

## STUDY OF THE CONSUMER INTEREST OF CULINARY TOURISM IN BULGARIA

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### **Abstract**

*Culinary tourism, like any type of tourism is an economic activity, but it is part of the culture of the defined region. Therefore, practicing culinary tourism should be perceived primarily as a cultural enrichment of the individual person. The aim of the research is to establish the degree of interest in the practice of culinary tourism in Bulgaria; Preferences in a particular culinary area; Expectations from practicing culinary tourism. In order to achieve this objective, it is necessary to carry out the following tasks: To prepare an inquiry card; To conduct the survey among consumers; To carry out statistical treatment and analyse the results of the survey; To summarize conclusions. To achieve the purpose of the survey was conducted questionnaires – in person and through online form (inquiry card), in the period 05.11.2018 – 22.12.2018 year, among 104 people aged 18 to 51 years. The questionnaire contains 20 questions of different types – open, closed, multivariate. From the analysis of the results of the study, the following are summarized: respondents practice different types of tourism, and culinary is also present in their preferences. Through an appropriate advertising and marketing strategy, this interest can be strengthened and more actors attract. Respondents would visit each of the tourist areas in Bulgaria for culinary tourism, but as the most preferred they have defined the Rhodopi region. Respondents would be motivated to travel if it offered them a new, different experience; has a good quality/price ratio; It is related to the consumption of traditional as well as unique food and drinks. They are interested in local traditions, lifestyle and culture and would visit festivals, holidays, and domestic/traditional restaurants. The vast majority of respondents believe that the best advertising of culinary tourism can be accomplished through specialized sites, radio and television. They like long weekends outside their own location; The most preferred period for participation in culinary tourism is from 1 to 3 days. For a period of such a duration would allocate between 150 and 300 BGN, this amount does not include the cost of transport and accommodation. Respondents are young people, mostly women, most – family, highly educated and most of them live in a big city; Decide to participate in culinary tourism independently*

**Key words:** *culinary tourism, study, interest, culinary area*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Bulgaria has a rich traditional food culture characterized by a variety of local foods and food preparation technologies. The process of transforming plant species into emblems that play an important role in building local identity and the specific taste of the place takes a long time [3]. Over the centuries a large number and various factors influenced the culinary characteristics of the different regions, so separate, different, unique culinary cultures were formed [10]. It is the uniqueness of the preserved food tradition that can be used to create a marketing concept for the development of culinary tourism in the country and in the different regions. There are also unique local, genuine and fresh food and

agricultural products and raw materials left over from all organic farming [11].

Culinary tourism, like any type of tourism is an economic activity, but it is part of the culture of the defined region. Therefore, practicing culinary tourism should be perceived primarily as a cultural enrichment of the individual person. All the tourists want to get acquainted and taste the specific local cuisine and traditional foods [6]. Culinary tourism includes cultural experiences, acquaintance of traditions, lifestyle and cultural identity of the destination in which it is practiced. In economic terms, culinary tourism contributes to the sustainable development of the region [2]. In general, tourism has a multiplier effect and "...its

growth stimulates the growth of other economic sectors“[7].

Tourism provides an additional sales outlet for food producers and tourism-related spending on locally produced food products helps to stimulate and revitalise local economies [1].

There are many benefits to be had in linking food and tourism for all stakeholders concerned. Tourists may even be tempted to stay longer in one place because of the availability of food products and related activities [4]. Significant positive relationships were found between food image and visit intentions [8].

Food fulfils a functional need of tourists; hence it consists of a considerable part of tourism expenditure in both individual and organized travel [5]. Local produce adds authenticity to the tourist experience and provides motivation for visitors to come to a location [9].

The purpose of this study is to establish the degree of interest in the practice of culinary tourism in Bulgaria; Preferences to a particular culinary area; Expectations from practicing culinary tourism. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to carry out the following tasks: Prepare an Inquiry card; to poll users; To carry out statistical treatment and analyse the results of the survey; To summarize conclusions. The purpose of this study is to give an understanding of how to make culinary tourism more attractive and popular among the population and how its marketing needs to change in order to attract a particular tourist segment.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

To achieve the purpose of the survey was conducted questionnaires – personally and through online form (Inquiry card), inquiry was held in the period 05.10.2019 – 22.11.2019 year, among 104 people aged 18 to 51 years. Preparation of an inquiry card: The questionnaire contains 20 questions of different types – open, closed, multivariate. The existence of different types of questions provides the respondents with the freedom to express their opinion and ensures the

adequacy and credibility of the results obtained. The questions included in the questionnaire are arranged in the following logical sequence:

