

~ ЕКОНОМІКА ТУРИЗМУ ТА ГОТЕЛЬНО-РЕСТОРАННА СПРАВА ~

УДК: 338.486.4:640.4:392.8(477)

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32680/2409-9260-2025-4-329-130-138>

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN UKRAINE BASED ON THE PRINCIPLES OF THE SLOW FOOD CONCEPT

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Abstract. The purpose of this study is to substantiate strategic approaches to the development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine based on the Slow Food concept, highlighting its potential as a driver of sustainable development. The research aims to identify the main challenges and opportunities in adapting global Slow Food principles to the Ukrainian context. The research is based on a combination of theoretical analysis and practical assessment using SWOT analysis and the TOWS matrix. It examines internal and external factors that influence the implementation of Slow Food-based gastronomic tourism. The study also explores international best practices and current initiatives in Ukraine, with a focus on strategic planning. The findings demonstrate significant potential for the development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine underpinned by Slow Food values such as quality, sustainability, and cultural authenticity. The analysis reveals existing but fragmented initiatives driven by local communities and individual stakeholders. Key strengths include Ukraine's rich culinary heritage, rising demand for organic products, and growing interest in authentic cultural experiences. At the same time, several weaknesses persist, including limited awareness of Slow Food principles, underdeveloped infrastructure, and seasonal constraints. External threats such as globalization, climate change, and the commercialization of traditions are also identified. Based on the SWOT analysis, four strategic scenarios were proposed: development, overcoming limitations, protection and survival. Each scenario includes targeted measures to support tourism development while preserving local culinary traditions. Among the most promising strategies are the creation of gastronomic clusters, educational programs for producers and guides, culinary events, and collaboration with global Slow Food network. The implementation of these strategies can strengthen Ukraine's regional tourism potential, preserve gastronomic heritage and support the formation of sustainable, community-based businesses. The practical significance of the research results lies in the development of strategic scenarios that serve as the basis for the formulation of regional tourism policies and business initiatives based on Slow Food principles.

Key words: slow food, sustainable development, gastronomic tourism, culinary and cultural heritage, strategy.

СТРАТЕГІЇ РОЗВИТКУ ГАСТРОНОМІЧНОГО ТУРИЗМУ В УКРАЇНІ НА ПРИНЦИПАХ КОНЦЕПЦІЇ SLOW FOOD

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Анотація. Метою дослідження є обґрунтування стратегічних підходів до розвитку гастрономічного туризму в Україні на основі концепції Slow Food, як однієї з рушійних сил сталого розвитку. Методологія дослідження ґрунтується на теоретичному аналізі та практичній оцінці даних із застосуванням SWOT-аналізу та матриці TOWS. У межах аналізу вивчено внутрішні й зовнішні чинники впливу на розвиток гастрономічного туризму на основі принципів Slow Food, таких як якість, сталий розвиток та культурна автентичність. Визначено, що гастрономічний туризм в Україні має значний стратегічний потенціал для розвитку на цінностях Slow Food. Українські практики Slow Food, що реалізуються місцевими громадами та окремими зацікавленими сторонами, хоча і носять фрагментарний характер, виступають підґрунтям для розкриття можливостей національного гастрономічного туризму. Серед них виділено вектор реалізації концепції сталого розвитку, поширення ідеї Slow Food серед ключових зацікавлених сторін, інтеграцію Slow Food у популярні туристичні напрямки. Сильними сторонами визначено багату гастрономічну спадщину України, зростаючий

попит на органічні продукти та підвищений інтересу до автентичного культурного досвіду. Водночас зберігаються певні слабкі сторони, включаючи обмежену обізнаність про принципи Slow Food, нерозвинену інфраструктуру та сезонність. Глобалізація, зміна клімату та комерціалізація традицій визначені основними зовнішніми загрозами. На основі результатів SWOT-аналізу та групування факторів TOWS запропоновано чотири сценарії стратегічного розвитку гастрономічного slow туризму: розвиток, подолання обмежень, оборона та виживання. Кожен сценарій включає заходи для підтримки розвитку туризму зі збереженням місцевих гастрономічних традицій залежно від сили впливу зовнішніх і внутрішніх факторів. До найбільш перспективних стратегій віднесено створення гастрономічних кластерів, освітні програми для виробників і гідів, проведення кулінарних подієвих заходів та співпрацю з глобальною мережею Slow Food. Реалізація цих стратегій може посилити регіональний туристичний потенціал України, зберегти гастрономічну спадщину та створити сприятливі умови для місцевого бізнесу на засадах сталого розвитку. Практична значущість результатів дослідження полягає в розробці стратегій, які слугують основою для формулювання регіональної туристичної політики та бізнес-ініціатив на принципах Slow Food.

