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Gastronomy, Hospitality, and the Future of the Restaurant Industry

Post-COVID-19 Perspectives

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Table of Contents

Preface xiv

Acknowledgment xvii

Chapter 1
Olives and Touristic Experiences: The Case of the Olive Tree and Olive Oil Museum 1
Ricardo F. Correia, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal & CiTUR, Portugal
Palmira Felgueiras, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal
Aida Carvalho, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal & CiTUR, Portugal
Dominyka Venciute, University of Management and Economics, Lithuania

Chapter 2
The Growing Importance of Gastronomy Tourism in China 19
Poshan Yu, Soochow University, China & Krirk University, Thailand
Heng Tang, The Intellectual Property School, Jiangsu University, China
Ding Zuo, Independent Researcher, China
Ramya Mahendran, Independent Researcher, India

Chapter 3
Analysis of the Traditional Gastronomic Offer as an Engine for Local Tourism Development: Guayas, Ecuador 48
Alejandra Ycaza, Ecotec University, Ecuador
Verónica Baquerizo, Ecotec University, Ecuador
Javier Vallejo, Ecotec University, Ecuador
Guido Valero, Ecotec University, Ecuador

Chapter 4
Importance of Mediterranean Nutrition in Tourism Businesses and Current Approaches 71
Seydi Yıkmış, Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University, Turkey
Aysen Coban Dincsoy, Istanbul Gedik University, Turkey
Melikenur Türkol, Tekirdag Namık Kemal University, Turkey
Vahide Gizem Aydın, Tekirdag Namık Kemal University, Turkey

Chapter 5
Portuguese Mediterranean Diet as a Future Trend for Healthy and Sustainable Restaurant Consumption: A Post-COVID-19 Perception 90
Helena Real, TOXRUN - Toxicology Research Unit, University Institute of Health Sciences, IUCS-CESPU, Portugal & Portuguese Association of Nutrition, Portugal
Rui Rosa Dias, ISAG - European Business School, Portugal & Research Center in Business Sciences and Tourism (CICET-FCVC), Portugal

Chapter 6
COVID-19, Food Safety, Risk Assessment, and Future Approaches in the Food Industry 115
Ayşen Çoban Dinçsoy, Istanbul Gedik University, Turkey

Chapter 7
The Present and Future of Gastronomy Against Global Threats 139
Cigdem Sabbag, Adiyaman University, Turkey

Chapter 8
An Investigation of Key Success Factors for Kebab as an Example of Local Food Tourism in Bonab: Customer Perspectives 165
Hamed Rezapouraghdam, Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkey
Osman M. Karatepe, Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkey
Hasan Kilic, Eastern Mediterranean University, Turkey

Chapter 9
Tourism and Gastronomy in the "New Normal": Building the Case for the Rise of Consumer Spiritual Quest to Feed the Body, the Mind, and the Soul 176
Mafalda Nogueira, IPAM, Portugal

Chapter 10
The Portuguese Hospitality and Restaurant Industry: Tax Challenges Post COVID-19 191
Susana Cristina Rodrigues Aldeia, ISAG - European Business School, Portugal & Research Center in Business Sciences and Tourism (CICET-FCVC), Portugal
Paulo Macedo, ISAG - European Business School, Portugal & Research Center in Business Sciences and Tourism (CICET-FCVC), Portugal
Liliana Ivone Pereira, IPCA, Portugal
Joaquim Jorge Mota, IPCA, Portugal

Chapter 11
Mass Masstige Index: Application in Wine Brands and the Importance in Restaurant Communication 208
Paula Rodrigues, Universidade Lusíada Porto, Portugal & Research Centre in Organizations, Markets and Industrial Management, Porutgal & BRU, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, Portugal
Ana Pinto Borges, ISAG - European Business School, Portugal & Research Center in Business Sciences and Tourism (CICET-FCVC), Portugal & COMEGI, Portugal,Portugal
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Chapter 12
Restaurant Industry in the Tourist City of Eastern Europe: Post-COVID-19 Perspectives – The Case of Lviv, Ukraine 220
Mykhailo Rutynskyi, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine
Halyna Kushniruk, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine

Chapter 13
Co-Creation of Destination Image and Food Tourism of the Emerging Economies 244
Rahmat Hashim, Taylor's University, Malaysia
Mohd Raziff Jamaluddin, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

Compilation of References 258

About the Contributors 313

Index 320

Chapter 12
Restaurant Industry in the Tourist City of Eastern Europe: Post-COVID-19 Perspectives – The Case of Lviv, Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

