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COMPARISON OF OPINIONS OF CATERING ESTABLISHMENT MANAGERS AND VISITORS CONSIDERING THEIR ATTITUDE TO CULINARY TOURISM

The Institute of Gastronomy, Spa Management and Tourism at Silesian University in Opava implements a research project Culinary Tourism and Public Gastronomy. The paper is devoted to the comparison of opinions of catering establishment managers and visitors, the first ones being professionals in this field. While some quantitative differences may be identified, they do not differ from the qualitative point of view and trends.

Introduction

Food is the centre of everyday life, traditions, culture and civilization. Gastronomy is the art and science of good food. However, in the context of current studies, its specification should be much broader. It includes the study and understanding of the origin as well as traditions related to food in social, economic and geographical context.¹ Food fulfils many roles as it is:

- the key role during important events – birthday, wedding, funeral,
- a functional element – the survival of man depends on food,
- a socialising element – networking and meeting friends,
- a means for exploring new countries and cultures.

In addition to its basic function, food creates a new dimension of experiments, especially in connection with travelling when it takes completely different scopes that may be emotional, sensory or cultural.² Gastronomy is an integral part of tourism as well as an important precondition for its development since food is one of the important elements surrounding tourists during their travel and holidays. The habits of customers are gradually changing as a significant part of visitors uses the offer of public catering that includes traditional catering establishments as well as the offer of street stalls. Hence food becomes an important means of exploring a

¹ Gillepsie, C. & Cousins, J. (2001): *European Gastronomy into 21st Century*. Routledge, Oxford, xi.

² Hall, C. M. Et al. (eds.) (2003): *Food Tourism Around the World – Development, Management and Markets*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2003, 60.

different culture. It enables visitors to perceive a new place not only by the common intellectual means of communication but also on the level of other perceptions and senses such as taste, smell, etc. Hence, food becomes a natural part of travelling when experience is associated not only with exploring a destination but also its regional culinary traditions. Local products become an essential element of a destination.

Gastronomy and culinary tourism – Starting points

Eating out gradually becomes an increasing form of leisure time spending when food is consumed not only out of necessity (to satisfy hunger) but also for pleasure (to satisfy senses). The atmosphere when eating and the very opportunity are a part of the overall experience as well as the food itself. A tourist focused on gastronomy and culinaria perceives these experiences as a great benefit. Regional dishes offer the possibility to get to know the local culture as each ethnic group de facto presents its traditions and cultural heritage also through its cuisine.

According to Malovický, cuisine and culinary traditions of a region match the ethnographic definition – food is a reflection of a region, its natural and human possibilities, skills, traditions and influences.³

Gastronomy as an independent product of tourism is gradually coming at the forefront of the interests of tourism professionals. In an effort to meet the ever increasing demands of tourists, emphasis is placed on the attempt to adequately enrich each service with a kind of experience. There are three principles to be respected when preparing a product and its offer:

- authenticity – the culture of a region is manifested through its cuisine,
- concept – to be engaged in all phases of preparation,
- hospitality – to think about the needs of customers even before they express their wishes.

Various experience events are organised to fulfil the above mentioned principles. These include one-time as well as regular events with activities covering the whole territory of a given country or its particular regions. The regularly repeating events include for example: Prague Food Festival, Taste the World Festival in Brno, Fresh Festival in Plzeň, Gourmet Festival in Mikulov, Garden Food Festival in Olomouc, Garden Food Festival in Ostrava, Food Festival in Karlovy Vary, national projects supporting national gastronomy (Czech Specials or Taste the Czech Republic) or regional gastronomy (Taste the Jeseniky Mountains, Taste the Haná Region).

³ Malovický, V. (2016): Jakchutnájižní Plzeňsko, In *Gastro & Hotelprofi revue*, 2016(3–4), 52–53.

However, also events of a smaller extent play a significant role here such as fairs, local harvest festivals, tastings („košty“), pig-slaughtering, Shrovetide festivals, etc. Furthermore, a rich accompanying programme is typical for these events. Hence, culinary experience combines with other cultural events. The WTO study has shown that the most important products in this area include mainly culinary experience events (79%), culinary trails (62%), culinary courses and workshops (62%) and visits of local markets and farmers/producers (53%).

