

GASTRONOMY TOURISM POTENTIAL OF TURKEY

Ümit SORMAZ

Necmettin Erbakan University, Konya/Turkey

usormaz@konya.edu.tr

Abstract

As a rapidly growing industry, tourism has become, in recent years, an important sector considered attractive to financiers due to the changes tourism has caused in countries' economic and sociocultural structures and this industry's positive contributions to national economies and policies. As one of many subtypes of tourism, gastronomic tourism has developed into a strong attractor thanks to gastronomic activities in tourist destinations. As in many countries around the world, Turkey now provides domestic and foreign tourists with chances to participate in activities organized by public and private organizations that seek to generate business in gastronomic tourism. In this context, this study seeks to investigate the importance and current status of gastronomic tourism in Turkey and to identify activities organized as part of the development of gastronomic tourism.

Keywords: *Tourism, gastronomy, gastronomic tourism, gastronomic activities, Turkey*

JEL Classification: *L66, L83*

I. INTRODUCTION

Eating is a physiological need associated with a developing tourism subsector and the food and beverage industry, which center around activities that satisfy this need and target tourists seeking to fill their free time. These individuals now are motivated not only by hunger but also by the enjoyment and sense of satisfaction they get from food and the surrounding atmosphere, landscape, and other aspects. These travelers give much importance to eating out. Nearly all tourists want to dine in restaurants, whether their accommodations have food and beverage services or not, preferring to try and become familiar with dishes that belong to the region around their accommodations. As a result, regional cuisines have become important tools to help tourists understand and experience other cultures (Kastenholz and Davis, 1999; Gyimothy et al. 2000; Joppe et al. 2001).

Culture is defined as all physical artifacts and spiritual values that are formed by social processes over time and all the tools that are used to generate these cultural elements. They are transferred to the next generation and help humans dominate their natural and social environments (TDK 2015).

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

Food culture makes distinctions according to regions (Yüncü, 2010). Destination countries' eating and drinking culture also play a part, among other factors, in encouraging people to travel. Individuals may venture long distances solely to taste to a specific country or region's dishes (Denizer, 2015). In addition, tourists travel to particular regions to participate in cultural experiences, including discovering local and regional tastes. A variety of food is accepted as normal

for some cultures, while, for others, specific dishes can be sacred. This food can enable even those only visiting regions to taste special cuisines, according to their particular interests. Many factors, such as tasting and observing the processing of raw materials used to make regional dishes, have played an important role in shaping the main reasons tourists form preferences during their visits. With the growing prominence of food cultures, gastronomic tourism has made an increasing but sustainable use of regional and traditional sources, contributing to alternative tourism studies (Yüncü, 2010).

Gastronomic tourism and the associated products contribute to the branding of regional cuisines, which are seen as attractions that contribute to destination preferences. This tourism subsector can be an alternative to sun and sea destinations and can generate a quality of activities that supports destinations' sustainability (Shenoy, 2005; Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Ulusoy, 2008). Dishes prepared using regional materials, cooked with traditional techniques, and served by those wearing traditional dresses and using traditional cooking ingredients and cooking methods are also features that attract tourists interested in gastronomic activities (Aslan, 2010).

A combination of the Greek words *gaster* (stomach) and *nomos* (law), gastronomy is defined as the art of eating and drinking in many sources, yet it is also an art and science directly connected with many other disciplines (Kivela and Crofts, 2006; Altinel 2014). When gastronomy is treated as a subtopic of tourism, fine arts, and food and nutrition sciences, it includes subjects such as the physiology of taste and tasting, food and beverage production, and nutritional functions in the human body. Experts in gastronomy determine the qualities of food and identify their nutritional value, as well as developing production

processes that follow hygiene-sanitation guidelines to protect food from spoiling, including physical, chemical, and biological characteristics (Shenoy, 2005).

From a wider perspective, gastronomy can be defined as “quality food and drinking experiences” or as “sanitary, well-prepared, nice, and delicious cooking” and “any combination and system of food” (TDK, 2015). The term “gastronomic tourism,” in general, includes a cuisine’s originality and localness from the consumer’s perspective, activities that enhance a product’s inherent connection to a specific region, and visits to regions in which original foods are eaten (Groves, 2001; Hall and Mitchell, 2005; Green and Dogherty, 2008; Çağlı, 2012).

