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Gastronomy and cultural tourism in João Pessoa-PB / Brazil: appreciation and post-pandemic recovery

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PURPOSE

Gastronomic tourism through restaurants and the like, located in historic centers, can contribute to the preservation of material heritage. In this context, the historic center of the city of João Pessoa, Paraíba, has a great historical and cultural value, with constructions that refer to the first years of the city's foundation, however, it is in relative abandonment, with many idle buildings and others that, due to lack of maintenance, they collapsed. Only the ruins are left. In the year 2020, with the coronavirus pandemic, the problem of abandonment became even more serious, as the need for social isolation put the activities in bars and restaurants in financial difficulties, when it did not cause them to close. Thus, this work aimed to analyze the contributions of gastronomic tourism, in the historic center, for the preservation of cultural heritage in a post-pandemic scenario. In this sense, the question that guided the study was: how can gastronomic tourism contribute to the preservation of the historic center and assist in the economic recovery of the region in the post-pandemic?

RESEARCH METHODS

The study is based on bibliographic and documentary research on gastronomy, historic center, cultural heritage and Covid-19. To answer the objective, a research with qualitative analysis was carried out, where, the object of this study were the bars and restaurants located in the historic center of João Pessoa, capital of the state of Paraíba in Brazil, due to gastronomic tourism and its contributions to the preservation of spaces.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The tourist has, through gastronomy, the opportunity to connect with the visited place, to live the experiences and the ways of life of the locality. However, from the year 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, travel had to be postponed and this had an impact on sectors related to tourism, especially for bars and restaurants. According to the data analyzed, the impact of the pandemic was severe, in such a way that, for the recovery of tourism, the sectors related to the activity will need to grow more than 17% in the years 2022 and 2023 to normalize the activity in the levels before the pandemic. In this context, it is important to enhance the performance scenario, that is, the operation of restaurants in buildings in the historic center has the potential to attract more visitors, enabling a greater appreciation and

conservation of the historic center, contributing to the recovery of the economy in this post-pandemic scenario. The situation in the historic center of the city of João Pessoa is delicate, as the lack of investment is evident and, in the research, no prospects, projects or actions were found to encourage the development of the gastronomy sector, which can contribute a lot to conservation and the enhancement of this historical and cultural heritage.

IMPLICATIONS

The Covid-19 pandemic imposes many restrictions on tourism, travel is postponed and as a consequence the hotel chain and gastronomy are severely affected. In this scenario, investment in domestic tourism presents itself as a viable alternative, the research found cases of success in historic centers in other cities that helped to recover tourism and also contributed to the protection of historical heritage. In this sense, the data analyzed indicated that the possibility of transforming the historic center of João Pessoa into a tourist and gastronomic hub is viable, thus contributing to the development of the city. The government must work in partnership with the private sector and propose investment in the place, develop protection policies that allow the use of the buildings so that their characteristics are preserved. This study found the need for more research on gastronomic tourism, in the historic center of João Pessoa, capital of the state of Paraíba (Brazil), and studies to understand the existing restrictions for the use of protected properties.

KEYWORDS

Cultural Tourism. Gastronomy. Gastronomic tourism. Cultural heritage. João Pessoa.

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