Food and tourism play a major role in the current experience economy. Food is a key part of all cultures, main element of the world heritage and an increasingly important attraction for tourists. At the same time, the link between food and tourism provides conditions for the development of local economies and culinary experiences help to publicise target destinations as well as to promote local culture that hence becomes more interesting for tourists.⁴ One of the comprehensive definitions used in scientific literature is given by Hall and Sharples.⁵ They define food tourism as an experience trip to an area for recreational or entertainment motives that involves visits to primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, farmers' markets, cooking shows, exhibitions, tasting quality products or any other tourism activity related to food. Additionally, such an experience trip is associated with a certain lifestyle that includes experimenting, learning from other cultures, gaining knowledge and understanding of quality/attributes connected with tourism products as well as consuming culinary specialities produced in a given region. “Good gastronomy features an endless range of tastes and aromas that have to be experienced and tasted.”⁶ Therefore, the experience of travelling for food that includes all the activities mentioned above is considered to be the main motive for visitors to travel to a particular place or at least one of the important reasons that determine the choice of a particular destination.

Culinaria is not only a way to keep traditions related to preparation of dishes and their presentation to the locals or visitors. It can represent a considerable economic benefit not only for the state budget income but also for the economic prosperity of particular regions. Therefore, regional cuisine is one of the significant elements influencing the quality of the holiday experience.⁷ Consequently, it is necessary to

⁴ Hjalager, A. M. & Richards, G. (eds.): *Tourism and Gastronomy*, Routledge, London, 2002.

⁵ Hall, C. M. Et al. (eds.) (2003): *Food Tourism Around the World – Development, Management and Markets*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 2003.

⁶ Vaněk, R. (2013): *Poklady klasické české kuchyně aneb jak to ta babička tenkrát vařila*, Prakul, Praha, 2013, 5.

⁷ Hererra, C. F., Herranz, J. B. & Arrilla, J. M. P. (2012): Gastronomy's Importance in the Development of Tourism Destinations in the World, In: Ilín, D. & Gaztelumendi, I. (2012): *Global Report on Food Tourism*, WTO, Madrid, 6.

build relationships and strategies for different levels of cooperation in the area of gastronomy support at all levels in relation to tourism and services associated with it (Figure 1). According to Hall, a whole range of mechanisms is available to support sustainable systems that use the relation between food and tourism with each of them working most efficiently on different levels. Although a state (or region) will be involved at all levels, it is very common that the activities specified at a higher level will be executed on a lower level to achieve the regional and local development goals.⁸

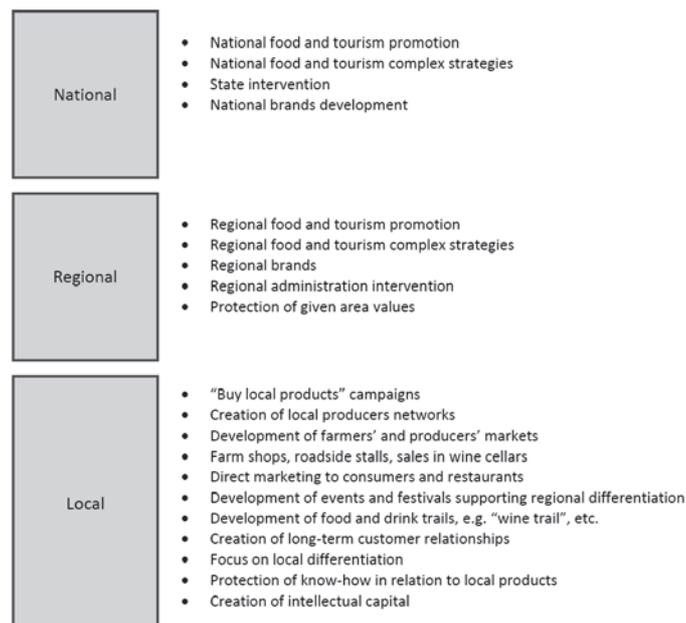


Figure 1: Development strategies in relation to national, regional and local cuisine
(Source: Own adaptation according to HALL)

Culinary tourism is a growing phenomenon that is developing as a new tourism product. It is based on the concept of exploring the culture associated with a particular region by eating and tasting food. According to the ICTA (International Culinary Tourism Association), culinary tourism represents travelling for unique culinary experience that involves exploring the visited area from the culinary point

⁸ Hall, C. M., Sharpes, L., Mitchell, R., Macionis, N. & Cambourne, B. (eds.) (2003): *Food Tourism Around the World – Development, Management and Markets*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 58–59.

