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## TOURIST POTENTIAL OF GASTRONOMIC FESTIVALS IN UDMURTIA (THE CASE OF THE “WORLD DUMPLING DAY” FESTIVAL)

**Abstract.** This article explores the potential of gastronomic festivals in Udmurtia. The current crisis in the tourism industry caused by the pandemic can be used as a point of growth for domestic event tourism. For regions that do not have the opportunity to enjoy a long holiday season due to their geographical position, a gastronomic festival may be a good option of a weekend break full of cultural experience. Despite a good choice of event-based gastronomic festivals in Udmurtia, residents and guests of the capital seem to know very little about them. The most famous “World Dumpling Day” festival held in Udmurtia since 2015 has become a brand, and yet, is not a full-fledged tourist product. The venue has been the same for 5 years, the festival events can't boast of a great variety either. The festival program is released late, which doesn't help travel companies to sell this event to tourists. As a result the interest and number of visitors drops every year, which is confirmed by the media content analysis. Over the past two (2018/2019) years, the number of positive reviews has also decreased significantly. A change of location and proper event promotion can revive the festival and make it a point of attraction for residents and guests of the capital alike. To determine the tourist opportunities of gastronomic festivals in the region, a face-to-face, individual, one-step expert survey was conducted. The survey respondents mentioned that not all gastronomic festivals in the region might have the potential for growth – it may make more sense to define two or three most interesting products and promote them. A pilot online questionnaire survey conducted among residents of Russian regions brought up a low level of awareness across country's residents about their resource potential, as well as lack of professional regional gastronomic brands promotion.

**Keywords:** gastronomic festival, weekend break, gastronomic tourism, festival tourism, an event, new kind of tourism.

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## **ТУРИСТИЧЕСКИЙ ПОТЕНЦИАЛ ГАСТРОНОМИЧЕСКИХ ФЕСТИВАЛЕЙ В УДМУРТИИ (КЕЙС ФЕСТИВАЛЯ «ВСЕМИРНЫЙ ДЕМПЛИНГ»)**

*В статье рассматриваются гастрономические фестивали в Удмуртии. Современный кризис в туристской отрасли, вызванный пандемией, можно использовать как точку роста для внутреннего событийного туризма. Для регионов, не имеющих возможности открывать курортный сезон в силу своих географических особенностей, гастрономический фестиваль может стать привлекательным отдыхом выходного дня. Отмечается, что несмотря на разнообразие событийных гастрономических фестивалей в Удмуртии горожане и гости столицы о них не знают. Самый известный гастрономический фестиваль «Всемирный день пельменя», проводимый в Удмуртии с 2015 года и ставший уже брендом не является полноценным туристским продуктом. Место проведения – неизменно уже на протяжении 5 лет. Фестиваль не отличается разнообразием проводимых мероприятий. Программа фестиваля появляется достаточно поздно, что лишает туристические компании возможности продавать этот фестиваль туристам. Интерес к событию ежегодно ослабевает. Это подтверждают результаты проведенного контент-анализа СМИ. За последние два года значительно сократилось количество положительно окрашенных публикаций. В 2018 и 2019 гг. они носят преимущественно критический характер. Смена локации и грамотное продвижение способны реанимировать фестиваль и сделать его точкой притяжения горожан и гостей столицы. Для определения туристских возможностей гастрономических фестивалей в регионе был проведен очный, индивидуальный, однотуровый экспертный опрос. В ходе опроса респонденты отметили, что не все гастрономические фестивали в регионе имеют потенциал роста. Необходимо выбрать два-три самых сильных продукта и продвигать их. Пилотный анкетный онлайн-опрос, проведенный среди жителей регионов России показал недостаточную осведомленность жителей страны об их ресурсном потенциале и недостаточном продвижении гастрономических региональных брендов.*

**Ключевые слова:** *гастрономический фестиваль, отдых выходного дня, гастрономический туризм, фестивальный туризм, событие, новая форма туризма*

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Gastronomic tourism is considered to be of high potential in travel and hospitality industry. Apart from leveraging existing regional resources and potential gastronomic tourism may be kept popular through event gastronomical activities [1, 2, 3-5]. Gastronomic festivals prove to become a dynamically evolving new type of tourism – weekend breaks.

