

THE OPPORTUNITY TO ESTABLISH A LOCAL GASTRONOMIC POINT IN FLOREȘTI COMMUNE, CLUJ COUNTY

JURJE MARA OANA¹, POP FRANCESCA MARIA¹, ARION FELIX H.*¹

¹*University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine, Faculty of Horticulture and Business in Rural Development, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

*Corresponding author's e-mail: felixarion@usamvcluj.ro

Abstract: This paper introduces a novel business concept, Local Gastronomic Points (PGL), aimed at providing an authentic culinary adventure by showcasing regional cuisine. PGLs are unique destinations where private kitchens bring to life specific regional recipes, delivering a genuine gastronomic experience to the end consumer. This paper delves into the concept, its potential impact on local communities, and the exciting prospects it offers in the ever-evolving culinary landscape.

Key words: *traditional, peasant household, local producers, sanitary-veterinary norms*

INTRODUCTION

The world is a treasure trove of diverse and delectable cuisines, each region boasting its own culinary identity [7,9,10]. Local gastronomic spots, or PGLs, emerge as a business idea to celebrate and share these distinct flavors [1,3,4]. This paper explores the concept's genesis, highlighting the importance of preserving traditional recipes and creating direct connections between passionate cooks and eager food enthusiasts.

PGLs are characterized by private kitchens that meticulously prepare dishes according to specific regional recipes. These kitchens serve as hubs for culinary exploration, offering consumers an opportunity to savor authentic flavors that are often overlooked in mainstream dining establishments. The essence lies in the personal touch, as cooks bring not only their culinary skills but also the stories and traditions behind each dish. PGLs are more than just dining venues; they are immersive experiences. This section explores how PGLs can transform a meal into a journey, with chefs engaging customers in the cultural and historical context of the cuisine. Whether it's a cozy home kitchen or a vibrant street food stall, PGLs transport diners to the heart of the region through the magic of local ingredients and cooking techniques.

Beyond the gastronomic pleasures, PGLs have the potential to contribute significantly to local economies. By supporting small-scale cooks and food entrepreneurs, PGLs foster community development and create unique selling points for tourism. This article examines the economic and social implications, shedding light on how PGLs can become catalysts for positive change. Local gastronomic point (hereinafter referred to as PGL) are destinations represented by private kitchens, where food is prepared according to specific regional recipes and served directly to the end consumer.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried on in the proximity of Cluj-Napoca, as it is a city with a diverse community, Florești gastronomy reflects ethnic diversity as Hungarian and Saxon Cuisine Goulash (beef soup) and Kürtőskalács (a type of traditional pastry). As a local gastronomic point should be placed in a village, Florești commune from Cluj County as chosen as being the most suitable place. Florești, formerly known as Feneșu Săsesc until 1924, is a commune in Cluj County, Transylvania, Romania. Comprising the villages of Florești (the administrative center), Luna de Sus, and Tăuți. The commune of Florești is a first-category commune and is currently experiencing continuous upward economic development [4,15].

The total area of the commune is 6074 hectares, including: 1,877 hectares of arable land, 1,406 hectares of pastures, 846 hectares of orchards, 1,207 hectares of forests, 111 hectares of shrubs, water, and reeds, 68 hectares, unproductive land 145 hectares, roads 122 hectares, and constructions 292 hectares.

The total population at the 2011 census was 21,827 people, distributed as follows: In the village of Florești: 19,331 people; In the village of Luna de Sus: 2,269 people; In the village of Tăuți: 227 people. The gender distribution is 49% male and 51% female. The minority percentage is as follows: In the village of Florești: Romanians 16,112, Hungarians 1,939, Roma 1,077; In the village of Luna de Sus: Romanians 868, Hungarians 1,356, Roma 42; In the village of Tăuți: Romanians 221, Hungarians 6.

According to the 2011 data, the population in the locality of Florești had the following religious structure: 15,620 Orthodox; 775 Greek-Catholic; 2,210 Reformed; 970 Roman Catholic; 784 Pentecostal; 534 Baptist and 934 other religion [12].

There was studied the conditions for Local Gastronomic Point (PGL), as part of the used methodology. Products are served directly by family members in their own households, adhering to legal hygiene requirements, without compromising the health of consumers (maximum 12 people/serving). Food products can be obtained from primary production on the farm's own property, as well as from other local producers. Also, the raw materials used in food preparation must come only from authorized/registered veterinary and food safety units, with an emphasis on indigenous products specific to the area where the gastronomic spot operates.

It is important to mention that the menu of local gastronomic spots differs from that of restaurants, as it has a daily menu with a limited assortment (at most 2 types of soups, 2 main courses, and possibly 2 dessert options), specific to the area where it operates [14]. PGL can be registered in permanent or seasonal households, located on animal farms, pastures, fish farms, fishing areas, agricultural farms, wineries, vineyards/orchards, hunting grounds, guesthouses, monasteries etc. [13]. Also, PGL cannot be registered in the vicinity of polluting industrial units (which emit large quantities of dust, chemicals etc.) or in areas with a high food safety risk (landfills, leather processing units, etc.).

