



## THE IMPACT OF THE LOCAL BRAND IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM. *PITA DE PECICA*

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**Abstract:** With an old symbolism, the brand concept currently defines aspects, models, features, communication, strategies, personality and value of a product, in the consumer's perception. An integral part of the country brand, the local brand has an essential role and can have a significant impact on the development and prosperity of the community, especially from a tourism point of view. The desire for relationships, for knowledge, as well as the cognitive motivation of travel are the basic elements of gastronomic tourism. Promoting local identity, the local brand often reflects the traditions, values and gastronomic culture of a certain region or even a community. With a history of over 50 years, Pita de Pecica is considered a local, national and international brand, being a key element in the development of gastronomic tourism in Arad county.

### • Introduction

Our country is in full process of recognition, appreciation of gastronomic heritage, but also of defining its culinary identity, at the level of the European Commission, it is represented by 13 certified traditional products.

One of these, "Pita de Pecica - IGP" received the IGP product certification in 2023. It is made in Pecica city, Arad County, by members of the applicant group, the Association of Traditional Products Producers ARĂDEANCA – Arad. With a history of over 200 years, -Pita de Pecica is considered a local, national, and international brand and could be a key element in the development of gastronomic tourism in Arad County.

### • Material and method

This paper conducts a study on the impact of the certified food product "Pita de Pecica" on consumer behavior and its direct influence on gastronomic tourism in the Arad area. To this end, a survey questionnaire was developed and administered among consumers. The sample studied consisted of 200 individuals.

### • Results and discussions

Of the 200 respondents, aged between 18 and 65 years, the majority have a high school diploma (61%), with the remaining 28% having a bachelor's degree, 9% holding postgraduate degrees, and 2% without a high school diploma. Most respondents come from urban areas (60%), with the remaining 40% from rural and suburban areas. Additionally, 76% are male. Regarding their financial situation, most come from families with an average monthly income.

To the question "What is your connection to the brands you use?" the response was only for 3 items (weighted average 3.06-3.21) and neutral for 5 items (weighted average 3.41-3.68).

For the question "What is your opinion on the attributes below seen through the lens of Pita de Pecica?" the majority consider the product to be of excellent quality (total agreement - weighted average 4.28), and the quality/price ratio to be very good (agreement - weighted average 4.17).

Regarding the attributes seen through the lens of Pita de Pecica ("What is your opinion on the attributes below seen through the lens Pita de Pecica?"), the majority consider the product to be a very good symbol of our local culture (total agreement - weighted average 4.17).

### Conclusions

Following the study, it is observed that there is a need for more extensive information regarding certified Romanian products in terms of their properties and nutritional value. This approach could significantly contribute to the development of effective gastronomic tourism.

The results of this study lead to other research directions regarding the ways to promote local brands and raise public awareness about the advantages of using local brands, both at an individual level and concerning their impact on the development of tourism, particularly gastronomic tourism.