

## Gastronomic Tourism of Türkiye: A Study on the Polish Market

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### Abstract

Gastronomy is defined as a discipline that studies the preparation, presentation, and consumption of food and beverages within the framework of the relationship between food and culture. Gastronomy tourism focuses on the search for new flavors in new locations to improve one's physical and mental health. Türkiye hosts a wide variety of tourism types and opportunities with its historical texture, natural beauty, and rich cultural pool. Gastronomy tourism is one of these rich tourism opportunities. Türkiye hosts millions of tourists from various countries around the world every year. In 2022, approximately 2.2% of foreign visitors to Türkiye were Polish tourists. This study determined the preferences and opinions of Polish tourists regarding Türkiye's gastronomy tourism market. According to the data obtained, 101 male and 282 female participants indicated that Turkish cuisine and Turkish gastro-tourism have an essential place in the world, gastronomic elements are an important factor in their preference for Türkiye, they find Turkish cuisine predominantly delicious and affordable, döner kebab and Turkish coffee are the most well-known food and beverages from Turkish cuisine, and the participants are planning to revisit Türkiye for gastronomy tourism. As a result of the study, gastro-tourism-oriented recommendations were given to the sector for Turkish cuisine to take a more active role in the country's tourism and for the Polish market to be utilized more effectively.

### Article Type

Research Article

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## INTRODUCTION

The need for tourism is considered a frequently preferred fact to renew motivation for several reasons, such as the difficulties encountered in daily life and the intense tempo in the field of work and education. It is an activity primarily attracted to developed and developing societies, and this interest is increasing day by day. Of course, not everyone's motivation method is the same. Accordingly, preferences and tendencies will also vary. Tourism has many types within the framework of various factors to respond to various requests and demands that are formed and have a high potential to be formed (Singh, 2008).

Tourism activity can be carried out for many purposes, such as business, vacation, sports, health, and cultural tourism in almost every world region within the window of opportunities and personal preferences. Among these preferences is gastronomic tourism, which has recently become increasingly popular, especially on social media platforms. Gastronomic tourism, seen as a cultural tourism sub-branch, aims to ensure physical and spiritual well-being. To achieve this goal, it is interested in proper nutrition and the discovery of new flavors. With the increasing value given to gastronomic tourism both in society and academia, the recognition of local flavors in the destinations visited is seen as an essential power in national and international tourism operations. Especially Turkish cuisine is at a very important point when it comes to gastronomic tourism. Turkish cuisine has taken its current shape due to hundreds of years of interactions between different ethnic origins. Today, there are gastronomic elements in seven different regions of Türkiye, many of which have high commercial and touristic value. These regions have recently become one of the most preferred locations worldwide through proper promotion and positioning (Şahin, 2015; Cooper, 2022).

According to the statistical information on the official website of the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the total number of foreigners and citizens residing abroad who visited Türkiye was 46,112,592 in 2018, 51,747,199 in 2019, 15,971,201 in 2020, 30,038,961 in 2021 and 51,387,513 in 2022. While an increase in the number of visitors in 2020 was normally expected compared to previous years, the reason for the decrease in 2020 was seen as the COVID-19 pandemic in Türkiye as in the whole world. As the impact of the pandemic has decreased, the removal of the said bans and the elimination of the problems experienced in the transportation network have enabled the number of visitors to return to its previous level quickly. While the number of visitors in 2021 reached approximately 58% of the number in 2019, the number of visitors in 2022 is almost the same as in 2018. In 2023, at least 50 million foreigners and citizens residing abroad are expected to visit Türkiye. Each visitor benefits from various tourism opportunities to varying degrees. This is because tourism activity has different purposes and expectations for everyone. Due to different interests and lifestyles, cultural and social differences, economic opportunities, etc., it would not be wrong to define tourism as a multifaceted industry (Mason, 2020; Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023).

This study aims to contribute to developing gastronomy tourism in Türkiye by determining how Turkish cuisine and Turkish gastro-tourism are perceived in the Polish market. Türkiye has a unique culinary culture and a rich historical and cultural heritage.

