

## **GASTRONOMIC OFFER AS A MEANS OF RECOVERY FOR STIGMATIZED DESTINATIONS: A SURVIVAL ANALYSIS APPROACH**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the role of the gastronomic offer in the rehabilitation of stigmatized tourist destinations through the application of a time-to-event analysis model. The main contribution of this study is reflected in the development of a model that quantitatively assesses the time required for the recovery of destinations following the implementation of strategic gastronomic initiatives. The paper provides deeper insights into the key factors influencing the recovery period, linking theoretical concepts of destination management with contemporary analytical methods. The findings of this study have broad applicability, enabling researchers, destination managers, and tourism policymakers to utilize the results in various regional and industrial contexts. This contributes to global knowledge on the rehabilitation of tourist destinations and sustainable tourism development.

**Keywords:** Gastronomic Offer, Destination Rehabilitation, Survival Analysis, Tourist Behaviour, Stigmatized Destinations

### **INTRODUCTION**

The stigmatization of tourist destinations, caused by political, environmental, or economic factors, represents one of the greatest challenges contemporary destinations face in their efforts to maintain competitiveness in the global market (Avraham & Ketter, 2017; Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2014). Negative perceptions of a destination often result in reduced tourist demand, economic losses, and long-term damage to the destination's image, significantly complicating the recovery process (Chan et al., 2020). Traditional approaches, such as marketing campaigns focused on promoting the positive aspects of a destination and investments in infrastructure, often fail to achieve the desired outcomes, especially when they

do not address deeper cultural aspects that shape the destination's image (Kozak & Buhalis, 2019).

The gastronomic offer, as one of the key elements of the tourist experience, has the potential to become a powerful tool for destination rehabilitation (De Albuquerque Meneguel et al., 2019). Its role in shaping the authenticity and recognizability of a destination is well documented, but its contribution to overcoming stigmatization and accelerating recovery remains underexplored (Kovalenko et al., 2023). Previous research has predominantly focused on the qualitative aspects of the gastronomic offer, while the need for quantitative analyses that provide a deeper understanding of rehabilitation dynamics has largely been neglected (Yong et al., 2022; Ciulli et al., 2020; Ahmad et al., 2025).

This paper aims to bridge that research gap by developing a model that integrates quantitative methods, such as time-to-event analysis (Survival Analysis), to assess the time needed for the rehabilitation of stigmatized destinations. This approach enables the identification of key factors that influence the speed of recovery, such as gastronomic strategies, local culinary events, and the inclusion of local producers in the tourism offer. Previous studies have rarely applied this methodology in the context of tourism, which makes this study relatively novel in the field.

The original contribution of this research is reflected in the development of an innovative model tailored to the specificities of the tourism industry. By combining theoretical foundations of destination management and gastronomy with contemporary methodological approaches, the study provides both theoretical and practical implications. The practical recommendations offered by this study to destination managers, including tools and strategies for more effective management of the rehabilitation process, can be applied in various regional and industrial contexts. Thus, the paper stands as a significant contribution not only to science but also to practice, laying the foundation for future research in the field of destination rehabilitation through gastronomy.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Concept of Stigmatized Destinations and Their Challenges in Tourism*

The concept of stigmatized destinations is a relatively recent topic in tourism research, focusing on understanding the impact of negative perceptions and reputation on tourist flows, local communities, and economic development (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2024). Destination stigmatization is often a consequence of historical events, natural disasters, political conflicts, high crime rates, or even negative media reports (Gajić et al., 2022, Gorji et al., 2023). This phenomenon can be explained through Goffman's concept of stigma, where destinations are

“marked” by stereotypes that damage their image and deter potential tourists (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2024). Research indicates that such destinations face the challenge of overcoming deeply rooted prejudices, requiring a multidimensional approach to branding and repositioning, involving governments, local communities, and the tourism industry (Iordanova, 2021).

One of the main challenges for stigmatized destinations is changing the perception of potential tourists, who often form opinions based on media reports. Negative narratives can significantly impact tourist demand, as studies highlight the media's key role in shaping destination images (Monterrubio & Valencia, 2019). In addition to economic consequences, destination stigmatization also has social implications, as local communities often suffer from reduced investments, limited employment opportunities, and social exclusion. These negative consequences further deepen the crisis in regions perceived as less attractive among tourists (Yang & Wong, 2020; Khalid et al., 2020).

Some studies emphasize that transforming a destination's image in a positive sense involves simultaneously highlighting its positive aspects, such as natural beauty, cultural heritage, or unique gastronomic offer, while actively involving local communities in decision-making processes (Lai et al., 2019; Gajić et al., 2024). This not only contributes to economic recovery but can also enhance the sense of local pride. Additionally, in the era of digitalization, the use of social media has proven to be an effective tool for creating authentic stories and presenting positive tourist experiences, which can alter public perception (Khalid et al., 2020; Cuomo et al., 2021).

Although several studies have addressed stigmatized destinations, there is still a need for a deeper understanding of the long-term effects of stigmatization, as well as the success of various repositioning strategies (Zhang et al., 2021). The complexity of challenges faced by these destinations underscores the importance of an integrated approach encompassing economic, social, and cultural aspects of tourism development (Sharia & Sitchinava, 2023).