- Questions №1 and №2 address the preferred types of tourism and their participation in culinary tourism;
- Question №3 Assesses how respondents perceive culinary tourism;
- Questions №4 and №5 provide information on preferred areas for tourism and in which of the regions respondents would return for culinary tourism;
- Question №6 looks for the respondents' personal experience of new routes for culinary tourism, including preferred places of eating;
- Questions №7, 8, 9 and №10 contain information on the factors that motivate people to practice culinary tourism; experience, the preferred activities for this type of tourism;
- Question №11 gives information about which way of advertising would be most appropriate for the promotion of culinary tourism;
- Questions 12, 13 information about the preferred duration of culinary tourism and the financial resources that respondents would allocate for participation in one.
- Questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 participants examine the following signs: gender; Monthly income; Age Marital status; Level of education and domicile.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results obtained by the survey make it possible to analyse and summarize conclusions. Aggregated data are presented in tabular, graphical or analytical form. In the context of the survey, each of the respondents was given the opportunity to indicate/choose several types of tourism, which he most often practiced, according to his personal preference. All 104 respondents made this choice. The analysis of the results showed that 59% of respondents practiced the most common sea tourism. After him the popularity ranks mountain tourism, with 41% of respondents. For 34% of respondents the most

preferred is cultural tourism, almost the same number of respondents gave their preference for adventure and eco tourism. Culinary tourism occupies a position on an equal footing with urban, health and SPA tourism-with 22% responded. The survey shows that 34% of respondents have already taken part in culinary tours in the country, are relevant to culinary tourism and are potential participants in this type of tourism.



Fig. 1. Number of participants in culinary tourism  
 Source: Own calculation.

The question: "To what extent do you agree with the statement: Culinary tourism is..." illustrates the different forms of tourism related to food as a motive for taking a trip. The highest proportion of respondents (36%) consider that culinary tourism is a journey to a particular destination, with all activities related to food and nutrition. For 20% culinary tourism means visiting a local farmers market, a restaurant or a culinary festival, which provides a "different" experience. For 28% of respondents, culinary tourism is part of other activities during the holiday. 13% of the respondents associate culinary tourism above all with a meal in a preferred restaurant during the holiday. 13% of the respondents associate culinary tourism above all with a meal in a preferred restaurant during the holiday. So are those who associate it with a trip to a destination, with a main motive to visit a certain culinary festival or farmer's market. For the rest, nutrition is not a leading motive for culinary tourism. The results are shown graphically in Fig.2 and 3.

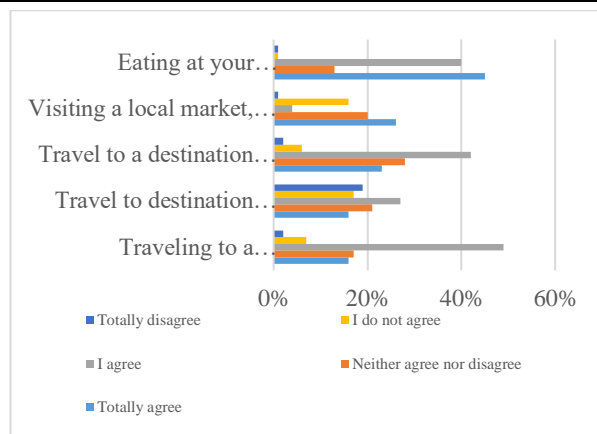


Fig. 2. Respondents' personal understanding of culinary  
 Source: Own calculation.



Fig. 3. Proportion of respondents who fully agree  
 Source: Own calculation.

Table 1. Personal understanding

Nº	Personal understanding
1.	Eating at your preferred restaurant during the holiday.
2.	Visiting a local market, restaurant or festival as a "different" experience.
3.	Travel to a destination with a festival/event as part of other holiday-related activities.
4.	Travel to destination with all holiday activities related to food and nutrition.
5.	Traveling to a destination with a primary motive for visiting a particular culinary festival/event or farmers' markets.

Source: Own determination.

Each of these areas has its admirers, but the respondents have the greatest desire to visit the Rhodopi region (20%), followed by Rila-Pirin region and Bourgas Black Sea coast (15%). The results are presented in figure 4 show the aggregate share of respondents, whether the answer "I have an exceptionally great desire to visit".

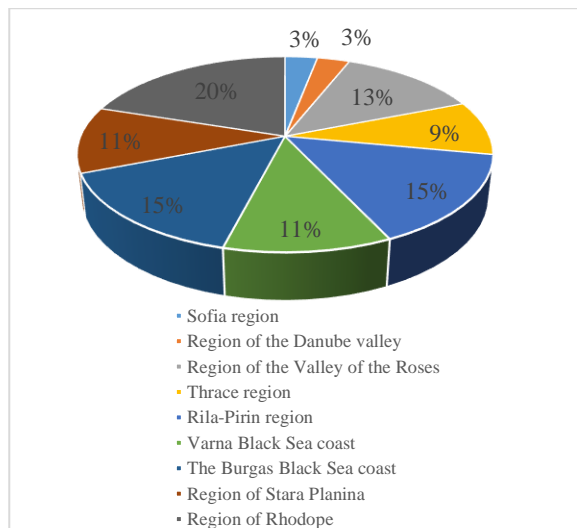


Fig. 4. Proportion of respondents who are extremely keen to visit a culinary area  
Source: Own calculation.