There are, also, specific requirements regarding the sanitary and veterinary norms to be respected, and they are related to areas for storing raw materials and additives (pantries, shelves, cabinets, refrigerators, freezers, cellars, etc.); area for maintenance and hygiene-disinfection materials (warehouses, cabinets), area for waste storage (platforms, dumpsters), preparation area (table) which can be located outdoors, cooking area and toilets/restrooms [11].

Also the SWOT analysis was carried by analysing, in the studied area, the strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities and the threats that could emerge in the situation of investing in a PGL

RESEARCH RESULTS

Those wishing to establish these local gastronomic spots must organize themselves into a legal entity, such as a sole proprietorship, individual enterprise, or family enterprise, established according to the provisions of Government Ordinance 44/2008. The first requirement, given that these types of activities go beyond private consumption, is the need to obtain veterinary and food safety registration documents.

For individual entrepreneurs: registration as an authorized natural person, individual enterprise, or family enterprise according to the provisions of Government Ordinance 44/2008. For commercial companies: registration in accordance with the provisions of Law 31/1990. The registration with the Trade Registry is based on the registration request, including the CAEN codes corresponding to the desired activity, along with the required

legal documents according to the National Trade Registry Office, reported to the legal form of registration. Completing specific documents (approximately 15-20) is necessary, and ensuring the necessary space for serving meals, sanitary areas, recreational spaces, and storage facilities is also essential.

The studied area is home to culinary schools and workshops, fostering a new generation of chefs who contribute to the city's culinary innovation. Just to mention a few cultural and gastronomic events in the Florești Commune, there could be pointed out Tradition Contest Festival, Florești Festival, Local Products Fair, Vegetable and Fruit Market, TIFF (Transylvania International Film Festival) in Florești, Moving Florești, "Florii" in Florești, Shows for children (Năzdrăvanii, Puck Theater), Singing and Dancing in the Gathering, but the list is still open.

Having in mind this specificity of the studied area, the SWOT analysis shown the potential and the limits of creating a PGL inside of it. The SWOT analysis was created based on deep study of the local characteristics. The results will be presented and discussed on each of the pillars of the analysis.

Regarding the **Strengths**, it was found out that:

a. **Authenticity:** PGLs stand as beacons of authenticity in the culinary landscape. By adhering to traditional recipes and cooking methods, they offer customers a genuine taste of the region's culinary heritage [2]. Each dish becomes a time-traveling experience, connecting diners to the rich history and flavors that define the local cuisine.

b. **Local Sourcing:** The emphasis on local sourcing not only enhances the freshness and quality of the dishes but also plays a pivotal role in supporting the community. PGLs can establish direct partnerships with local farmers and producers, ensuring a sustainable supply chain. This not only benefits the PGL itself but also contributes to the economic growth of the region by supporting local businesses.

c. **Personal Touch:** One of the unique charms of PGLs is the personal touch they bring to every dining experience. Whether it's a family-run establishment or a small-scale kitchen, the atmosphere is infused with warmth and genuine hospitality. Diners aren't just customers; they become part of an extended culinary family, creating memories that go beyond the plate.

d. **Cultural Connection:** PGLs serve as guardians of cultural heritage. By showcasing and preserving local culinary traditions, they play a vital role in maintaining a sense of cultural identity. The act of sharing regional dishes becomes a form of storytelling, weaving narratives of history, customs, and community [8]. PGLs, in essence, become cultural ambassadors, inviting both locals and visitors to partake in the richness of a region's culinary tapestry.

In essence, the success of Local Gastronomic Points lies not only in the delightful flavors they serve but in the immersive experience they offer—a journey through authenticity, community, and cultural connection.

On termn of **Weaknesses**, is was pointed out that:

a. **Limited Capacity:** The intimate, small-scale setting that adds charm to PGLs can also pose a challenge in terms of capacity. With limited seating and kitchen space, there's a risk of turning away potential customers, which could, in turn, limit revenue. To mitigate this, PGLs could explore options like reservation systems, special events, or even considering expansion while maintaining the personalized atmosphere.

b. **Dependency on Seasonality:** While relying on seasonal ingredients contributes to freshness and authenticity, it may pose challenges in maintaining a consistent menu throughout the year. PGLs can overcome this weakness by diversifying their menu, offering seasonal specialties while also incorporating more stable, year-round options.

Additionally, strategic partnerships with local farmers and suppliers could provide a more reliable source of seasonal ingredients.

c. **Competition with Established Restaurants:** Competing with larger, well-established restaurants in the area can be daunting for PGLs. However, the uniqueness and authenticity of PGLs can be turned into a strength. Effective marketing strategies that highlight the personalized service, cultural connection, and local sourcing can help PGLs carve out their niche. Collaborations with local tourism initiatives or food festivals can also increase visibility and attract a wider audience.