This chapter is devoted to the issue of post-COVID-19 revitalization of the restaurant industry in Lviv – one of the most representative tourist cities in Eastern Europe. Lviv is a fashionable and inexpensive destination of international gastronomic tourism. The modern restaurant industry developed in Lviv until 2020. Statistical trends of losses of the city's restaurant industry, in 2020 to the the first half of 2021, are unprecedentedly: 27% of establishments were closed; more than 55% of staff lost their jobs. However, the status of the cultural and tourist capital saved the restaurant industry of Lviv from collapse. Thanks to the acquired image and promotional campaigns in 2020–2021, domestic tourists actively visited Lviv during periods of easing of quarantine restrictions and enjoyed original local gastronomic products. The strategic goal in the post-COVID-19 era is to complete the transformation of the traditional business partnership into an updated smart hospitality cluster in Lviv.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which had led to social distancing, remote working, and even the closure of the restaurant business, many restaurants have faced enormous operational challenges. However, in 2021, the restaurant business is expected to grow, mainly due to companies rearranging their operations

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and recovering from the COVID-19 impact. The global restaurants market is expected to grow from $2193.94 billion in 2020 to $2619.27 billion in 2021 at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 19.4% (Restaurants and Mobile Food Services Global Market Report, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic caused massive restrictions on the restaurant market in 2020, as governments imposed restrictions on domestic and international travel, limiting the need for services offered by these establishments. In 2020-2021, Ukraine proved to be the weakest country in Europe in terms of the effectiveness of counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic and supporting business entities. In particular, the tourism sector and the hospitality industry have been the most vulnerable to restrictions. As a result, tourist centers in Ukraine have suffered large-scale destructive losses (Danylyshyn, 2020; European Bank Report, 2020; etc.). The hospitality industry of Ukraine consists of almost 100 thousand commercial facilities – restaurants and cafes, hotels, tour operators and travel agencies. From March 2020, all these facilities were completely closed until the summer for the period of total lockdown. Further functioning of the hospitality sector graphically resembles a sinusoid, where situational restarts chronologically coincide with the easing of quarantine restrictions introduced by the government, and alternate with periods of stagnation in the relevant periods of total lockdown in Ukraine.

According to official data, the hospitality business in Ukraine by the end of 2020 lost at least $ 1.5 billion. More than 400,000 HoReCa employees have lost their jobs. The hospitality industry of major tourist cities of Ukraine has suffered huge financial and infrastructural losses. In particular, in 2020 the restaurant industry of Ukraine lost almost 4 thousand restaurants (20.7% of the total). As of January 1, 2021, there were 14,786 restaurants, cafes and bars (vs 18,636 establishments in 2020). The capacity of the restaurant market decreased in 2020 by almost 30% and amounted to $ 0.5 billion (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2021).

At the beginning of 2020, about 550,000 people worked in the restaurant sector. Now there are a third less of them. Almost 150,000 employees in the restaurant industry have lost their jobs due to lockdowns and quarantine restrictions in Ukraine. These are the people who worked in cafes and restaurants that closed due to the pandemic COVID-19 and those who were fired due to falling restaurant attendance. Most of these people will not return to work in the restaurant industry. Most of them have found work in other fields. The professional labor market, which has been formed over the years, has suffered huge losses. In 2021, this caused a big problem for the restaurant industry, many restaurant establishments simply cannot find enough professionals.

The biggest financial and infrastructural losses were suffered by the hospitality industry of large tourist cities of Ukraine, which was market-oriented to serve tourist flows, which grew steadily until 2020 (Rutynskyi & Kushniruk, 2020a). In Kyiv, Lviv and Odessa, every seventh restaurant closed after the spring lockdown (14% of the total). The number of other food establishments decreased by 12%.

Lviv is one of the largest tourist cities in Eastern Europe. It should be noted that the historical center of Lviv is included in the list of the UNESCO World Heritage Sites (L'viv – the Ensemble of the Historic Centre, 2021). The city is located near the eastern border of the EU and thanks to popular low-cost flights is tightly integrated into the pan-European international travel industry. Lviv is closely connected with more than a hundred large cities of Great Britain, the EU, Turkey and other countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, the Caucasus, and the Arabian Peninsula through a network of low-cost routes.

The Telegraph, influential British editorial, named Lviv as one of 12 most exciting new routes in 2018. Lviv was on the 5th place in the list. Fiona Duncan, after visiting for Telegraph Travel, said: "Though Lvivians of today are known for both their fervent nationalism and for their churchgoing, their city has an easy-going, almost frivolous air, filled with university students, embellished by its frothy confection

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