Ключові слова: slow food, сталий розвиток, гастрономічний туризм, кулінарна та культурна спадщина, стратегія.

JEL Classification: L830, O130, Z100

Statement of the problem. Global awareness of the impact of human activity on the environment has expanded with the beginning of the implementation of the goals of sustainable development and has led to the emergence of new trends in the development of the tourism and travel sector. Modern tourists increasingly seek to get not only visual impressions from travel, but also culinary experiences through which they get acquainted with the culture and traditions of the country and region. The problems of sustainable development, including the preservation of ecological balance and cultural identity, are becoming increasingly important in the conditions of anthropogenic pressure on natural and socio-cultural resources. At the same time, globalization, although it creates new opportunities for international tourism, at the same time threatens the unification of gastronomic culture, gradually displacing local features. In response to this, the Slow Food movement arose as a reaction to the spread of fast food and the standardization of food culture, which has become an alternative to mass tourism and is becoming increasingly widespread throughout the world.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Gastronomic tourism has become a subject of growing interest among both international and Ukrainian researchers. Recent studies have increasingly focused on the relationship between gastronomic tourism and sustainable development. Key aspects of such research include the potential of gastronomic tourism to stimulate and diversify local economies [1-4] to support the preservation and promotion of local culinary traditions and cultural heritage [5-6], and to foster the development of individual gastronomic destinations through partnerships and the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders [2, 7-8]. Other important issues include the reduction of food waste, support for organic farming, the use of local and seasonal products, and the environmentally responsible practices of food service establishments [3-4, 8]. In this context, the “Slow Food” movement is gaining increasing support. This concept promotes a slower pace of life, which is reflected in efforts to counteract the rapid globalization of the service industry, preserve regional culinary traditions, and encourage the unhurried enjoyment of food. This definition has become used to describe a way of eating and type of conscious consumerism that encourages respecting seasonality, reducing environmental impact within food production, encouraging better education around the food system and supporting local producers and their heritage» [9]. Foreign and Ukrainian scholars interpret slow food [5, 8, 10-15] as one of the concepts of sustainable development, the spread of which has resulted in slow travel, slow city and others. The leader of the Slow Food movement in Ukraine, Yulia Pitenko, believes that the main goal of the concept lays on the next tendency: “slow is not a food, it’s the attitude to life that transmitted through it. Thoughtfully, not hastily or superficially, but with pleasure, gratitude, and understanding of how this food got to the table and what qualities it carries” [5]. In their study, T.-Y Huang and others found out that authenticity and slowness significantly influence the experience of slow food tourists, while environmental awareness did not influence the experience of such tourists, indicating its significant contribution to achieving sustainable development goals. They also found that the experience of slow food positively affects the quality of life of tourists [15]. At the same time, by analyzing the popularity of search queries on the topic of “slow food” in Google trends over the past 5 years worldwide, a heterogeneous regional distribution of interest in this topic was identified. The most popular topic remains in Kosovo, Italy, the United Kingdom, Australia and Ireland. Ukraine is in 40th place for these queries. In these countries, Slow Food began with gastronomic considerations and was later developed as a social movement phenomenon [13], actively spreading into gastronomic tourism. There is currently no consensus among experts

and scholars on what exactly constitutes slow gastronomic tourism [14] and the foundations on which it is based [15].

The article is devoted to the identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem. As the concept of slow tourism is relatively new, there is still no clear interpretation that would also encompass gastronomic tourism, despite its direct link to Slow Food. Furthermore, despite the importance of slow thinking, little is known about how the Slow Food offer can be developed, promoted or highlighted under the name of “slow gastronomic tourism”. Therefore, there is a need to investigate how Slow Food can be taken into account in the tourist offer of gastronomic tourism in the long term.

The purpose of research. The purpose of the study is to substantiate strategic approaches to the development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine based on the Slow Food concept as a factor of sustainable development.

Presenting of the main research material. Gastronomic tourism, as one of the most dynamic forms of contemporary tourism, is aimed at exploring and experiencing authentic culinary traditions, local products, and beverages that are characteristic of specific regions. In light of current trends, this type of tourism serves not only recreational purposes but also contributes to socio-economic development, environmental responsibility, and the preservation of cultural identity within territories.

