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PROSPECTS FOR USING THE GASTRONOMIC HERITAGE OF THE ZHYTOMYR REGION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL TOURISM

ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ ВИКОРИСТАННЯ ГАСТРОНОМІЧНОЇ СПАДЩИНИ ЖИТОМИРСЬКОЇ ОБЛАСТІ ДЛЯ РОЗВИТКУ РЕГІОНАЛЬНОГО ТУРИЗМУ

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Gastronomic tourism drives regional economic development, determining the high relevance of capitalizing on local culinary heritage. The study examines the resource potential and prospects of gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region. The methodology encompasses the analysis of scientific sources, official data, and empirical examples. Results indicate that regional tourism is structured into event-based and object-route forms, deeply grounded in local dishes and Intangible Cultural Heritage. A spatial map of key locations was developed. A SWOT assessment confirms Polissian cuisine's authenticity as a primary advantage while identifying institutional and marketing barriers. The practical significance lies in providing an analytical basis for packaging the regional product, coordinating event calendars, and refining promotion strategies.

Keywords: Gastronomic tourism, Zhytomyr region, tourism product, SWOT analysis, regional development.

У сучасному науковому дискурсі гастрономічний туризм розглядається як ключовий драйвер регіонального розвитку та дієвий інструмент збереження локальної ідентичності. Дослідження присвячене комплексній оцінці ресурсного потенціалу та перспектив інтеграції кулінарної спадщини Житомирської області у конкурентоспроможний туристичний продукт. Встановлено, що організаційна структура гастрономічного туризму в регіоні диференціюється на дві домінуючі форми: подієву та об'єктно-маршрутну. Подієвий компонент реалізується через тематичні фестивалі, тоді як об'єктно-маршрутний вимір представлений дегустаційними майданчиками та крафтовим виробництвом. Елементи нематеріальної культурної спадщини та традиційні поліські продукти формують ресурсний фундамент, що створює унікальний клієнтський досвід. Завдяки застосуванню методології SWOT-аналізу визначено стратегічні вектори розвитку галузі. Результати підтверджують, що конкурентною перевагою регіону є високий рівень автентичності поліської кухні та наявність офіційно визнаних традицій. Водночас трансформація цього потенціалу у сталий продукт гальмується низкою бар'єрів. До обмежувальних факторів належать інституційна неврегульованість напряму, фрагментованість пропозицій, слабка інтеграція у туристичні пакети та дефіцит цифрового супроводу. Для подолання диспропорцій розроблено концептуальні пріоритети просторової оптимізації галузі. Стратегічний фокус спрямовано на проектування сталих міжмуніципальних маршрутів вихідного дня, що об'єднують розрізнені локації в єдиний ланцюжок. Критичною є розробка консолідованих реєстрів, мап та скоординованих календарів для підвищення видимості продукту. Стратегічним напрямом визначено стимулювання агрогастрономічного туризму з акцентом на місцеві традиції бджільництва. Практична цінність роботи полягає у створенні бази для ефективного репозиціонування регіонального туристичного продукту Житомирської області. Впровадження рекомендацій сприятиме диференціації дестинації, зміцненню бренду та економічній стійкості громад завдяки капіталізації їхньої гастрономічної спадщини.

Ключові слова: Гастрономічний туризм, туристичний продукт, Житомирська область, гастрономія, регіональний розвиток.