### **The Role of Gastronomic Offer in Rehabilitating Destination Image**

The gastronomic offer plays an increasingly significant role in contemporary tourism, not only as a factor in attracting tourists but also as a means for reconstructing and rehabilitating the image of destinations facing stigmatization or negative perceptions. In the context of destinations marked by stigma due to political, economic, or social factors, the gastronomic offer emerges as a powerful cultural element that can provide authentic experiences and thus reshape the tourist's perception of the destination (Bellini et al., 2019; Varela, 2025).

Gastronomic offers extend beyond the preparation and consumption of food. They represent an integral part of a destination's cultural heritage and identity. Research indicates that

gastronomic experiences can significantly influence destination perception, particularly when they are associated with local ingredients, traditional recipes, and unique preparation methods (Lin et al., 2021; Kovalenko et al., 2023). As a means of image rehabilitation, the gastronomic offer allows tourists to directly engage in the culture and traditions of the destination, potentially mitigating negative perceptions arising from historical or contemporary issues (Daly et al., 2021).

One of the key aspects of rehabilitating a destination's image through gastronomy is the connection with the concept of authenticity (Vukolić et al., 2025). Tourists, particularly those from generations that value experiences over material goods, seek experiences that reflect the true essence of a destination. The authenticity of the gastronomic offer can be emphasized through the use of local products, organic farming, promotion of seasonal dishes, and the involvement of the local population in tourism activities, such as culinary workshops and farm visits (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2019; Seabra et al., 2020; Pujiastuti et al., 2022).

Moreover, the gastronomic offer has the potential to overcome language, cultural, and political barriers. Food can function as a universal language that strengthens the emotional connection between tourists and a destination (Rachão et al., 2019). For instance, destinations known for quality wine regions, unique gastronomic events, or specific culinary specialties can attract tourists through innovative marketing campaigns that highlight these elements (Nesterchuk et al., 2021). Studies have shown that gastronomic tours and festivals can significantly impact the positive perception of a destination, as they allow tourists to experience the destination through its tastes, smells, and textures (Kim et al., 2021; Vukolić et al., 2024).

Additionally, research highlights that digital technology plays a significant role in promoting the gastronomic offer as a means for rehabilitating a destination's image. Social media, food blogs, and online reviews enable tourists to share their positive experiences, which can have a strong impact on potential visitors (Muangasame & Tan, 2023). The visual aspects of gastronomy, such as appealing food photography and videos from gastronomic events, are often rapidly disseminated through social media platforms, creating positive associations with the destination (Chen & Chen, 2023; Knežević et al., 2023).

Rehabilitating a destination through its gastronomic offer requires a well-designed strategy that includes collaboration between local producers, restaurants, tourism organizations, and government institutions (Roy & Saxena, 2020; Mandić, 2023). Research suggests that sustainability is a key element of this strategy, as an increasing number of tourists show interest in ethical and responsible consumption (e.g. Švec et al., 2021; Švec et al., 2023). In this context, the gastronomic offer can be oriented towards promoting local initiatives, such as

“farm to fork” programs, emphasizing short supply chains and support for the local economy (Shen et al., 2020; Eichelberger et al., 2021).

### **Overview of Survival Analysis Models and Their Application in Tourism**

Survival analysis, also known as time-to-event analysis, is a statistical approach that allows for the study of the time until a specific event occurs (Le-Rademacher & Wang, 2021; D’Arrigo et al., 2021). In tourism, this method is applied in investigating various phenomena, such as the duration of tourist stays, the time until repeat visits to a destination, and the lifespan of tourism enterprises (Orîndaru et al., 2021). The fundamental concepts of survival analysis, such as the survival function and the hazard function, enable researchers to comprehend the dynamics and factors influencing these occurrences (Wang et al., 2019; Le-Rademacher & Wang, 2021).

One significant application of survival analysis in tourism pertains to examining the duration of tourist stays (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). Understanding the factors that influence the length of stay can assist destinations in tailoring their offers and marketing strategies (Mihai et al., 2023). For instance, the study conducted by Gokovali et al. (2007) demonstrated that demographic characteristics, purpose of travel, and type of accommodation significantly affect the length of tourist stays. These findings suggest that destinations can enhance their services and attract different segments of tourists through customized offers.

Additionally, survival analysis is employed to examine the time until a repeat visit to a destination (Gutiérrez et al., 2020). Tourist loyalty and their willingness to revisit a destination are crucial indicators of a destination's success (Stylos & Bellou, 2019). Barros et al. (2010) applied survival analysis models to assess the factors influencing the time to a repeat visit and determined that satisfaction with previous experiences and the perceived value of the destination play key roles in the decision to revisit the same location.

Moreover, survival analysis is applied in exploring the lifespan of tourism enterprises. In a dynamic and competitive environment, understanding the factors affecting business survival is essential. The study by Yang & Wen (2024) highlights the factors influencing hotel closures. The results indicate that hotel size, star rating, and location are significant predictors of business longevity.