of view. Gastronomy can be associated with other products of cultural tourism such as heritage tourism aimed at visitors interested in cultural heritage.⁹ These have the opportunity to get to know not only the monuments and landmarks of a particular country, its traditions and historical milestones but also its gastronomy that, to a certain extent, presents the way of life of the local population. Hall distinguishes four types of tourists who travel for food:

- **Gastronomes** – feature high interest/involvement in culinaria, may be food professionals, eat a wide range of cuisines, search for new food experiences.
- **Indigenous foodies** – feature high and moderate interest/involvement in culinaria, research local culture at destination, adopt new ingredients, cook food from destination.
- **‘Tourist’ foodies** – show low or occasional interest/involvement in culinaria, choose ‘tourist’ menus, may seek mainstream restaurants with ethnic cuisine.
- **Familiar foods** – show low interest/involvement.

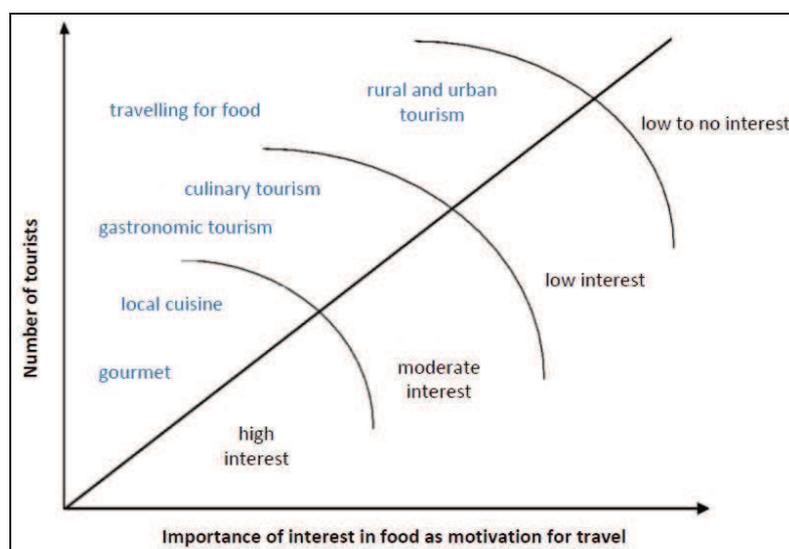


Figure 2: Motivation for travelling (Source: Authors according to HALL)

Traditional dishes are a part of the culinary culture of each ethnic group. Local tradition was primarily determined by a permanent and stable settlement, steady

⁹ Vavrečková, E. & Vaniček, J.: Analýza názorů návštěvníků restaurací na gastroturismus, In: *Sborník recenzovaných příspěvků z mezinárodní vědecké konference Hotelnictví, turismus a vzdělávání*, Vysoká škola hotelová v Praze, Praha, 262.

means of livelihoods, professional skills, and existence of small towns as well as transport infrastructure. Famous regional pilgrimages and the need to feed the pilgrims well while respecting their culinary habits manifested itself significantly, too.¹⁰

Besides other things, culinary tourism contributes to the elimination of differences between the high and low season periods and thus represents a model for socio-economic development of regional areas. An example of this concept may be the United Kingdom where the Government has recommended local associations to adopt the concept of food tourism as a means for the growth of local economies linked with creation of new jobs.¹¹ According to Wolf, food tourists can be divided into the following segments:

- Deliberate Culinary Tourists – exclusive motivation for travelling is experiencing quality food.
- Opportunistic Culinary Tourists – travel to experience local cuisine; nevertheless, this factor is not the only motive when choosing a target destination.
- Accidental Culinary Tourists – show low level of participation in most food-related activities; they eat and drink to satisfy hunger and thirst (are satisfied with the offer of dishes in a given destination); they attend farmers' markets.
- Uninterested Culinary Tourists – do not engage in any of the food-related activities.¹²

It is important to ask the question who food tourists are. They are travellers who seek the authenticity of places they visit through food. They are concerned about the origin of products and they recognize the value of gastronomy as a possible means of socialising as well as an opportunity for gaining and sharing experiences with others. Such tourists usually have higher-than-average spending, they are demanding and appreciating quality and at the same time they are prepared to pay for it. Therefore, gastronomy cannot become a bland and anonymous product. On the contrary, it should be unique and must have personality, because otherwise it will become vulnerable, de-localised and subject to adulteration and generalisation.¹³

¹⁰ Malovický, V. (2016): Jak chutná jižní Plzeňsko, In: *Gastro & Hotel profi revue*, 2016(3–4), 52–53.

