ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATE OF GASTRONOMIC TOURISM IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

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Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important sectors of Armenia's economy. According to the Law of the Republic of Armenia "On Tourism," tourism is defined as travel for a period of up to one year from one's place of permanent residence to another location for education, recreation, visiting relatives, health improvement, rehabilitation, business, religious activities, receiving medical assistance and services, participating in conferences, celebrations, exhibitions, cultural, environmental, operational, and other events, as well as for other purposes [The Law on Tourism, 2023]. One form of it is the gastronomic tourism, which occupies a significant space in tourism system, as it contributes to economic development, the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and the sustainable development of territories.

Gastronomic tourism has strong prerequisites for development in Armenia and can attract both inbound and domestic tourists. Each region of Armenia possesses its own traditional dishes. However, restaurants typically offer the most well-known ones. In this context, reviving older and forgotten, less familiar dishes and incorporating them into restaurant menus is of critical importance both for safeguarding national culinary traditions and for offering tourists distinctive and appealing food experiences. Such dishes can also serve as a basis for creating a gastronomic brand for each region, which may become one of the hallmark features of Armenia's tourism industry.

In essence, this study addresses the following core research question: "What is the current state of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Armenia, and what development trends and structural characteristics can be observed – particularly for the period 2020-2024 – based on data on tourism flows, accommodation and public catering infrastructure, as well as the activities of tourism intermediaries (agencies/tour operators)?" The objective of the research is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the current condition of gastronomic tourism in Armenia by combining qualitative and quantitative methods and using primary and secondary data, and to assess not only numerical dynamics but also the development of experiential, governance, and branding components within the sector. At the same time, the study aims to highlight key development directions, especially the potential to enrich the tourism offering through the creation of regional gastronomic brands and the revitalization of less well-known traditional dishes.

The research aims:

1. To analyze the dynamics of outbound, inbound, and domestic tourist flows over the past ten years to identify the overall state of tourism in Armenia.
2. To examine the volume of accommodation services and the number of operating entities in this sector, both in Yerevan and in the regions, to assess the distribution and condition of accommodation facilities.
3. To evaluate the volume of public catering services and the number of entities operating in this field, since gastronomic tourism is directly connected with the food sector.
4. To analyze the activities of travel agencies and tour operators, as well as the dynamics of booking services and other tourism-related services, to understand the need for further decentralization of tourism.

Methodology

In this study, analytical and comparative methods, as well as macro-level analysis, were employed to identify and examine the current state of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Armenia. The methodological framework of the article is grounded in the comparative approach, within which a series of comparative analyses was conducted.

The study's methodology is intended to provide a comprehensive assessment of the present condition of gastronomic tourism in Armenia and therefore integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research was carried out in several stages and relied on both primary and secondary data sources.

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, as well as primary and secondary data, the analysis evaluates not only numerical trends, but also the development of experiential, managerial, and branding components within the sector.

Literature review

During this study, a variety of sources were reviewed and analyzed, including classical academic literature and official statistical data provided by the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia. In the literature, gastronomic (culinary) tourism is commonly described as a way to experience culture through food. Long argues that culinary tourism is not only about tasting food, but about engaging with another culture, where food conveys identity, heritage, and everyday local life [Long, 2004, 20–50]. From this perspective, the tourist experience depends not only on what is eaten, but also on how and where it is served, who presents it, and what stories and traditions accompany it.

A more structured view of food tourism as a managed tourism product is presented in 'Food Tourism Around the World: Development, Management and Markets', edited by Hall and Sharples (with co-editors and contributors). The authors treat food experiences as a specific tourism segment that requires management and coordination – from product design to marketing – and cooperation among key local actors such as restaurants, produ-

cers, event organizers, and tour operators [Hall, Sharples, 2003, 25-59]. They stress that the "taste of place" can shape a destination's image, become an important part of what visitors remember, which is highly relevant for Armenia's regional culinary diversity.