Statement of the problem. Modern travellers are increasingly seeking unique emotional experiences through the consumption of a region's authentic cuisine, which facilitates a deep immersion in its socio-cultural context and historical environment. The consumption of craft and traditional dishes fosters an understanding that directly contributes to the preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Consequently, the gastronomic sector is gradually becoming a key driver of regional economic development. The economic revival of individual regions, in turn, systematically contributes to the overall progress of Ukraine – a country with rich culinary traditions. In the Zhytomyr region, the gastronomic component of the tourism offering is based primarily on authentic Polissya cuisine, locally sourced dishes and event-oriented promotional practices, in particular specialised festivals. However, an objective contradiction arises: despite the region's rich resource base and high cultural authenticity, this potential is not being fully realised. Therefore, the key problem and urgent task of this study is to identify and analyse specific internal structural barriers that hinder the transformation of Zhytomyr region's culinary heritage into a formalised, viable and economically sustainable tourism product.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In contemporary English-language literature, as noted by Kornilova V.V. and Kornilova N.V., two terms are most frequently used: gastronomic tourism and food tourism. In Ukrainian tourism studies, there is no clear terminological definition regarding the type "gastronomic tourism," where terms such as "culinary tourism," "wine-gastronomic tourism," and "gourmet tours" are also encountered [1]. Gastronomic, food, and culinary types of tourism can be used by researchers as interchangeable terms belonging to the same type of tourism [2, p. 1; 3, p. 252; 4, p. 2; 5, p. 33]. However, they have different meanings depending on the context [2, p. 1; 3, p. 252]. Kornilova V.V. and Kornilova N.V. note that, in their opinion, the most detailed concept is "gastronomic tourism," which derives from the term "gastronomy" – a socially oriented science that investigates the connection between nutrition and culture. In contrast, cookery (culinary arts) is viewed as an applied component of gastronomy, encompassing technological processes, recipes, and tools for food preparation [1]. One of the most frequently used definitions of this type of tourism is an experiential journey to a gastronomic region,

which has an entertainment or recreational purpose, covering a wide range of events such as food production, the organization of trading venues, culinary festivals, and tastings, where gastronomy is the main or one of the primary motivations for travel [1; 4, p. 2; 6, p. 6]. According to the definition of the World Food Travel Association (WFTA), these are journeys where the goal is the process of obtaining an authentic experience based on the consumption of food and drinks. This type of tourism is viewed as a means of exploring locations where culture and food consumption are key elements in forming impressions [1].

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem. Despite the sector's global momentum, significant gaps remain at the regional level. In particular, gastronomic tourism is not identified as a separate sector in the key strategic document – the 'Development Strategy for Zhytomyr Region for the Period up to 2027' [7, p. 98]. This indicates a lack of proper institutionalisation of the sector at the official level. Furthermore, the pressing issues facing tourism development in Zhytomyr region include: poor accessibility of tourist attractions, inadequate accommodation infrastructure, weak digitalisation, insufficient marketing, and the impact of military operations [8, p. 41]. Thus, there remains an urgent need to identify specific internal structural barriers that hinder the effective transformation of Zhytomyr region's rich culinary potential into a competitive and viable tourism product. A tool that allows for the systematisation of both internal barriers and external influencing factors is SWOT analysis.

Formation of the objectives of the article (task statement) is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the prospects for the development of gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region using the SWOT analysis methodology. The main objective of the study is to identify strengths and weaknesses, as well as to pinpoint potential opportunities and external threats that are relevant to the operation and further promotion of gastronomic tourism products within the region under study.

Summary of the main research material. At the same time, this does not imply the total absence of gastronomic tourism, particularly considering that this type of tourism can be linked with other forms. For example, Korosten is a city in the northern part of the Zhytomyr region. It is renowned for its traditional deruny (potato pancakes), and the formation of the city's gastronomic brand, according to the Korosten City

Council, began on September 28, 2008, with the inauguration of the first All-Ukrainian Deruny Festival, which established a tourist magnet and popularized the city [9]. Subsequently, the festival acquired international status, securing the informal title of "the capital of deruny," and shortly thereafter, a monument to the derun was unveiled. During the second festival, a tradition was initiated that subsequently became a permanent feature of the International Deruny Festival in Korosten. This refers specifically to the master class "Deruny from the Mayor" (V. Moskalenko); in 2013, this practice received European public recognition. In 2025, the 16th festival attracted approximately 9,000 visitors, according to unofficial estimates [9; 10].