Udmurtia as a region can offer a few gastronomic holidays at the same time. The above mentioned "World Dumpling Day" festival, which has become Republic's signature event. The festival has got a clear association with "Udmurtia – the homeland of dumplings!" across the region. Another republican festival "Pest-fest" is held in the Kez district on the third Saturday of May. This holiday is a tribute to the tradition of the Northern Udmurts, who used to eat field horse-tail. Don't forget the berry festival "Uzy Bory" (July 13th, 2019, Syumsinsky district), the Republican folk festival "Perevozinsky saline" (August 3d, Votkinsky district), the international festival of Finno-Ugric cuisine "Byg-Byg" in the Sharkansky district in the village of Starye Bygi (July 6-7th). "Byg-Byg" was held in Udmurtia for the sixth time. Taban Fest is another open air summer festival, which has become an annual event (Sharkan land, in the estate of Tol Babaya). Last year Taban Fest changed its format slightly – it is now held together with Ectonics and is meant to be a festival and fair for audiences of 6- 60 years old. There's also a trio of traditional gastronomic holidays in August-Honey-Apple-Nuts Spas. The Republican mushroom festival "Gubi-fest" held on September 14th in the Yar district has been enjoyed by visitors twice.

Most of those festivals are not only focused on gastronomic aspects, but also provide cultural insights, promote environmental care, offer sports and entertainment activities. In 2019 "Taban Fest" was run together with the Udmurt pop group "Ectonics", turning it into a weekend open air festival. While having a master class on cooking a traditional Udmurt dish – tabani, one could enjoy modern Udmurt pop and rock music, dance or practice yoga in the fresh air.

Festivals as a phenomenon of social and cultural life are an important part of shaping out of the region's image and the development of its economy. Taking into account the specifics of gastronomic events, Den V. G. and Gomilevskaya G. A. [12] suggested a project based approach in event management of a culinary festival.

Project management of a culinary festival involves various types of social partnerships based on cooperation and mutual consideration of the interests among all project participants. As a rule, festival organization is based on the principles of public – private partnerships using a legal form of investment partnership (I.T.) [21]. As a result of contractual relations, social partnership makes it possible to increase the efficiency of the resource used, create a balance of interests of participants from the position of socialization of the market economy. Social partnership also requires coordination with regional and local authorities, including ensuring the safety of festival participants and timely actions by the Ambulance, Emergency services, and police.

At the stage of concept development, the event theme, goals and objectives are highlighted. This stage becomes the starting vector that determines the direction of the organizing team's work. It should be noted that the effectiveness of the festival depends primarily on its uniqueness and timing. Research shows that a number of culinary festivals have similar themes and are often held simultaneously, which reduces their effectiveness and attractiveness. The mismatch of the festival organizers, representatives of business and government leads to the festivals overlapping with each other. For example, in 2019, this happened with the festival of historical reconstruction "Rus Druzhinnaya" and the gastronomic ethno-festival "Taban Fest.", held jointly with the Udmurt pop group "Ectonics". Both of them took place in Udmurtia in the period from the 12th to the 14th of July, 2019. "Rus Druzhinnaya" – the 13th-14th of July, and "Stern-fest" – the 12th-13th of July. Each of the festivals simply did not reach its audience.

The planning process for a culinary festival

includes market research, consumer analysis, product and service characteristics, a promotion plan, and a clear schedule with a detailed program. The experiences of organizing festivals show that there are high requirements for marketing, including the creation of a thematic site, maintaining accounts on social media, etc. The Dumplings Festival, which has already become a brand in Udmurtia, has a good marketing component. It is very actively promoted through social media such as Vkontakte, Instagram, as well as traditional Republican media.

The next stage of preparation for the festival is making a list of participants and it's determined in accordance with the chosen theme.

The stage of drawing up a tasting plan can be considered as an opportunity to invest in the image of the manufacturer's company and its products. This requires careful calculation of the amount of raw materials and finished product needed for tasting.