Wolf emphasizes the economic and community value of culinary tourism in "Culinary Tourism: The Hidden Harvest". He presents it as a tool that can generate income and employment not only in hospitality but also across the broader food production, agriculture, and service chain [Wolf, 2006, 1-59]. This idea is essential for Armenia's regions, where local products and traditional food practices add significant value to the tourism offer.

From a branding and policy perspective, the OECD publication 'Food and the Tourism Experience' (edited by Richards) highlights that food tourism can support national and regional branding and contribute to economic development, particularly when public policy strengthens links between tourism and food sectors [Richards, 2012, 13-43]. In this approach, food becomes an accessible way for visitors to understand a country's identity and uniqueness.

Finally, Yeoman and co-authors in 'The Future of Food Tourism' discuss future trends, linking the growth of food tourism to experience personalization, the demand for authenticity and uniqueness, technological change, and sustainable development [Yeoman, 2015, 23-45]. They argue that successful destinations will be those that can combine tradition with innovation while maintaining a clear connection to local history and identity. This is relevant to Armenia, where traditional cuisine, wine culture, and hospitality can be presented through modern formats such as cooking classes, farm visits, wine routes, and themed festivals.

Therefore, assessing the current state of gastronomic tourism in Armenia should be based not only on official statistics and sector reports, but also on these theoretical approaches, so that the analysis captures both numerical trends and the development of experiential, management, and branding components.

In addition, the study examined tourism data from the past ten years published by the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, which helps describe broader tourism trends [The Socio-Economic Situation of the RA, 2015-2025]. The reports of the Tourism Committee of the Ministry of Economy of Armenia were also used as key official sources. Moreover, the research incorporated relevant statistics, research reports, and project documents on winemaking, agricultural production, and the public catering sector.

Scientific novelty

The scientific novelty of this study lies in the fact that the current state of gastronomic tourism in Armenia is presented not through general descriptions, but based on official statistical data for 2020-2024. The analysis examines, within a single integrated framework, the dynamics of tourism flows, the structure of accommodation types, the expan-

sion of the public catering sector, and the activity of tourism intermediaries (travel agencies/tour operators). Another novel aspect is the approach of combining quantitative table - based evidence with qualitative interpretation. This makes it possible to identify not only trends of growth or decline, but also structural features related to sector governance, experience development, and branding. The study also formulates an important scientific problem by showing that Armenia lacks an official system for counting gastronomic tourists, which limits the development of targeted strategies and effective public policy in this field. In addition, the research provides a comparative assessment of regional disparities and regional potential, highlighting where infrastructure and service volumes are concentrated and what resources exist in the regions to diversify gastronomic tourism.

Finally, the article proposes practical directions for development: enriching the tourism offer through the creation of regional gastronomic brands and the revitalization of lesser-known traditional dishes, thereby linking the statistical picture to concrete tools for sectoral development.

Analysis

Gastronomic tourism is one of the rapidly developing forms of tourism in Armenia and requires appropriate resources to support its growth. National cuisine constitutes an element of intangible cultural heritage. Armenia's culinary traditions have deep historical roots and display distinct features shaped by various historical, geographical, and climatic factors.

The method of comparison and comparative analysis is applied in practice as follows. In particular, it is reflected in year-to-year comparisons (e.g., 2019-2020, as well as the contrast between the indicators of 2023-2024) and in the comparison of the rates of increase or decrease across key indicators.