The traditional space of a tourist's gastronomic experience can be conceptualized as an interactive system comprising three essential elements: the gastronomic product, the consumer, and the location. It is noteworthy that tourists are increasingly interested in immersing themselves in the culinary cultures of various regions, seeking not merely gastronomic pleasure but a conscious consumption experience [7], which is grounded in the principles of quality, cleanliness, and fairness-core values of the Slow Food movement. The principle of “good” refers to the consumption of delicious, high-quality, and natural food prepared according to traditional recipes that reflect the region’s culinary heritage. The principle of «clean» emphasizes the use of organic ingredients, the avoidance of chemical pesticides, herbicides, and GMOs, and adherence to environmentally sustainable practices. Meanwhile, the principle of “fair” focuses on supporting local producers, fostering community entrepreneurship, and enhancing opportunities for local populations to represent their way of life and culture through gastronomy.

These principles form the foundation of contemporary gastronomic tourism, which integrates environmental awareness, ethical consumption, and a respect for cultural authenticity (Fig. 1), aligning with the values promoted by the Slow Food movement. This combination fosters a culture of responsible food consumption, reduces food loss, preserves biodiversity, and supports ecosystem sustainability. Moreover, gastronomic tourism inspired by Slow Food principles facilitates a hedonistic yet reflective appreciation of taste as part of a broader cultural experience, which, in turn, stimulates conscious consumption and a deeper understanding of local gastronomic identities.

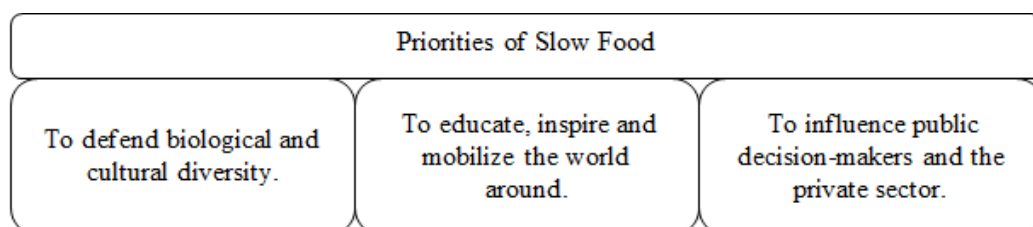


Fig. 1. Priorities of Slow Food

Source: created by the authors based on [11]

The integration of Slow Food principles into gastronomic tourism (Fig. 2) brings together gastronomic, social, and environmental objectives, establishing a sustainable development model that harmonizes the relationships among people, the natural environment, and cultural heritage. In this context, Slow Food may serve as a platform for the balanced development of gastronomic tourism through the consistent application of its principles in the planning and delivery of tours and excursions.

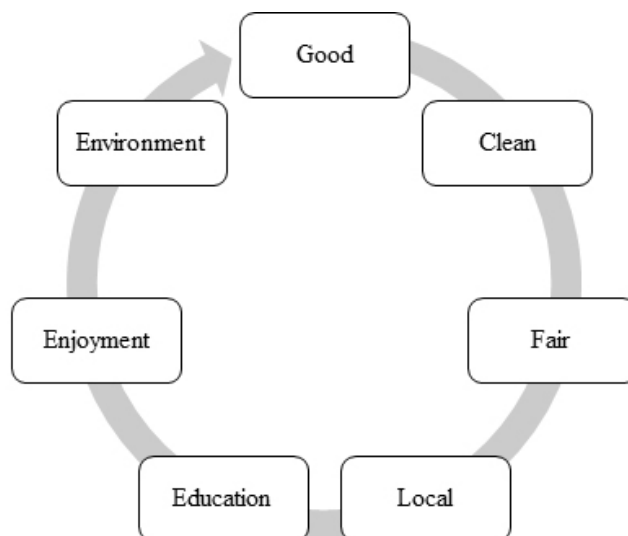


Fig. 2. Slow food principles in gastronomic tourism

Source: created by the authors based on [2, 8, 12]

