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Gastronomy in Tourism

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Abstract

Culinary culture has been an area that has been ignored until recently. However, culinary culture is always the longest-surviving part of a culture and tradition. To put it in a different way, cuisines where many different identities of a society merge together and national feelings are felt most are a mirror of daily life styles, religious beliefs, habits, traditions and customs. Changes of eating style in societies and rising the value of eating socially have been one of the reasons for movements in tourism activities. Gastronomy tourism has become major and has become a rapidly growing component of the attractiveness of tourism destination in recent years. The marketing opportunities to gastronomy tourism are being developed by the countries given importance to that issue. Tourists' wishes to experience the local tastes in the destinations and accommodation facilities have prepared the ground for the development of gastronomy tourism. Tourism businesses that realized the importance to gastronomy tourism given by local and foreign tourists have featured the gastronomic factors in their facilities. Therefore, it is ensured that to take attention for gastronomy, tourism should be managed in coordination with all tourism- related foundations and civil society organizations and with the encouragement of relevant ministries. In addition, the promotional activities are required to be taken in measurable ways by gastronomic tourism developers.

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1. Introduction

Eating, which in today's world is one of the physical needs and in relation with the developing tourism sector and food and beverage industry, has led to the emergence of a sector that has become to be seen as leisure time activities and desired to be met outside. Almost all tourists, no matter the accommodations at which they are staying provide food and beverages services or not, prefer to eat outside; and get to know and taste the local dishes belonging to the region. Within this context, local dishes of a region have become important means to get to know and learn more about a different culture (Kastenholz & Davis 1999; Gyimothy et al., 2000; Joppe et al., 2001).

A tourist might want to visit an area to have some new cultural experience, or they just want to try local dishes and different tastes belonging to that area as well. As a result of this, such reasons as trying local dishes of an area and observing production phases of and tasting a local dish which is made of a raw material available only in that specific region have now begun to be among the main reasons that affect tourists' preferences for destinations to visit. Moreover, this will contribute to the sustainability of the regions' resources and also to alternative tourism facilities that can be structured in regions with food culture coming into prominence (Yuncu, 2010).

Gastronomy is now seen as a determinant factor in attracting tourists while they choose destinations. Gastronomic tourism can become an alternative tourism type on its own to sun and sea destinations, and it can also serve as an activity supporting these destinations (Shenoy, 2005; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Ulusoy, 2008).

2. Gastronomy

The word "gastronomy" was formed by merging the Greek words "gaster" (stomach) and "nomas" (law). However, it is more useful and important to interpret what it denotes and covers beyond its dictionary meaning, instead of its dictionary meaning only (Altinel, 2014).

Although "gastronomy" is defined as the art of eating and drinking in many sources, it in fact is an inter-related branch of art and science that has a direct relation with chemistry, literature, biology, geology, history, music, philosophy, psychology, sociology, medicine, nutrition, and agriculture (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). As the topic is about eating and drinking, this covers such issues as nutritional sciences, sense of tasting and its physiology, wine production, functions of nutritional elements in human body, specifying qualities in choosing food stuffs, and developing production processes in accordance with hygiene and sanitation norms to prevent foods from going off physically, chemically, and biologically (Shenoy, 2005).

The purpose of gastronomy is to maintain human health with best nutrition possible and ensuring enjoying life and eating; food and beverages' being produced in hygienic environments and prepared to be consumed in a way that will address to palatal and visual pleasure are also among the study topics of gastronomy.

3. Gastronomic Tourism

Tourism in today's world is one of the most important economic sectors and leisure time spending activities, and the facts that it has a great multiplier effect economically and can cause directly and indirectly an activation in many sub-sectors make it an ideal development means (Cagli, 2012).

Tourism, which has a driving role in development of societies, is a source of income for those providing services as people spend to meet their needs when they are travelling. As people's needs increase, so does the obligation of producing and offering more and more goods and services, which increases production, investment, and income in societies (Akgoz, 2003). Tourism affects nations, people and nations' establishing relations with one another, and it also integrates the phenomena of culture, heritage, economy, and environment; therefore, orienting its development, and its coordination and control are highly crucial issues (Cagli, 2012).