In the Berdychiv district, specifically in the village of Halchyn within the Hryshkivtsi community, a gastronomic festival is also held where the signature dish is white borsch; the event was first conducted on October 1, 2022. The festival is titled "White Borsch and Not Only." The event takes place on the grounds of an estate, adjacent to a single-story palace from the 18th–19th centuries built in the Classicist style, which formerly belonged to Mykhailo Chaikovsky, a Polish-Ukrainian writer as well as a Polish and Turkish politician. Furthermore, in 2025, the head of the community noted that representatives of territorial communities from Zakarpattia, Chernihiv, Odesa, Kyiv, Rivne, Khmelnytskyi, and other regions of Ukraine joined participation in this year's culinary festival [11-13].

In the village of Oliivka (Zhytomyr district), the First Regional Honey Festival was inaugurated on August 23, 2025, on the premises of the "Ring" trade complex. The event program included a fair of beekeeping products, tastings, a cultural and entertainment component, and separate activities for children. The event was organized in partnership between the Oliivka Village Council and the Zhytomyr Regional Military Administration. The Regional Military Administration presented it within the framework of the "Dialogue between Government and Business" platform [14-16].

Radomyshl is renowned for its unique estate – the "Radomyshl Castle-Museum" – which has functioned as a comprehensive cultural-tourism site since 2011. As of 2023, the structure of the castle's offerings on its official website includes enogastronomic formats, specifically wine tastings and the comprehensive wine tour "Night at the Radomyshl Castle-Museum," which combines tasting with hotel accommodation. In 2024, a separate gastronomic tour, "The Royal

Path of Ukrainian Wine at Radomyshl Castle," was launched [17; 18].

Within the territory of the Popilnia territorial community is the "Vedmezhatko" apiary, which has been engaged in beekeeping for over 10 years, producing 100% organic products [19, 20]. The village of Strokiv, also part of the Popilnia territorial community, is renowned for badzokha; this dish was featured in the presentation of gastronomic heritage elements of the Popilnia community and the Zhytomyr region as a whole. In addition to this dish, pidpalky, vykhvatni, and the wedding korovai were also presented [21]. In 2023, pidpalky and badzokha were inscribed on the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), as were tomatoes fermented in wheat [22]. In the village of Mala Racha (Radomyshl community), the "Radomlyn" pancake festival was introduced in 2018, and in 2019 it acquired regional status [23]. The Khoroshiv community possesses a unique gastronomic brand – "Polissian Yushka" (soup) with mushrooms, beans, and fish – which is positioned as the region's "crown" dish and is served cold [24; 25]. On April 8, 2025, a gastro-tour took place in the Teterivka community, where one of the main dishes is dushenyina, typically prepared for holidays, particularly Christmas, although there is also an everyday version. Dushenyina, tushenyina, and dushanina are all local names for the same dish. Iryna Shevtsova, the owner of one of the recreation complexes, offers guests linden tea made from linden blossoms collected and dried directly within the complex grounds. The Teterivka community is located near a river and a lake; therefore, other dishes include crucian carp and carp. Tetiana Luchok offers bread baked from millstone flour in the Teterivka community [26; 27]. In the village of Stuhivshchyna in the Ovruch community, a potato dish called makar was prepared. It is served with cracklings (shkvarky) and sour cream, traditionally cooked in an oven, and washed down with milk or kvass [28]. The Malyn community also possesses its own gastronomic heritage. In the village of Zabrane, there is a dish called Mochanka, which in the 1950s and 60s was served for every holiday and was cooked in an oven. The village of Malynivka features the dish "Czech Kolache," which refers to baked goods flavored with cheese or poppy seeds, as well as "Raspberry Borsch." In Ustynivka, also located within the Malyn community, there is a food product named Sharpanyna, which was also traditionally prepared in an oven. In the city of Malyn, one can taste "Heather Uzvar" (compote) as well as "Honey-Beer"