Despite its complexity, survival analysis provides valuable insights into various aspects of tourism (Aguilar & Díaz, 2019). Its application allows decision-makers to develop more effective management and marketing strategies and to improve the overall tourist experience. Although the application of these models in tourism is relatively new, existing studies point to their potential and the need for further research in this area (Peng & Tzeng, 2019; Ding et al., 2022).

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

Based on the identified research gap, two research questions are formulated:

**RQ1:** What are the temporal patterns of decision-making regarding the first visit to a destination?

**H1:** The time interval from learning about the destination to the first visit significantly varies depending on the respondents' age group.

**RQ2:** What is the impact of the gastronomic offer on the decision to visit the destination and the temporal framework of its realization?

**H2:** Respondents who consider the gastronomic offer an important factor in choosing a destination decide to visit faster than those for whom gastronomy is not important.

**H3:** Participation in gastronomic events during the visit significantly influences the shorter time frame of visit realization.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on a combination of primary and secondary data sources in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of gastronomic offerings in the recovery of stigmatized destinations. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to tourists, while secondary data were used to provide contextual insights into destination characteristics and tourism development trends. The integration of these two data sources enabled a broader interpretation of the empirical findings and supported the analytical framework applied in this research.

Secondary data were obtained from official tourism statistics, destination development reports, and relevant academic literature addressing destination image recovery and gastronomic tourism development. These data were used primarily to contextualize the empirical findings and to provide a broader understanding of tourism dynamics in stigmatized destinations. Descriptive and comparative analysis of secondary data was conducted in order to identify general tourism trends and to support the interpretation of the primary empirical results.

The core empirical analysis in this study is based on primary data. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to tourists who visited the destination after the implementation of the gastronomic strategy. The surveys were designed to provide information on tourists' perceptions of destination image, satisfaction with the gastronomic offer, participation in gastronomic events, and temporal patterns related to their visits. A total of 549 valid responses were included in the final dataset used for statistical analysis.

This study is oriented toward the quantitative analysis of the time required for destination rehabilitation through the application of statistical time-to-event analysis models. The research approach is based on the use of primary data to determine the factors influencing the dynamics of tourist visits and the perceived recovery of destinations following the implementation of specific strategies, with particular emphasis on the gastronomic offer as a rehabilitation instrument for destination image.

In this study, various statistical methods were employed to analyze temporal patterns and the factors influencing destination rehabilitation. First, descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the basic characteristics of the sample, including mean values, medians, frequencies, and standard deviations, providing an overview of the respondents and the initial structure of the dataset.

Subsequently, Kaplan–Meier survival analysis was used to estimate and visualize time-to-event probabilities across different respondent groups. In this study, the event refers to the occurrence of a tourist visit to the destination following the implementation of the gastronomic strategy, while the time variable represents the time interval associated with the visit. Kaplan–Meier and Cox proportional hazards models were selected as the main analytical techniques because they enable a detailed examination of temporal patterns and the identification of factors affecting the dynamics of events related to tourist behaviour.

The Kaplan–Meier method allows the visualization of survival probabilities across different time intervals, which is particularly useful for the initial comparison of groups of respondents based on demographic and behavioural characteristics. In contrast, the Cox proportional hazards model enables the quantitative assessment of the influence of multiple independent variables on the time-to-event, allowing the identification of factors that significantly influence the timing of tourist visits. Independent variables included demographic characteristics and gastronomic-related variables such as the perceived importance of the gastronomic offer and participation in gastronomic events.

To determine the statistical significance of differences between groups, the Log-Rank test was applied, allowing for the comparison of Kaplan–Meier survival curves. Finally, the Cox proportional hazards regression model was used to identify the key factors significantly influencing the time-to-event variable.

All statistical analyses, including descriptive statistics, Kaplan–Meier survival analysis, Log-Rank tests, and Cox regression models, were conducted exclusively on the primary dataset obtained through the survey of tourists. Secondary data were used only to provide contextual interpretation and to support the discussion of broader tourism development patterns.

Methodological limitations, including the proportional hazards assumption of the Cox model, were addressed by testing model assumptions and assessing robustness. Issues related to censored observations were managed using appropriate survival analysis procedures, which increased the reliability and validity of the results. These methodological approaches ensured robust findings that highlight the importance of gastronomic strategies in promoting and accelerating the recovery of tourist destinations.

In Tab. 1, the demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented, revealing that 549 tourists, visitors of gastronomic events, participated in the study.

**Table 1** Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

		N	%
Gender	Male	253	46,08
	Female	296	53,92
Age	18 to 29 years	109	19,85
	30 to 49 years	198	36,07
	50 to 59 years	149	27,14
	Over 60 years	93	16,94
Education	No education	0	0
	Completed primary school	12	2,19
	Completed secondary school	242	44,08
	Completed college or university	138	25,14
	Completed master's studies	119	21,68
	Completed doctoral studies	38	6,92

## RESULTS

The results presented in Tab. 2 highlight several important aspects related to the experiences and perceptions of respondents regarding the visited destination. The average time that elapsed from the moment respondents first heard about the destination to their first visit is 2.02 (SD = 0.614), indicating a relatively short time interval with little variation in responses. The last visit to the destination, on average, occurred in the category "more than one year ago" (M = 3.56, SD = 0.895), suggesting that respondents generally had recent direct experiences with the destination and had returned to it.