Although such different terms like "culinary tourism", "gastronomy tourism", "gastro-tourism", "wine tourism", "food tourism", and "gourmet tourism" are used in literature to define it, the widely used term "gastronomic tourism" is defined as "being in pursuit of unique experience of eating and drinking." Gastronomy tourism, which generally refers to the originality of a dish and its being indigenous to a place, a region or a country, covers the main areas of indigenous dishes and wine tourism (Hall & Mitchell, 2000; Groves 2001, Green & Dogherty, 2008; Cagli 2012, URL 2014).

Gastronomic tourism includes visiting food producers, eating festivals, restaurants and special places related to some special foods together with tasting a special dish, observing its production and preparation processes or eating a special dish from the hands of a very famous chef as well as seeing how a certain dish is being prepared (Hall et al. 2003; Hall & Mitchell, 2005). In addition, instead of preparations of foods at restaurants and hotels for tourists, tourists' travelling in pursuit of having experience regarding local foods and beverages is within the scope of gastronomic tourism (Akgol 2012). The industry of gastronomic tourism, which does not consist only of food guides and restaurants, covers any kind of culinary experience. Within this sector are cooking schools, shops selling cookbooks, gastronomy tours operators and tour guides; gastronomy-related media, television programs and magazines, and activities, winemakers, vineyards, breweries, distilleries, field owners, and producers (Cagla, 2012).

An important point for the development of gastronomic tourism is a region's people's protecting local products belonging to that region. Some of the shareholders of gastronomic tourism are individual grape growers, hotels, restaurants, tour operators, package tour or individual tourists, and local businesses (Alonso & Yiliu, 2011).

Culture, as an element of gastronomic tourism, is generally expressed with inner willingness of people to get to know different cultures (Kozak, 1997; Akgol, 2012). Besides gastronomy tourism being interest tourism, through the learning of cultural characteristics of host areas thanks to local dishes of the area, gastronomy tourists are also culture tourists at the same time (Akgol, 2012). Gastronomic tours, arranged to introduce a region's dishes and food culture which play an important role in selection of and the experience tourists can have in a region, can feature a region. Some of these regions are France, Australia, South Africa, Italy, America, England, etc. where wine tourism is more developed; Canada with beer tourism, and Italy with such famous foods as pasta and pizza. Moreover, all these places together with Toscana region in Italy, Napa valley in California, The USA, South Africa, Australia, Champagne and Burgundy regions in Chile and France have been known to be gastronomy destinations for long years. As for Turkey, it is generally famous for kebab and doner kebab (special dishes made from meat) (Acar, 1996; Charters & Knight; 2002, Plummer et al., 2005; Getz & Brown, 2006; Sparks, 2007; McKercher et al., 2008). In the light of studies carried out so far, it has been stated that the desire to get to know and taste dishes from the Turkish cuisine ranked fifth among the reasons why foreign tourists prefer Turkey (Akman, 1998; Arslan, 2010). Moreover, it has also been found that visits and tours in order to see and taste special dishes from the Turkish cuisine ranked the third most preferred by foreign tourists (Akgol, 2012), and that foreign tourists consider the Turkish cuisine to be delicious, attractive, fatty, and spicy (Sanlier, 2005).

Gastronomy, a new branch in tourism sector, is in relation with not only eating and drinking, but it is also inter-related with many other branches of science and art (Sahin, 2015). Figure 1 shows the relationship of gastronomy with other sciences (Zahari et al., 2009).

4. The Importance of Gastronomy for Destinations

In today's marketing world where there is an intense rivalry, the marketing of destinations is a complex phenomenon as it has many difficulties with different purposes and expectations; and local cuisines are unique sources to develop, introduce and market a destination (Uner, 2014). When it is considered that gastronomic tourism is an indispensable and reflective part of developing and marketing a destination, tourists visiting a destination should be included in regional culture in all aspects. Gastronomic tourism activities that can be carried out at a destination provide direct and indirect employment and financial income (Sahin, 2015). Gastronomic tourism is considered to be very crucial in that it can make tourists' trip a very unique one, help a destination shine and get a good reputation among others as well as showing that food and beverages consumption can have symbolic meanings besides being just a physiological need (Caliskan, 2013). With this point of view, gastronomic tourism is an important indicator of tourists' status and relates to what, where, when, and with whom they eat; so image making studies should be performed with great care paying special attention to these types of details as they have great importance in terms of marketing activities (Karim, 2006; Sahin, 2015).

