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## Gastronomija kao sredstvo upravljanja marketingom i razvoja ruralnih destinacija

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**Apstrakt:** Kulinarski doživljaj je nezaboravno iskustvo i vrhunac za mnoge turiste. Hrana sadrži "energiju ljubavi" i može imati snažan "push-up efekat". Svrha ovog rada je da identifikuje faktore koji utiču na kulinarsko iskustvo, i u tom kontekstu, da uvede hedonističku hranu iz Srbije. Rad je zasnovan na empirijskom istraživanju provedenom među 328 stranih turista „tragača za ukusom“ iz osam zemalja koji su od avgusta 2015. do avgusta 2017. posetili šest tradicionalnih seoskih imanja (Salaši) u seoskom odredištu Vojvodine (severna Srbija). Rezultati pokazuju da se hedonističko kulinarsko iskustvo smatra nepogrešivim elementom autentičnih putničkih iskustava (91,4%), te da adekvatni marketing veoma ukusne hrane (žuta supa od živine sa rezancima i jetricima, ćevapi, domaće kobasice itd.) najviše doprinose razvoju turističkih destinacija.

**Ključne reči:** Kulinarski turizam, marketing menadžment, razvoj destinacije, Srbija

## Gastronomy as a mean of marketing management and rural destination development

**Abstract:** Culinary experience is an unforgettable experience and a highlight for many tourists. The food contains "energy of love" and can be a powerful "push-up effect". The purpose of this paper is to identify factors that influence the culinary experience, and in this context, to introduce hedonistic food from Serbia. The paper is based on empirical research carried out amongst 328 foreign tourists "taste trekkers" from eight countries who visited six traditional farmhouses (Salaši) in the rural destination of Vojvodina Province (Northern Serbia) from August 2015 to August 2017. The results indicate that hedonistic culinary experience has been regarded as an infallible element of authentic travel experiences (91.4%), and that adequate marketing of very delicious food (yellow poultry soup with noodles and liver dumplings, kebab, homemade sausages, etc.) are the attributes that most affected tourist destination development.

**Keywords:** Culinary Tourism, Marketing Management, Destination Development, Serbia

### 1. Introduction

While destinations were traditionally viewed as well-defined geographical areas, nowadays it is widely accepted that "destination has become some kind of individual experience which is interpreted subjectively by consumers" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 97). It can be said that specific places make distinctive tastes and according to Lee et al. (2015), unique local "taste of place", and "love at first bite" concept will contribute to the creation of a strong place brand and will facilitate the rural development. To go further, it can be said that tourism at a destination is a range of experiences, which comprise invisible network connecting at the same time many needs and motives: local culture exploration; reflection of

subjective perception; the embodiment of authentic travel experience; education opportunity; representation of prestige and status; influence of reference group, etc.

On the other hand, food tourists (so called "taste trekkers") are in search for authentic or new culinary experiences and also some kind of "adventure". According to Fields (2002) tourists' culinary experiences are considered as multi-dimensional consumption of the tourism system of which local foods are a part. Although culinary tourism is becoming a very important segment of the travel industry (Hjalager & Corigliano, 2000), only few studies examined the relationships between destination competitiveness and hedonistic culinary experiences in culinary tourism (Mason, Paggiaro, 2012). Some researchers suggested that tourists who value hedonistic culinary experiences are more motivated to approach new experiences in global (Smith, 2001; Everett, Aitchison, 2008). In this context, it can be said that hedonistic culinary experience is the pursuit and prioritizing of pleasure. Serbia is a paradise for food hedonists. Serbian traditional cuisine contains a myriad of flavors and smells, mixture of tastes as a result of influences of various nations who live in this region. This fusion of different influences represents unique hedonistic culinary experiences that can only be enjoyed in Serbia, especially as a part of diverse tourism offer in rural settings (Demirović et al. 2017; Mijatov et al., 2018). Serbian cuisine is characterized by highly diverse, strong and spicy food, which can be approximately described as a mixture of Turkish, Greek, Bulgarian, German and Hungarian cuisines.