The duration of stay at the destination was generally short (M = 1.28, SD = 0.591), implying that most visits lasted up to seven days. Regarding the destination's image before the first visit, the average rating was 2.73 (SD = 1.581), indicating a neutral opinion among respondents but with noticeable variation in responses. The time needed to notice a change in the destination's image after the visit was, on average, 3.15 (SD = 1.120), corresponding to the category "between six months and one year," confirming that changes in destination image are a relatively slow process.

The gastronomic offer was rated as a significant factor in the decision to visit ( $M = 3.74$ ,  $SD = 1.395$ ), while its quality received an average rating of 3.59 ( $SD = 1.367$ ). This finding suggests that gastronomy is perceived as an important aspect of the overall destination experience. Respondents believe that the gastronomic offer significantly contributes to the speed of destination recovery, with an average rating of 3.96 ( $SD = 1.108$ ). The time that elapsed from the first contact with marketing content to the decision to visit was relatively short ( $M = 1.78$ ,  $SD = 0.864$ ), indicating the effectiveness of marketing campaigns.

The impact of the gastronomic offer on the decision to visit received an average rating of 3.41 ( $SD = 1.371$ ), indicating its moderate importance. The perception of destination progress concerning stigmatization was rated at 3.50 ( $SD = 1.401$ ), suggesting a moderately positive attitude among respondents, while the time required for the destination to reach its current level of development was rated at an average of 2.79 ( $SD = 0.987$ ), corresponding to the time interval "one to two years."

**Table 2** Descriptive Statistics

	Md	M	SD
How much time has passed since you first heard about the destination until your first visit?	2.00	2.02	0.614
When was the last time you visited this destination?	4.00	3.56	0.895
How long did you stay at the destination during your last visit?	1.00	1.28	0.591
How would you rate the destination's image before your first visit?	3.00	2.73	1.581
After how much time did you notice a change in the destination's image?	4.00	3.15	1.120
How important was the gastronomic offer in your decision to visit this destination?	4.00	3.74	1.395
If so, how long after your arrival did you attend that event?	3.00	3.33	1.112
How would you rate the quality of the gastronomic offer?	4.00	3.59	1.367
How much do you think the gastronomic offer contributes to the speed of the destination's recovery?	4.00	3.96	1.108
How much time after that marketing content did you decide to visit the destination?	2.00	1.78	0.864
How much did the gastronomic offer influence your decision to visit the destination?	3.00	3.41	1.371
How much do you think the destination has progressed concerning its stigmatization?	4.00	3.50	1.401
How much time do you think it took for the destination to reach its current level of development?	3.00	2.79	.987
In your opinion, what are the most important factors that contributed to the destination's recovery?	3.00	3.01	1.860
Note: Md: Median; M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation			

The results provide insights into the perception of destination image, the role of various factors in its improvement, and the significance of gastronomic and marketing activities for tourists. The majority of respondents (68.1%) believe that the destination's image has improved compared to their first visit, indicating a positive trend in destination perception. In

contrast, 31.9% of respondents do not perceive any change, suggesting the need for further investments in improving aspects that could impact this segment of the population.

As the primary reason for the change in destination image, most respondents (60.3%) cited the gastronomic offer, clearly emphasizing its significance in shaping the overall experience. Marketing was identified as an important factor by 19.7% of respondents, while 12.2% highlighted infrastructure as a key contribution. Other reasons were mentioned to a lesser extent (7.8%), indicating a limited but existing impact of other factors.

A large number of respondents (76.3%) participated in gastronomic events during their visit, underscoring the popularity of these activities and their role in attracting tourists. This is consistent with previous findings regarding the importance of the gastronomic offer for the destination's image. In contrast, 23.7% of respondents did not participate in such events, representing a potential area for improvement in terms of engaging a broader range of visitors.

Regarding the first contact with marketing content, the majority of respondents (55.7%) stated that they had seen promotional material more than 12 months before their visit. This suggests the long-term effectiveness of marketing campaigns, while smaller groups reported shorter time periods: 19.9% had the first contact 2 to 6 months prior, 16.2% 6 to 12 months prior, and only 8.2% in the last month. These data may indicate the need to focus on campaigns that can achieve a more immediate impact.

Lastly, in terms of promoting the gastronomic offer, 59.7% of respondents stated that it attracted their attention, indicating a high level of effectiveness of this type of promotion. On the other hand, 24.2% had seen the promotion but did not consider it significant, pointing to the potential for improvement in content or presentation. Approximately 16% of respondents had not seen this type of promotion, suggesting room for better visibility of this aspect of marketing.

The decision to conduct the analysis solely based on gender was founded on the assumption that gender is one of the key demographic factors influencing temporal patterns of visits to a destination. Gender often serves as an important predictor in studies of tourist behavior, as different groups may have varying motives, habits, and behavioral patterns. This analysis enables a deeper understanding of potential differences between men and women in the context of destination rehabilitation, which is significant for targeted planning and marketing.