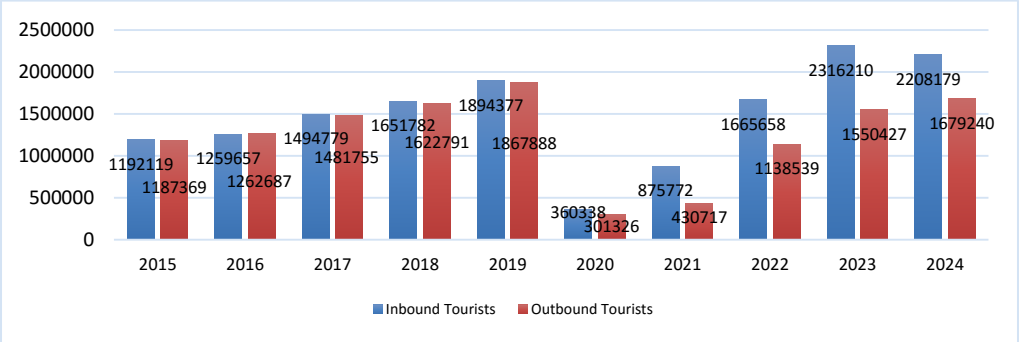

Figure 1. Number of inbound and outbound tourists in 2020–2024 *[The socio-economic situation of the Republic of Armenia 2015-2024]*, person

Before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, tourism was growing at a rapid pace. As a result of the pandemic, the sector experienced substantial losses. While 1,894,377 tourists arrived in Armenia in 2019, the number of inbound tourist visits in 2020 amounted to

360,338, which represents an 81% decrease compared to the previous year. Under the conditions of the continuing pandemic, 870,308 inbound tourists visited Armenia in 2021 – 141% higher than in 2020 [Socio-economic situation of the RA, 2021, 150]. In 2022 and 2023, the number of inbound tourists increased, largely due to a significant inflow of Russian tourists following the Russia - Ukraine war.

In 2023, the number of inbound tourists reached 2,316,210, which is 39% higher than in the previous year. In 2024, Armenia received 2,208,179 tourists, which is 108,031 fewer than the 2023 figure. Fugure 1 presents the dynamics of inbound and outbound tourist numbers in Armenia for 2020-2024, allowing a clear view of the pandemic's impact and the subsequent recovery trends. After the high levels recorded in 2019, the sharp decline in 2020 is explained by the COVID-19 pandemic and the related restrictions. In the following years, a gradual increase is observed, reaching its peak in 2023 with more than 2.3 million inbound tourists; however, a certain decline is visible in 2024, which can be interpreted in light of both external geopolitical and regional factors. Nevertheless, the overall trend indicates that Armenia's tourism market has retained growth potential, which is an important precondition for the development of gastronomic tourism.

The application of the macro-level analysis method is reflected in examining the tourism sector at the national and macroeconomic levels. Below, nationwide data, overall trends, and the sector's structural characteristics are presented, including the hotel industry, public catering establishments, and travel agencies, their distribution across different years.

Table 1. Certain indicators of the accommodation patterns of inbound tourists in January-December 2023-2024." *[The socio-economic situation of Armenia in 2015-2024]*

Number/Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Inbound tourists of Armenia	1 192 120	1 259 657	1 494 779	1 651 782	1894 377	375 216	875772	1665658	2316210	2208178
Of which have stayed (overnighted):										
In hotel industry establishments	164 732	174724	264 702	307 473	550 289	97 550	278393	645233	732998	710436
At a friend's or relative's home, in rented apartments, etc.	1 027 388	1084933	1 230 077	1 344 309	1344 088	277 666	591915	1020425	1583212	1497743

Table 1 presents data on the distribution of inbound tourists in the Republic of Armenia by type of accommodation for 2015-2024, specifically distinguishing between hotel-sector establishments and other types of accommodation (e.g., staying with relatives, rented apartments, and similar options). The data show that although the number of tourists staying in hotels has increased over time, the majority still prefer non-hotel and more informal accommodation choices. In 2023, only around one-third of tourists used hotel establishments, while a substantial share relied on other forms of accommodation (such as Airbnb and rental apartments). This pattern also suggests the importance of diaspora travel and visits to relatives. According to the table, in 2023, 31.6% of tourists arriving in

Armenia (732,998 tourists) stayed in hotel-sector establishments, while in 2022 the share was higher – 38.7% (645,233 tourists). This structure is a significant signal for gastronomic tourism development: the relatively small proportion of tourists in hotels indicates that gastronomic offerings should be developed not only within hotels, but also through family-based and community-based formats.