Understanding and addressing these weaknesses can help PGLs navigate the challenges of the culinary business landscape while preserving the essence that makes them special. By leveraging their unique strengths and proactively managing limitations, PGLs can continue to thrive and offer memorable dining experiences.

Opportunities that were spotted out from the analysis reveals that:

a. **Culinary Tourism:** The rise of culinary tourism presents a golden opportunity for PGLs to shine. By positioning themselves as authentic culinary destinations, PGLs can attract a steady stream of visitors eager to explore and savor local flavors. Offering curated culinary experiences, such as cooking classes, food tours, or themed events, can turn PGLs into must-visit spots for both locals and tourists alike.

b. **Collaboration with Local Producers:** Building strong partnerships with local farmers and producers can be a game-changer for PGLs. This collaboration not only ensures a fresh and diverse supply of ingredients but also strengthens the local economy. PGLs can showcase these partnerships as part of their story, highlighting the traceability and sustainability of their dishes. This not only adds authenticity to the culinary experience but also contributes to the broader community.

c. **Online Presence:** Establishing a robust online presence is a key opportunity for PGLs to expand their reach. Social media platforms can be leveraged to showcase mouth-watering dishes, share behind-the-scenes glimpses, and engage with a broader audience. Additionally, offering online ordering and delivery services can cater to a wider customer base, including those who may not have the opportunity to visit the physical location. A well-crafted website, engaging social media content, and partnerships with food delivery platforms can elevate the visibility of PGLs in the digital realm.

By seizing these opportunities, PGLs can not only enhance their business prospects but also contribute to the larger cultural and economic landscape. Embracing culinary tourism, forging local collaborations, and embracing the digital age can position PGLs as dynamic and forward-thinking players in the ever-evolving world of gastronomy.

Finally, the **Threats** could not be ignored, so it was observed that

a. **Regulatory Challenges:** Adhering to health and safety regulations and obtaining permits is crucial for the smooth operation of PGLs. To address this, PGLs should invest time in understanding and staying updated on local regulations. Building strong relationships with local authorities can help navigate the regulatory landscape more efficiently. Implementing rigorous health and safety protocols not only ensures compliance but also fosters trust among customers.

b. **Economic Fluctuations:** The dining industry is often susceptible to economic downturns or fluctuations. PGLs can mitigate this threat by diversifying their offerings. Introducing budget-friendly options, loyalty programs, or special promotions during economic downturns can help maintain customer loyalty. Additionally, establishing partnerships with local businesses or implementing flexible pricing strategies can provide a buffer against the impact of economic uncertainties.

c. **Changing Consumer Preferences:** Consumer preferences and trends are ever-evolving [8]. PGLs need to stay attuned to these shifts. Regularly updating the menu,

incorporating new culinary trends, and seeking feedback from customers can help PGLs stay ahead of changing preferences. Embracing flexibility and innovation in both menu and service can ensure that PGLs remain appealing to a broad audience.

d. **Pandemics and External Shocks:** Recent global events have highlighted the vulnerability of businesses to external shocks like pandemics or natural disasters. While some factors may be beyond control, PGLs can proactively prepare by implementing contingency plans. This may include diversifying revenue streams through online orders or delivery services, ensuring a robust supply chain, and having clear communication strategies in place to keep customers informed during challenging times.

Acknowledging and planning for these threats can position PGLs to not only weather challenges but also emerge stronger and more resilient. By adopting a proactive and adaptive approach, PGLs can navigate the uncertainties of the external environment while continuing to provide authentic and memorable culinary experiences.

CONCLUSIONS

No venture is without its challenges. This section addresses potential obstacles in establishing and maintaining PGLs, such as regulatory hurdles, marketing strategies, and ensuring consistency in quality. By proposing innovative solutions, the paper aims to guide aspiring entrepreneurs in navigating the complexities of the culinary landscape.

In conclusion, local gastronomic spots are an increasingly current and sought-after business idea for consumers, and establishing such a family business is very timely in the region. As the culinary world evolves [5, 6], so do opportunities for PGLs. This section speculates on the future prospects of this business model, considering trends in consumer preferences, technology integration, and potential global collaborations. The paper encourages entrepreneurs to stay adaptive and forward-thinking to thrive in the ever-changing gastronomic landscape.

Finally, it can be appreciated that Local Gastronomic Points emerge as beacons of culinary diversity, offering a genuine and immersive experience for food enthusiasts. This paper celebrates the richness of regional cuisines and encourages entrepreneurs to explore the untapped potential of PGLs. As the culinary world continues to captivate hearts and taste buds, PGLs stand poised to redefine the way we experience and appreciate local gastronomy.

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