The results of the answers to the question are analogous: "which area would you visit again for the purpose of culinary tourism?" The biggest part is the share of the willing to the Rhodopi region. The results are reflected in Table 2.

Table 2. Proportion of those wishing to re-visit the region for culinary tourism

Region	The relative share of those who answered affirmatively
Sofia region	1%
Region of the Danube valley	6%
Valley of the Roses	9%
Thrace region	7%
Rila -Pirin region	11%
Varna Black Sea coast	13%
The Burgas Black Sea coast	12%
Region of Stara Planina	14%
Region of Rhodope	27%

Source: Own calculation.

Myson defined four types of motivators for taking a tourist journey: physical, cultural, interpersonal and motivators for status and Prestige. Physical motivators are related to ensuring residence in nature, at sea, new experiences and impressions. This includes visits to a particular destination because of a healthy lifestyle.

Cultural motivators aim to enrich knowledge and culture, so tourism and culinary arts belong to them. Travellers want to explore and learn more about culture, lifestyle and traditions in the region visited. Food and beverage, the technology of their production are components of every culture. Therefore,

those who visit a particular destination due to a specific and unique dish, food, specialty or drink, actually enrich their culture and knowledge. With regard to interpersonal motivators, family gatherings or where one or more family members live in different territories, the visit during holidays, festivals, etc. is an opportunity for the family to gather and spend their time together.

The survey results show that all factors that would motivate people to participate in culinary tourism are considered important. The factor "opportunities for new emotions and experiences" with 82% of all answers stands out as the most significant. "The ratio: Quality/price" is an important factor for 80% of respondents. For 76% of respondents, the possibility of combining with another type of tourism is an attractive factor that will motivate them to embark on a journey. For 73% It is extremely important to have available accommodation and good infrastructure, and for 75% is an important factor in the availability of domestic restaurants. The factors "existence of country houses" and "image of the destination", respectively, 52% and 68% are the smallest share. The results are reflected tabular in Table 3.

Table 3. Degree of importance of the factors in choosing a destination

Factors:	Extremely important	Important	I can not decide	Is not important	Insignificant
Availability of farms or country houses	14.0%	38.0%	27.0%	20.0%	1.0%
Destination image	16.0%	52.0%	15.0%	13.0%	4.0%
Opportunities to participate in festivals, farmers' markets, culinary festivals and more.	26.0%	40.0%	23.0%	10.0%	2.0%
Availability of traditional (everyday) restaurants	29.0%	46.0%	15%	8.0%	1.0%
Good infrastructure and availability of accommodation	31.0%	42.0%	14.0%	12.0%	1.0%
Opportunity to combine with other types of tourism	38.0%	38.0%	19.0%	4.0%	1.0%
Quality/price ratio of tourist services	45.0%	35.0%	13.0%	7.0%	1.0%
Opportunities for emotions and experiences	49.0%	43.0%	14.0%	1.0%	3.0%

Source: Own calculation.

In Table 3, there are the summarized the results of the answers to the question "what are the expectations of the respondents in their participation in culinary tourism". For 93% of the respondents, tasting food and drinks is the

most anticipated experience during participation in culinary tourism. Tasting unique food and drinks is waiting for 90% of the respondents; Overall, all responses are positive, with the weakest interest – 58% for participating in traditional culinary activities in the area.

Table 4. Respondents' expectations of participation in culinary tourism

Expectations:	Strongly wish	I have a desire	I can not decide	I have no desire	Totally not relevant to me
To participate in traditional culinary activities in the region	16.0%	42.0%	24.0%	14.0%	2.0%
To enrich my knowledge of the health effects of eating traditional dishes	24.0%	45.0%	14.0%	10.0%	3.0%
For fun - to participate in traditional culinary events: festivals and holidays	28.0%	40.0%	23.0%	9.0%	0.0%
To enrich my knowledge of local life, culture, traditions and cooking	33.0%	51.0%	12.0%	6.0%	1.0%
To try unique foods and drinks	52.0%	38.0%	8.0%	2.0%	0.0%
To try foods and drinks specific to the area	60.0%	33.0%	7.0%	1.0%	0.0%

Source: Own calculation.

In Table 4, there are reflected in the results of a study on the desire to visit different types of activities when participating in culinary tourism. The most desirable activities related to tasting of traditional food and drinks (95%); In the second place, the replies indicate visits to culinary festivals/events and Food feasts (82%) and visit of traditional/residential restaurants (81%). With close results are the activities of visiting farmers' markets (67%), visits to exposures related to life, culture and traditions (71%), and visiting a country house and preparing traditional food and drinks (71%). With relatively lower results are activities related to participation in traditional culinary activities (67%) and visiting small businesses (65%).