¹¹ Everett, S. & Slocum, S. L. (2013): Food and tourism: an effective partnership? A UK-based review, In: *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 21(6), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2012.74160120> (1017.01.15.).

¹² Amster, R.: *Food Tourism: Plenty on the Plate for Travel Sellers*, <http://www.travelmarket-report.com/com/articles/Food-Tourism-Plenty-on-the-Plate-for-Travel-Sellers> (2017.01.03.).

¹³ Ilín, D. & Gaztelumendi, I. (2012): *Global Report on Food Tourism*, World Tourism Organization, Madrid, 10–11.

Territory is the backbone of the gastronomy offer. It includes natural and landscape values, history, culture, traditions, countryside, the sea and typical cuisine of a given place. In this context, transforming an area into culinary values is one of the greatest challenges for tourist destinations. Particular regions of each country are rather diverse in terms of food. Consequently, it can be rather challenging to use the term 'national cuisine' for culinary recipes and customs of different regions that are not only influenced by regional and landscape context but that also reflect traditions and places where they originated. The character of an area plays an important role in regionality as it creates a noticeable contrast, e.g. the cuisine of mountainous areas in comparison to that of fertile lowland territories or territories along river flows. But it is not just the landscape.

Product is an essential element of food tourism. Therefore, it is important to define the sources of heritage and natural resources that we decide to transform into tourism products. These will consequently support and highlight a given locality and its identity.

Cultural heritage. Besides other things, proximity of another culture also plays an important role in differences. This is noticeable in particular in the border areas where tastes of particular regions mix. This blending also reflects itself in the names of regional dishes. Hence, gastronomy enables tourists to explore cultural and historical heritage of destinations through tasting, shopping and gaining new experiences. Culinary tradition is a process of continuous development as well as challenge for professionals in the industry to incorporate innovations to restore and tailor their offer to the needs of new customers.

Sustainability. The idea is not to create pressure on culinary heritage but to support it with regard to sustainability. Hence, the point of is not 'turistification' of gastronomy by creating new offers or by expanding the existing ones but the trend to make visitors to participate in cultural reality in a destination that is properly interpreted and explained through cuisine, local products and all the services and activities that surround them.

Quality. The areas that want to promote food tourism should work on different levels of quality – identification and protection of local products, development of competitive offer, professional attitude of staff on the basis of training and retraining, and perception and protection of customers with the aim of increasing visitor satisfaction.

Communication. Target destinations should offer real and authentic description of their food tourism offer. The experience of visitors is changing and is not necessarily associated with the travelling itself but it starts much earlier in connection with pre-travel preparation – a visitor is inspired by getting all the necessary information and its mutual comparison. The experience ends at the moment when a traveller evaluates and shares his experience via the social

networks. The key roles of the whole process are played by excellent chefs, the media (especially TV and the internet), tour guides (books), food blogs and social networks. Regions should be a part of all these channels and processes. And gastronomy represents one of the important tools of promotion.

Cooperation or synergy. It is necessary for people working in a particular place (producers, farmers, fishermen, chefs, restaurateurs, and hoteliers, local administration) to participate in defining food tourism product offers and their management.

The methodology of the research

The Institute of Gastronomy, Spa Management and Tourism at Silesian University in Opava has been implementing a research project “Culinary Tourism and Public Gastronomy” since 2014. The project has been carried out in cooperation with the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Management at Prešov University in Prešov. Its results have been published in professional journals.

The main objective of the research is the determination of the profile of visitors of selected catering establishments, analysis of their opinions on public catering establishments as well as of their eating habits during trips and holidays. Consequently, potential differences within particular regions are analysed.

The research is carried out on two levels. The first part is carried out in the form of a questionnaire survey and respondents are residents and visitors of selected regions. The second part is carried out in the form of interviews with managers of catering establishments. Although the structure of both types of questionnaires is different, several questions are identical. The data are successively obtained in personal contact of interviewers with respondents exclusively. Although the disadvantage is a reduction of the level of anonymity, a significant advantage is represented by the possibility to respond to potential remarks of respondents and thus gain the opportunity to complete or enrich the structured questionnaires with interesting suggestions.