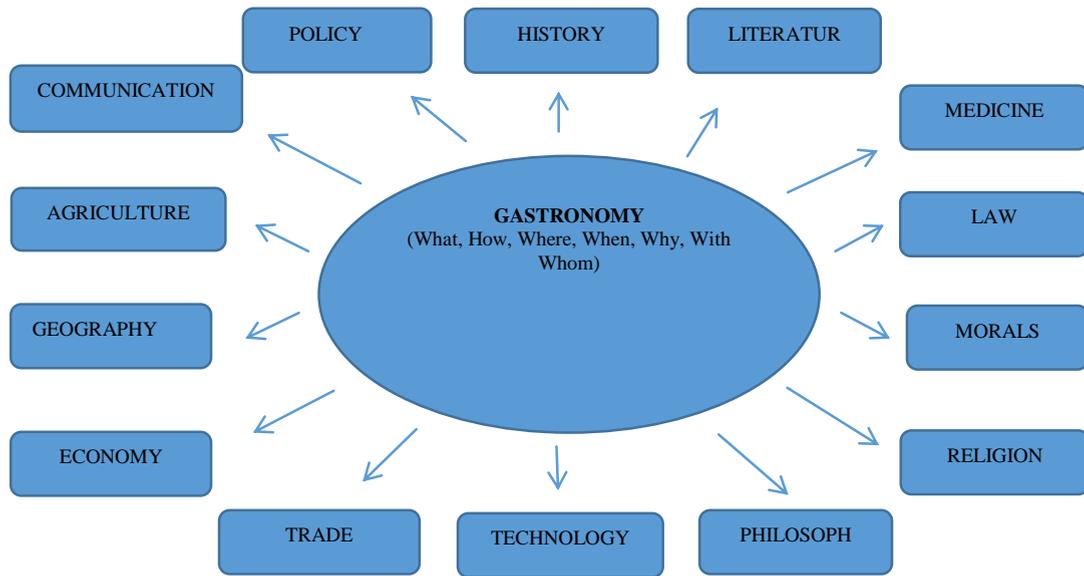


Figure 1. A multidisciplinary model for the science of gastronomy (Zahari et al., 2009).

For the development, marketing and maintenance of destinations, it is observed that many precautions are taken to protect the richness of regional cuisines utilizing unique geographical, cultural, and climatic factors. One of the best examples to this is the control on the Barrosa beef in Portugal, where it is a must to feed these animals only with local feeds and grasses and not to give any other feed other than those of organic and local ones during the growth of animals, thus, this prevents the production of the same products in any other places providing a high rivalry advantage (Caliskan, 2013). In addition, gastronomy activities (such as gastronomy festivals, courses, museums, etc.), which take place to protect the gastronomy values of a region, play an important role in marketing of destinations.

As a result, a successful gastronomic identity study is of utmost importance in that it increases the quality tourist population in a region and enables the visits to occur every season, thus both maintaining the cultural heritage and facilitating economic and socio-cultural development (Sahin, 2015).

5. Results

Gastronomic tourism which supports regional development by setting the link between food and beverages and tourism and strengthens local identity and culture as well as financial conditions should be more active and maintained. So, this will also contribute to protecting historical and cultural heritages and handing down them to next generations and ensuring its permanence (Hall et al., 2003a). However, although there are some studies on food and cuisine tourism in Turkey (Hamlacıbası, 2008; Eren, 2011; Demir, 2011; Sahbaz, 2011), there is only a limited number of studies on “gastronomic tourism” in Turkey. Therefore;

- Research, studies, and projects about gastronomy, gastronomic tourism and its development in Turkey should be carried out on a nationwide and international basis,
- There must be national and international broadcasts to introduce the gastronomy destinations in Turkey,
- Panels, workshops, and seminars should be held to inform foreign and domestic tourists, get their attention, and to introduce and promote gastronomic tourism,
- National and international food and gastronomy festivals should be arranged to introduce the gastronomy destinations of Turkey to tourists.

For all these events and activities to take place, there must be cooperation under the chairmanship of the ministry of culture and tourism together with such civil society organizations as provincial culture and tourism departments, tourism departments of universities, tourism businesses, associations, and federations.

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