On advertising and promotion of culinary tourism, respondents believe that the best way is through publications on specialised sites and the Internet – 30% of respondents. In the second place they defined the TV and radio advertisement – 22%. The other listed ways of advertising share 8 to 17%. 10% of respondents indicated the personal recommendation as a reliable advertisement and promotion of culinary tourism. The results are presented in Fig. 5.

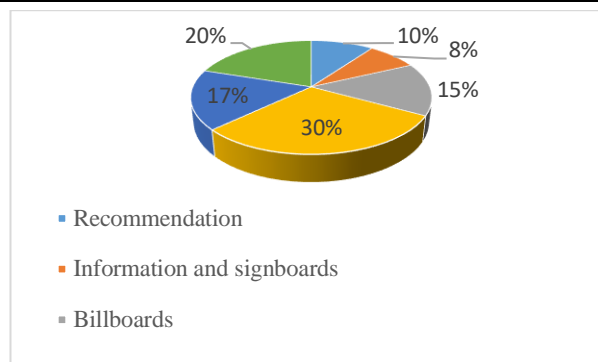


Fig.5 Ways to promote culinary tourism  
 Source: Own calculation.

Half of the respondents (52%) Choose the duration of the trip for the purpose of culinary tourism from 1 to 3 days; 42% prefer a period of 3 to 5 days – so "long weekend". A negligible number of respondents responded positively to the duration of culinary tourism with a period longer than 5 days (Fig. 6).

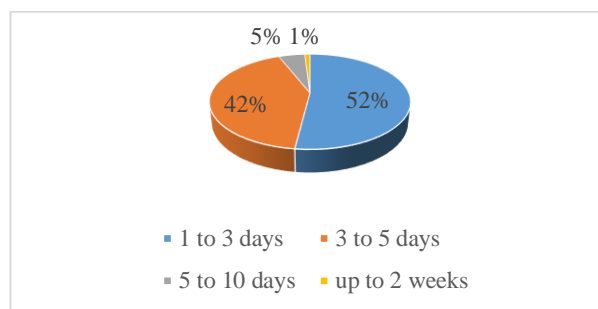


Fig.6. Preferences for the duration of culinary tourism  
 Source: Own calculation.

The financial means that respondents would allocate for culinary tourism lasting 1-3 days vary in different limits. 43% of respondents indicated that financial resources were needed within 150-300 BGN, 26% of them were willing to allocate more than 300 BGN. For culinary tourism (Fig. 7).

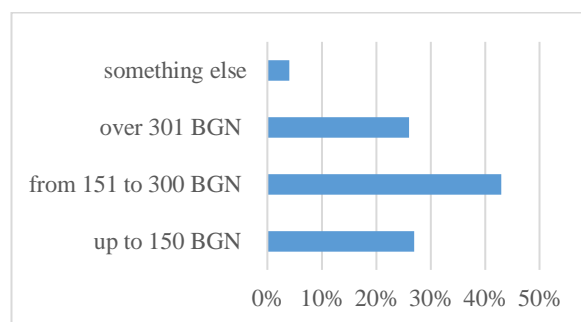


Fig.7. Amount of funds that respondents would devote to culinary tourism lasting 1-3 days  
 Source: Own calculation.

Respondents' profile: 40% of the total respondents were young people aged between 31 and 40 years; 26% were young people up to 30 years. 68% of respondents were women; 62% are married; The majority of respondents decide to travel independently, in another large part – 39%, decisions are taken by family Council. Respondents were highly educated (72%) And most of them live in a large city (69%).

## CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the results of the study can be summarized the following:

-Respondents practice different types of tourism, and the culinary is also present in their preferences. Through appropriate advertising and marketing strategy, this interest can be strengthened and more participants are attracted.

-Respondents would visit each of the tourist areas in Bulgaria for culinary tourism, but as the most preferred they have defined the Rhodopi region.

-Respondents would be motivated to travel if it offered them a new, different experience; has a good quality/price ratio; It is associated with the consumption of traditional as well as unique of its kind food and drinks. Interested in local traditions, lifestyle and culture and would visit festivals, holidays, and domestic/traditional restaurants.

-The majority of respondents believe that the best advertisement for culinary tourism can be accomplished through specialized sites, radio and television.

-They enjoy long weekends outside their own location; The most preferred period for participation in culinary tourism is from 1 to 3 days. For a period of such a duration would allocate between 150 and 300 BGN, this amount does not include the cost of transport and accommodation.

-Respondents are young people, mostly women, most – family, highly educated and most of them live in a large city; Decide to participate in culinary tourism independently;

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