The authors set the main hypothesis that hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a powerful marketing management tool and a mean of tourist destination competitiveness. In this sense, the primary goal of the study is to indicate that the marketing management is the possible modus why tourists enjoy food from Serbia. A survey was used for the purposes of this research, whereby 350 questionnaires were distributed and 328 of them were analyzed. The analysis led to the confirmation of the given hypothesis and lower level hypotheses. The SPSS program, version 23.0, and Pearson Chi-Square Test, ANOVA test, KMO, Bartlett's Test, Factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient were used. In addition to the research data, the authors used the available statistical and other secondary documentation.

## 2. Literature review

Malone et al. (2014) defined hedonic consumption in tourism as a „multisensory”, leisure and high emotive aspects of consumer's experience of products. In the wider concept "hedonistic culinary experience" is a term used to describe "traveling and enjoying to eat". The term "culinary tourism" was developed by Lucy Long in 1998 (Wolf, 2002; Horng et al., 2012). Long narrate culinary tourism as "partaking" in the specific or diverse food experiences related to a tourist destination. Smith (2001) followed the idea and proposed a definition focusing on basic motivational factors: "culinary tourism occurs when the recognition of regionally produced foods and beverages is a significant motivator or activity during the trip" (p. 3). In resumption of her research, Long (2004) accentuate that the culinary tourism experience is a way for tourists to delight and receive different local cultures. The desire to explore culture has been identified as an important motivation for tourist food consumption by several researchers (Fields, 2002; Kim et al., 2009; Kivela, Johns, 2003).

Scarpato (2002) pointed out that food can be a contemporary cultural resource as it satisfies all the conventional requirements of cultural tourism products. Fields (2002) stated that when tourists are experiencing new local cuisines, they are simultaneously experiencing a new culture. Since food reflects human cultures (Beardsworth, Keil, 1997), various aspects of the local food such as the way the local people eat, the food preparation process, and the taste of the local food provide "indicia" that are critical for reasonable the local culture. Accordingly, this explained one of the underlying reasons why many of the respondents were enthusiastic in tasting local Serbian food. Ksendzova et al (2015) suggested that people who "appreciate the pleasure" are more motivated to approach new experiences. Indeed, tourists tend to be intensely involved in the process of "food assessment" (Malone et al, 2014), which is often the result of subjective perception.

In relation to hedonistic culinary experiences it can be said that emotions as a result of subjective perception have a significant role to play in influencing tourists' attitude towards food. Authenticity discovering has long been recognized as a key motivator in tourism experiences (Hughes, 1995; Wang, 1999; Cole, 2007), it has also been identified as one of the motivators influencing destinations development (Kim et al., 2009). Trying something new is widely accepted as a significant tourist motivation (Lee, Crompton, 1992; Warde, Martens, 2000). Fields (2002) claim that status-aware tourists

like to explore new cuisines and food. Likewise, Kivela and Johns (2003) suggested that people often used dining out and traveling to assert social status. Kim et al. (2009) also identified prestige as one of the motivational factors for consuming local food. In addition, as the participants were interested in the kinds of food recommended by their reference groups, they were in pursuit of what is in "fashion". This coincides with Finkelstein's (1998) contention that tourists in quest of foreign gastronomic experience could have been motivated by the pursuit of "fashionability".