Table 2. Number of domestic tourists in the Republic of Armenia, 2015–2024. [The socio-economic situation in Armenia 2015-2024]

Number/Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total tourists, of which by purpose.*	871 888	979 968	1 086 707	1 092 322	1544600	1045756	1595826	1929940	2303610	2 836 749
business	160 089	171 601	252 787	207 761	280542	150649	247843	383873	439743	490 200
Leisure and recreation	591 271	696 582	742 188	781 668	1112305	765100	1229224	1412388	1702376	2 191 680
Medical treatment	63 494	58 194	43 558	58 339	52006	53500	67325	67298	56556	70 350
For other purpose	57 034	53 591	48 174	44 554	99747	76507	51434	66381	104938	70 177

**The data reflect tourists registered in hotel industry establishments (hotels, hotel-type lodgings, resorts, holiday homes, etc.).*

Table 2 presents the number of domestic tourists in Armenia and their distribution by purpose of visit – business, leisure and recreation, treatment, and other purposes – for the period 2015–2024. The data indicate that overall domestic tourism shows a steady upward trend, especially in 2019 and after 2021, when the share of domestic trips made for leisure and recreation reaches approximately 70-75%.

This suggests that Armenia's population increasingly makes use of leisure opportunities within the country, creating a favorable basis for developing gastronomic tours and related products. Business and treatment-related trips represent a relatively small but stable share, which further supports the conclusion that, for the domestic market, the primary target segment for gastronomic tourism is the leisure and recreation segment.

In recent years, the number of domestic tourists in Armenia has also increased. In 2015, the number of domestic tourists amounted to 871,888, while in 2016 it reached 979,968, representing an increase of approximately 12.4% compared to the previous year. Between 2017 and 2018, the growth in the number of domestic tourists was 0.51%. In 2019, domestic tourism reached 1,544,600 people, increasing by 41.4% compared to 2018. In 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of domestic tourists declined by about 33% compared to the previous year, totaling 1,045,756. In 2021, domestic tourism rose to 1,595,826, which is 52.6% higher than in 2020 and 3.3% higher than in 2019. In 2022, the number of domestic tourists reached 1,929,940, increasing by 20.9% compared to 2021; approximately 73% of these trips were made for leisure and recreation. In 2023, domestic tourism amounted to 2,303,610 people, representing a 19.4% increase compared to 2022, and about 74% of trips were again for leisure and recreation. The table presented below includes comparative elements between different regions of Armenia

and Yerevan, showing differences in the accommodation sector, public catering, and tourism service providers, as well as comparisons of their revenues and volumes of activity. This also demonstrates the application of the comparative method in the study.

Table 3. Volume of accommodation services and the number of economic entities operating in the sector in Yerevan and the regions of Armenia, 2020-2024. [*Data provided by the Statistical Committee of the RA*]

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD
Yerevan	480	11836,8	567	26787,1	598	44986,2	783	55654,8	814	53102,9
Aragatsotn	7	40	9	174,1	12	316,3	23	338,5	28	352,6
Ararat	8	64,3	11	109,7	12	121,4	16	126,2	16	136,4
Armavir	16	30,1	19	70,2	21	104,8	27	111,2	27	124,1
Gegharkunik	40	341,2	44	866,5	50	936,4	86	965,8	91	982,5
Lori	30	204,9	33	591,9	37	701,2	69	782,6	76	806,4
Kotayk	93	2001,3	103	3903,4	118	4469,3	130	4601,1	132	4632,9
Shirak	33	290,9	37	422,6	41	546,3	65	786,2	70	814
Syunik	38	410,7	46	621,2	50	680,1	72	902,5	89	946,9
Vayots Dzor	26	261,5	29	951,5	31	989,6	50	1025,6	58	1041,6
Tavush	76	1004,2	82	1304,6	87	2097,3	124	2851,3	139	2871,5
Total (RA)	**847**	**16485,9**	**980**	**35803**	**1057**	**55949**	**1445**	**68146**	**1540**	**65812**