The next stage is to prepare the site and provide the material and technical base (technical equipment, lights, furniture, pavilions, stands, props); refrigeration equipment; equipment for storing and conducting master classes; dishes and auxiliary equipment. This stage is one of the most important and requires preliminary preparation. The unpopularity of some gastronomic festivals among the residents of the region is due to the lack of a prepared site and infrastructure. For example, the Byg-byg festival is held in the village of Starye Bygi in the Sharkan-sky district of Udmurtia. The absence of roads makes this festival a holiday only for the residents of nearby villages. The bus with tourists can't go there. Amateur tourists in cars, too. As a result, unfortunately, this festival cannot be called a tourist product.

Hereinafter, the definition of budget. This stage includes: preparation of estimates and search for sources of funding, which are usually the organizers, registration fees of participants, and sponsorship. This stage is the final stage in the project management system of the festival and is closely related to the choice of the organi-

zational and legal form that determines the system of relations between the festival organizers. In this regard, the most interesting was the "Taban Fest", 2019. It became the first environmental festival in Udmurtia, where the sale of street food in disposable plastic dishes was banned and separate waste collection was organized. The General partner of the event was a Regional operator for waste management in the Udmurt Republic – the company "Spetsavtohozyaystvo".

Thus, a systematic approach to organizing a gastronomic festival involves a wide range of actions, and an insufficient level of preparation for at least one stage can lead to negative consequences, reduced effectiveness and even failure of the festival.

A study was conducted to determine the potential of gastronomic festivals in the region:

- Research methodology – expert survey.
- Interaction with respondents – face-to-face interview.
- Number of experts at a time – individual survey (11 as total).
- Approving expert assessments – one-step process.
- Selection – targeting.

The respondents included representatives of business, in particular tour operators: 6 experts out of 11; government (Ministry of national SD policies, Management of tourism development and tourist activities of the Ministry of UR economy): 2 experts; municipal cultural institutions: 1 expert; public organizations: 2 experts.

Respondents were asked to answer several questions. One of the key issues is their opinion about the well-known festival in Udmurtia – "World Dumpling Day". This festival is led by the initiative of the Ministry of national policy of the Udmurt Republic in partnership with the group of companies "8 people". "World Dumpling Day" has been held annually since 2015 as part of the development of the brand "Udmurtia-the homeland of dumplings!» and is aimed at developing a positive image of the region, recognition of the Republic beyond its borders, and promotion of national Udmurt culture.

The festival is a silver medalist of the national awards "Russian Event Awards" and "Eventiada Awards". The souvenir of the festival is a winner of Grand Prix of all-Russian contest "Tourist Souvenirs" in the nomination "Souvenir of the event" (2016), tourist route "Dumplings weekend" received the first place in the nomination "the Best event of the tourist route" in the final of the all-Russian tourism award "route of the Year 2016", in January 2017, the Festival has become a winner of the national prize of public relations development "Silver Archer".

The festival is held annually for 2 weeks at various venues in the Republic. The final event takes place on the Central square of Izhevsk on the second Saturday of February.

At the end of 2017, 35 thousand people visited the Festival's events. During the Festival, a record was set for the largest number of dumplings eaten in one place, namely 74,059 dumplings. In turn, the producers of the products sold 7 tons of dumplings.

Experts' opinions on this event proved to differ. All respondents – 100 percent – agreed that the festival is a bright event in the region and it's positioning improved, i.e. its organizers managed to create a brand "Udmurtia – the homeland of dumplings" among the residents of the Republic. As a result, the interest in dumpling products and the number of manufacturers dramatically increased.