As gastronomic tourism enables the promotion of local cuisines, this subsector helps to spread food culture from the local to the national and international levels (Güler et al., 2016). Each destination has its own distinctive attractions. However, some of them outweigh the others and enhance destinations’ identities (Akdağ et al., 2015). Basic features of foods that comprise country brands can include using local materials, preparing dishes with traditional techniques, and the associated cooking and serving techniques.

As long as food production and serving processes use proper hygiene and sanitary conditions,

tourists have shown that tasting a country’s traditionally prepared foods is vitally important (Hacıoğlu et al., 2009; Cohen and Avieli, 2004). Thus, tourists’ experiences in regions have an added attraction in the form of variations of local foods, which make up the most important part of regional tourism features (Shenoy, 2005). Gastronomic tourism has much potential in Turkey. This can be examined according to the potential for being a main attraction, such as wine and cheese, oil and olive oil, and food tours, or for being local foods that can be served in addition to these tours (Çağlı, 2012). The distribution of inbound tourists according to their reason for coming to Turkey in the last three years is shown in Table 1.

As Turkey has a rich cuisine, every city and region creates their own local dishes based on their own preferred tastes, geographical conditions and customs shaped by historical processes. Notably, these locations are recognized for their unique conditions and main dishes and desserts (Çağlı, 2012).

Researchers have confirmed that the food and beverage sector has a vital importance in—and accounts for a large share of—tourism income. Compared to the accommodation sector, the food and beverage sector represented 18.4% of total tourism income in 2004. This share increased to 23.8% in 2009, although, in 2014, it decreased to 19% (see Table 2).

Table 1. Distribution of Inbound Tourists According to Reason of Coming to Turkey in the Last Three Years (TUİK, 2015)

ACTIVITIES	2012	2013	2014
Tour, entertainment, sportive and cultural	19.453.393	20.637.476	22.801.498
Visiting friends and relatives	2.624.016	2.947.172	3.022.614
Job training (less than 1 year)	202.011	169.941	158.820
Health and medical reasons (less than 1 year)	153.520	188.295	328.647
Religious/pilgrimage	61.116	54.395	77.636
Shopping	852.934	915.788	1.019.912
Transit	38.548	36.429	38.698
Job (conference ,meeting, duty et cetera)	1.918.178	2.082.477	2.051.273
Other	933.657	1.144.408	1.051.621
Going along with	5.105.089	5.651.093	5.299.565
TOTAL	31.342.464	33.827.474	35.850.286

Table 2. Income Acquired by Foreign Tourist in Turkey (TURSAB, 2015).

Year	Tourism Income (thousand \$)	Food and Beverage Expenditures (thousand \$)	Food and Beverages’ share From total (%)
2004	17.076.609	3.158.780	18.4
2005	20.322.111	3.690.171	18.1
2006	18.593.947	3.899.512	20.9
2007	20.042.501	4.746.747	23.6
2008	25.415.068	5.774.961	22.7
2009	25.064.481	5.975.660	23.8
2010	24.940.996	5.841.251	23.4
2011	28.115.693	6.440.577	22.9
2012	29.351.445	6.210.047	21.1
2013	32.308.991	6.583.641	20.3
2014	34.305.904	6.523.852	19.0

2.1 Gastronomic Festivals in Turkey

Food and gastronomic festivals, besides being an important part of gastronomic tourism, allows domestic and foreign tourists to participate in gatherings with local people. This creates opportunities

to share experiences of food enriched with activities that allow visitors to immerse themselves in local food culture (Rand et al., 2003; Kalkstein, 2007). Table 3 below lists food festivals that are organized at the national and international levels in Turkey.