Polish tourists are one of the important tourist groups visiting Türkiye. Sectoral studies that determine the situation by focusing on the views of tourists play a critical role in increasing tourism potential. The importance of this study is that it guides stakeholders with the information it will provide to understand Turkish gastronomic tourism better.

It is also important to better promote and market Turkish gastronomic tourism internationally, attracting more tourists and increasing the potential for economic gain. The results of the study are expected to provide data that will be worth considering when making strategic decisions in the sector.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Gastronomy and Gastronomic Tourism**

The term gastronomy, which is formed by the combination of the Greek words "gaster" which means stomach, and "nomos" which means law, is called the art of eating. The origin of the word modern gastronomy is attributed to Archestratus, the gourmet writer and poet of Ancient Greece, who would later become known for his poem "Gastronomia". Archestratus BC 4. in his humorous didactic poem "Hedypatheia" (The Luxury Life), written in the twentieth century, advised gastronomic readers where to find the best dishes of the Mediterranean and revealed the secrets of ancient Greek cuisine. The person who suggested that the name of the Luxury Life poem be changed to gastronomia is expressed as the Ancient Greek orator and grammarian Athenaeus (Moirá et al., 2015).

Currently, gastronomy differs from the mere act of nutrition both in terms of meaning and practice. It is a concept where different dishes from different cultures can be tasted in entirely different lands, and the food story can be learned. Food can be prepared and presented according to nutritional values, nutritional habits of individuals, regional differences, seasonal conditions, and many other factors. Today, an increasing number of food and beverage enterprises are trying to differentiate from each other and aim to give consumers an extraordinary experience by appealing to all their senses. These businesses receive awards and stand out through many rating agencies. In addition to all these, thanks to the increasing possibilities of the communication network, individuals can now choose the places they see fit among many options and observe many different criteria (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020).

Factors such as the various ratings mentioned, consumer recommendations and comments, and the desire to have different experiences have pushed individuals who already want to differentiate their eating experience to new searches. This situation has prepared the ground for the emergence of the concept of gastronomic tourism. As competition between tourism destinations increases, gastronomy has a vital role to play as an increasingly valuable source of new products and activities to make local culture attractive and attract tourists. This is not only because eating is at the center of the tourist experience but also because gastronomy has become an important source of identity formation in postmodern societies. Nowadays, because tourists can identify with the types of cuisine encountered on holiday, the expression "we are what we eat" is adopted, not only physically but also because tourists can identify with it (Hjalager & Richards, 2002).

The prominence of local culture increases the interest in the natural and organic. All over the world, agricultural gastronomic products, authentic restaurants, and farms are emerging. Old markets are being restored, and local destinations are becoming tourist attractions. In such centers, tourists can buy products from local producers and taste local dishes. Gastronomic tourism is a product defined on a regional basis; it stands out as a resource that can attract travelers to a city, region, or country. A gastronomic brand is a characteristic of regional cuisine, which is expressed only in the leadership of one or more local dishes that are located in a particular region or with a certain originality. The gastronomic product is at the center of gastronomic tourism, but it is not a separate part of it (Nesterchuk et al., 2021).

The World Tourism Organization refers to gastronomic tourism as a tourism activity that characterizes the experience of visitors associated with food and related products and activities while traveling (UNWTO, 2023). Accordingly, authentic, traditional, and/or innovative culinary experiences, as well as gastronomic tourism, can also include different activities such as visiting local producers, attending food festivals, and taking part in cooking classes.