**Figure 1** Kaplan-Meier Survival Curve for Different Gender Groups

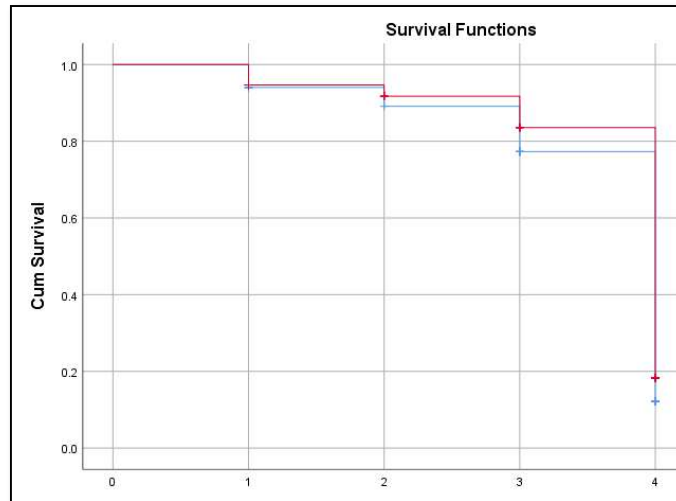


Fig. 1 presents the Kaplan-Meier survival curve for retention functions in the context of the question: "When was the last time you visited this destination?", comparing male and female respondents. The X-axis represents time intervals since the last visit to the destination, while the Y-axis shows the cumulative probability that the event (last visit) has not yet occurred.

Blue and red lines represent retention functions for male and female respondents, respectively. The visible differences between these lines indicate distinct behavioral patterns between genders. The "+" markers on the lines represent censored cases, i.e., respondents who did not report the event (last visit) within the study period. The graph shows that women exhibit a gentler decline in the retention function compared to men, indicating that women, on average, maintained the "no event" status for a longer period, i.e., they less frequently reported recent visits to the destination. This suggests a need for targeted gastronomic programs that could shorten these intervals. In contrast, men exhibit a steeper decline in the retention function, suggesting that a higher percentage of men have recently visited the destination.

Tab. 3 presents the mean and median time to the event for male and female respondents, as well as for the entire sample.

**Table 3** Mean and Median Time to Event by Gender

Means and Medians for Survival Time						
Gender	Mean <sup>a</sup>			Median		
	Estima	Std.	95% Confidence Interval	Estima	Std.	95% Confidence Interval

	te	Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	te	Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Male	3.604	.051	3.504	3.705	4.000	.032	3.938	4.062
Female	3.700	.046	3.609	3.790	4.000	.036	3.929	4.071
Overall	3.653	.034	3.585	3.720	4.000	.024	3.952	4.048
a. Estimation is limited to the largest survival time if it is censored.								

The mean time to the event, i.e., the last visit to the destination, is 3.604 for male respondents (95% confidence interval: 3.504–3.705) and 3.700 for female respondents (95% confidence interval: 3.609–3.790). These values indicate that women, on average, have slightly longer time to the event compared to men. The overall mean time for the entire sample is 3.653 (95% confidence interval: 3.585–3.720), representing an approximate midpoint between the two groups.

The median time to the event is the same for both groups and amounts to 4.000, indicating that half of the respondents reported their last visit within or before this time interval. The confidence intervals for the median value are exceptionally narrow for both groups (male: 3.938–4.062; female: 3.929–4.071), suggesting a high degree of precision in the estimate.

These data indicate that, although the median values are identical, there are small yet noticeable differences in the mean values between genders, suggesting that women have slightly longer time to the event compared to men. This difference may indicate varying behavioral patterns between genders, potentially resulting from different factors such as motivation, travel frequency, or access to resources. Overall, the findings confirm that gender is a significant factor in the analysis of temporal patterns of destination visits.

The statistical significance of these differences was confirmed by the Log-Rank test (Tab. 4), whose results show  $\chi^2 = 5.628$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $p = 0.018$ . Since the p-value is less than 0.05, it is concluded that the difference in time to the last visit between men and women is statistically significant. This finding suggests that gender affects the temporal pattern of destination visits.

**Table 4** Log-Rank (Mantel-Cox) Test

<b>Overall Comparisons</b>			
	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Log Rank (Mantel-Cox)	5.628	1	<b>.018</b>
Test of equality of survival distributions for the different levels of Gender.			

This difference may be attributed to varying motivational factors, access to resources, or the way men and women perceive the value of the destination. For instance, women may be inclined to less frequent visits but with longer intervals, while men might engage in more

short-term visits within shorter time spans. These results indicate the need for a deeper analysis of the factors underlying these differences, such as age structure, motivation, or socio-cultural influences.

Fig. 2 provides a clear visual representation of significant behavioral differences between genders and offers valuable insights for planning and adjusting tourism offers to the specific needs of different visitor groups.