The primary goal of the research is to map the opinions of respondents considering the issues of public catering, to identify the habits of population in terms of catering during one-day trips, short and long term holidays in our country as well as abroad. Another goal is to find out the attitude towards culinary tourism and participation in culinary events such as festivals, experience culinary events, themed culinary events, etc. An integral part of the research is mapping the awareness of respondents considering culinary festivals including their interest to participate in these events.

The results of the research and discussion

The purpose of the paper has been to present the comparison of the views on culinary tourism from the perspective of residents and visitors as well as from the perspective of catering establishment managers on the territory of selected regions of the Czech Republic with the predominance of Moravian regions.

Currently, we have approximately 1600 questionnaires at our disposal that were completed by visitors of catering establishments. The structure of the respondents in terms of their motivation is shown in *Figure 3*. Most of the respondents (51%) are visitors at one-day trips and residents who came to a restaurant to eat. 16% of respondents were people on holiday.



Figure 3: Structure of respondents in terms of their motivation to visit a restaurant
 (Source: own results)

The opinions of catering establishment managers have been obtained by the method of interviews with managers of selected establishments, 80 managers have been addressed. Out of them, independent restaurants created 45%, cafés 20%, hotel restaurants 15%, wine cellars and wine shops 10%, and pizzerias 10%. Besides other things, the interest of catering establishment managers in regional ingredients as well as their orientation on regional suppliers of ingredients have been investigated.

With regard to the fact that a part of each nation culture is its gastronomy, next question was aimed at the opinion of both groups of respondents concerning traditional Czech dishes (*Figure 4*). The number of responses was limited to three so that the respondents limited themselves to their priorities.

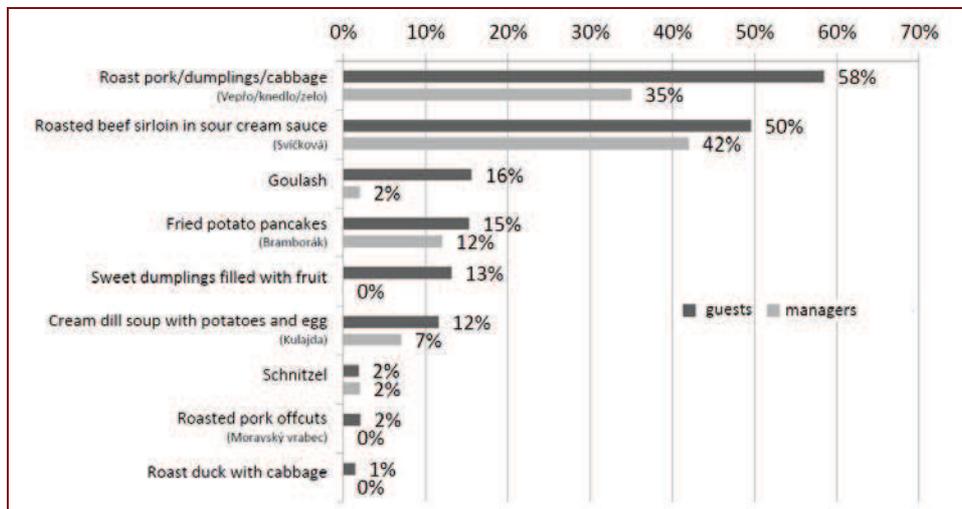


Figure 4: Traditional Czech dishes (Source: own results)

Although the opinions of managers and guests are not completely consistent, it is obvious that the primacy of national dishes, i.e. roasted beef sirloin in sour cream sauce (a total of 92% for both groups) and roast pork with dumplings and cabbage (a total of 93% again for both groups) is indisputable. Apart from the relative correspondence between both groups of respondents considering fried potato pancakes, they show rather different opinions considering the other dishes. Although the managers know that goulash is one of the favourite dishes of Czech visitors, unlike the guests they do not consider it a traditional dish. A significant part of respondents ranked kulajda (cream dill soup with potatoes and egg) among typical Czech dishes.