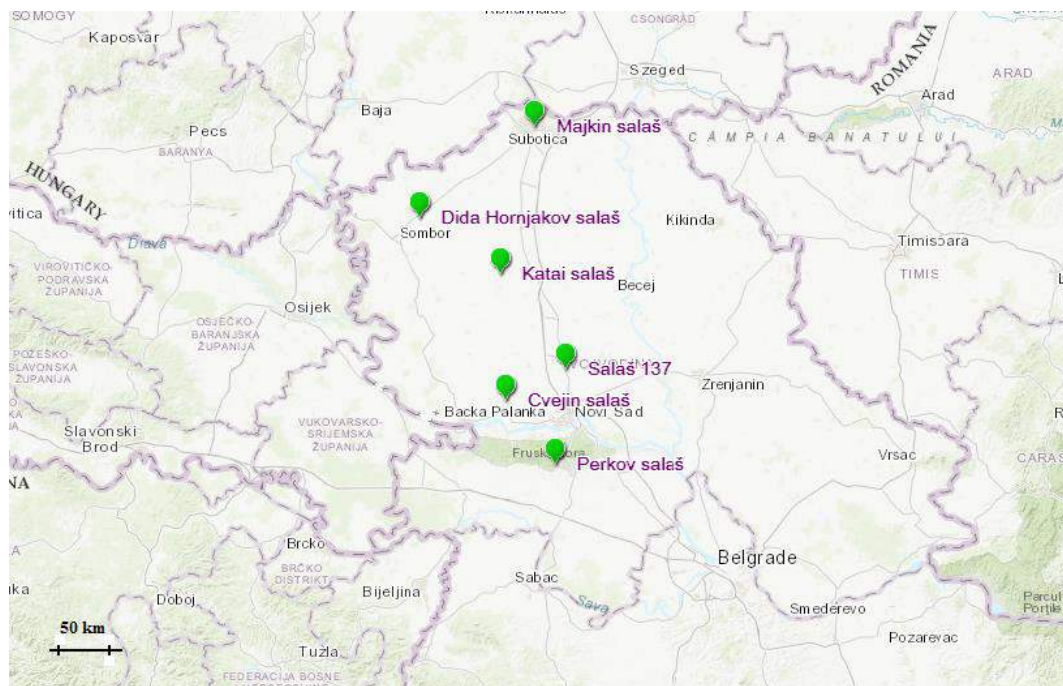
### 3. Research methodology

This study is based on modified *Local Food Preferences model*, previously employed in similar recent case-study (Chang et al., 2010). The motivational factors identified include: explore local culture, authentic travel experience, learning/education opportunity, prestige and status, reference group influence, and subjective perception. Since the purpose of this study is to generate understanding rather than to generalize findings to a large population, a purposive sampling method was adopted (Chang et al., 2010).

The sample of this study comprised 328 tourists originating from eight countries (Slovenia, Russia, Croatia, Italy, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Hungary and China). Within the five-point scale the item "Strongly agree" refers to the respondents' favorite opinions about the hedonistic food from Serbia and the item "Absolutely disagree" refers to their unfavorable opinions. The questionnaire was piloted in the summer of 2015.

Collected data were analyzed by employing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) programme. Although there are a number of traditional farm houses (Serb. *Salaš*) in Vojvodina Province (Northern Serbia), six farms attractive for tourists have been selected for the analysis in this study. The following farms have been analyzed: *Dida Hornjakov salaš*, located near Sombor, *Salaš 137* in Čenej near Novi Sad, *Majkin salaš* in Palić, *Katai salaš* in Mali Idoš, *Cvejin salaš* in Begeč, and *Perkov salaš* near Neradin in Fruška Gora National Park (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Territoriality of the farm houses in Vojvodina



The data were processed with the statistical program SPSS 23.0. Exploratory factor analysis is used in the analysis of the gathered data on the interconnections of the sets of variables. In order to explore the local food impact on the tourists' attitudes ANOVA test were applied.

We can see in the Table 1 that the meals are available in all farms, and are mainly based on farm cuisine prepared in a traditional way. Each farm is recognizable according to some regional gastronomic specialties.