According to the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, the concept of Slow Food has followers in 160 countries around the world. In Italy alone, there are 394 presidia (communities) that manage such activities throughout the region [16]. Regions such as Tuscany, Piedmont, Emilia-Romagna and Sicily are famous for their traditional products, farms and restaurants that adhere to the principles of Slow Food. There are numerous agritourism, wine tours and cooking workshops that introduce local gastronomy. There is a global network of local communities that protect cultural and biological diversity, spread knowledge about healthy eating and call for a fair food policy for all [8]. The French regions of Brittany, Provence and Lyon offer unique gastronomic experiences based on local ingredients and traditional recipes. In Spain (Catalonia), attention is paid to the preservation of local varieties and traditional production methods. Tourists are attracted by farmers' markets and gastronomic tours dedicated to local delicacies. Restaurants promote the "kilometer zero" philosophy, which indicates the locality and freshness of products. The Austrian region of Alpe-Adria became one of the first official "Slow Food Travel" destinations in the world, offering tourists an introduction to local producers, traditional crafts and unique cuisine. In Ukraine, the global Slow Food development initiative is supported and promoted by «Slow Food UA», which was founded in 2004. It includes more than ten Slow Food communities. Their largest projects are listed in Table 1. Such initiatives are aimed at popularizing local products, restoring traditional recipes, and involving tourists in the process of cooking, which contributes to the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

Table 1

Some of the global projects of Slow Food UA

| № | Project name | Characteristic |
|----|-----------------|--|
| 1. | Food for Change | The campaign focuses on preserving culinary traditions and fostering biodiversity. The organization collaborates closely with local communities and producers to safeguard traditional recipes, native ingredients, and artisanal food production methods. By celebrating these elements, the company ensures their preservation, allowing future generations to experience and enjoy them. |
| 2. | Seeds & GMO | The SLOW FOOD movement stands against the commercial cultivation of genetically modified crops and advocates for non-GMO products and animal feed. The use of genetically modified organisms poses the risk of transforming food into a patented commodity dominated by a handful of transnational corporations. This endangers not only the survival of traditional food crops but also the livelihoods of small-scale farmers. |

| | | |
|----|---------------------------------|--|
| 3 | Slow Travel Food | Tourism has the potential to play a significant role in strengthening sustainable local food systems. Slow Food Travel, a sustainable culinary tourism initiative, offers immersive travel experiences that empower rural communities and celebrate local culinary traditions. |
| 4. | Food Waste | Slow Food advocates that reducing food waste is essential for creating a sustainable food system, especially in a world where resources are limited, and millions suffer from undernourishment. |
| 5. | Solidarity gastro tourism | During their shared journeys, ukrainian participants exchange experiences, valuable advice, and inspiring stories that support local communities and drive positive change for both individuals and society. They visit farmers, small craft farms, national parks, and reserves. |
| 6. | Atlas of Taste “Ark of Ukraine” | In 2015, the “Atlas of the Ark of Taste” program was launched, highlighting unique and authentic products that contribute to the food biodiversity of various countries. From the outset, this project was active in Ukraine. As part of the DIGE project and under the auspices of SLOW FOOD UA, the University of Gastronomic Sciences created the Ukrainian online catalog “Ark of Taste.” This catalog features 85 traditional Ukrainian products, though research suggests that the actual number should be significantly higher. |
| 7. | Seeds: Made in Ukraine | Due to the globalization of the global seed market, indigenous plant, herb, and fruit and berry tree varieties are disappearing in Ukraine. SLOW FOOD UA works to preserve and distribute traditional seeds and seedlings, searches for ancient varieties with unique flavors and qualities, researches regional dishes connected to these varieties, contributes information to the global online catalog of endangered plant varieties and livestock breeds in the international «Ark of Taste» project, establishes online and offline seed exchange and sales points, and collaborates with the international network of traditional seed keepers. |
| 8. | Land children of | The movement combines theoretical knowledge with the practical one and teaches children how to take care for plants. It also actively involves children in public events and campaigns aimed at preserving the environment or protecting local ecosystems. For example, cleaning up areas together with adults, gardening, planting trees and bushes. |

Source: created by the authors based on [17-19]

In addition, local and professional communities disseminate slow food initiatives and projects among students, integrating the economic, political, environmental and cultural principles of slow food. The most famous among them are Academicians (Kyiv), Beekeepers of the Ukrainian Carpathians (Lviv), Development of local craft cheesemaking in Ukraine, Delicious, clean and honest products of the Kyiv region, Creation of permaculture centers in Ukraine to support and preserve local ecosystems, Preservation of the gastronomic heritage of Southern Bessarabia, village of Primorske, Odesa region and others [17].

