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## Attitudes and orientation of employees in the Serbian catering industry about products with protected origin

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### ABSTRACT

The subject of this paper is the knowledge and attitudes of employees in the hospitality industry about products with protected geographical origin in Serbia. In order to include these products in the gastronomic offer, data whether employees are aware of them must be obtained since they represent the main purpose of this paper. The aim of this paper is to investigate the knowledge level, awareness and attitudes of employees in catering and tourism in Serbia about the importance and the type of protected products and their representation in the gastronomic offer of Serbia. The critical review is in accord with the official regulations and guidelines under the law of the Republic of Serbia on protected products. Employees (n = 202) in restaurants on the territory of Serbia participated in the research. The data obtained by the survey were processed using descriptive statistics and presented in a table in the paper. Based on the conducted research, it was found out that the employees are familiar with the concept of protected food, but that their use is not sufficiently represented in the gastronomic offer of Serbia.

**Keywords:** protected products, gastronomy, geographical indication of origin

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Geographical indications represent the legal framework of the European Union which aims to protect the name, identity and reputation of national food. Depending on the type of the protected product, the following designations of origin differ: protected designation of origin PDO, protected geographical indication (PGI) and traditional specialty guaranteed TSG [1].

The quality label is a quality guarantee that consumers are willing to pay more than for products that do not own it [2] while adequate product protection has been found to provide economic benefits by proposing an interaction between tourism and gastronomy [3].

In the past two decades, regional food development has become not only part of the gastronomic definition but an important feature in the food trade, while consumers are increasingly interested in the origin of food, the region and the authenticity of the ingredients from which the product is made [4].

Product protection system has been created in order to highlight the offer of unique agricultural, food and gastronomic products. This way, trademarks have a positive effect on users of services or products, creating a clear picture of specific, authentic food and beverages characteristics, while their constant production and sales positively affect the economic development of the country - the region from which the products come [5].

In the early 1990s, measures were introduced within the European Union to regulate products with protected geographical origin, which aimed to connect local regions and localities [6] while in Serbia, intellectual property rights gained importance only 10 years ago, so the legislation in this area is harmonized with international and European. Legislative protection of geographical origin represents a development opportunity for the Serbian economy, given that we are predominantly an agricultural country. It is the protection of PDO, PGI and TSG products that allows better conditions for the affirmation of villages and other smaller areas, impacts their survival, which also have a favorable effect on the preservation of diverse local plants [7] and diversity of animal species, characteristic for a particular area.

The subject of the paper are products with protected origin and the employees' knowledge and awareness about protected products in Serbian catering industry. In order to include products with protected origin into the gastronomic offer, hospitality industry employees should get better acquainted with them, which is the main aim of this paper.

The task of the paper is to answer the following research questions:

- whether there is a sufficient number of protected agricultural and food products on the territory of Serbia?;
- the extent to which employees in the catering industry are informed about the importance and types of domestic protected products?;
- whether in national restaurants, dishes prepared from products with a designation of origin are sufficiently represented?

Products with a designation of origin are an important factor for the agricultural and food sector. Geographical indications of origin give authenticity to products by driving the local economy, while the designation of origin provides standardization of production methods giving way to the quality of the final product [8]. A PDO is the name of an area, place or in exceptional cases, the country used to describe a product or foodstuff. The use of this designation represents the certainty that a certain product comes from a certain area and meets

a certain quality that can be attributed to its geographical origin, while protected geographical indication (PGI) status is obtained by marking products that are traditionally prepared in a certain area or at least have certain process performed in a specific region. Traditional specialty guaranteed TSG is a mark that marks a product that has certain properties and characteristics that can be clearly distinguished from similar products [1].

Geographical indications of origin give authenticity to products by driving the local economy, while the designation of origin is the only one that provides standardization of production methods, putting emphasis to the quality of the final product [8]. Food authentication is a method on the basis of which food is evaluated and determined whether it meets the described conditions from the product declaration, which can certainly be defined as product classification [9]. A traditional product can be defined as a product that is often consumed or its tradition is associated with certain celebrations or time of year where the product is passed down from generation to generation, produced in a traditional way, in accordance with gastronomic heritage, region or country and from a specific local area [10].