Table 1 Specialty of traditional farm houses (Salaši) in Vojvodina Province

Name of farm house	The Specialties of Traditional Farm Houses
<i>Dida Hornjakov Salaš</i>	Yellow poultry soup with noodles and liver dumplings; rice with stewed stomachs; three kinds of sauce: cherry, tomato and dill; layered cake with poppy seeds, nuts, cherries, pumpkin.
<i>Cvejin Salaš</i>	Cabbage (from Futog or Begeč) with turkey, goat, beef; stuffed (Serb. <i>Sarmice</i> ) cabbage (chard, horseradish leaves or vine leaves); baked sauerkraut (Serb. <i>Podvarak</i> ); beans with smoked pork ribs and smoked pork knuckle; chicken stew; beef stew; pork delicacies.
<i>Majkin Salaš</i>	Turkey with apricots; turkey with pasta; pork chop in a sauce of apple; kebab (Serb. <i>Ćevapčići</i> ); hamburger steak; smoked pork; white pork; homemade sausages; steak in a chutney sauce; chicken breast; fillet of chicken drumstick; the stewed intestine (Serb. <i>Škembići</i> ).
<i>Perkov Salaš</i>	Chicken or beef stew with homemade noodles; tomato soup with zucchini; strudel with poppy seeds or nuts; homemade brandy; wine and fruit juices; old-fashioned cakes and sweet pies, plum jam; sweet dish made of watermelon, blackberries and wild strawberries.
<i>Katai Salaš</i>	Pasta dishes and various types of homemade bread.
<i>Salaš 137</i>	Pie with cheese (Serb. <i>Gibanica</i> ); strudel with poppy seeds and nuts; pie with pumpkin (Serb. <i>Bundevara</i> ); cooked meat and vegetables from the soup and five sauces; rolled veal; roast in cream; stuffed zucchini; plum dumplings; rice pudding (Serb. <i>Sutlijaš</i> ); egg noodles cooked in milk and flour (Serb. <i>Šnenokle</i> ).

The study started with the main hypothesis H: The hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a powerful marketing management tool and a mean of tourist destination competitiveness. In order to test the hypothesis H, it was necessary to answer to specific questions and to set certain low-level hypotheses. One of the most important questions that needed to be answered was: **How did you describe the taste of Serbian food?** In order to obtain the answer to this question, six low-level hypotheses were formed: h1 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is the way to explore local culture; h2 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a reflection of subjective perception h3 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is an argument of authentic travel experience; h4 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a good basis for learning/education opportunity; h5 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a simulacrum of prestige and status; and h6 – Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is an influence of reference group.

#### 4. Results and discussion

The Table 2 shows that the largest percentage of participants comes from Slovenia (93 people – 28.4%) and Russia (64 people – 19.5%). The respondents from Croatia and Italy are equally represented (44 people – 13.4%), the same as the respondents from the Netherlands (24 people – 7.3%) and the UK (27 people – 8.2%), while the least percentage of respondents comes from China (7 people – 2.1%).

Table 2 Country of origin

Name of the country	Frequency	Percent
Croatia	44	13.4
Russia	64	19.5
The Netherlands	24	7.3
China	7	2.1
Italy	44	13.4
Slovenia	93	28.4
The UK	27	8.2
Hungary	25	7.6
Total	328	100%

Table 3 Results of the KMO and Bartlett's Test

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		0.857
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	1929.644
	df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure value was 0.857, which exceeds the recommended value of 0.60 (Kaiser, 1974). In addition, Bartlett's test of sphericity has achieved the needed statistical significance ( $p=0.000$ ), which confirms the justification of the application of exploratory factor analysis (Table 4).

Table 4 Results of the Factor analysis

Items (Variables)		Factor loading	Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings	% of Variance
<b>FI</b>	Local food is the way to Explore local culture	.765	4.637	77.285
	Local food is argument of Authentic travel experience	.898		
	Local food is reflection of Subjective perception	.650		
	Local food is good basis for Learning/ education opportunity	.715		
	Local food is simulacrum of Prestige and status	.789		
	Local food is influence of Reference group	.820		

The reliability of the measurement instrument was checked by using *Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient*. In an ideal case, Cronbach's coefficient should be above 0.70 (DeVellis, 2003), but the values of this instrument are very sensitive to the number of items on the scale. As Pallant (2011) states, short scales (fewer than 10 items) usually have quite small Cronbach's coefficient (below 0.50). Bearing this in mind, we conclude that the set model is valid (Table 5).