Such initiatives not only contribute to the popularization of Ukrainian traditions but also serve as a platform for international cooperation and the exchange of experience. However, in Ukraine, the implementation of Slow Food practices remains fragmented. This is attributed to both the limited availability of resources and infrastructure, and the insufficient institutionalization of this approach within national and local tourism policies. While the Slow Food concept is being actively implemented in several European countries (Italy, Austria, Slovenia, Denmark) as a strategic component of sustainable tourism, in Ukraine, its adoption is still primarily occurring at the local level and is initiated by individual tourism business entities, public organizations, or local communities. Nevertheless, the sporadic manifestations of the Slow Food philosophy in Ukrainian gastronomic tourism demonstrate the presence of positive developments towards the formation of sustainable tourism practices grounded in local identity, environmental consciousness, and the support of local communities. To identify strategic guidelines for the further development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine based on the Slow Food philosophy, a SWOT analysis was conducted. Based on its results, TOWS [20] factors were grouped to create possible scenarios for the strategic development of gastronomic tourism based on the principles of Slow Food (Tables 2, 3).

Table 2

The influence of internal factors on the development of gastronomic tourism based on the principles of slow food

| Internal factors | |
|--|--|
| <p>Strengths (S):</p> <p>S 1. Slow Food offers tourists a unique experience of local culture and cuisine.</p> <p>S 2. Supporting local farmers, organic products, and traditional production methods.</p> <p>S3. Slow Food is associated with quality, health, and environmental awareness.</p> <p>S 4. Slow Food has a global and national community that brings together producers, chefs, and tourists.</p> <p>S4. Contributes to the preservation of intangible heritage through the popularization of traditional dishes and recipes.</p> | <p>Weaknesses (W) :</p> <p>W 1. Local products may only be available in a certain area. Some products are only available during certain times of the year, which may limit tourist offerings.</p> <p>W 2. Traditional cooking methods require more time, which may not meet the expectations of some tourists.</p> <p>W 3 Slow Food products may be more expensive due to environmentally friendly production.</p> <p>W4. Low awareness among tourists of the principles of Slow Food.</p> |

Source: created by the authors

Table 3

The influence of external factors on the development of gastronomic tourism based on the principles of slow food

| External factors | |
|--|---|
| <p>Opportunities (O):</p> <p>O 1. Development of gastronomic tours with the organization of festivals, tastings, culinary master classes for tourists and the integration of Slow Food into popular tourism destinations.</p> <p>O 2. Promotion through social networks, blogs and travel platforms.</p> <p>O 3. Spreading the idea of Slow Food through key stakeholders.</p> <p>O 4. Growing interest in organic products, healthy lifestyles and sustainable tourism.</p> | <p>Threats (T):</p> <p>T 1. Globalization and mass gastronomic tourism can reduce demand for local products.</p> <p>T 2. Negative impact of climate change on the availability of seasonal local products.</p> <p>T 3. Reduction in population incomes and, as a consequence, the number of tourists willing to spend money on individual and unique gastronomic tourism offers.</p> <p>T 4. The commercialization of Slow Food can lead to a loss of authenticity.</p> |

Source: created by the authors

Four types of scenarios were considered:

SO-strategies: internal strengths can be used to realize external opportunities – development strategy.

WO-strategies: minimizing internal weaknesses or developing missing strengths to realize external opportunities – strategy to overcome limitations.

ST-strategies: internal strengths are used to minimize external threats – defense strategy.

WT-strategies: minimizing internal weaknesses to avoid external threats – defense strategy or survival strategy.

It was found that Slow Food demonstrates the potential to activate the development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine based on the principles of sustainable development, however, some internal weaknesses and external threats slow down this process.

Development Strategy (SO). Using the Sustainable Development Goals as an advantage to develop routes that combine gastronomic locations that offer tourists a unique experience of local culture and cuisine, environmentally friendly products and traditional production methods. Expanding the range of services based on Slow principles and turning them into tourist magnets. Using a wide range of stakeholders to promote the Slow Food concept through culinary stories, videos and partner materials from famous chefs both on online platforms and blogging, as well as cooperation with hotel and restaurant businesses in urban and rural areas and tour operators. Creating gastronomic Slow Food clusters with the participation of all stakeholders, including local authorities. Participation in grants and competitions for the development of entrepreneurial initiatives. Due to the popularization of the Slow Food concept and the growing demand for gastronomic tours, organize events where tourists can taste traditional dishes, participate in master

classes and get to know local producers without rushing. You should also offer tourists gastronomic packages that combine local culinary experience with a comfortable stay. Cooperation with Slow Food Global and Slow Food Ukraine to promote and popularize gastronomic tours based on Slow Food principles. Development of route maps, provision of location markings and development of tourist infrastructure with the support of authorities.