Table 3 presents the number of businesses providing accommodation services and the volume of these services (in million AMD) for Yerevan and the regions of Armenia for 2020-2024. The data show that the accommodation sector is largely concentrated in Yerevan, creating a clear territorial imbalance: in 2024, about 68% of all such entities were located in the capital. At the same time, several regions (Kotayk, Tavush, Gegharkunik, Syunik, and Vayots Dzor) show growth both in the number of entities and in service volumes, which indicates a gradual activation of regional tourism infrastructure. These trends are important for the territorial diversification of gastronomic tourism: stronger accommodation infrastructure in the regions supports the creation of regional gastro-brands and can also help extend tourists' length of stay.

In 2024, the total number of hotel-sector establishments in Armenia was 1,540, of which roughly 68% were in Yerevan. Public catering establishments are especially important for the development of gastronomic tourism, since both their menus and the quality of service directly influence tourist satisfaction. One well-known example among both tourists and local residents is "Pandok Yerevan," which is widely associated with traditional Armenian cuisine. Recently, many restaurants have also adopted distinctly Armenian names – such as "Kololak," "Tsirani," "Dolmama," "Lavash," "Sherep," "Chinar," "Chaman," "Gata Pandok," "Basturma," and "Pandok Yerevan Getapin" – which also attracts visitor interest. "Pandok Yerevan Getapin," for instance, offers gastronomic tours for visitors to Armenia and for those interested in Armenian culinary culture, allowing participants to become familiar with national cuisine, learn about preparation traditions, and

gain a distinctive gastronomic experience. These descriptive and content-based interpretations, which go beyond purely numerical data, illustrate the use of qualitative methods in the study.

Table 4. Volume of public food service activities and the number of economic entities operating in the sector in Yerevan and the regions of Armenia, 2020–2024 *[Data provided by the Statistical Committee of the RA]*

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity, units	Volume, million drams	Quantity, units	Volume, million drams	Quantity, units	Volume, million drams	Quantity, units	Volume, million drams	Quantity, units	Volume, million drams
Yerevan	1599	85160,8	1821	130936	2101	159772	2224	222146	2220	231531
Aragatsotn	30	479,4	39	797,8	43	853,6	80	1021,2	82	1023,5
Ararat	124	778,9	143	1207,2	154	1523,9	190	1851,3	194	1209
Armavir	49	568,3	78	1745,4	90	3029,8	145	3395,4	162	4164,5
Gegharkunik	40	817,2	61	1627,4	69	2096,6	116	2265,3	118	3401,7
Lori	38	458,2	59	1430,6	68	2173,5	110	2604,5	112	1964,4
Kotayk	134	5682,8	161	10644,1	186	20022	240	25064,3	286	24254,9
Shirak	92	1245,6	128	3136,2	139	4376,2	175	4956,2	201	5358
Syunik	62	510,1	85	1652,3	90	2276,2	135	2651,4	143	2401,2
Vayots Dzor	38	932,6	53	1454,6	56	1999,4	89	2369,8	121	2226,7
Tavush	115	1214	150	2180,5	160	3868,5	198	4658,9	205	4808,9
Total (RA)	**2321**	**97848**	**2778**	**156813**	**3156**	**201991**	**3702**	**272985**	**3844**	**282344**

Table 4 summarizes the volume of public catering services and the number of operating entities in the sector, comparing Yerevan with the regions of Armenia for 2020-2024. Yerevan's role is again dominant: the largest share of both the number of public catering establishments and the turnover is generated in the capital. Nevertheless, in several regions (including Kotayk, Gegharkunik, Shirak, Tavush, and others), the period 2020-2024 shows growth both in the number of entities and in financial volumes, indicating a gradual expansion of the food service sector into the regions. The development of the public catering market in regional areas is an important foundation for gastronomic tourism, since restaurants and cafés are the main platforms where local cuisine, traditional dishes, and wine culture are presented to visitors.

