

# THE QUALITY OF GASTRONOMIC MANIFESTATIONS IN STRENGTHENING TOURIST DESTINATION BRAND EQUITY: A CASE STUDY OF VOJVODINA

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**Summary:** *The paper examines the influence of the quality of gastronomic manifestations on tourist destination brand equity. The research was conducted on the example of the tourist destination of Vojvodina. More precisely, the research was conducted on a sample of 600 visitors at 32 gastronomic manifestations, which were organized on the territory of Vojvodina in the second half of 2022. The survey was conducted during the holding of gastronomic manifestations. The research was conducted using SEM. The results show that the quality of gastronomic events has a positive impact on strengthening the brand equity of the destination. This conclusion was drawn based on findings that show that all dimensions of the quality of the hospitality event have a positive impact on all components of brand equity. The*

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*results of the survey show that food at the event has the greatest impact on destination brand equity, while souvenirs have the least impact. The facilities at gastronomic events have a significant impact on brand quality, while the informational services at a gastronomic event have a significant impact on destination brand awareness.*

**Keywords:** *gastronomic manifestations / tourist destination / brand equity / Vojvodina.*

## INTRODUCTION

Intense competition between tourist destinations has led to branding becoming a dominant activity in destination management, and a strong brand is a source of competitive advantage. As numerous destinations can have quality content and services, but not be recognizable on the market, a brand becomes an important source of competitive advantage by providing additional value by promising and guaranteeing potential tourists that they will experience something special and valuable at the destination. The experience of uniqueness and a sense of satisfaction are key determinants of the likelihood that tourists will recommend and revisit a particular destination (Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Hui et al., 2007; Martins, 2016). The goal is to position the destination in the minds of tourists as a unique tourist offer that provides authentic experiences, enjoyment, and satisfaction during their travels to the destination (Cai 2002; Florek & Kavaratzis 2014). This is achieved, among other things, by creating a strong brand (Freire, 2016). As a result, branding of the destination acquires a strategic role in the management of tourist destinations (Freire & Gentner, 2021), and a strong brand becomes a key driver of competitiveness and success (Scheuch, 2012).

The diverse range of content in tourist attractions, as well as the great potential of manifestations for the development of gastronomic offers, have led to special attention being given to the consideration of the possibilities of using gastronomic manifestations in strengthening the brand of destination and attracting tourists (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017; Lee et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2019). The possibility of using gastronomic manifestations in destination branding Mohanty et al., (2020) lies in the ability of gastronomy to attract a large number of people to one place, with the aim of tasting food and drinks, watching or participating in their preparation as a special form of entertainment and

recreation, while Bessière (1998) recognizes local gastronomic offer and cuisine as a key element in (re)defining local identity. Lau and Li (2019) justify the possible use of gastronomic manifestations in the function of destination branding in that they allow the local tradition and way of life of the inhabitants of a certain region to be experienced. Jiménez-Beltrán et al., (2016) argue that tourist manifestations connect tourists with the destination through emotional identification. It was determined that this is achieved through the satisfaction that tourists feel during their presence at the manifestation. Their findings are in line with the findings of Prayag et al., (2017), who found a significant correlation between the emotional experience of the tourist, the perceived images of the destination, satisfaction, and the intention to recommend the destination or its contents and manifestations to others.

The consumption of authentic food is part of an unforgettable and impressive experience of visiting and in that way affects the perception, activities and intentions of tourists to visit again the destination (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Wu and Liang (2020) also suggest that the consumption of food is associated with a unique experience that creates positive emotions that affect the decision of tourists to visit again the destination. Therefore, manifestations, such as places where the consumption of authentic food is promoted, can be used to enhance the destination brand equity (Yang et al., 2020).