Table 3. Local Food Thematic Festivals Organized in National and International Level in Turkey (KTB, 2015)

Festival's Name	City	Festival's Name	City
Pear festival	Ankara, Malatya	Ayran festival	Ankara, Antalya, Balıkesir
Broad bean festival	Kütahya	Green pea festival	Afyon
Lung festival	Edirne	Pine nut festival	Aydın
Tea festival	Rize	Flower okra festival	Amasya
Plum festival	Antalya, Manisa, Aydın	Nut festival	Giresun, Kocaeli
Kashar cheese festival	Ardahan	Apricot festival	Kayseri, Malatya, Mersin
Orcharding festival	Afyonkarahisar	Corn festival	Trabzon
Nut festival	Siirt	Milk festival	Balıkesir, Sakarya
Peach festival	Çanakkale	Tarhana festival	Burdur, Kütahya
Butter festival	Trabzon	Bryndza cheese festival	Erzincan
Egg festival	Hatay, Siirt	Yogurt festival	Kocaeli
Haricot festival	Giresun	Garlic festival	Kastamonu
Mushroom festival	Antalya	Tomatoes festival	Çanakkale
Cream festival	Afyonkarahisar, Nevşehir, Çorum,	Morel mushroom festival	Muğla
Rice-pilaff festival	Edirne, Kastamonu	Potato festival	Afyon, Sivas, Trabzon
Dried crushed wheat festival	Kastamonu	Melon festival	Ankara, Kırıkkale, Manisa, Sivas
Grapery and vintage festival	Çanakkale, Edirne, Karabük, Malatya, Manisa	Watermelon festival	Adana, Antalya, Diyarbakır, Kırıkkale, Konya, Manisa
Strawberry festival	Bartın, Kırklareli, Konya, Manisa, Tokat, Zonguldak	Apple festival	Antalya, Bolu, Denizli, Mersin, Karaman, Kocaeli, Malatya
Roasted chickpea festival	Denizli, Kütahya	Walnut festival	Aksaray, Bitlis, Kayseri, Kırşehir, Malatya, Van
Rosehip-dried fruit	Gümüşhane	Olive and olive Oil festival	Balıkesir, Bursa
White mulberry and molasses festival	Ankara, Isparta, Tunceli	Pomegranate, citrus fruits and mandarin festival	Antalya, Mersin, Muğla
Cherry festival	Adana, Afyon, Çankırı, Denizli, İzmir, Karaman, Kocaeli, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Niğde, Tokat, Tekirdağ	Honey festival	Adıyaman, Antalya, Ardahan, Erzincan, Giresun, Kastamonu, Malatya, Mersin, Rize, Siirt, Sivas, Tunceli, Van, Yozgat, Zonguldak

Table 4 provides regional food festivals, and Table 5 presents national and international gastronomic festivals (KTB, 2015).

It is obvious that the regional products are being utilized to attract tourists to national and international festivals which have great diversity as is seen in Table 3. Besides, it has been understood there are variety of cities from different regions that have same type of festivals since the same products are being produced in the vast majority of country. For example, it is cherry

festivals have been organizing in the thirteen different cities from five different geographical region such as Adana, Afyonkarahisar, Çankırı, Denizli, İzmir, Karaman, Kocaeli, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Niğde, Tokat and Tekirdağ.

In addition to local products and food festivals that are national and international participated, Turkey hosts numerous regional festivals aiming to arouse the interest of the domestic and foreign tourists (Table 4).

Table 4. Regional Tastes Festivals Organized in National and International Level in Turkey (KTB, 2015)

Festival's Name	City	Festival's Name	City
Fish Festival	Antalya, İstanbul, Kastamonu	Boza Festival	Tekirdağ
Cağ Kebab Festival	Erzurum	Pancake Festival	Ankara
Hot Pot Festival	Ankara	Keşkek Festival	Antalya, Aydın, Balıkesir, Çankırı, Denizli
Chestnut Sweet Festival	Bursa	Turkish Fairy Floss Festival	Kocaeli
Kommagene Steak Tartar a la turca Festival	Adıyaman	Pita with Tahina Festival	Konya
Mesir Paste Festival	Manisa	Brewis Festival	Ankara
Sırık Kebab Festival	Sinop	Flaky Pastry Festival	Isparta

Turkey has been hosting the wide range of prestigious domestic and international gastronomic festivals and food competition organizations in which

local, regional and international culinary culture and products are being exhibited for the domestic and international visitors for many years (Table 5).