The obtained data concerning the opinions of the respondents (guests as well as managers) correspond to a certain extent with dishes that were ranked among national specialities within the project Czech Specials.¹⁴ These include roasted beef sirloin in sour cream sauce (referred to as the main symbol of Czech cuisine) and further (listed in alphabetical order) dill sauce, fried coated carp with potato salad, fried potato pancake, 'kuba' (dish based on groats and mushrooms), pikeperch with caraway, potato dumplings filled with plums, potato dumplings stuffed with smoked

¹⁴ Its preparation proceeded for cooperation of Czech Tourism agency with representatives of the professional sphere – the Association of Hotels and Restaurants and the Association of Chefs and Confectioners of the Czech Republic – viz Zimáková, B.: Czech Specials či „Ochutnejte Českou republiku“. In: *Sborník recenzovaných příspěvků mezinárodní vědecké konference Hotelnictví, turismus a vzdělávání*, VŠH, Praha, 2011, 396.

meat, quark dumplings filled with strawberries, roast duck with cabbage, roast pork with dumplings and cabbage, schnitzel, sweet dumplings filled with fruit, and tomato sauce with boiled beef.

The respondents were also asked what drink they consider to be traditional Czech. Differences between the attitudes of guests and catering establishment managers regarding traditional Czech drinks were statistically insignificant to such an extent that *Figure 5* shows just the weighted average of both groups.

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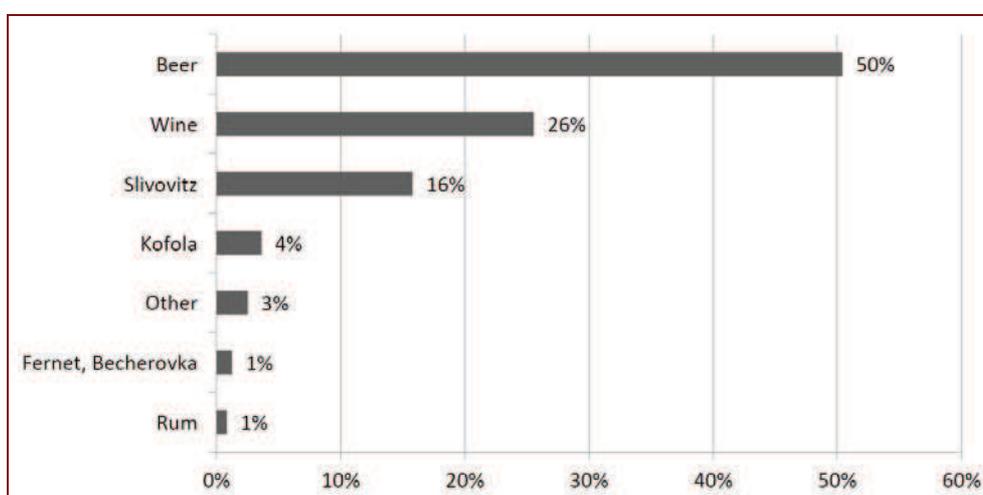


Figure 5: Traditional Czech drinks (Source: own results)

Since the research was carried out in the country with the largest beer consumption per capita, the values obtained for the most preferred drink are not surprising. The frequency of opinions regarding the other traditional Czech drinks could have been slightly affected by the proportion of respondents from Moravia and Silesia that was higher than would correspond to quota sampling.

Although preferences regarding countries interesting from the culinary point of view are the same with both groups of respondents, the preference of catering establishment managers considering Italian and French cuisine is considerably higher (*Figure 6*). Especially Italy is considered to be a culinary superpower.

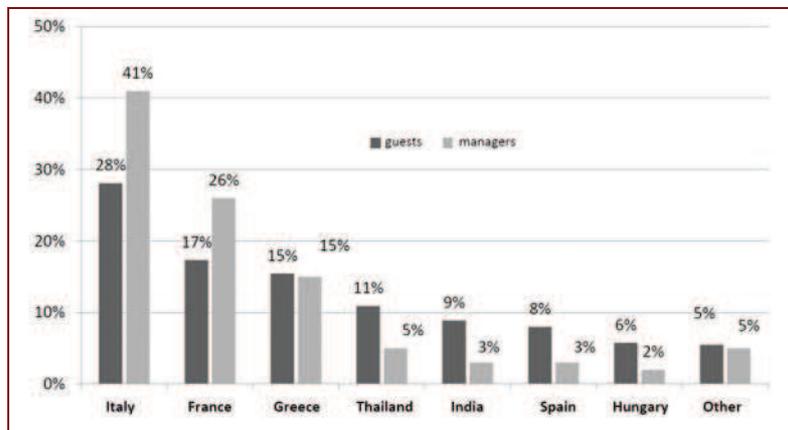


Figure 6: Countries interesting from the culinary point of view
(Source: own results)

The popularity of Italian, French and Greek cuisine is certainly indisputable. However, we are aware of the fact that the answers could be to some extent affected by a holiday spent in a popular destination and by enjoying local dishes in a reachable destination. The responses of catering establishment managers have shown that they consider the offer of local specialities and products to be one of the most important marketing tools. Therefore, the visitors were asked how important tasting and enjoying local products and culinary specialities during their holidays and trips is.