Given the previously stated, it is not surprising that there is a lot of research that has had food and gastronomic offers as a subject of study in the function of destination branding. However, it is surprising that a relatively small number of works are dedicated to researching the direct role of the quality of gastronomic manifestations in the function of strengthening the value of the destination brand. Therefore, the goal of this work is to test the role of the quality of gastronomic manifestations in the function of strengthening the destination brand equity. The research was conducted on the example of the tourist destination of Vojvodina. Specifically, in this context, Vojvodina is particularly interesting as a tourist destination, which is distinguished by the richness of authentic gastronomic products (Kalenjuk et al., 2011). A large number of nations and peoples who have inhabited Vojvodina for centuries, among other things, have influenced the formation of an authentic cultural identity of Vojvodina that is reflected in its

gastronomic identity. Although the influence of different peoples is apparent in the formation of specific gastronomic identity in the rest of Serbia, Vojvodina stands out with a particularly rich and diverse gastronomic identity.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The potential that gastronomy has in attracting millions of tourists to a certain destination to enjoy the taste of unique local gastronomic products (Kivela & Crotts, 2006) has led many authors to consider how to use gastronomy as a tool to improve competitiveness and strengthen the brand of a tourist destination. The marketing potential of gastronomy in branding a destination arises from at least two reasons. First, one-third of tourist spending on a destination goes to food (Quan & Wang, 2004). Tourists need to consume food while travelling and while staying at a destination, so food is considered a significant factor in the development of tourism at a destination. Second, food is associated with feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction, which are considered key determinants that influence the choice of destination and the intention of tourists to return. Unique and authentic food contributes to increasing the value of the destination and thus the overall experience. Research by Chi and Qu (2008) shows that regardless of whether the gastronomic offer at the destination is an attraction or an integral part of the destination's tourism offer, it plays a significant role in creating a high-quality experience for tourists, which positively affects their intention to revisit the destination. It should also be added that so-called culinary tourists, i.e. tourists whose visit to a certain destination is motivated solely by the desire to enjoy the taste of gastronomic products from that destination, have a high purchasing power (López-Guzmán et al., 2014), making them an attractive market segment. Similarly, Timothy (2014) argues that gastronomy, together with folklore and oral traditions, represents a non-material determinant of destination development, which has the greatest impact on improving the competitiveness of the destination.

As a special segment of research on the role of gastronomy in enhancing the competitiveness of destinations, there are studies dedicated to studying the role of gastronomic manifestations in branding destinations. Unlike studies whose primary focus was on the role of food and

gastronomic offer in branding destinations, studies that have directly investigated the contribution of gastronomic manifestations to destination branding are very rare. They can be divided into two groups of research. One group is made up of studies that have investigated the role of gastronomic manifestations in destination branding through the gastronomic experience that tourists have experienced during their visit to the manifestation. Such research has been conducted by Folgado-Fernández et al., (2017) and Lee et al., (2017). The findings of these research indicate that a positive gastronomic experience of tourists, through the enhancement of the loyalty of the manifestation, contributes to the strengthening of the brand of the manifestation and the destination. Folgado-Fernández et al., (2017) indicate that, unlike other elements of the offer in the destination (material and immaterial), which have a positive impact on the brand destination, only positive gastronomic experiences have a direct impact on the brand of the destination. The effect of the positive gastronomic experience associated with a certain gastronomic event is even more evident and significant when it is taken into account that tourists consider it as a unique service, regardless of the range of services that are offered to them during the creation of a tourist product.

Another group of research studies examined the impact and significance of various characteristics of gastronomic manifestations on destination branding. Such research was conducted by Lee et al., (2017), Stone et al., (2018), Lee and Kwon (2021), Čavić and Mandarić (2021), and Čavić et al., (2021). Unlike studies that have examined how gastronomic experiences gained at gastronomic manifestations contribute to strengthening destination branding, studies that have studied the impact of characteristics of gastronomic manifestations on destination branding are not consistent in terms of which characteristic of the manifestation has the greatest impact on destination branding. So, Vuković and Ružičić (2020) state that authenticity and recognizability of manifestation, which they argue not only contribute to the promotion of the destination, but also to the promotion of the culture and tradition of a specific place or region. This is explained by the team that food, which is authentic to a specific place or region and is promoted through certain gastronomic manifestations, provides an authentic representation of culture for the tourist (Vuković & Ružičić, 2020). Similarly, Lee and Arcodia (2011) cite