When designing gastronomic packages, it is also important to define the target market. Due to cultural preferences and eating traditions, some tourists are primarily interested in fish-based dishes, while others focus on dairy products, beverages, and similar items. To promote gastronomic tourism, Armenia should make broad use of the internet, especially social media, where attractive visual content can effectively stimulate interest and draw tourists' attention. Another promotion channel is the use of informational materials at va-rious exhibitions and tourism fairs. Table 6 presents the number of entities operating as travel agencies, tour operators, booking services, and other tourism-related service providers, as well as the volume of their services, for 2020-2024, by Yerevan and the regions of Armenia. The data indicate that the majority of these entities are also concentrated in the capital, where the main financial flows of the market are generated. At the same time, the regions show

some increase in the number of agencies and tour operators, which is an important precondition for expanding inbound and domestic gastro-tours beyond Yerevan. The development of a network of tourism intermediaries supports the packaging and marketing of gastronomic and wine-tourism products, since these actors function as the key link between tourists, local producers, restaurants, and hotels.

Table 5. Volume of activities of travel agencies, tour operators, reservation services, and other tourism-related services, and the number of economic entities operating in the sector in Yerevan and the regions of Armenia, 2020-2024 *[Data provided by the Statistical Committee of the RA]*

	2020		2021		2022		2023		2024	
	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD	Quantity, units	Volume, million AMD
Yerevan	588	6373	695	9786,8	805	17252,8	937	24700,9	939	29131,4
Aragatsotn	5	9,3	7	13,8	7	14,9	16	16,1	18	21,3
Ararat	14	40,1	19	45,1	22	48	29	58,3	29	64,2
Armavir	12	3,5	16	18,9	18	21,1	36	28,6	39	31,6
Gegharkunik	7	6,7	10	14,3	13	16,1	21	20,2	22	23,8
Lori	12	2,8	20	27,9	24	31,2	37	36,1	37	39,2
Kotayk	23	31,5	30	48,2	40	67,9	55	82,5	55	91,3
Shirak	15	7,4	21	28,4	23	32,2	36	38,3	37	42,1
Syunik	5	2,2	8	9,3	10	12,5	13	15,6	13	17,4
Vayots Dzor	4	5,4	6	11	6	13,1	13	16,1	13	18,5
Tavush	6	22	9	54,9	11	69,8	17	87,5	17	108,7
Total (RA)	**691**	**6503,9**	**841**	**10059**	**979**	**17580**	**1210**	**25100**	**1219**	**29590**

The use of quantitative methods is evident across all analytical tables, which contain numerical indicators (such as inbound, outbound, and domestic tourist numbers; financial volumes of services; and the number of operating entities) and in the conclusions drawn from these tables. In other words, collecting and presenting data in the form of official statistics and deriving empirical conclusions from those figures represent the core of the quantitative approach.

At present, there are no official statistics on the number of gastronomic tourists arriving in Armenia. Because the number of explicitly gastro-tour packages remains limited, tourists often choose “classic” packages, within which they may also experience national cuisine. Therefore, it can be stated that a large share of tourists visiting Armenia try Armenian dishes; however, since no formal statistical accounting of gastronomic tourists is conducted, it is not possible to specify their exact number. This represents a key challenge for the development of gastronomic tourism, as tourists participate in national culinary experiences through different types of travel packages rather than through clearly identified gastro-tour products.

Many Armenian travel companies specialize in organizing gastro-tours and offer a range of gastronomic and eno-tourism packages of different durations. These packages typical-

ly include tastings, master classes, visits to Areni as a key wine-producing area, participation in Yerevan Wine Days festival, visits to various restaurants, and guided excursions. For example, some provide programs that allow tourists to experience a full set of gastro-tour activities and emphasizes that the Armenian national dishes offered to visitors are environmentally clean. This includes "Armenia is a Paradise for Gourmets" (7 days/6 nights), "Armenia with Taste and Aroma" (8 days/7 nights), and "Wine Tour: Feel Armenia through Wine" (6 days/5 nights) [Gastro Tours, 2025]. In addition, the training courses focuse on Armenian culinary traditions and cooking skills. Gastro-tours and culinary master classes are also available [Food Tours, 2025]. Others provides both gastro- and eno-tour programs [Wine Tours, 2025][1].