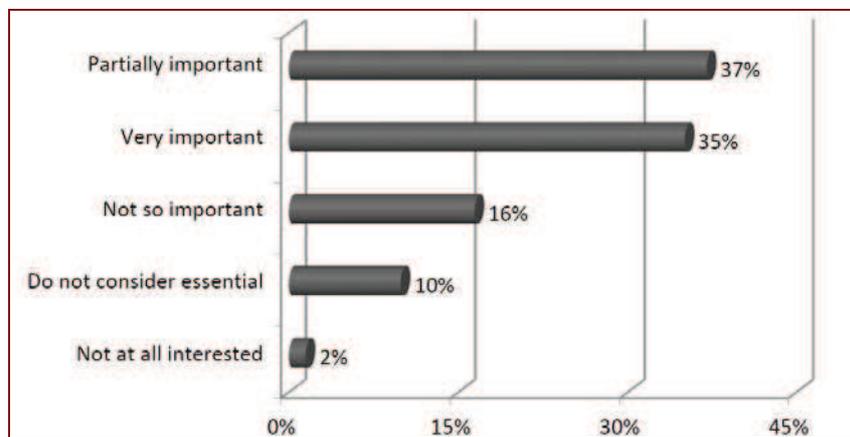


Figure 7: Importance of enjoying local products and culinary specialities
(Source: own results)

The results shown in *Figure 7* present a considerable level of interest of visitors to selected regions to explore local products. Majority of them (a total of 72%) identified this factor as very or partially important. The respondents do not underestimate the role of regional gastronomy and consider it to be an important part of exploring local culture and its gastronomy as an integral part of cultural heritage.

Summary and conclusions

The purpose of the paper is comparison of the opinions of catering establishment managers with the opinions of their visitors considering some issues related to gastronomy and culinary tourism. This comparison resulted in the following conclusions:

- Roasted beef sirloin in sour cream sauce (majority opinion of catering establishment managers) and roast pork with dumplings and cabbage (prevailing opinion of guests) are considered to be traditional Czech dishes.
- Both catering establishment managers and guests consider beer a typical Czech drink (50%). Regarding this drink, it should be noticed that we have expected a higher rate. This result may have been influenced by the fact that majority of respondents is from Moravia and Silesia. Wine represents a typical Czech drink for 26% and slivovitz for 16% of respondents.
- Both groups of respondents consider Italy, France and Greece to be interesting countries from the point of view of culinary tourism. However, professionals in gastronomy attach the first two countries a greater importance than the respondents from among the public.
- Catering establishment managers consider important to offer local specialities and regional products. This fact has also been confirmed by restaurant visitors as three quarters of them regard it important or very important.

The results of the research clearly show that the visitors of selected regions interested in cultural heritage also show interest in regional gastronomy as well. Hence, national cuisine, or rather regional gastronomy becomes an important element to attract domestic as well as foreign visitors as culinary art reflects national traditions and customs of local people, strengthens the interest of visitors in exploring a region and plays a significant role when choosing a destination. Tourists perceive the combination of these elements to be important. Therefore, to satisfy tourists, it is necessary to offer them not only a quality tourism infrastructure but also quality catering offer. It is necessary to motivate regional restaurants by means of progressive education and inspiration to prepare dishes using local products and to stabilise the offer of dishes based on traditional recipes.

If enterprises providing services in tourism sector want to be successful, it is important to benefit from the specifics of particular regions when creating the offer, and to seek ways for mutual cooperation with the aim of achieving a multiplier effect of all involved.

Tourism is a promising factor of regional development of any country. The growing interest relating to production and consumption of regional foodstuffs and their use in regional gastronomy contributes to the revival of traditional production practices as well as to raising awareness regarding sustainable development of natural resources of a given area. Culinary tourism is a phenomenon that is constantly growing and has a positive impact on the economy, employment and local heritage. Due to tourism trips, culinary tourism has great potential for further development although this type of tourism is still practised by a minority of tourists. Nevertheless, the fact is that it involves a very specific type of tourist with a high volume of average spending on very high-quality products. In this way, culinary tourism contributes to improving the general perception of a destination.¹⁵

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