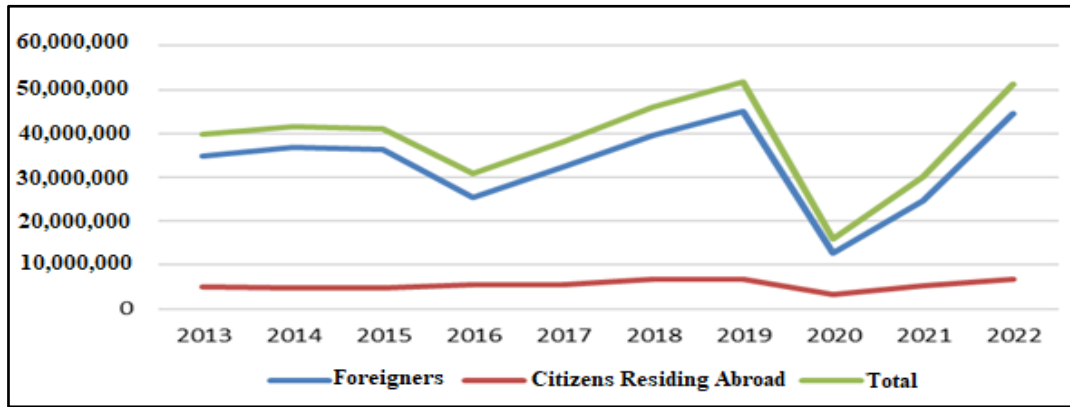
Nowadays, gastronomic tourism is a global trend and is considered one of the most dynamically developing sectors of world tourism. This is an effective tool and, in some cases, a pioneer in the tourism market for promoting countries. However, in recent years, gastronomy has become an indispensable element in getting acquainted with the culture and lifestyle of a particular region. Gastronomy is related to new trends in tourism: originality, interest, respect for culture and traditions, healthy lifestyle, sustainability, experience, and impressions (Sormaz et al., 2016). For gastronomic tourism, which is frequently pronounced today, various expressions could first be used in the terminology. In 1998, the concept of "Culinary Tourism" was introduced by Professor Lucy Long. In 2001, Eric Wolfe, the founder of the International Culinary Tourism Association, created the first official document on culinary tourism explaining the essence of the concept. In 2012, the expression of culinary tourism was replaced by the expression of gastronomic tourism. In 2015, at the World Tourism Organization's 1st World Food Tourism Forum, the concept of gastronomic tourism was expanded, and concepts such as food tourism were also included. In 2018, gastronomic tourism was one of the most striking and remarkable trends in tourism. In 2021, the World Tourism Organization's 6th World Forum was held in Brussels, Belgium, under the title Gastronomic Tourism (Nesterchuk et al., 2021).

In light of all these, the popularity of gastronomic tourism is increasing day by day, and it has a significant say in the tourism market with many of the components mentioned above.

### **Tourism Relations of Türkiye and Poland**

Türkiye has hosted millions of tourists from all over the world for many years. Of course, various values such as Türkiye's historical features, geographical location, climate diversity, and sense of hospitality are among the locomotives of this development. Türkiye's tourism, which has the characteristics and capacity to respond to different tourist portfolios in search of various types of tourism, is increasing the number of visitors day by day.

When the trend in Figure 1 is analyzed, it is seen that there has been an increase in the number of tourists visiting Türkiye in the long term. Of course, when certain years are analyzed, there may be increases or decreases in tourism activities due to various reasons such as problems in the world, embargoes imposed between countries, and crises. It is seen that the lowest level of the last ten years was experienced, especially in 2019 and 2020. The reason for the decline, especially in these two years, is the COVID-19 virus that has emerged all over the world. In this direction, all sectors were disrupted, and especially the tourism sector suffered great damage as a result of the pandemic and the measures taken. However, after the effect of the pandemic started to decrease, the wounds started to heal quickly, and the tourism sector has made serious progress with the momentum it has gained. When the number of visitors in 2022 is analyzed, it is clearly seen that the number of visitors in 2019 has been reached.



**Figure 1.** Trend of Visitors to Türkiye by Year

**Reference:** Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023.

Poland is a Central European country bordered by Germany to the west, Czechia to the southwest, Slovakia to the south, Ukraine to the southeast, Belarus to the east, Russia and Lithuania to the northeast, and the Baltic Sea to the north. Poland has a population of approximately 38,523,000 and covers an area of 312,685 square kilometers. This area makes Poland the 9th largest country in Europe. The official language is Polish, and the currency of the country is Złoty (Serwis Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2023). In addition to many components, with the appreciation of Poland's official currency against the Turkish Lira in recent years, it will be an undeniable fact that Türkiye will take a more prominent place in selecting destinations to be subject to tourism. Figure 2 below shows the Turkish Lira and Złoty parity levels in the last ten years. As can be seen in the graph, the change in recent years is particularly striking.