four characteristics of gastronomic manifestations that contribute to destination branding: festival longevity, number of visitors, government support, and media coverage. The same authors (Lee & Arcodia, 2011) state that activities related to local cuisine and supporting the promotion of manifestations are characteristics of manifestations that have the greatest impact on the destination brand, while Lee and Kwon (2021) state that these are the quality of services at the manifestation and activities related to the possibility of visitors directly participating in the manifestation programs. Yang et al., (2020) state that this is the perception of the image that tourists have of the manifestation. This is in line with the results of Sohn et al., (2014), which state that a positive perception of tourists about the manifestation has a positive impact on their decision-making process in choosing a destination. The impact of previously formed positive images of gastronomic offerings on the experienced experience during a visit to the destination is well documented in the work of Kivela and Crotts (2006). Li et al., (2021) emphasize the authenticity of food. Marković et al., (2015) state that the value of the manifestation is expressed through the characteristics of the gastronomic offer, the image, and the authenticity of the destination.

The tourist potential of Vojvodina, as a gastronomic destination, is recognized by domestic authors (Kalenjuk et al., 2011, 2018). However, despite the interest of domestic authors in researching the gastronomic potential of Vojvodina, there are few studies that have investigated how to use the potential of gastronomic manifestations in improving the loyalty of tourists towards the brand of the tourist destination. Studying this issue is significant, primarily for two reasons. The first is that gastronomic manifestations represent a relatively efficient way of branding and positioning the destination (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012). On the one hand, if they are well-created and organized, they have a relatively large power to attract tourists to the destination (Beltran et al., 2016; Seyitoğlu et al., 2020). On the other hand, they do not require significant investments in infrastructure and primarily depend on the enthusiasm of local volunteers (Gursoy et al., 2004). The second reason is that Vojvodina is distinguished by a large number of gastronomic manifestations. Every year, a large number of gastronomic manifestations are held in a precisely defined time. Each of these manifestations is unique and represents diversity in customs, culture and tradition. As the authenticity of gastronomic offers is an important

segment for creating a brand of a specific place and tourist destination (Lai et al., 2018; Stone et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020), or a brand (Tsai & Wang, 2017; Lai et al., 2019; Choe & Kim, 2019; Yang et al., 2020), a large number of authentic gastronomic manifestations imply that they can be used in positioning Vojvodina as a unique and authentic destination; as a destination that offers a specific gastronomic offer, which is reflected in authentic food, delicacies and wines, numerous salas, with different architectural and cultural traditions. Since gastronomic manifestations represent an important tool, not only in promoting authentic food and drinks of a specific place and/or region, but also other material and immaterial attractions on the destination (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2016; Lau & Li, 2019), researching gastronomic manifestations in function of strengthening the brand of the tourist destination of Vojvodina, represents a challenge for researchers and a necessity in the conditions of intense competition.

The findings of Lai et al., (2019), that the characteristics of gastronomic offerings have different effects on the cognitive and affective components of the tourist's intention, imply that the results of research on the role of gastronomic manifestations in destination branding cannot be applied to a priori to other destinations, due to differences in key characteristics. Additionally, findings from Almeyda-Ibáñez and George (2017) related to destination branding indicate that cultural ambience affects differences in perceptions of the same destination characteristics. Therefore, although tourists show certain tendencies in how they evaluate brands in different cultures, the impact of the cultural environment in which the destination is located affects this issue and must be studied on a case-by-case basis (Almeyda-Ibáñez & George, 2017). Also, the findings of Henderson (2009) support the need to study the role of gastronomic manifestations in the function of destination branding on a case-by-case basis.