Table 5 Cronbach's Alpha results

		N	%
Cases	Valid	328	100
Cronbach's Alpha		N of Items	
0.555		6	

According to data in the Table 6, it can be noted that the size of the statistical significance of  $p<0.05$  is recorded in almost all cases: *LF1* ( $p=0.02$ ), *LF2* ( $p=0.024$ ), *LF3* ( $p=0.029$ ), *LF4* ( $p=0.036$ ) and *LF6* ( $p=0.001$ ). This factors show an extremely high statistical significance among the mean scores of the respondents' attitudes.

**Table 6 ANOVA Test results**

		<b>Sum of Squares</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean Square</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Local food is the way to Explore local culture (LF1)</b>	Between Groups	15.946	7	2.278	3.427	.002
	Within Groups	212.734	320	.665		
	Total	228.680	327			
<b>Local food is reflection of Subjective perception (LF2)</b>	Between Groups	12.089	7	1.727	2.341	.024
	Within Groups	236.106	320	.738		
	Total	248.195	327			
<b>Local food is argument of Authentic travel experience (LF3)</b>	Between Groups	9.397	7	1.342	2.267	.029
	Within Groups	189.526	320	.592		
	Total	198.924	327			
<b>Local food is good basis for Learning/ education opportunity (LF4)</b>	Between Groups	13.508	7	1.930	2.175	.036
	Within Groups	283.879	320	.887		
	Total	297.387	327			
<b>Local food is simulacrum of Prestige and status (LF5)</b>	Between Groups	7.542	7	1.077	.921	.490
	Within Groups	374.309	320	1.170		
	Total	381.851	327			
<b>Local food is influence of Reference group (LF6)</b>	Between Groups	27.467	7	3.924	3.502	.001
	Within Groups	358.530	320	1.120		
	Total	385.997	327			

Note:  $p < 0.05$  if the p-value associated with the F is smaller than  $p = 0.05$ , then there are significant statistical differences among the observed groups.

Many participants articulated that they would be interested in anything that could represent the culture of Serbian food. It is interesting that 89.9% of the respondents strongly agree that "Hedonistic food from Serbia is the way to Explore local culture" (Table 7). Following Montanari (2006), Lee et al (2015) argued that "food is culture, and culture is food", two-way relationship and an aspect of legacy, and that food is a language that overcomes all barriers. MacDonald and Deneault (2001) claimed that food and wine tourists fulfill their expectations when they "immerse themselves in the culture they are visiting through authentic and engaging experiences with people, cuisine, wine and other cultural activities" (p. 13). It can be said that "Love goes through the mouth", and food is the widest form of tolerance and cultures of different nations respect.

Some of the specific responses were: "Food in Serbia is very delicious", "Meat dishes are generally well spiced and hot", "Domestic food melts in your mouth", "Cakes and cookies are better than chocolate", "You just have to eat it because it is so tasty", etc. After examining the same Table 8 it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference in responses, which is  $p = 0.000$ . It shows that the respondents gave uniform answers. By analyzing these data, it can be concluded that the cause derives from the number of participants. In fact, there was not the same number of respondents in relation to their country of origin, so, the result is not surprising. The analysis of the data confirmed lower-level hypothesis h1 which states that Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is the way to explore local culture.

Table 7 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as the way to explore local culture

Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is the way to explore local culture		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total
Country of origin	Croatia	3	2	4	0	35	44
		0.9%	0.6%	1.2%	0%	10.7%	13.4%
	Russia	0	3	5	4	52	64
		0%	0.9%	1.5%	1.2%	15.9%	19.5%
	The Netherlands	0	2	2	6	14	24
		0%	0.6%	0.6%	1.8%	4.3%	7.3%
	China	0	0	0	1	6	7
		0%	0%	0%	0.3%	1.8%	2.1%
	Italy	0	3	5	9	27	44
		0%	0.9%	1.5%	2.7%	8.2%	13.4%
	Slovenia	1	1	1	2	88	93
		0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	0.6%	26.8%	28.4%
	The UK	0	0	0	2	25	27
		0%	0%	0%	0.6%	7.6%	8.2%
	Hungary	0	1	0	5	19	25
		0%	0.3%	0%	1.5%	5.8%	7.6%
	<b>Total</b>	4	12	17	29	266	328
		1.2%	3.7%	5.2%	8.8%	81.1%	100%