[29, pp. 8, 10, 17, 18]. As a result, gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region can be categorized into two main forms: event-based and object-and-route. The event-based component is represented by festivals of dishes and products, which serve as tourist magnets and tools for place branding. The object-and-route component of gastronomic tourism in the region is realized through stationary tourist sites and structured tasting and gastronomic programs, where the gastronomic component is integrated into a comprehensive cultural-tourism product, as well as through local production initiatives that offer excursion-tasting formats. In this context, local dishes and elements of intangible heritage form the resource foundation of gastronomic tourism: they provide the content for event formats (as the central product of festival events) and enhance object-and-route offerings (as an element of authentic experience included in visitation and tasting programs). Thus, gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region is characterized by its integration with cultural and event tourism. At the same time, systemic development is constrained by infrastructural, military, and organizational factors. To visualize the spatial distribution of key gastronomic events and object-and-route initiatives in the Zhytomyr region, a map of the

main gastronomic locations has been developed [Fig. 1].

Based on theoretical provisions, empirical cases and problematic aspects identified in regional policy documents, a SWOT table has been compiled for gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region (Table 1).

The SWOT analysis demonstrates that gastronomic tourism in the Zhytomyr region possesses strengths, for example, the high authenticity of local gastronomic content and the presence of registered elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage relevant for forming authentic gastronomic practices. Another important characteristic is the potential for cross-integration of gastronomic tourism with cultural and event tourism, which potentially expands the value proposition of the destination. At the same time, a number of limitations have been identified. First, in regional approaches, gastronomic tourism is not institutionalized as a separate direction, which reduces the manageability of its development. Second, the offering is fragmented: events, sites, and local dishes are insufficiently combined into sustainable inter-municipal routes or tour packages. Third, existing deficits in digital support (information, navigation, booking) and marketing promotion reduce the visibility