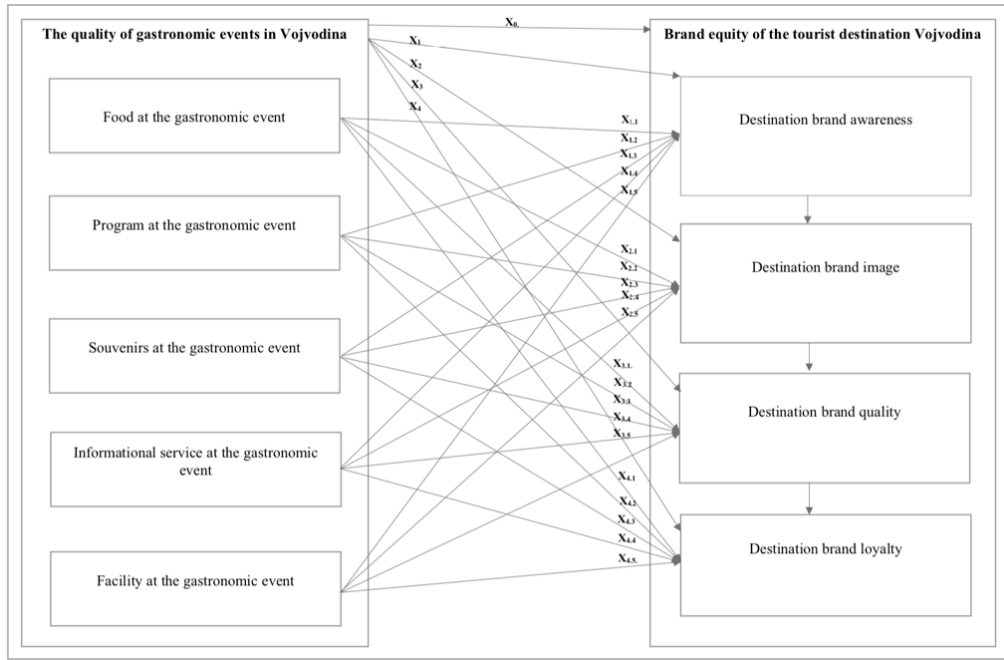
## **VARIABLES AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

As already stated, the main goal of the paper is to examine the role of the quality of gastronomic manifestations in the function of strengthening the brand of a tourist destination. The more precise research goal is to

test the impact of each individual component (dimensions) of the quality of gastronomic manifestations on each component of the destination brand equity. The research is based on the theoretical foundations of destination branding (Kaushal et al., 2019; Chi et al., 2020), the impact of gastronomy on the image of the destination and the tourist experience (Choe & Kim, 2018; Lai et al., 2018, 2019) and the role of gastronomic manifestations in destination branding (Yang et al., 2020; Akturk & Akbaba, 2021; del Pilar Leal Londoño et al., 2022). More specifically, the research model is built on the results of theoretical and empirical research by Yoon et al., (2010) and Marković et al., (2015) who identified the key dimensions of the quality of gastronomic manifestations that affect the value of the manifestation and Konecnik & Gartner (2007) who developed a model of the destination brand equity. Yoon et al., (2010) and Marković et al., (2015) identified five dimensions of the quality of gastronomic manifestations that affect the value of the manifestation: food, program, souvenirs, informational service, and facility. Konecnik and Gartner (2007) developed and empirically proved a model of destination brand value, which consists of four components: brand recognition of the destination - the strength of the brand's presence in the consumer's mind; destination imagery - the emotional perceptions consumers attach to a specific brand; destination quality - the personal judgement of consumers about the overall quality and superiority of the product; and brand loyalty to the destination - the attachment a customer has to a brand. Destination brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and its symbol, which add or subtract from the value provided by an offer of destination to a destination and/or that visitors to the destination.

According to these studies, the research model is shown in figure 1.



**Figure 1.** *The research model*

Source: Authors

As can be seen from figure 1, in the study the validity of the following hypotheses is examined:

$X_0$ : The quality of gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

$X_1$ : The quality of gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

$X_{1.1}$ : Food at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

$X_{1.2}$ : Programs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

$X_{1.3}$ : Souvenirs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

$X_{1.4}$ : Informative service at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>1.5</sub>: The facility at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the awareness of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>2</sub>: The quality of gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the image of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>2.1</sub>: Food at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the image brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>2.2</sub>: Programs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the image brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>2.3</sub>: Souvenirs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the image brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>2.4</sub>: Informative service at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the image brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>2.5</sub>: The facility at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the image brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>3</sub>: The quality of gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>3.1</sub>: Food at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>3.2</sub>: Programs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>3.3</sub>: Souvenirs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina.

