
THE PRESENCE OF FOOD TOURISM IN THE TRAVEL AGENCIES SUPPLY PROGRAMS

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Abstract: Tourism is usually used as a very powerful tool to stimulate underdeveloped rural areas and to promote development through different comparative advantages of the observed spaces. Rural tourism in Serbia should contribute to the development of environment, but also to economically motivate the local population to remain in the countryside. Many studies focus on rural tourism and its impact on economic development. Culinary tourism or food tourism is the exploration of food as the purpose of tourism. Because of this it is considered as a vital component of the tourism experience and the travel agencies that recognize the relevance of the offer based on food will have a lot of success in the future. The research was carried out among 49 Novi Sad travel agencies. The motives and attitudes of the employees in the agencies were examined, the presence of food-based arrangements, as well as their plans in future. The results showed that only 3 agencies have a food as a topic in their offer which is a very small number especially considering the importance of Vojvodina when it comes to the taste and quality of food.

Keywords: travel agencies, rural tourism, food tourism, Novi Sad, Serbia

1. INTRODUCTION

Rural tourism is associated with notions of rusticity and authenticity, which greatly depend on natural environment, arts, heritage, tradition of agrarian societies and **food** (Bouchon et al. 2016; Vujko et al, 2017). Empirical studies have grown in profusion during the past ten years and have focused on the causality relationship between rural tourism and economic growth (Brida et al. 2010).

Bearing all this in mind it comes to the idea that the cooperation between agencies and destinations is a bold necessity. According to Topolšek et al. (2014) and Vujko et al. (2016a) Travel Agencies have been recognised as a base component of modern business concept. These trends must be considered unique (Vujko, Gajić, 2014a), because there are tourists all over the world with the same or similar motifs “to eat” (Vujko et al, 2017a). Every tourists eats about three times a day which puts food one of the fundamental economic drivers of tourism. Many countries are making importante investment in food tourism development which is manifested through the visitor spending and overnight stays rising as a result of food tourism promotion and advocacy of travel agencies. Traditional food can be important both as a tourism attraction in itself and in helping to shape the image of a destination (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Hall et al. 2003; du Rand & Heath, 2006). It can be said that academic literature has concentrated on its role as an economic generator and a marketing tool (Telfer & Wall, 2000; Kneafsey & Ilbery, 2001; Jones & Jenkins, 2002; Okumus *et al*, 2007; Vujko et al, 2017a) or as a partner to wine tourism (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2000; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Vujko et al, 2017a). However, recent texts (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Long, 2004; Vujko et al, 2016b) have marked a new trend in the study of food-motivated tourism.

So, the food tourism is a great opportunity for the development of undeveloped rural destinations, and tourist agencies should be the backbone of this development.

The aim of this paper is to point out the importance of travel agencies in terms of food tourism supply and to indicate the significance of networking of providers (travel agencies) and suppliers (food producers in the villages).

2. RESEARCH MEDODOLOGY

This study was conducted in the city of Novi Sad eminent travel agencies (49). The research was a combination of quantitative methods (statistics and web analysis) and qualitative methods (discussion and written documents). First part of the research was conducted by searching web addresses and internet content of travel agencies (Table 1). The following agencies have been analysed: Big Blue, Atic Tours, Arka Tours, Astra Tours, Auto Turist, Avenija

Putovanja, Balkan Fun, Capri Travel, Castel Nuovo, Eko Art Travel, El Greco, Elite Treval, Elnos Tours, Eurojet, Fantast Tourist, Ferior Tours, Funtours, Go2 & Max Travel, Grand Tours, Green Travel & Adventure, Holiday, International line, Jahorina Info, Juresic, Karpati, Kon Tiki, Lider Travel, Maestral, Magelan, Market Tours, Modena Travel, NS Travel, Oktopod, Olimpia Travel, Omnitours, Panacomp, Perla Tours, Philoxenia Travel, Prestige Travel, Putopis, Puzzle Group, SAB International, Stephany, Sunny Travel, Tango Travel, Top Tours and Urban Travel.

The second part of the paper attempts to determine the involvement level of food tourism in the tourist offer of travel agencies. Employees (46) were asked whether they have mentioned facilities in their itineraries, and they were asked to provide a detailed explanation of their “point of view” (Vujko et al, 2017b). The obtained data were analysed by appropriate statistical methods which were descriptive and comparative and enabling the explication of the research results and the performance of certain conclusions.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to Table 1 it can be seen that only three agencies have a supply based on food tourism.

Table 1 Research Result

Travel agencies	Offer based on food tourism
Big Blue	-
Atic Tours	-
Arka Tours	-
Astra Tours	-
Auto Turist	-
Avenija Putovanja	Wine tour, Traditional farm houses of Vojvodina
Balkan Fun	-
Capri Travel	-
Castel Nuovo	-
Eko Art Travel	-
El Greco	-
Elite Travel	-
Elnos Tours	-
Eurojet	-
Fantast Tourist	-
Ferior Tours	-
Funtours	-
Go2 & Max Travel	-
Grand Tours	-
Green Travel & Adventure	-
Holiday	-
International Line	-
Jahorina Info	-
Juresic	-
Karpati	-
Kon Tiki	-
Lider Travel	-
Maestral	-
Magelan	Rural tourism, Wine tour, Traditional farm houses of Vojvodina
Market Tours	-

Modena Travel	-
NS Travel	-
Oktopod	-
Olimpia Travel	-
Omnitours	-
Panacomp	Culinary tour
Perla Tours	-
Philoxenia Travel	-
Prestige Travel	-
Putopis	-
Puzzle Group	-
SAB International	-
Sajka	-
Stalis Tours	-
Stephany	-
Sunny Travel	-
Tango Travel	-
Top Tours	-
Urban Travel	-

Table 2. Do you have mentioned accommodation facilities in your itineraries?

Responses		Frequency	Percent
Valid	No	43	93,5
Valid	Yes	3	6,5

Source: Own calculations

According to data from Table 2, we can conclude that the most of the agency do not have food tourism offer in their itineraries, and that only three of them have (Table 1).

Table 3. Tell us detailed explanation of your attitude? Why is that?

Responses	Frequency	Percent
There are not enough interested tourists	8	17,4
We have not thought about it	4	8,7
The owner does not see the interest in domestic tourism	5	10,9
Domestic tourism is the future, we are thinking in that direction	10	21,7
We plan as soon as possible to connect with some of them	10	21,7
Demand is growing, so we plan to turn our business towards this form of tourism	2	4,3
Sounds interesting, I'll think about it	1	2,2
We have not cooperated with the aforementioned facilities, but in the future we want	1	2,2
There is interest and we nurture it	5	10,9
Total	46	100

Source: Own calculations

In Table 3, there is frequency of question “Tell us detailed explanation of your attitude?” regardless of whether they have or do not have such offer. We can see that only five employees from the above three agencies consider that the demand for food tourism exists and that it need to be nurtured.

4. CONCLUSION

Travel agencies need to be aware of the opportunities that food tourism can provide. It is simply unacceptable that agencies do not have food-based arrangements in their offer. Especially the travel agencies from Vojvodina. According to Vujko et al. (2017a), Vojvodina is a place of multiculturalism and mixing of taste in the region and Serbia, and can be significant resource of gastronomy tourism. Its natural and anthropogenic values created many recognizable, authentic dishes and food products (Vujko et al, 2017a). One is certain, food of

Vojvodina is powerful tools that can attract many visitors. Agencies must quickly understand the importance of food-based food arrangements and include them in their offer. Those who understand this in time will be ready for the flow of modern touristic business.

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