Table 8 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
64.454 <sup>a</sup>	28	0.000

Another factor that activated the respondents to taste hedonistic food from Serbia was the “subjective perception” about Serbian food (Table 9). Some participant’s utterance corroborated this contention: “The food is great for gaining weight”, “Soups are healing” and “The portions are very extensive”. Many respondents identified the role of subjective perception as source of hedonic value experienced during their traveling. Based on the values  $p=0.000$ , statistically significant differences can be seen in responses of different categories (Table 10). It shows that the respondents gave uniform answers. Bearing in mind that 69.5% of all participants strongly agree and partially agree that “Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a reflection of subjective perception”, the data confirmed lower-level hypothesis  $h_2$  stating that Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a reflection of Subjective perception.



Table 9 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as reflection of subjective perception

Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is reflection of subjective perception		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total
Country of origin	Croatia	3	2	15	14	10	44
		0.9%	0.6%	4.6%	4.3%	3%	13.4%
	Russia	5	2	18	22	17	64
		1.5%	0.6%	5.5%	6.7%	5.2%	19.5%
	The Netherlands	0	4	6	13	1	24
		0%	1.2%	1.8%	4.0%	0.3%	7.3%
	China	0	0	0	7	0	7
		0%	0%	0%	2.1%	0%	2.1%
	Italy	3	5	9	23	4	44
		0.9%	1.5%	2.7%	7.0%	1.2%	13.4%
	Slovenia	0	0	15	72	6	93
		0%	0%	4.6%	22%	1.8%	28.4%
	The UK	0	0	3	20	4	27
		0%	0%	0.9%	6.1%	1.2%	8.2%
	Hungary	0	1	9	13	2	25
		0%	0.3%	2.7%	4.0%	0.6%	7.6%
	<b>Total</b>	11	14	75	184	44	328
		3.4%	4.3%	22.9%	56.1%	13.4%	100%

Table 10 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
82.462	28	0.000

Another important reason for the respondents to partake of hedonistic food from Serbia (Table 11) was the desire for an "authentic travel experience". There is an old saying that says "When in Rome, do as the Romans do"; this belief was epitomized in the following comment: "Serbian sausage (Serb. *Kulen*) and cream cheese (Serb. *Kajmak*) are a heavenly experience; food is mostly based on meat, cabbage and potatoes; ground beef/pork patty (Serb. *Pljeskavica*) with onions and kajmak are a gift of gods". For the respondents who held this belief, they considered food to have a greater value on the cultural and intellectual aspects than on physical pleasure, and they sought for culinary experiences that were unique and original when they travel. Hence, they felt that they were being brought closer to Serbia when they were totally immersed in the authentic local eating experience. Based on the values  $p=0.000$ , statistically significant differences can be seen in responses of different categories (Table 12). Most participants (91.4%) agree with the attitude that hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is an argument of authentic travel experience, which is the confirmation of lower-level hypothesis h3.

Table 11 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as authentic travel experience

Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is argument of authentic travel experience		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total
Country of origin	Croatia	4	1	1	1	37	44
		1.2%	0.3%	0.3%	0.3%	11.3%	13.4%
	Russia	0	3	4	2	55	64
		0%	0.9%	1.2%	0.6%	16.8%	19.5%
	The Netherlands	0	2	2	0	20	24
		0%	0.6%	0.6%	0%	6.1%	7.3%
	China	0	0	0	0	7	7
		0%	0%	0%	0%	2.1%	2.1%
	Italy	0	0	8	0	36	44
		0%	0%	2.4%	0%	11.0%	13.4%
	Slovenia	2	0	0	0	91	93
		0.6%	0%	0%	0%	27.7%	28.4%
	The UK	0	0	0	0	27	27
		0%	0%	0%	0%	8.2%	8.2%
	Hungary	0	0	1	0	24	25
		0%	0%	0.3%	0%	7.3%	7.6%
	<b>Total</b>	6	6	16	3	297	328
		1.8%	1.8%	4.9%	0.9%	90.5%	100%