X<sub>3.4</sub>: Informative service at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina

X<sub>3.5</sub>: The facility at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the quality of the brand of the tourist destination Vojvodina

X<sub>4</sub>: The quality of gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>4.1</sub>: Food at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>4.2</sub>: The programs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>4.3</sub>: Souvenirs at gastronomic manifestations have a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>24.4</sub>: The informative service at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

X<sub>4.5</sub>: The facility at gastronomic manifestations has a positive impact on the brand loyalty of the destination brand equity of Vojvodina.

The research was conducted on a sample of 600 visitors at 32 gastronomic manifestations, which were organized on the territory of Vojvodina in the second half of 2022. The survey was conducted during the holding of gastronomic manifestations. The sample size was determined by taking into account the population size, the acceptable level of confidence and the permitted error of sampling. In a more precise context, the sample size was established with consideration for a permissible sampling error of 5%, which is typically regarded as the standard in this genre of research. Additionally, it drew upon data sourced from the tourism organization of Vojvodina, indicating an annual attendance of approximately 376,000 visitors, of which only a third visit gastronomic events. Furthermore, this determination took into account the existence of over 250 gastronomic events within the geographical scope of Vojvodina. The data were collected based on a structured questionnaire, which was compiled on the basis of relevant statements proposed in the scientific literature. The validity of the questionnaire was tested by applying principal component analysis (PCA) since a high Cronbach's alpha value does not indicate a high reliability as it can simply be the result of a large number of items included in the analysis. The respondents assessed the statements from the questionnaire using the five-point Likert scale, with ratings from (1), "completely disagree", to (5), "completely agree". The statements from the questionnaire are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Gastronomic manifestation and brand equity of the tourist destination*

Variable	Issues	Source
Food at a gastronomic event (FG)	The food sold at the gastronomic event is of very good quality.	Yoon et al., (2010), Marković et al., (2015).
	The food sold at the gastronomic event is delicious.	
	The price of food at the event is in accordance with the quality of the gastronomic service.	
	The gastronomic offer at the event is diverse.	
Program at a gastronomic event (PG)	The program at the gastronomic event is fun.	
	Through the program at the gastronomic event, I learned about the culture and traditions of the destination.	
	The program at the gastronomic event is well organized.	
	The program at the gastronomic event is well managed.	
Souvenirs at a gastronomic event (SG)	Souvenirs are of high quality.	
	Souvenirs are diverse.	
	Souvenir prices are competitive with other destinations.	
Informational service at a gastronomic event (IS)	The program and schedule of events during the event is available.	
	Signaling at the event makes it easy to find your way around	
	Propaganda materials are well prepared.	
	The festival staff provides quality guide services.	
Facility at a gastronomic event (FsG)	A sufficient number of parking spaces is provided.	
	Rest areas are well prepared.	
	The destination is characterized by exclusive restaurants.	
Destination brand awareness (DBA)	I heard about the destination	Konecnik & Gartner (2007), Chen & Phou (2013).
	I am familiar with the name of the destination	
	I am familiar with the logo and symbols of the destination	
	I am familiar with the brand characteristics of the destination	
Brand image	The destination is characterized by a rich tradition and specific customs.	

	The destination is characterized by authentic gastronomy.	Konecnik & Gartner (2007), Yang et al., (2020).
	The destination is characterized by an attractive presentation of food.	
	The destination is characterized by exotic places to prepare food	
<i>Destination brand quality (DBQ)</i>	The destination is characterized by the hospitality of the local population.	Konecnik & Gartner (2007), San Matrin et al., (2018).
	The destination is characterized by numerous cultural attractions.	
	The destination is characterized by high-quality attractions.	
<i>Destination brand loyalty (DBL)</i>	The destination is characterized by the hospitality of the local population.	
	The destination is characterized by numerous cultural attractions.	
	I intend to suggest my friends to visit the destination.	