When asked about the promotion of the festival, 90,9 percent of respondents, which is 10 people out of 11, admitted that the festival should have more competent promotion though. The event program appears very late, and there is no comprehensive promotion strategy. The organizers are not interested in selling the festival and therefore there is no clear interaction with businesses, journalists, and bloggers. The organizers of the event (1 expert out of 11), however, say that the festival has no problems with promotion and attendance. The organizers confirm, that information about the upcoming event is posted on the website of the Ministry of national policy of the UR, on the website of the

Head of the UR. As for the foreign tourists, information about the region's gastronomic events is available in the second catalog "Russia – not only football. Summer festivals" – a guide on summer festivals and holidays that introduces foreign tourists not only to the bright cultural events, but also helps them navigate the sights of the regions. For further trip planning, the catalog contains links to official travel portals.

Most of the experts – 7 to be precise, which is 63.6 percent, say that the festival would benefit from some changes in the event program and location. The traditional program of the "Dumpling festival" includes master classes in making dumplings, basketball with throwing improvised dumpling balls into the ring, and dumpling eating races. According to respondents, this program should be updated annually, as the festival lacks a zest. In addition, it is more appropriate to hold the festival not in Izhevsk, but in the Igrinsky district, from where the dumplings came along the Siberian highway thus blending two stories into a single event.

Some experts – 36.4 percent, said that the "Dumplings festival" has never pursued tourist goals. The purpose of the festival is to educate and harmonize ethnic relations. This goal has been achieved.

Speaking about the tourist opportunities of Udmurt gastronomic festivals, all respondents (all 11 experts) – 100 percent – say that there is potential in Udmurtia. Udmurtia is a multinational Republic. Cuisine brings people together. Udmurtia can attract tourists from neighboring regions with protected forests, clean rivers and lakes. We need to promote national cooking customs.

72.7 percent of respondents believe that regional tour operators know the structure of work in the tourism industry and are experts in tourism. They can sell any product. To do this, one needs to make it a tourist destination. The Department of tourism needs to understand what type of tourism to develop in the region and work together with representatives of the business community in this direction. We need



to strengthen the strong! Not all food festivals have the same growth potential – we need to choose two or three best festivals and promote them.

18.2 percent of respondents said that there should be many festivals. Each district has something to surprise its neighbors with. There are berry places, there are mushroom places. The more often citizens will go out for the weekend in the districts to the festivals, the more friendly and united the population of the Republic will be.

Thus, the experts conclude that it is quite difficult to sell gastronomic festivals as an independent product, they require careful organization and preparation, so they should be a part of the overall marketing of the territory or a specific tour route.

The "World Dumpling Day" gastronomic festival, which has been held in Udmurtia since 2015 and has already become a brand, is not a full-fledged tourist product. The concept of the event is the harmonization of interethnic and intercultural relations, promotion of Udmurt culture. The venue has been unchanged for 5 years. Several venues are involved in the festival. The main events are held on the Central square of Izhevsk. The festival does not differ in the variety of events. The festival program appears late, which makes it impossible for travel agencies to use the festival as a tourist event. Necessary: change the location of the festival, update the program of events, coordinate the program with business representatives, and promote the festival among local residents and guests of the capital.

In recent years, according to the participants and guests of the festival, there has been a decrease in interest in the event. This is confirmed by the results of another study conducted in 2019.

Research methodology: content analysis of mass media.

This is a quantitative analysis of a large text array followed by a qualitative interpretation of its contents. Media content analysis was conducted in two stages. At the first stage, a front-end content analysis was performed. The analy-

sis revealed more than 15 online publications that mentioned the Dumpling festival on their pages from 2015 to 2019. Key words and phrases were used as semantic units: dumplings festival, dumplings fest, world dumpling day, homeland of dumplings, Udmurt dumplings, etc.

At the second stage, a RAID analysis of the materials "Udm-info", "Izhevskinfo", "Susanin", "Udmpravda", "Izh.kp", "Gorodfm", "Udmtv", "Izhlife", "Ntv.ru", "Kp.ru", "Strana.ru", "Myudm.ru", "d. kvadrat", "Izh24.ru", "Glazov-news" and others. A total of 202 publications were analyzed.