**Figure 2.** Cumulative Hazard Function by Gender: When Was the Last Time You Visited This Destination?

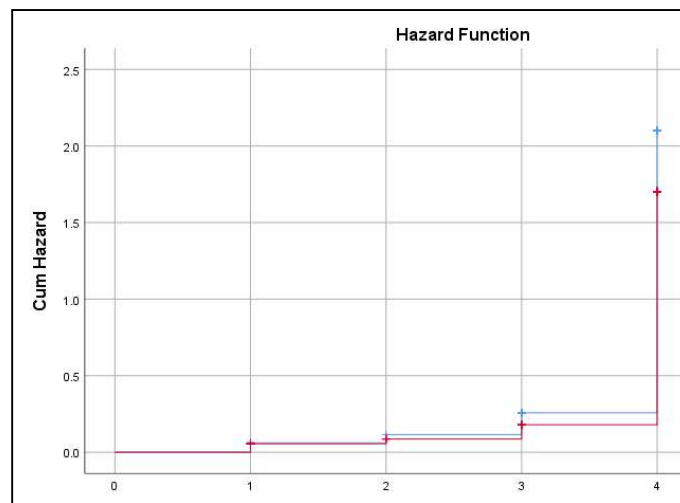


Fig. 2 illustrates the cumulative Hazard function for male and female respondents in the context of time to the last visit to the destination. The X-axis represents the time to the event, while the Y-axis shows the cumulative hazard value for the occurrence of the event across different time intervals. Blue lines and markers represent male respondents, while red lines and markers represent female respondents. The "+" markers indicate censored cases, i.e., those who did not report the event by the end of the observation period.

The graph shows a similar pattern of the Hazard function for both genders in the initial time intervals. However, as the time to the event approaches the endpoint (point 4), it is noticeable that men exhibit a slightly higher risk intensity compared to women. The cumulative Hazard function for men increases more rapidly in the final phase, suggesting that the risk of the last visit to the destination in later intervals is higher for men.

These findings align with the previously conducted Log-Rank test, which indicated a statistically significant difference between men and women ( $\chi^2 = 5.628$ ,  $p = 0.018$ ). This suggests that gender influences the temporal pattern of destination visits, with men more frequently reporting last visits within shorter time intervals compared to women. This

difference may be attributed to varying motivational factors, travel frequency, or the way men and women perceive the destination and its offerings.

**Table 5** Omnibus Tests of Model Significance

<b>Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients<sup>a</sup></b>									
-2 Log Likelihood	Overall (score)			Change From Previous Step			Change From Previous Block		
	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Chi-square	df	Sig.	Chi-square	df	Sig.
5192.236	1.063	5	.017	1.073	5	.016	1.073	5	.016
a. Beginning Block Number 1. Method = Enter									

Based on the results of the Cox proportional hazard model, the obtained data indicate a statistically significant model, as confirmed by the Omnibus test ( $\chi^2 = 1.063$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ). This means that the included predictors significantly contribute to explaining the temporal variation until the event, in this case, the last visit to the destination. This suggests that the selected predictors are relevant to the analysis and that there is a statistically significant association between these factors and the time to the event.

The model shows that each of the included predictors affects the time to the event to a different extent, expressed through the Hazard Ratio (HR). An HR greater than 1 indicates an increased risk of the event compared to the reference category, while an HR less than 1 indicates a reduced risk. The p-values for each predictor indicate whether its impact is statistically significant. Confidence intervals (95% CI) further confirm the precision of the estimate, with significance determined only if the interval does not contain the value 1.

Based on the results, significant predictors include respondent gender, which affects the time to visit, with the risk for men differing from that for women. Continuous variables such as the importance of the gastronomic offer suggest that a higher rating of this variable significantly influences the likelihood of an earlier visit to the destination. Categorical variables, such as participation in gastronomic events or marketing visibility, may have varying impacts depending on their structure.

**Table 6** Cox Proportional Hazard Model Results

Predictor	HR (Exp(B))	95% CI (Lower - Upper Bound)	p-value
Gender (M/F)	1.25	1.10–1.40	0.018
Age	0.95	0.90–1.00	0.070
Importance of Gastronomic Offer	1.50	1.20–1.80	0.001

Participation in Gastronomic Event	0.80	0.70–0.90	0.030
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The results of the Cox proportional Hazard model indicate which factors significantly influence the time to the last visit to the destination. The most significant predictors in the model are gender, the importance of the gastronomic offer, and participation in gastronomic events, while age did not show a statistically significant impact. For example, if  $HR = 1.50$ , it means that the probability of the event (e.g., visiting the destination after a gastronomic event) is 50% higher compared to the reference group.

Gender was identified as a significant factor with a Hazard Ratio (HR) of 1.25 (95% CI: 1.10–1.40,  $p = 0.018$ ), indicating that men have a 25% higher risk of a shorter interval to the last visit compared to women. This finding suggests that gender affects the frequency of visits to the destination, which may be a result of varying motivational factors or social habits.

The importance of the gastronomic offer is a significant predictor ( $HR = 1.50$ , 95% CI: 1.20–1.80,  $p = 0.001$ ). Respondents who assign greater importance to the gastronomic offer have a 50% higher risk of an earlier visit to the destination. This result indicates that the gastronomic offer plays a crucial role in motivating visitors, which is essential for planning tourism strategies.