Source: Authors

The adequacy of the sample is tested using the Kaiser-Meier-Okin sample adequacy test (test value = 0.825). Also, Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2(496) = 2161.3$ ) was conducted. Since the application of the Likert scale leads to difficulties in the application of PCA, in order to alleviate the limitations of PCA analysis in the design and validation of the questionnaire, an assumption is made with interval data. Namely, the data from the questionnaire are ordinal, so it is difficult to determine whether they are normally distributed or not. On the other hand, in order to generalize the results of PCA, strict compliance with these assumptions is required. Otherwise, acceptance of this assumption is common practice when working with ordinal data. The results of the questionnaire validity test are shown in Table A1 in the appendix, with the note that an oblique Promax rotation was used. The results of the PCA analysis indicate that the questions are grouped according to expectations, respectively, so that the questionnaire can be confidently used in further analysis. The collected data were processed using the statistical package for social sciences (Gretl) and the statistical software AMOS for modelling structural equations (SEM)

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

Before the AMOS model parameters were assessed, a correlation analysis of the indicators was conducted. The first condition for the valid application of factor and structural analysis is that indicators be highly correlated and mutually replaceable. Table 2 shows the correlation matrix of indicators (variables that are measured in the model), the average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha for estimating the reliability of the multi-item sections, and the goodness-of-fit indices for the SEM model.

**Table 2.** *Correlation Matrix (squared correlation), AVE (average variance extracted), reliability and the goodness-of-fit indices*

	FG	PG	SG	IG	FsG	DBA	DBI	DBQ	DBL
FG	1								
PG	0.551	1							
SG	0.537	0.597	1						
IG	0.536	0.546	0.663	1					
FsG	0.495	0.571	0.485	0.589	1				
DBA	0.558	0.563	0.519	0.606	0.531	1			
DBI	0.497	0.489	0.474	0.572	0.568	0.443	1		
DBQ	0.601	0.446	0.594	0.501	0.492	0.497	0.552	1	
DBL	0.442	0.514	0.603	0.578	0.507	0.505	0.557	0.533	1
AVE	0.61	0.598	0.622	0.647	0.585	0.672	0.675	0.669	0.633
Reliability	0.711	0.754	0.702	0.781	0.713	0.865	0.774	0.818	0.713
RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation)				0.049					
RMSR (root mean square residual)				0.051					
NNFI (non-normed fit index)				0.981					
AGFI (adjusted GFI)				0.912					

All correlations are significant at  $p < .05$ .

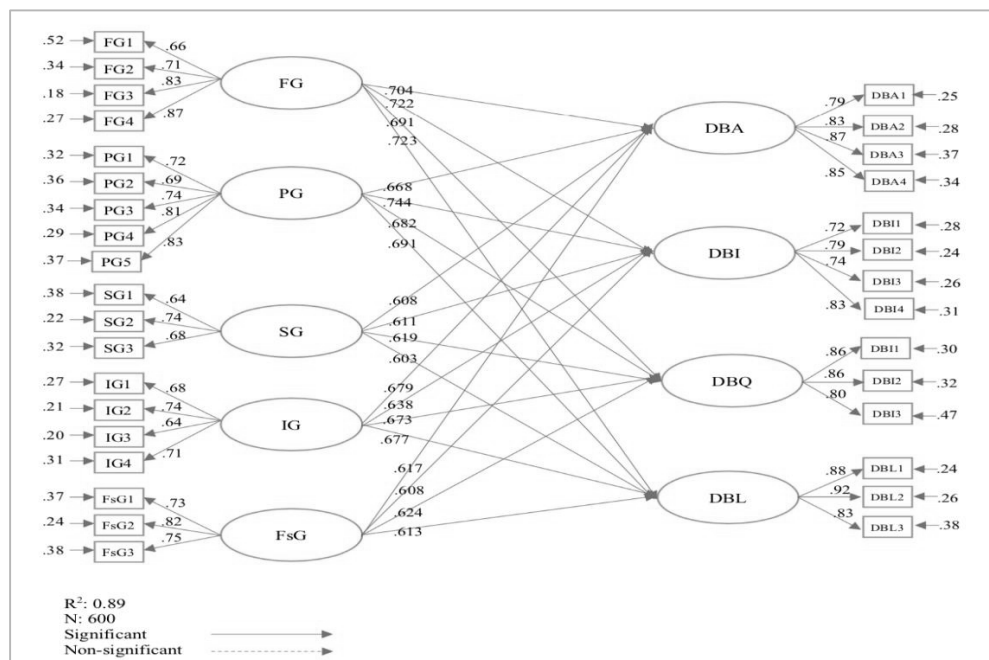
Source: Authors

The correlation matrix analysis indicates that the variables are highly

correlated with each other. The AVE for each construct was greater than the square of the correlation coefficient for the corresponding inter-constructs, which confirms discriminant validity, while the results of convergent validity of measures also contribute to convergent validity. Values of Cronbach's alpha in all cases are above 0.7, indicating an acceptable level of reliability for each construct. Additionally, construct reliability was further supported by the fact that all AVEs exceeded .50. According to the goodness-of-fit indices, the proposed structural model was found to fit the data well.