Media content analysis showed that in 2015 and 2016, media publications were positive or, very rarely, neutral. Since 2017, the number of positive publications in regional media has been reduced by about 20 percent. Criticism is increasingly found on the pages of publications. Over the past two years (2018-2019), only regional media have shown interest in the event. Publications are mostly neutral or critical. There is also no genre variety of publications. Informational materials predominate. These are mostly notes or announcements of events. Reports are extremely rare – only two publications. There are no analytical materials at all.

This confirms the conclusions and recommendations made during the expert survey. The annual dumplings festival, which has become a brand and secured the status of "homeland of dumplings" for Udmurtia, requires a serious update and revision of the program. Changing the location and proper promotion can revive the festival and make it a point of attraction for citizens and guests of the capital.

Further, in order to study in more depth the potential demand for gastronomic festivals in the regions of Russia, a sociological study was conducted, which resulted in a rating of attractive gastronomic regions.

The problem is to determine gastronomically attractive regions of Russia.

Type of research – intelligence, pilot.

The method is an online questionnaire blitz survey.

Timeline – the survey was conducted in two stages: in November 2018 and June 2019.

The selection is spontaneous.

The target audience is residents of Russian regions (Izhevsk, Votkinsk, Glazov, Kambarka, Moscow, Kazan, Samara, Belgorod, Ufa, Murmansk, Chita), mainly residents of Udmurtia – 70 percent.

The total number of respondents is 82. The gender ratio is dominated by women – 60%, men – 40%.

Psychographic portrait of respondents – men and women from 20 to 47 years old, studying (students) or working, have a higher education or are receiving it. The income level is average. Mostly residents of the city (90 percent). 60% of respondents have a family with children. Do not have a permanent partner – 40 percent.

Hypothesis of the research is: the most famous gastronomic region is the Caucasus, while the least known gastronomic region is Udmurtia.

The study confirmed the hypothesis. The second part of the hypothesis was partially confirmed. Out of 56 residents of Udmurtia, only one person put their Republic in the first place. 18 people put Udmurtia in the last place, all of them local residents. For 14 respondents, Udmurtia was not among the 5 known gastronomic regions at all.

The "Russian" Caucasus became the leader. Respondents singled it out for kebabs and meat. In second place – the far East (fish, caviar). Next, Crimea for its fine wines. Fourth place – Tatarstan. On the fifth line are the cities of the Golden ring (Suzdal, Kostroma, Veliky Novgorod), Kaliningrad, and Udmurtia.

Bashkortostan, Tver region, and Krasnodar territory were also included with the top 10 gastronomic regions.

All this indicates a lack of awareness of the country's residents about their resource potential and insufficient promotion of regional gastronomic brands. In particular, even half of the surveyed residents of the Republic do not know their regional brand – "Udmurtia – the homeland

of dumplings".

So, as a result of the research, it was found that the gastronomic festival has an impact on the development of tourism in the region, the formation of a positive image of a tourist destination. It is very difficult to sell a gastronomic festival as an independent product, so it should become a part of the territory's marketing

The dumpling festival, which has been held in Udmurtia since 2015 and has already become a brand, is not a full-fledged tourist product. The main concept of the event is the harmonization of interethnic and intercultural relations. The festival does not differ in the variety of events held. The festival program appears late, which makes it impossible for travel agencies to use the festival as a tourist event. The festival needs to be reanimated. This is confirmed by the results of an expert survey and content analysis. Changing the location and proper promotion can actualize the festival and make it a point of attraction for citizens and guests of the capital.

In the organizational aspect the gastronomic festival is a complex product requiring technology phased planning, from selecting the theme of the concept, identifying the target audience, concerted actions of organizers and coordinators of recruitment, training, special equipment, to food tastings. Despite the variety of event-based gastronomic festivals in Udmurtia (in July and August – they are every second weekend), citizens and guests of the capital do not know about them.

Gastronomic festival can become an attractive way to travel for domestic and inbound tourism – a weekend holiday. According to experts, for most amateur tourists, a short trip to a neighboring region is acceptable for one or two nights, and for citizens who go to the festival outside the city location – without an overnight stay. Thus, short-term gastronomic festivals with a comprehensive approach to their organization can act as a tourist resource which allows to increase the attractiveness of the region by promoting local products.

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