**Figure 2.** Turkish Lira/Polish Złoty Parity

**Reference:** TradingView, 2023.

Table 2 provides statistical information on Polish citizens' visits to Türkiye. The data reveals that the number of Polish tourists visiting Türkiye has fluctuated over the years. The upward trend between 2013-2015 was followed by a downward trend in 2016-17. In 2019, the numbers increased again, and after a COVID-19-induced decline in 2020, it resulted in the highest number of tourist visits in history in 2022. This progress shows the growing importance of Polish tourists in the tourism market.

**Table 1.** Number of Polish Tourists Visiting Türkiye by Years and Share of All Tourists

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
All Tourists (million)	39,8	41,6	41,1	30,9	37,9	46,1	51,7	15,9	30	51,3
Polish Tourists (thousand)	423,1	510,5	500,7	205,7	296,1	646,3	880,8	145,9	585	1.135,9
Share	0,010	0,012	0,012	0,006	0,007	0,014	0,017	0,009	0,019	0,22

**Reference:** Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2023.

## Literature Review

Different current definitions, such as gastro tourism and gastro tourist, can be added to gastronomic tourism. With the increasing popularity, gastronomic tourism studies are encountered in increasing numbers every day in the literature. Considering that gastronomic tourism has become one of the most important tourism trends, an increase in the number of gastro tourists can be expected. For this reason, it is essential to determine the level of participation of gastro tourists in activities related to eating and drinking and their attitudes towards these activities (Çanakçı, 2020).

Studies on perceptions of Turkish cuisine and Türkiye's gastronomic tourism are included in the literature, albeit in small numbers. Akman and Hasipek (1999) wanted to examine the attitudes and behaviors of foreign tourists visiting Türkiye toward Turkish cuisine. Accordingly, among the reasons why the tourists participating in the research come to Türkiye, the reason for Turkish Cuisine ranks 7th. In addition, it was stated that almost all tourists had consumed food or drink from Turkish cuisine before this visit.

Özdemir and Kınay (2004) examined foreign tourists' perceptions of Turkish cuisine. Accordingly, while some tourists expressed a positive opinion in terms of diversity, taste, difference, and hygiene, some tourists also expressed negative opinions about the use of excess spices, tomato paste, and oil.

In another study, 293 foreign tourists visiting any region of Türkiye were asked to share their experiences of Turkish cuisine using the survey method. Accordingly, "Experiencing the dishes specific to Turkish cuisine" ranks third as a reason for tourists to choose Türkiye as their holiday destination. 49.8% of the participants stated that they received knowledge about Turkish Cuisine from their circles who had experienced this cuisine before, and 14% stated that they had information through mass media. On the other hand, while there is no variability in tastes for Turkish cuisine according to factors such as marital status, gender, job status, and education level, differences in preferences according to nationality, age, and place of residence are striking. While 93% of the participants stated that they would like to revisit Türkiye, it was reported that the participants would share their experiences about Turkish gastronomy with their circles when they returned to their countries (Birdir & Akgöl, 2015).

Eren (2019) examines the perceptions of 407 foreign tourists about Turkish cuisine and their intentions to revisit and identifies three dimensions. These are expressed as culinary culture and food, gastronomic activities, and catering establishments. In the study, tourists' satisfaction with eating and drinking opportunities in Türkiye and their interest in local businesses were mentioned. According to the research results, kebab, raki, döner, eggplant, and baklava are

tourists' most memorable foods and drinks. Moreover, it was found that the gastronomic image of the destination affected the intention of tourists to visit again.

In her study in which she determined the gastro tourist typologies, Çanakçı (2020) applied a survey technique to 606 foreign tourists visiting Türkiye. After the clustering analysis, the participants are divided into four groups: neglecters (indifferent, not taking too seriously), experimental tourists, leisure tourists, and gastro tourists. Accordingly, tourists included in these typologies may differ in terms of interest in local food and beverages, frequent consumption of familiar foods, and the tendency to consume luxury food and beverages.