The results of the confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** *Structural model testing*



Source: Authors

As shown in Fig. 2, with respect to testing the relationships between festival quality dimensions and components of destination brand equity, it can be concluded that the quality of gastronomic events in Vojvodina has a positive impact on brand equity tourist destination Vojvodina. The

conclusion was derived based on evidence that all quality dimensions of gastronomic events have a positive impact on all components of brand equity. Also, it can be concluded that all special hypotheses from H1 to H5 are confirmed as valid since all dimensions of the quality of the gastronomic event have a statistically significant and positive influence on each component of the brand value of the destination Vojvodina. Food at a gastronomic event served as the strongest predictor of brand equity because it has the greatest influence on all components of brand value. An exception is the influence in the case of the content of the event, which has the greatest impact on the brand image of the destination. Food at a gastronomic event has a strong impact on destination brand loyalty. This indicates that this is the most important component of attraction and repeat visits.

It can be said that souvenirs have the least importance for strengthening brand equity. This means that for visitors this dimension is not particularly important and that in order to promote the brand of the tourist destination, the focus should be on other dimensions of quality. The facility at the gastronomic events has a strong impact on brand quality, while IS has a strong impact on destination brand awareness. This means that for visitors this dimension is not particularly important and that to promote the brand of the tourist destination, the focus should be on other dimensions of quality. The facility at the gastronomic events has a strong impact on brand quality, while IS has a strong impact on destination brand awareness. Such findings indicate that food is the most important element, which is expected, but also that different dimensions of the quality of the gastronomic manifestation should be used to strengthen certain components of the brand's value.

## CONCLUSION

The impact of quality of gastronomic event at brand equity of tourist destination Vojvodina, in the paper, investigated using SEM. As the findings indicated, all the quality dimensions (food, program, souvenirs, informational service, and facilities) were positively related to destination brand equity. The food at the gastronomic events was the dimension most strongly associated with equity, while programs, souvenirs, informational services, and facilities similarly influenced equity. Since all dimensions had a significant impact on the value of the



brand, it is easy to conclude that the quality of gastronomic events in Vojvodina has a significant impact on the value of the brand of the tourist destination of Vojvodina. This claim has important implications for management of tourist organization Vojvodina. An important finding of the research is that different dimensions of quality have different effects on different components of brand equity. This implies that, depending on the component of the brand value of the destination we want to improve, the accent should be on the corresponding dimension of the quality of the gastronomic event.

The finding that food at the event has the greatest impact on destination brand equity was expected. However, this finding does not corroborate earlier research. The earlier research found that the festival program predicted positive emotion and satisfaction most strongly. The powerful impact of food may be rooted in the hedonic attributes of creating a memorable experience. Festivalgoers normally undergo hedonic experiences from enjoyment in preparing and eating food geared toward the needs of attendees.

The effects of the program on destination brand equity are noteworthy since they were associated with preparing and eating food as the festival's theme. In designing a program for the gastronomic event in Vojvodina, the organizer must ensure that authenticity is attached to these experiences. In other words, the emphasis must be on the promotion of the authenticity of food and programs, because an important incentive for visiting gastronomic festivals is the search for authentic experiences.

Facilities also positively affected equity. This finding corroborates the results of earlier research, that festival facilities indirectly enhance loyalty via satisfaction. Since parking lots, rest areas, and restrooms are major subjects of visitor complaints, the focus of organizers of the gastronomic event must be on expanding rest areas and available parking space and staffing them with trained personnel. The relatively small influence of souvenirs indicates that emphasis should be placed on other dimensions of quality.