The use of secondary data is clearly evident throughout the analytical section. The analysis relies on information obtained from state and official sources (e.g., the Statistical Committee, ministry reports, and sectoral bodies). All numerical figures presented in the tables – and the interpretations based on them – are the result of processing and analyzing these secondary datasets, which directly demonstrates the application of this method.

Conclusions

In conclusion, gastronomic tourism in Armenia is an important and growing segment of the tourism system, with both economic and cultural heritage value. The development of gastro and wine-related components contributes to revaluing Armenian cuisine and wine, promoting local traditions, activating agricultural and food-production chains, and supporting balanced regional development by creating new jobs and increasing demand for services (food service, accommodation, tour operations, and related activities). At the same time, the study shows that the potential of gastronomic tourism has not yet been fully realized, because gastronomic offers often remain within traditional tour packages without clear measurement and distinct positioning.

One of the key challenges is the lack of official statistics on the number of gastro-tourists and their behavioral characteristics, which limits targeted planning and effective management of the sector. Therefore, it is a priority to introduce separate accounting and monitoring mechanisms for gastronomic tourism and to develop a sectoral strategy with clear objectives, indicators, and responsible stakeholders. This strategy should also be linked to the creation of regional gastronomic brands by encouraging not only the promotion of

[1] "Armenia spirit travel" offers 7-day group wine tours as well as individual (tailor-made) options [Culinary Tour in Armenia, 2025]. Amtravel DMC / ExploreArmenia also markets gastronomic and wine tour packages [Food and Wine Tours, 2025]. In addition, the Tasty tour and L&I ("El End Ay Tour") provide gastro- and eno-tours, including master classes and brandy-themed programs that introduce visitors to the diversity and sophistication of Armenian cuisine [Culinary Tour, 2025], [Wine and Brandy Tour, 2025]. Finally, Bright Tour offers and implements 6-day gastronomic packages covering destinations such as Aragatsotn, Vayots Dzor, Armavir, Gyumri, Kotayk, Tavush, and Gegharkunik [Gastro Package, 2025].

well-known dishes, but also the revival of less-known and forgotten foods, their inclusion in restaurant menus, and their integration into tourism experiences (tastings, master classes, farm and winery visits, and similar activities).

At the same time, for the sustainable development of the sector, it is important to improve service quality and the 'packaging' of the tourist experience through unified approaches to hospitality, service standards, storytelling, and sanitary and quality requirements. Public – private cooperation should be strengthened among tour operators, restaurants, hotels, communities, and producers, and digital promotion tools should be used more strategically, especially through social media to reach international target markets. These steps would allow gastronomic tourism to be treated not as an additional element, but as an independent and competitive tourism product with high added value and long-term socio-economic impact.

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Analysis of the current state of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Armenia

Key words: gastrotourism, travel agencies, tour operators, gastrotours, hotel facilities, inbound and outbound tourists, domestic tourists, catering services

The article analyzes the current state of gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Armenia. Three major directions are considered essential for the development of tourism in Armenia: cultural tourism, gastro-tourism (cuisine and wine), and adventure tourism (including winter tourism). Armenian cuisine and wine are presented to tourists through their rich heritage. Gastro- and eno-tourism are among the leading directions in the global tourism market. Many elements of Armenian cuisine are well-known worldwide and attract tourists by preserving and showcasing the traditions of the Armenian people. It is not accidental that Armenian lavash has been included in UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Lavash was registered due to its unique preparation methods, as well as its cultural and national significance. All these factors contribute to the development of gastronomic tourism in Armenia, which is the main focus of the article.