Table 12 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
60.061	28	0.000

Some of the respondents rated tasting hedonistic food from Serbia as a “learning/education” opportunity (Table 13). They considered that eating hedonistic food from Serbia would enable them to acquire new food knowledge so that they could have the capacity to discuss and evaluate Serbian food. Hence, the respondents could enrich their “cultural capital”, a term which denotes the knowledge that enables an individual to interpret various cultural codes (Bourdieu, 1984). Based on the values  $p=0.000$  there are statistically significant differences in responses of different categories (Table 14). Lower-level hypothesis  $h_4$  was also confirmed because majority of participants agree (84.5%) that “Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a good basis for learning/education opportunity.”

Table 13 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as learning/education opportunity

Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is good basis for learning/education opportunity		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total	
Country of origin	Croatia	4	1	2	12	25	44	
		1.2%	0.3%	0.6%	3.7%	0.6%	13.4%	
	Russia	0	7	11	9	37	64	
		0%	2.1%	3.4%	2.7%	11.3%	19.5%	
	The Netherlands	0	4	0	14	6	24	
		0%	1.2%	0%	4.3%	1.8%	7.3%	
	China	0	0	0	0	7	7	
		0%	0%	0%	0%	2.1%	2.1%	
	Italy	0	4	4	12	24	44	
		0%	1.2%	1.2%	3.7%	7.3%	13.4%	
	Slovenia	2	0	11	14	66	93	
		0.6%	0%	3.4%	4.3%	20.1%	28.4%	
	The UK	0	0	0	15	12	27	
		0%	0%	0%	4.6%	3.7%	8.2%	
	Hungary	0	0	1	17	7	25	
		0%	0%	0.3%	5.2%	2.1%	7.6%	
	<b>Total</b>		6	16	29	93	184	328
			1.8%	4.9%	8.8%	28.4%	56.1%	100%

Table 14 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
105.588	28	0.000

Some of the participants indicated that they were motivated to taste hedonistic food from Serbia so that they could share such experiences with their friends (8.2%) when they returned home (Table 15). Accordingly, tasting hedonistic food has become same as souvenirs and mementos from the travel. The results obtained in this study show that respondents enjoy the Hedonistic culinary experiences from Serbia and when sharing their gastronomic experience with friends, they promote Serbia in the best manners. As with previous answer, there are statistically significant differences in responses of different categories (Table 16). On the basis of participants' statements that they absolutely disagree and partially disagree (86.3%) that "Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a simulacrum of prestige and status", the lower-level hypothesis h5 is rejected as inaccurate.

Table 15 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as simulacrum of prestige and status

Hedonistic food from Serbia is simulacrum of prestige and status		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total	
Country of origin	Croatia	31	2	6	0	5	44	
		9.5%	0.6%	1.8%	0%	1.5%	13.4%	
	Russia	45	12	0	3	4	64	
		13.7%	3.7%	0%	0.9%	1.2%	19.5%	
	The Netherlands	20	0	0	2	2	24	
		6.1%	0%	0%	0.6%	0.6%	7.3%	
	China	4	1	2	0	0	7	
		1.2%	0.3%	0.6%	0%	0%	2.1%	
	Italy	36	0	0	4	4	44	
		11%	0%	0%	1.2%	1.2%	13.4%	
	Slovenia	72	12	7	0	2	93	
		22%	3.7%	2.1%	0%	0.6%	28.4%	
	The UK	19	5	3	0	0	27	
		5.8%	1.5%	0.9%	0%	0%	8.2%	
	Hungary	19	5	0	1	0	25	
		5.8%	1.5%	0%	0.3%	0%	7.6%	
	<b>Total</b>		246	37	18	10	17	328
			75%	11.3%	5.5%	3%	5.2%	100%

Table 16 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
63.235	28	0.000

Some respondents were interested in tasting various local foods that were recommended to them by their “reference groups”, (Table 17), such as their friends, celebrities or Internet (Facebook, Instagram etc.).