According to the author [11] on average 49% of Czechs eat out, 60% of Belgians who are employed eat their main meal in a restaurant, while 59% of Germans consume local and traditional lunch for meals using catering services.

Placement of products with a geographical indication in agri-food production is of fundamental importance for the economy of the country [12]. The protection system of products with a geographical indication is extremely important for underdeveloped countries [13]. The origin of food has a very important role not only for the sustainability of the food and beverage production system but also for the quality of food, among which the economy of small producers and food trade stand out significantly [4]. In addition to certain shortcomings in certain sectors, Serbia has numerous traditional agricultural and food products, as well as gastronomic products, which can be placed on the tourist market. The participation of all catering and tourist entities in the region is necessary in the process of creation and shaping in development [14]. Analyzing the databases of products that include international protection, it was concluded that economic entities from Serbia do not use enough benefits provided by geographical indications, hence it is necessary to pay more attention to product registration at the international level [15].

Based on the conducted research [16] which indicates that the growth of PDO products depends on the support of the European Union and more frequent use by consumers, while the quality or sensory characteristics, historical aspect of origin and culture incorporated together with the territory create a positive opinion about the product [17]. Based on research [18-19] it can be confirmed that consumers have higher respect, are looking for, buy and are willing to pay a higher price for protected products compared to conventional ones, even more than compared to products of organic origin, while in the research [20] concludes that females are more interested. Numerous studies have shown that consumers tend to value quality, authenticity, ethical standards, countries of origin and sustainable food production when buying [21-18], among which the traditional method and regional affiliation stand out. These aspects are closely linked, representing a greater intention to purchase food products with protected geographical status [22].

Products with protected origin may also be subject to fraud [23] given that as such they have a global economic impact and are associated with different traditions and regions in Europe, and are certainly of greater economic value due to their unique qualities and characteristics than those without a label [24]. Examples from the members of the European

Union prove that the establishment of a system of geographical origin and the placement of such products achieve huge economic growth. This approach ensures the development of the region, drives the economy, tourism, and especially rural areas. When buying, consumers value quality and authenticity, ethical standards of the country of origin as well as sustainable food production, so there is a growing body of research on products with protected geographical indications [25].

A geographical indication identifies a particular product with origin, i.e. the territory of a particular country, region or locality, where a particular quality, reputation or other characteristics of the product can be essentially attributed to its geographical origin, whose production and/or processing and/or preparation takes place in a certain limited area [26] while the geographical indication of origin shows where the product comes from, what are the specific properties, as a result of natural, human factors from that area [27].

Geographical indications are [26]:

- name of origin and
- geographical indication.

The name of origin is the geographical name of a country, region, or locality, which indicates a product originating there, whose quality and special properties are exclusively or essentially conditioned by the geographical environment, including natural and human factors, and whose production, processing and preparation takes place entirely in a certain limited area [26]. Based on the law on geographical indications, the use for marking is clearly defined: natural, agricultural, food and industrial products, handicrafts and services [26] while the gastronomic product is not defined as a form of gastronomic-tourist offer. This type of protection of gastronomic product represents the promotion, culture, tradition of Serbian gastronomy in the world, as well as tourists who visit Serbia. The main shortcoming of the law on geographical indications is the fact that the designation of a traditional product is not defined, following the example of European laws and regulations. In order to better promote - marketing of natural, agricultural, food and industrial products, home-made products, it is necessary to define a protected gastronomic product, which is a set of natural, agricultural, food and industrial products, home-made products, country, region, locality, city, district, which undergoes, mechanical and heat treatment, changes the physical state, nutritional value, aesthetic dimension and style of the final gastronomic product [26].