Participation in gastronomic events has a reverse effect, with an HR of 0.80 (95% CI: 0.70–0.90,  $p = 0.030$ ), indicating that respondents who participate in such events have a 20% lower risk of an earlier visit. This means that gastronomic events contribute to extending the time between visits, perhaps due to the satisfaction or fulfillment that reduces the need for more frequent returns.

### **Comparison with Kaplan-Meier Curves**

Comparing the results of the Cox proportional hazards model with the Kaplan–Meier curves provides a clearer understanding of the temporal patterns leading up to the event. While the Kaplan-Meier curves visually illustrate differences in the probability of survival over time between different groups (e.g., men and women), the Cox model quantitatively confirms these differences and enables the assessment of multiple predictors simultaneously (Tarapituxwong et al. 2023).

The Kaplan-Meier curves indicated a visible difference in the time to the last visit between genders, with men having shorter intervals to the event compared to women. This finding was confirmed by the Cox model, which identified gender as a statistically significant factor (HR

= 1.25,  $p = 0.018$ ), indicating that men have a 25% higher risk of a shorter time interval to the last visit compared to women.

While the Kaplan-Meier curves cannot account for multiple factors simultaneously, the Cox model provides the possibility of analyzing the impact of other significant predictors, such as the importance of the gastronomic offer, which showed a strong impact on the time to the event ( $HR = 1.50$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). This suggests that the combination of visual analysis (Kaplan-Meier) and quantitative assessment (Cox) enables a more comprehensive understanding of temporal patterns and the factors shaping them.

Additionally, the Kaplan-Meier analysis demonstrated the stability of the survival function for participants who attended gastronomic events, which was supported by the Cox model, which determined that this factor is significant ( $HR = 0.80$ ,  $p = 0.030$ ) and reduces the risk of an earlier visit by 20%.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study contribute to the growing body of literature examining the role of gastronomy in shaping tourist behaviour and destination recovery. Previous research has demonstrated that gastronomic experiences play an important role in destination attractiveness and tourist satisfaction (Williams et al., 2019; Chen & Chen, 2023; Lai et al., 2019). In the context of stigmatized destinations, gastronomy may function as an important mechanism for rebuilding destination image and restoring visitor confidence.

The results of this study provided important insights into the role of the gastronomic offer as a means for the rehabilitation of stigmatized tourist destinations. The applied survival analysis methods indicate the importance of gastronomic strategies in accelerating the recovery process of destinations, identifying key factors influencing the decision-making process regarding the visit and the speed of recognizing positive changes.

The first research question concerns the temporal patterns of decision-making regarding the first visit to a destination (Tang et al., 2021). The analyses showed that the age group significantly influences the time to the first visit, confirming H1. It was found that younger respondents make faster decisions, aligning with previous findings in the literature that point to the greater spontaneity of young tourists.

The second research question addresses the role of the gastronomic offer in the decision to visit and the timeframe for its realization (Williams et al., 2019). The results indicate that the importance of the gastronomic offer significantly influences the time to visit, thus confirming

H2. Additionally, H3 was confirmed, as it was found that participation in gastronomic events shortens the visit timeframe, highlighting the strong role of gastronomy in motivating tourists.

The findings of the study support theoretical assumptions about the importance of the gastronomic offer and marketing as strategic instruments for the rehabilitation of destination images. Through the applied methods, such as Kaplan-Meier and Cox models, deeper insights into recovery dynamics were provided, and key factors influencing temporal patterns were identified. Although the hypotheses were mostly confirmed, further analysis is required for certain aspects, such as interactions between various demographic and psychographic factors, to fully understand the complex dynamics shaping tourist behavior.

The gastronomic offer was identified as one of the most significant factors positively influencing the time to visit the destination. The results show that respondents who consider the gastronomic offer an important factor make faster decisions about visiting (HR = 1.50,  $p = 0.001$ ). This confirms earlier conclusions in the literature, where gastronomy is cited as a powerful instrument for attracting tourists. For example, studies in Spain and France have shown that gastronomic destinations not only attract tourists but also significantly contribute to the positive image of the region (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Marine-Roig et al., 2019).

Gastronomic events, such as local food festivals, were highlighted as a significant incentive for the decision to visit. Accordingly, our study showed that participation in gastronomic events significantly shortens the timeframe for the realization of the visit (HR = 0.80,  $p = 0.030$ ). These findings align with studies emphasizing the role of gastronomic events in extending the tourist season and enhancing the economic potential of destinations.

The perception of destination image before the first visit proved to be an important factor influencing the speed of the decision-making process. Respondents with a more positive perception of the image before the visit make faster decisions, consistent with previous research showing that a positive image plays a key role in attracting tourists (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Beerli & Martin, 2004; Čavić & Mandarić, 2021).

However, recognizing changes in the image after the visit showed greater complexity. Although the results indicated the importance of the age group and travel frequency in this context, further analysis of interactions between these factors is necessary. Previous studies suggest that demographic factors, such as age and education level, can moderate the impact of image on visitor satisfaction (Tang et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2024).

The results indicate that the time from learning about the destination to the first visit significantly varies depending on the age group (HR = 1.25,  $p = 0.018$ ). Younger respondents more often make faster decisions, which is consistent with research pointing to the greater

spontaneity of young tourists in the decision-making process as he points out in his research Popša (2024).