Table 5. Gastronomy Festivals Organized in National and International Level in Turkey (KTB, 2015)

Festival's Name	City	Festival's Name	City
International Food Festival	İstanbul	Grass Dishes Festival	Muğla
International Gastronomy Festival	İstanbul	Disappearing Tastes Festival	Nevşehir
Candy Maker, Pastrycook Festival	Kastamonu	International Cookery and Tourism Festival	Bolu
Regional Foods and Gastronomy Festival	Bursa, Çanakkale, Erzurum, İzmir, Karaman	International Golden Cap Cooks Festival	Antalya
International cuisine days	Bolu	National Cookery Camp	Bolu

2.2 Gastronomy Museums in Turkey

Gastronomy museums are run by experts in gastronomy science and visited by tourists interested in gastronomy, who are looking for information about the history, customs, and techniques of gastronomy as a component of local culture in destinations. These museums are defined as institutions that seek to increase and publicize gastronomic tourism.

Temporary and permanent exhibits' contents fall within the scope of gastronomic activities, showing established regional gastronomic artifacts and providing opportunities for training (Alexander and Alexander, 2007; Harrington and Ottenbacher, 2010; Horng and Tsai, 2011; Çağlı, 2012). Table 6 shows the gastronomy and food culture museums currently open to visitors in Turkey.

Table 6. Gastronomy and Food Culture Museums in Turkey (Çağlı, 2012; URL 2015c,d)

Museum's Name	City	Museum's Name	City
İstanbul Gastronomy Museum	İstanbul	Antakya Cuisine Museum	Hatay
MSA Gastronomy Museum	İstanbul	Emine Göğüş Cuisine Museum	Gaziantep
Traditional Cuisine Museum	Şanlıurfa	Kuşadası Mill Farm –Olive Oil Museum	Aydın
Turkish Coffee Museum	Eskişehir	Cuisine and Food Culture Museum	Antalya
Mürefte Feyzi Kutman Wine Museum	Tekirdağ	Adatepe Olive Oil Museum	Çanakkale
Edremit Evren Ertür Historical Olive Oil Tools Museum	Balıkesir	Oleatrium Olive and Olive Oil Historical Exhibit Field	İzmir

Cities that are rich in gastronomy and culinary culture have been increasing the number of gastronomy and culinary museums in order to introduce and publicize their gastronomic characteristics handed down from the past civilization to present (Table 6).

2.3 Cooking Courses in Turkey

Cooking was once done to satisfying a basic need, but, currently, this activity has changed to a pleasure and a pleasant hobby for many people.

Cooking courses teach how to prepare a selection of dishes from traditional and world cuisines to people intending both to become professionals and to savor the dishes they are cooking. Today, this is a fast growing business, and culinary education programs are in high demand in Turkey. Cooking courses organized by private and governmental institutions in Turkey are shown in Table 7 (URL 2015f, g, h, i, j, k).

Table7. Cooking Courses Teach by Private and Governmental Institutions in Turkey

Cooking Courses Opened by Government			
Course's Name	Issuer	City	Year
Cookery Pastry& Baklava Making Service Man Bartender Dairy Bar Pizzeria Pita Local Cuisines	Ministry of National Education Public Education Center	All Cities	1956
Cookery Pastry & Baklava Making Preparing Home Cooking Fruits and Vegetables Decoration Sushi making Sugar Paste	İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Courses (İSMEK)	İstanbul	1996
Cookery Baklava Making Pastry Service Man	Konya Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Courses (KOMEK)	Konya	2004
Cookery Preparing Home Cooking Pastry	Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipality Profession and Art Education Courses (KO-MEK)	Kocaeli	2007
Cooking Courses Opened by Government			
Course's Name	Issuer	City	Year
Cookery Preparing Home Cooking Pastry Chocolate making Service Man	Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Courses (BUSMEK)	Bursa	2009
Cookery Pastry Home Cooking	Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Vocational Courses (BELMEK)	Ankara	1994
Cookery Service Man Pastry	İzmir Metropolitan Municipality Skill and Vocational Courses (İZMEB)	İzmir	2006
Cookery Pastry Preparing Home Cooking Gaziantep Cuisine	Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Courses (GASMEK)	Gaziantep	2005
Cookery Preparing Home Cooking	Odunpazarı Art and Vocational Courses (OMEK)	Eskisehir	2004
Pastry Preparing Home Cooking	Antalya Art and Vocational Courses (ASMEK)	Antalya	2004
Cookery Pastry Preparing Home Cooking	Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality Art and Vocational Courses (KAYMEK)	Kayseri	2004
Cookery Pastry & Bread Making Bartending Turkish Cuisine Coffee Making chocolate making International Cuisines	Culinary Arts Academy (MSA)	İstanbul	2004