Strategy for overcoming limitations (WO). Training local producers, restaurateurs, guides in Slow Food principles for conducting excursions. Preparing alternative programs of tours and excursions taking into account the seasonality factor. Using the educational and cognitive function of gastronomic tourism to conduct workshops for tourists on preparing traditional dishes and gaining Slow Food experience. Expanding the offer through cooperation with restaurants that offer affordable Slow Food options and cooperation with local producers in organizing excursions and tastings based on Slow Food principles. Developing virtual tours that popularize Slow Food can demonstrate its advantages and uniqueness, expand the target audience through growing interest in organic products and a sustainable lifestyle.

Protection Strategy (ST) should emphasize the uniqueness of Slow Food's expertise in marketing campaigns to combat mass gastronomic tourism. This will allow the involvement of international experts and tourists to Ukrainian Slow Food festivals and projects through partnerships with the global Slow Food network and Slow Food Ukraine. Use alternative local products in the event of climate change or seasonal restrictions. Conduct online broadcasts of master classes on cooking authentic dishes to popularize gastronomic tourism locations. Create an atmosphere of hospitality at the locations. Protect the authenticity of the concept by promoting ideas of sustainability rather than mass consumption, including the development of regulations that encourage an ethical approach to gastronomic tourism.

Survival Strategy (WT). Creation of budget gastronomic excursions for tourists. Participation in international and Ukrainian social and entrepreneurial projects with funding to support local economies. Form a tourist offer for gastronomic tourism based on Slow Food principles, taking into account seasonality and selling local products and ready-made dishes to tourists. Development of certification for authentic Slow Food locations to avoid commercialization of the concept. Launching "Buy Local" initiatives and creating platforms for direct sales from producers to consumers to draw attention to local cuisine and local traditions.

In addition, local governments, as one with the influence of stakeholders at all stages of the implementation of each strategy, should work on the development of important infrastructure facilities, such as roads connecting popular gastronomic slow food locations, toilets, parking lots, tourist information centers, etc. The proposed strategies can help ensure long-term sustainability and preserve the gastronomic locations and cultural heritage of Ukraine, while providing high-quality impressions from visitors.

The proposed strategies have prospects for Ukraine. Each of them offers a unique scenario for strategic planning for the development of gastronomic tourism based on the principles of Slow Food, depending on the influence of external and internal factors and the behavior of stakeholders. Their implementation will contribute to the growth of the tourist attractiveness of regions, the preservation of gastronomic heritage and its popularization, and the creation of favorable conditions for the development of local business based on the principles of sustainable development.

Research conclusions and prospects for further research in this scientific direction. The results of the study indicate significant potential for the development of gastronomic tourism in Ukraine based on the Slow Food concept. This approach combines the principles of sustainable development, local identity and cultural authenticity. An analysis of existing practices shows that fragmented manifestations of the Slow Food concept are already present in Ukraine. A comprehensive SWOT analysis was conducted to assess both internal factors and external conditions affecting the implementation of Slow Food-oriented gastronomic tourism. The identified strengths include Ukraine's rich gastronomic heritage, the growing demand for environmentally friendly products and the growing interest in authentic cultural experiences. Opportunities were also noted, in particular those arising from the Sustainable Development Goals, international cooperation and the expansion of creative tourism. At the same time, several internal weaknesses were highlighted, such as the fragmented nature of existing initiatives, limited awareness of stakeholders and insufficient infrastructure, as well as external threats, including seasonality, climate change and the commercialization of cultural traditions. Based on this analysis, four flexible strategic scenarios were proposed: development (SO), overcoming weaknesses (WO), protection (ST) and survival (WT). Each scenario outlines targeted solutions aimed at promoting the development of gastronomic tourism, while preserving the authenticity of local cuisine and traditions. The

implementation of these strategies is expected to enhance regional tourism appeal and foster the development of local businesses rooted in sustainability. These directions represent promising avenues for future research, particularly in terms of evaluating the long-term socio-economic and environmental impacts of Slow Food-based tourism initiatives in various Ukrainian regions.

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Стаття надійшла до редакції 14.04.2025

Прийнята до публікації 25.04.2025

Опубліковано онлайн 12.05.2025