Table 17 Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia as influence of reference group

Hedonistic food from Serbia is influence of reference group		Absolutely disagree	Partially disagree	No opinion	Partially agree	Strongly agree	Total
Country of origin	Croatia	5	1	0	9	29	44
		1.5%	0.3%	0%	2.7%	8.8%	13.4%
	Russia	7	0	0	21	36	64
		2.1%	0%	0%	6.4%	11%	19.5%
	The Netherlands	4	0	0	2	18	24
		1.2%	0%	0%	0.6%	5.5%	7.3%
	China	0	0	0	0	7	7
		0%	0%	0%	0%	2.1%	2.1%
	Italy	6	1	1	5	31	44
		1.8%	0.3%	0.3%	1.5%	9.5%	13.4%
	Slovenia	0	2	1	18	72	93
		0%	0.6%	0.3%	5.5%	22%	28.4%
	The UK	0	0	0	0	27	27
		0%	0%	0%	0%	8.2%	8.2%
	Hungary	1	0	0	0	24	25
		0.3%	0%	0%	0%	7.3%	7.6%
	<b>Total</b>	23	4	2	55	244	328
		7%	1.2%	0.6%	16.8%	74.4%	100%

Table 18 Pearson Chi-Square test results

Value	df	Statistical significance (p)
54.773	28	0.002

Based on the values  $p=0.002$  there are statistically significant differences in responses of different categories (Table 18). Lower-level hypothesis  $H_6$  was confirmed because majority of participants agreed (91.2%) that “Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is influence of a Reference group”.

## 5. Conclusion

According to results it can be concluded that the ability to discern tastes is tourist destination competitiveness, and can be a powerful tool of marketing management. Boyne et al., (2002), Oman et al., (2015) and Tsai and Wang (2016) founded that tourists spend from 30% to 40% of their budget on food when traveling. Further, Horng and Tsai (2010) argued that cuisines that are well known for taste and quality can be developed into tourism products. Lee et al. (2015) and Bowen and De Master (2011) argued that specific rural places can be recognized in the global market through the establishment of specific taste of destinations. Food tourism can provide interest and many positive changes to rural communities by bringing in tourists who, first and all spend money. Omar et al. (2015) noticed that tourism destination may be visited because of the unique local “taste of place” (it) served for tourists. They have found that food can increase the positive image of destinations because it is reflection of local life, local production and also heritage (Everett and Aitchison, 2008).

Serbian traditional cuisine contains a multiplicity of tastes that can only be enjoyed in Serbia. Serbian cuisine is characterized as multifarious, flavored and spicy, which can be approximately described as a mixture of Turkish, Hungarian, Bulgarian and Greek cuisines. The use of meat and dough is predominant in it, and they are integral parts of many national dishes, such as ground beef/pork patty (Serb. *Pljeskavica*), grilled minced meat (Serb. *Ćevapi*), Karadjordje's schnitzel (Serb. *Karadžorđeva šnicla*), etc. The national drink is plum brandy (*šljivovica* or homemade *rakija*). It can be said that tourists tend

to be deeply involved in the process of “tasting place”, and through food tourism, tourists can have authentic experiences. Tourism choice is generally bound by hedonic motivations. Tourists love to please themselves and they often travel to enjoy. The results we obtained tend to be viewed as a motivator for vacation choice and tourist destination competitiveness. The point of view received here is consistent with a phenomenological understanding of “taste of place”. Tourist destinations must be recognizable to be competitive. Food tourism is a remarkable way to do it.

It is evident from this study that there are three main sources of hedonic value: Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is an argument of authentic travel experience (91.4%), Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is an influence of a Reference group (91.2%), and Hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is the way to explore local culture (89.9%). According to these findings, we can conclude that hedonistic culinary experience from Serbia is a powerful tool that can be used in promotions of rural destination and is a means of tourist destination competitiveness. This confirms the main hypothesis.

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