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The research was conducted among employees in tourism and catering in the territory of the Republic of Serbia. The research was conducted electronically. The survey questionnaire consists of four thematic parts. Each thematic part consists of several items on the basis of which knowledge is reached. 202 respondents participated in the research in the period from 20.05.2020. to 01.08.2020. In order to obtain more relevant data, the obtained data were processed using descriptive statistics. The research provides an opportunity to take a closer look at the socio-demographic structure of respondents, as well as to confirm the competence of their attitudes about products with a designation of origin in Serbia, based on questions about their workplace, experience and monthly income.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3. 1. Analysis of socio-demographic characteristics of respondents

In order to gain a realistic insight into the attitudes of employees in the catering and tourism industry, a socio-demographic analysis of the respondents was performed first.

Among the surveyed respondents in the Serbian catering industry, male employees dominated with 61.90%, while females represented a share of 38.10%.

Also, out of the total number of respondents, the largest share of respondents is aged from 18 to 25 with a share of 40.10%, while respondents aged from 26 to 35 are represented with a share of 35.10%, which means that the younger population is mostly employed in catering, given that age is an important parameter in creating the attitudes of employees about products with protected origin.

When it comes to the level of education of employees, most respondents completed high school, share of 41.10% of respondents, while 35.60% of respondents have completed college or academy. Employees with a university degree are listed in third place with a share of 11.40%, while respondents with a master's degree are represented with a share of 9.40%. PHDs are represented with a share of only 1.50%, while employees with primary school take a share of only 1%, which gives importance to this research given that the level of education affects the attitudes of employees about products with protected geographical origin (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Socio-demographic structure of respondents.

| <b>Question</b>     | <b>Claims</b>               | <b>Value (n)</b> | <b>Share (%)</b> |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Gender              | Male                        | 125              | 61.90            |
|                     | Female                      | 77               | 38.10            |
| Age range           | Aged from 18 to 25          | 81               | 40.10            |
|                     | Aged from 26 to 35          | 71               | 35.10            |
|                     | Aged from 36 to 45          | 29               | 14.40            |
|                     | Aged from 46 to 55          | 15               | 7.40             |
|                     | Aged from 56 to 65          | 5                | 2.50             |
|                     | Aged over 66                | 1                | 0.50             |
| Degree of education | Primary school              | 2                | 1                |
|                     | High School                 | 83               | 41.10            |
|                     | College or academy          | 72               | 35.60            |
|                     | Faculty                     | 23               | 11.40            |
|                     | Master's or Magister Degree | 19               | 9.40             |
|                     | PHD                         | 3                | 1.50             |

When it comes to the educational profile of employees, the largest share of respondents has a catering educational profile with a share of 74.30%, which is in favor of this research. A very important factor in this research is the fact that the catering education profile has the largest share of respondents, which is a very important role for better placement of products on the domestic market in restaurants and among colleagues, exchange of opinions and experiences, and based on the above it can be determined that in the Serbian catering industry there is a very large share of educated staff (Table 2).

These data are very important for the research itself, since the level of education, monthly income, and educational profile depends on the promotion of products with a designation of origin, their application in the gastronomic offer of Serbia, and certainly the knowledge of guests.

**Table 2.** Education and place of work of the respondents.

| <b>Question</b>                                  | <b>Claim</b>                | <b>Value (n)</b> | <b>Share (%)</b> |
|--|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Educational profile                              | Catering                    | 150              | 74.30            |
|  | Tourist                     | 12               | 5.90             |
|  | Economy                     | 11               | 5.40             |
|  | Agriculture                 | 2                | 1                |
|  | Food Technology             | 5                | 2.50             |
|  | Chemistry                   | 2                | 1                |
|  | Other                       | 20               | 9.90             |
| Method of education in catering                  | High School                 | 64               | 31.70            |
|  | College or academy          | 75               | 37.10            |
|  | Faculty                     | 11               | 5.40             |
|  | Master's or Magister Degree | 13               | 6.40             |
|  | PHD                         | 4                | 2                |
|  | Non-formal education        | 20               | 9.90             |
|  | Professional seminars       | 3                | 1.60             |
|  | Courses                     | 12               | 5.90             |
| Type of catering facility by place of employment | Grange                      | 3                | 1.50             |
|  | Hacienda                    | 1                | 0.50             |

|  |                          |    |       |
|--|--------------------------|----|-------|
|  | Classic restaurant       | 45 | 22.30 |
|  | International restaurant | 68 | 33.60 |
|  | Mixed                    | 85 | 42.10 |

The next part of the research shows the way of educating employees in the hospitality sector. Based on the answers, it is known that the largest number of employees were educated through colleges with a share of 37.10% of respondents, while 31.70% of respondents were educated in high schools. Based on the research, we find out that educational institutions are mostly represented for education in catering (Table 2).