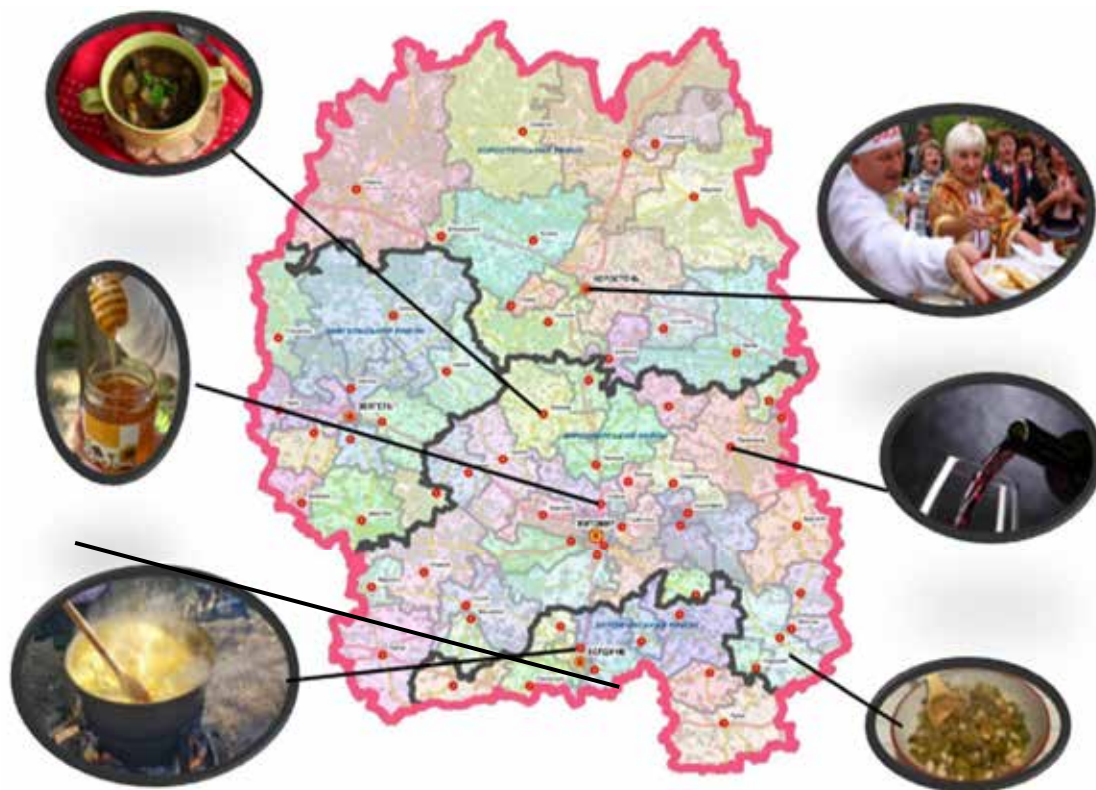


Figure 1. Major gastronomic events in Zhytomyr Region

Source: based on own research

Table 1

SWOT analysis of gastronomic tourism in Zhytomyr region

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
The presence of object-and-route formats with a tasting component	Absence of a formalized status for gastronomic tourism as a distinct category in regional classifications	Development of sustainable inter-municipal weekend itineraries based on existing gastronomic events and sites	Military-security restrictions and damage to cultural infrastructure.
Existing event-based gastro-magnets (festival formats of dishes)	Fragmentation of the regional gastronomic product: events, sites, and local dishes are not integrated into inter-municipal itineraries or tour packages.	Systematization of the regional gastronomic offering (calendar/map/routes) to enhance accessibility	Competitive pressure from inter-regional gastronomic destinations
High authenticity of the content: local dishes of Polissia and communities	Insufficient attention to local cultural identity as the foundation of an authentic gastronomic experience	Development of regular interactive tasting services based on local dishes and elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)	Reputational instability of event formats (lack of official verification of specific indicators).
Presence of recorded elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) applicable for developing authentic gastronomic offers	Insufficient digitalization, reducing the accessibility and visibility of the gastronomic product, as well as demand conversion	Destination differentiation through local gastronomic identity	Seasonal and resource-based risks (ingredient seasonality, honey production volatility) driving instability in gastro-tourism programs
Integrating gastronomic tourism with other types of tourism, which increases appeal, duration, and revenue	Lack of accommodation and limited accessibility shorten stays and hinder gastro-tour packaging	Development of niche thematic products based on beekeeping resources and honey events (agri-gastronomic segment)	
	Ineffective marketing promotion, reducing the visibility of gastronomic events and locations		
	Underrepresentation of agri-gastronomic sites in the empirical base, which narrows the site-and-route component of the gastronomic product		

Source: based on own research

of the gastronomic product and the efficiency of attracting demand. The impact of infrastructural limitations (accommodation, accessibility) on the length of stay and the possibilities of packaging gastro-tours is noted separately, as well as the insufficient representation of agri-gastronomic

locations in the available empirical base. In the opportunities block, development directions relevant to the existing product structure are defined: the formation of sustainable inter-municipal weekend routes based on events and sites ; the systematization of the gastronomic

offering (calendar/map/routes); the development of regular tasting and interactive services based on local dishes and Intangible Cultural Heritage ; strengthening destination differentiation through local gastronomic identity; and the deployment of niche thematic products within the agri-gastronomic segment. Threats are defined as factors of external influence: security restrictions and damage to cultural infrastructure; competition from other regional gastro-destinations; reputational risks of event formats in the absence of official verification of specific indicators; and the seasonal and resource dependence of individual programs, which may cause unevenness in the supply for gastronomic tourism.

Conclusions. Gastronomic tourism is a key factor in the economic development and pres-

ervation of the local identity of the Zhytomyr region. In the region, it takes two forms: event-based (festivals) and site- and route-based (tasting venues, craft producers). The resource base consists of authentic Polissya cuisine and elements of intangible cultural heritage. Despite its high potential, the transformation of this heritage into a sustainable tourism product is hampered by institutional uncertainty, a fragmented offering, poor digitalisation, the war, and infrastructure constraints. Promising areas include the creation of inter-municipal weekend routes, the systematisation of gastronomic offerings (registers, maps, calendars), the development of regular tasting services, and the promotion of agri-gastronomic initiatives, particularly in the field of beekeeping.

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