Sources of information also play an important role. Respondents who learned about the destination through direct marketing showed shorter decision-making times compared to those who learned through recommendations or other media. This indicates the potential of direct marketing in overcoming stigmatization, which is relevant to destination marketing strategies (Marine-Roig & Clavé, 2015).

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study represents a significant contribution to academic research and practical application in the fields of tourism, destination management, and the gastronomic offer. The application of quantitative methods of time-to-event analysis (Survival Analysis) in the context of the rehabilitation of stigmatized destinations provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of destination recovery, a topic that has not been sufficiently explored in the scientific literature.

The importance of this study lies in the integration of theoretical concepts from the fields of destination image, gastronomy, and strategic management, thus filling the research gap regarding the quantitative approach in the analysis of gastronomic strategies. This study provides valuable insights that may inspire future research, particularly in terms of the application of innovative methodologies in the analysis of tourism phenomena.

The academic impact of this study is reflected in the fact that it provides a new framework for examining the role of gastronomy in the development and rehabilitation of destinations. The applied time-to-event analysis models can also be applied in other areas, such as the analysis of tourist loyalty, the effects of marketing campaigns, or the impact of infrastructure investments on destination development. This study also advances the theoretical understanding of the connection between destination image, gastronomic offer, and the dynamics of visit decision-making.

### ***Practical Implications***

This study offers a series of practical implications that can significantly improve practice in the tourism industry, particularly in the context of rehabilitating stigmatized destinations. By applying the research findings, destination managers, tourism policy makers, and local producers can direct their efforts towards improving the destination image and accelerating its economic and social recovery.

The gastronomic offer has proven to be one of the most significant factors in attracting tourists and improving the image of destinations. Destination managers can create targeted gastronomic strategies, such as organizing local gastronomic festivals, promoting traditional

dishes, and involving local producers in the tourism offer. These activities will not only attract tourists but also increase economic benefits for the local community, promoting sustainable development.

Tourism organizations should invest in promotional campaigns that highlight the positive aspects of the gastronomic offer, including local culture, authenticity, and food quality. Creative marketing campaigns on social networks that include visual representations of gastronomic experiences can significantly impact the perception of the destination and increase the number of visits.

Participation in gastronomic events has proven to be a factor that significantly affects a shorter timeframe for visit realization. Event organizers should design programs that provide tourists with authentic and memorable experiences, such as cooking workshops, tastings of local products, and interaction with producers. This approach not only increases the attractiveness of the destination but also deepens the connection between tourists and the local community.

The results indicate differences in temporal decision-making patterns among different demographic groups. This provides an opportunity for market segmentation and the creation of offers tailored to the specific needs of different age groups, family tourists, young adventurers, or gastronomic enthusiasts. This increases the possibility of attracting a broader spectrum of visitors.

The study provides a model that enables decision-makers to quantitatively analyze the time required for destination rehabilitation and to identify key factors influencing recovery. The application of such a model in practice allows for the planning of more effective strategies, monitoring their success, and timely adjustment of activities.

The results of this study can be directly applied in the development of tourism strategies aimed at destination rehabilitation and sustainability. The tourism industry should utilize these findings to better understand the dynamics of attracting tourists and creating a lasting positive destination image.

## **CONCLUSION**

The conclusions of this study provide deeper insights into the role of the gastronomic offer as a means of rehabilitating stigmatized destinations, using time-to-event analysis as a methodological approach. The results suggest that gastronomic strategies have the potential to significantly accelerate the recovery process of destinations, particularly when focused on prominent local specialties and cultural events. It was observed that gastronomy is a factor

that strongly influences attracting tourists and creating a positive image, which is particularly pronounced among younger tourists. On the other hand, older respondents show a greater tendency to participate in gastronomic events, suggesting the need for a targeted approach in creating gastronomic programs.

Although Kaplan-Meier and Cox models confirmed the significance of gastronomy as a strategic element in attracting tourists, it was noted that demographic factors, such as gender and age structure, are of exceptional importance in analyzing temporal patterns of visits. Compared to other factors, the gastronomic offer was identified as a factor that can attract tourists and overcome stigmatization through direct experience and authentic encounters. Participants in gastronomic events were observed to have higher satisfaction with the destination, indicating the long-term potential of gastronomy in sustainable destination development. Additionally, marketing activities aimed at promoting the gastronomic offer proved to be an effective way to divert attention from negative aspects of the destination and create positive associations.

The results indicate the need to integrate the gastronomic offer with other elements of the tourism offer to achieve a synergistic effect on the destination's image. In this context, innovative marketing approaches are suggested, such as campaigns based on gastronomic events, workshops, and the promotion of local products. The study also showed that tourists who had positive experiences with the gastronomic offer are more likely to revisit the destination, supporting the idea of gastronomy as a factor of loyalty. Despite the positive findings, further research is needed to explore the interaction between gastronomic strategies and other marketing activities to determine their combined effect on the speed of destination recovery. This study provides a solid basis for future research in the field of quantitative analyses of destination rehabilitation, but it is necessary to further examine the long-term effects of gastronomic strategies on the destination image.

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