Overall, the results of our study indicate that understanding post-visitation festival experiences enables organizers to more efficiently and effectively construct appealing events that promote repeat visitation;

understanding post-visitation festival experiences: (1) increases understanding of the importance of the quality dimensions for the destination brand equity, (2) monitors reactions of visitors to revise the content of event and marketing mix accordingly, and (3) consequently increases repeat visitation or loyalty.

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# KVALITET GASTRONOMSKIH MANIFESTACIJA U FUNKCIJI JAČANJA KAPITALA BREND TURISTIČKE DESTINACIJE: STUDIJA SLUČAJA VOJVODINE

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**Sažetak:** U radu se ispituje uticaj kvaliteta gastronomskih manifestacija na kapital brenda turističke destinacije. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na primeru turističke destinacije Vojvodine. Tačnije, istraživanje je sprovedeno na uzorku od 600 posetilaca na 32 gastronomske manifestacije, koje su organizovane na teritoriji Vojvodine u drugoj polovini 2022. godine. Anketa je sprovedena tokom održavanja gastronomskih manifestacija. Istraživanje je sprovedeno pomoću SEM. Rezultati pokazuju da kvalitet gastronomskih događaja ima pozitivan uticaj na jačanje vrednosti brend destinacije. Ovaj zaključak je izveden na osnovu nalaza koji pokazuju da sve dimenzije kvaliteta gastronomskih manifestacija imaju pozitivan uticaj na sve komponente vrednosti brenda. Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da hrana na manifestaciji ima najveći uticaj na vrednost brenda destinacije, dok suveniri imaju najmanji uticaj. Programi na gastro manifestacijama imaju snažan uticaj na kvalitet brenda, dok informativne službe imaju značajan uticaj na svest o brendu destinacije.

**Ključne reči:** gastronomske manifestacije / turistička destinacija / vrednost brenda / Vojvodina.

## Appendix

**Table A1.** *Results of Principal factor analysis (factor loading)*

Variable Issues		Factor loading								
		FG	PG	SG	IG	FsG	DBA	DBI	DBQ	DBL
Food at a gastronomic event (FG)	The food sold at the gastronomic event is of very good quality.	0.632								
	The food sold at the gastronomic event is delicious.	0.691								
	The price of food at the event is in accordance with the quality of the gastronomic service.	0.705								
	The gastronomic offer at the event is diverse.	0.771								
Program at a gastronomic event (PG)	The program at the gastronomic event is fun.		0.851							
	Through the program at the gastronomic event, I learned about the culture and traditions of the destination.		0.776							
	The program at the gastronomic event is well organized.		0.699							
	The program at the gastronomic event is well managed.		0.81							
Souvenirs at a gastronomic event (SG)	Souvenirs are of high quality.			0.754						
	Souvenirs are diverse.			0.902						
	Souvenir prices are competitive with other destinations.			0.852						
Informational service at a gastronomic event (IG)	The program and schedule of events during the event is available.				0.737					
	Signaling at the event makes it easy to find your way around				0.913					



	Propaganda materials are well prepared.	0.795
	The festival staff provides quality guide services.	0.699
<i>Facility at a gastronomic event (FsG)</i>	A sufficient number of parking spaces is provided.	0.871
	Rest areas are well prepared.	0.883
	The destination is characterized by exclusive restaurants.	0.806
<i>Destination brand awareness (DBA)</i>	I heard about the destination	0.772
	I am familiar with the name of the destination	0.749
	I am familiar with the logo and symbols of the destination	0.811
	I am familiar with the brand characteristics of the destination	0.846
<i>Destination brand image (DBI)</i>	The destination is characterized by a rich tradition and specific customs.	0.717
	The destination is characterized by authentic gastronomy.	0.799
	The destination is characterized by an attractive presentation of food.	0.688
	The destination is characterized by exotic places to prepare food	0.663
<i>Destination brand quality (BDQ)</i>	The destination is characterized by the hospitality of the local population.	0.881

<i>Destination brand loyalty (DBL)</i>	The destination is characterized by numerous cultural attractions.	0.794
	The destination is characterized by high-quality attractions.	0.809
	The destination is characterized by the hospitality of the local population.	0.917
	The destination is characterized by numerous cultural attractions.	0.961
	I intend to suggest my friends to visit the destination.	0.922

Source: Authors