Chef Owner			
Cookery Pastry Bread Making Coffee and Barista Education Food and Beverage Business Management and Chef Owner	Chef's Table Culinary School	İstanbul	2011
Cookery Pastry Italian Cuisine Chef school	İstanbul Culinary Institute	İstanbul	2007
Cookery Pastry and Bread Making Restaurant Business Management	Murat Bozok's Kitchen	İstanbul	2014
Cookery Pastry and Bread Making Food and Beverage Business Management Bar and mixology Barista Education	Doors Academy	İstanbul	2012
Temek Cuisine Pizza Bread Making	Chef's İstanbul	İstanbul	2004
Cookery Pastry Chocolate making	Kitchen Studio Academy	İstanbul	2012
Cookery Pastry and Bread Making Chef Owner Bar and Service	EKS Culinary Academy	İstanbul	2012
Cookery Pastry and Bread Making	Chef Academy	Ankara	2012
Cookery	Kadir Has University Hands-on Culinary Education	İstanbul	2011
Cookery Pastry Sugar Paste	Chef's İstanbul Culinary Workshop	İstanbul	2004

2.4. Gastronomic Tours in Turkey

Within gastronomic tourism, gastronomic tours are extremely important, having the goal of introducing visitors to local tastes. The numbers of these tours are gradually increasing. A full 88.2% of tourists worldwide indicate that food is an important point in their destination selection process, making this an indicator of tourists' behavioral intentions (TURSAB, 2015). In general, Mediterranean countries such as France, Spain, Italy, and Greece traditionally dominate gastronomic tourism, but its importance is rising in countries like the United States, China, Australia, and Turkey. In the latter country, gastronomic tours have been organized in many cities, including Gaziantep, Mersin, Hatay, Adana, and Nevşehir. These tours are becoming more prominent as ways to introduce local tastes to domestic and foreign tourists, playing a significant role in introducing Anatolia's rich cuisine and food culture to visitors. In Turkey, various regions are famous for their local products and food culture, and gastronomic tours focused on main dishes, desserts, wine, cheese, olives, and olive oil have already been organized (Çağlı, 2012). Gastronomic tours organized in Turkey are listed in Table 8 (TURSAB, 2015).

Table 8. Gastronomy Tours Organized in Turkey

Organized Gastronomy Tours	Gastronomy Tours' Organized City
Local Culinary Tours	Gaziantep
	Hatay
	Mersin
	Adana
	Nevşehir
Vintage and Wine Tours	Ankara
	Tekirdağ
	Çanakkale
	İzmir
Olive Oil Tours	Balıkesir
	Aydın
	Muğla
	Çanakkale
Fish and It's Meals	Trabzon
	Sinop
	Samsun
	Giresun
	Ordu

III. CONCLUSION

Kitchens throughout the world, including in Turkey, are no longer the only place where food habits are preserved, becoming instead places that represent local culture and shared pleasurable experiences. Food and the associated factors that affect individuals and societies are accompanied by a need for the art of eating and the food and beverage sector. Based on this shared necessity, gastronomy and its activities increase countries' potential for tourism thanks to the way that dishes represent cultural integrity, help protect local economies, and draw visitors' attention to cultural identities.

Currently within gastronomy tourism, activities such as gastronomic tours, gastronomy and cuisine museums, gastronomic and food festivals, tourism and food fairs, gastronomic entertainment, and cooking courses, conferences, books, and booklets are gaining importance as ways to present the richness of cultural heritage. Turkey—even though its traditions and customs are still intact—has lost some of its

gastronomic specialties through the process of time and new generations. This country needs to respond to the need to transfer its cultural heritage to future generations, which will also increase its potential to attract domestic and foreign tourists who come to destinations with a desire to taste and learn about local cuisines. The present study's results reveal the importance of, and need for, gastronomic tourism and national and international organizations that can organize more gastronomic tourist attractions. As do many countries, Turkey needs to develop a more extensive organization of gastronomic tourism to satisfy both domestic and foreign tourists' interests.

This research showed that supporting gastronomic activities strengthens regional and local economies, contributing to more effective cultural and commercial policies. Based on these findings, Turkey should increase both the quality and quantity of the relevant organizations by providing incentives in both the public and private sector.

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