When it comes to the type of catering facility by place of employment, it can be stated that mixed restaurants have the largest share of respondents with a share of 42.10%. In second place are international restaurants with a share of 33.60% of respondents, while in third place are classic restaurants with 22.30% of respondents. In the penultimate place are granges with a share of 1.50% of respondents, while haciendas participate with a share of 0.50% of respondents. Based on the respondents, it can be stated that there are the least employees in the haciendas, and the most in mixed restaurants (Table 2).

### 3. 2. Analysis of employees' attitudes about products with a geographical indication

The ability and reliability of employees is a very important role for restaurant owners, as they play a key role in attracting and retaining guests [28]. Therefore, the attitudes of employees about products with a designation of origin are of great importance for the business and operation of the catering facility. The attitudes of employees about products with a geographical indication are presented in the next part of the research.

**Table 3.** Attitudes of employees about products with a designation of origin.

| Question  | Claims                       | Value (n) | Share (%) |
|---|------------------------------|-----------|-----------|
| Have you heard of products with a geographical indication?                        | Yes                          | 169       | 83.70     |
|   | I am not sure                | 31        | 15.30     |
|   | No                           | 2         | 1         |
| Serbia has a sufficient number of products with geographical protection of origin | I completely disagree        | 36        | 17.84     |
|   | I mostly disagree            | 52        | 25.74     |
|   | I neither agree nor disagree | 52        | 25.74     |
|   | I agree                      | 33        | 16.33     |
|   | I completely agree           | 29        | 14.35     |

One of the very important segments for future intentions are certainly the attitudes of employees in the catering industry, which are certainly one of the important factors for the improvement and use of protected products.

Table 3 shows the attitudes of employees about products with a designation of origin. When asked if they have heard of products with protected origin where 83.70% of respondents answered in the affirmative and 15.30% of respondents are not sure. Among the respondents, 1% of respondents have not heard of products with protected origin. Based on this research, it can be concluded that employees are sufficiently informed about products with protected origin.

By processing the data presented, it can be stated that the smallest share of 14.35%, on the question whether Serbia has a sufficient number of products with geographical origin, answered in full. In second place I agree - 16.33% of respondents, while in third place I completely disagree - 17.84% of respondents. In the last place are the attitudes of employees who share the opinion, I mostly disagree and Neither agree nor disagree with the share of 25.74% of respondents (Table 3).

**Table 4.** Attitudes of employees about the offer of protected products in the restaurant by place of employment.

| Question   | Claims          | Value (n) | Share (%) |
|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------|
| Do you offer products with a geographical indication in your restaurant?   | No              | 59        | 29.20     |
|  | I am not sure   | 37        | 18.30     |
|  | Yes             | 106       | 52.50     |
| Do you think that national and domestic dishes prepared from protected products are sufficiently represented in restaurants? | No              | 160       | 79.20     |
|  | I am not sure   | 25        | 12.40     |
|  | Yes             | 17        | 8.40      |
| Are guests informed about the protected foods from which meals are prepared in restaurants?                                  | No              | 141       | 69.80     |
|  | I do not know   | 41        | 20.30     |
|  | Yes             | 20        | 9.90      |
| Which region in Serbia do you consider the most promising for the popularization of products with a designation of origin?   | Vojvodina       | 45        | 22.30     |
|  | Šumadija        | 60        | 29.70     |
|  | Belgrade        | 22        | 10.90     |
|  | Eastern Serbia  | 11        | 5.40      |
|  | Western Serbia  | 24        | 11.90     |
|  | Southern Serbia | 40        | 19.80     |

The analysis of the attitudes of employees on the offer of products with protected origin in the catering facility is shown in Table 4.

