

Gastronomy for Tourism Development

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Gastronomy for Tourism Development: Potential of the Western Balkans

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Preface

The book, *Gastronomy for Tourism Development: Potential of the Western Balkans*, is dedicated to the countries belonging to the Western Balkans region (for this book, countries consisting of former Yugoslav republics belonging to the south-eastern Europe), except Slovenia (the Central Europe), which are all striving to foster their economic growth and social well-being by heavily relying on the tourism sector as their major source of income. Although this region has been a popular subject matter for the academic community, there is a lack of literature on the growing concern of gastronomy for the tourism development of the region. The common gastronomic heritage of the Western Balkans presents a unique opportunity to develop a unique gastronomic and tourism product that goes far beyond the different national identities. Today, several dishes, preparation methods and service procedures are recognised as the Gastronomy of the Balkans, presenting a fascinating 'melange' of Western Europe, Mediterranean and oriental culinary traditions with a special local (the Balkan) touch. Taking into consideration that the Western Balkan countries are following the most tourist developed countries of Central Europe which are nowadays keen to develop authentic and recognisable gastronomic tourism products, this book addresses the growing need for more research and expands the current knowledge base about tourism and gastronomic potentials of the region. Accordingly, the book can be considered as a theoretical and practical guide towards a gastronomic future for the Western Balkans, showing drivers, potentials and barriers affecting the region in its effort to become a prominent European food destination of the twenty-first century.

The book consists of 10 chapters and is the work of the team of renowned researchers from the region who attempted to multidisciplinary and holistically present the different aspects of gastronomy of the region, addressing topics such as gastronomy and regional identity, the importance of specific food products for gastronomy and tourism development, the challenges of gastro-tourism development in different countries of the region, the importance of the image of local cuisine for gastronomy and tourism development, the presentation of the best practices in strategic development of gastronomy, exploration of the interlinkages between gastronomy and events in DMOs' strategic activities, the importance of restaurants' online reputation for destination competitiveness, the importance of gastronomy for further tourism and economic development of the region and the financial potentials of gastronomy for future tourism development.

Therefore, this book can be considered as a systematic overview and critical examination of the situation in the region, providing some new insights into the area. Readers can also find theoretical explanations of specific phenomenon related to gastronomy development, supported by empirical explanations in the cases of different countries in the region. We strongly believe that this book will be of interest to academics, students, practitioners, policymakers, governmental and non-governmental organisations as well as other stakeholders that wish to be informed about the challenges, progress and current trends in regional gastronomy development.

The editors would like to express their sincere thanks to all the contributors and the reviewers of the manuscripts.

Editors