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**The role of traditional culinary specialties in attracting international tourists**

*Rolul specialităților culinare tradiționale în atragerea turiștilor internaționali*

Currently, the Republic of Moldova is experiencing a positive increase in tourist flows in various destinations and types of national tourism. Research on gastronomic tourism is relevant today, because at the current stage of development of the tourism industry, in a market oversaturated with “traditional” types of tourism, it is important to create a new offer, a tourist product that will attract consumers.

Each country has its own unique gastronomic characteristics, which serve as the basis for creating gastronomic tours. Therefore, the development of this type of tourism can have a direct impact on the development of tourist destinations. Based on this assumption, the purpose of this study was formulated: to examine the impact of gastronomic tourism on the development of tourist destinations, using the experiences of different countries as examples.

Gastronomic tours have always been and remain popular and interesting for tourists, because they involve more than just a simple visit to cafes and restaurants, but also a series of events dedicated to presenting the cultural characteristics of a nation through the prism of national gastronomy. Usually, such tours leave a lasting impression on tourists and help attract their attention to tourist destinations in a certain region, while promoting the development of that destination.

It is important that certain traditional culinary specialties become popular with visitors, who will return next time because of them. More than 40% of foreign tourists associate our country with wine, show the results of the study “Perception of Moldova as a tourist destination by foreign visitors”. Many tourists return home not only with positive impressions of the consumption of local wine, but also with titles or even recipes of traditional Moldovan dishes. Among the culinary products popular among international tourists we note: pies, sarmale, friptura, mămăliga, baba neagră, fish plate, etc.

Research shows that foreign tourists appreciate traditional Moldovan cuisine for its authentic taste, often unassociated with the taste of childhood. In many cases, they appreciate the natural taste of Moldovan agricultural products. Thus, foreign tourists decide to visit the Republic of Moldova again, being attracted by the magic of the taste of traditional dishes.

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