Based on Table 4, it can be stated that in the offer of restaurants where respondents are employed, most use and serve products with protected geographical origin with a share of 52.50% of respondents, in second place with a share of 29.20% of respondents do not use and serve products with protected geographical origin in the restaurant in which they are employed, while in third place with a share of 18.30% of respondents answered that they are not sure. Based on these results, we come to the conclusion that restaurants use products with protection of geographical origin, which is very important for the development and improvement of other products and the region.

When asked whether national and domestic dishes prepared from protected products are sufficiently represented in restaurants, 79.20% answered with a negative answer, 12.40% answered with an answer I do not know, while 8.40% respondents answered with a positive answer. It can be stated that a very small number of products are used in the preparation of domestic and national dishes (Table 4).

It is very important that employees are informed about the habits and wishes of the guests. Guests' satisfaction greatly affects the degree of satisfaction and loyalty, as well as whether they will visit the place again and recommend it to friends [29].

In the next part of the research, the attitudes of the employees about the knowledge of the guests are presented. Based on the results, it can be stated that the guests are not sufficiently informed about the protected foods from which meals are prepared in restaurants. A negative answer was given by 69.80% of respondents, the answer I do not know was given by 20.30% of respondents, while respondents with a positive answer take a share of 9.90%. Based on the obtained results, the largest number of respondents believe that guests are not sufficiently familiar with the range of foodstuff from which meals are prepared in restaurants (Table 4).

When it comes to the popularization of products with protected origin, the largest number of respondents answered that Šumadija is the most promising with a share of 29.70% of respondents, while in second place Vojvodina is the most promising region for popularization of products with protection of geographical origin with a share of 22.30%. In third place, Southern Serbia with a share of 19.80%.

In fourth place is Western Serbia, with 11.90% of respondents. In fifth place is the city of Belgrade with 10.90% of respondents, while in last place is Eastern Serbia, with only 5.40% of respondents. It can be stated that Šumadija is considered the leading region for product popularization (Table 4).

Table 5 shows the results of the respondents, whether the indigenous varieties of plants and animals should be protected. 93.60% of respondents said yes, while 5.90% of respondents said they did not know. A share of 0.50% of respondents believes that indigenous plant and animal varieties should not be protected. The majority of respondents answered with a positive answer, which is very good for the affirmation of forgotten species of plants and animals.

Based on a detailed analysis of the processed data shown in Table 5, and based on the question of whether the product map would improve their popularization and consumption, the largest share of respondents believes that it would contribute with a share of 83.20% of respondents, in the second place with the answer I do not know is a share of 12.40% of respondents, while in the last place with a share of 4.40%, are respondents who believe that the map of products with protected origin would not improve their popularization.

**Table 5.** Employee attitudes about protected products.

| <b>Question</b>  | <b>Claims</b> | <b>Value (n)</b> | <b>Share (%)</b> |
|--|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| Do you think that indigenous species of plants and animals should be protected on the territory of Serbia?     | No            | 1                | 0.50             |
|  | I do not know | 12               | 5.90             |
|  | Yes           | 189              | 93.60            |
| Would a map of products with the designation of origin of Serbia improve their popularization and consumption? | No            | 9                | 4.40             |
|  | I do not know | 25               | 12.40            |
|  | Yes           | 168              | 83.20            |

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

On the grounds on the set goals and tasks of this research conducted by established scientific methodology and the use of domestic and foreign literature, the following conclusions, relevant for this research were reached:

- Based on the collected data and the attitudes of employees whether Serbia has a sufficient number of products with protected origin, it can be concluded that the majority of respondents believe that Serbia does not have a sufficient number of products with protected origin compared to the overall capacity.
- Based on the analysis of the attitudes of employees about products with protected origin, it can be concluded that employees in the catering and tourism of Serbia are referred to products with a designation of origin.
- In order to determine the representation of protected products, a survey was conducted among employees in the catering industry on the territory of Serbia. Based on the analysis of the attitudes of employees about the offer of products with protected origin in the catering, facilities in its gastronomic offer have products with protected geographical origin, which is a very important fact for the product promotion. While 79.20% of respondents believe that national and domestic dishes prepared with protected products are underrepresented in Serbian restaurants.

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