In another research, Yiğit and Perçin (2021) wanted to measure the perceptions of Turkish cuisine of foreign tourists coming to the Cappadocia region with a word association test. Accordingly, tourists have pointed out that while Turkish cuisine is delicious, the use of spices is widespread and healthy, but the cuisine remains weak in terms of recognition.

In another study in which the perceptions of foreign tourists towards Turkish cuisine were examined using the survey technique, Dinç et al. (2022) wanted to examine the impressions and tendencies of tourists staying in the Ayvalık region about Turkish cuisine and culture. The research determined four dimensions: appearance, taste, price-performance, and other. According to the results, it was determined that tourists were familiar with and interested in food and beverages in Turkish Culinary culture. In addition, in the analysis, a significant difference was observed between the "appearance" sub-dimension related to Turkish Cuisine and the gender of the tourists and between the ages of the tourists and the appearance, taste, and price-performance dimensions.

Çakıcı and Eser (2016) conducted a study on the perspectives of 11 foreign culinary chefs from 8 different nationalities on Turkish cuisine. According to the data, foreign chefs expressed that they liked the dishes very much regarding nutritional value, nutrients, taste harmony, and spices used; however, negative opinions have been expressed on issues such as digestive comfort, hygiene, and the amount of sugar used. On the other hand, while most participants see Turkish cuisine as a rich cuisine with roots in the past and in a special position among the world's cuisines, they stated that they had questions about whether it is known enough or not.

Akdağ et al. (2018) compared tourists in two different destinations in the Mediterranean Region in terms of gastronomic experience, perspective on cuisine, similarities, and differences. Accordingly, Cordoba City of Spain and Türkiye's Hatay were examined, and questions were asked to 396 participants using the survey technique. According to the results, both destinations attract gastro tourists. Especially the city of Cordoba is an attraction for tourists who want to spend time for entertainment. In addition, eating and drinking activities as a reason for visiting Hatay come in third place after cultural heritage and relaxation factors.

Although the approaches of foreigners towards Türkiye's gastronomy are discussed in the literature as mentioned above, these studies are few. The perceptions of domestic tourists or the attitudes of foreign tourists towards the destination have also found a place in the literature. However, due to the context of this study, they have not been added to this section.

## Methodology

The question form used in this study, designed as a descriptive case study, was prepared by consulting experts in the field. The research questions were sent to Polish tourists visiting Antalya province during the summer tourism

season of 2023 by sending a link via the "Google Forms" application. First of all, the sample group was informed about the research. Participants who wanted to take part in the study were sent links from different social media. To ensure internal validity in the research, expert opinions were taken regarding the questions in the forms, research data, and interpretations. The data obtained in the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics, percentages, and frequencies.

While designing the data collection tool, the literature was first reviewed, and a draft question form was prepared by considering the research problems identified in the literature. Considering the feedback from the experts, necessary changes were made to the draft form, and the draft form was transformed into a pre-application form. As a result of the pre-applications conducted online, it was seen that there was no problem with the comprehensibility and answerability of the form. Afterward, it was decided that the form was suitable for the research, and field studies were started. The convenience sampling method was preferred in the research. The sample group of the research consists of 383 Polish tourists. The question form used in the research consists of two parts: "demographic questions" and "gastro-tourism questions". The ethics committee permission required for the collection of the data used in this study was obtained by the Ethics Committee of Alanya University on 05.07.2023.

In the first part of the study, the participants were asked five demographic questions, including gender, age, marital status, education, and average monthly income. In the second stage, seven questions focused on gastronomy and tourism were asked of the participants. The questions asked of the participants are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Gastronomic tourism questions asked of the participants

1	What is the first country that comes to your mind when you think of gastronomy?
2	What is your main reason for choosing Türkiye?
3	What is the impact of gastronomy on your preference for Türkiye? (1-5)
4	What is your opinion about Turkish cuisine?
5	What is the first dish that comes to your mind from Turkish cuisine?
6	What is the first drink that comes to your mind from Turkish cuisine?
7	Would you consider visiting Türkiye again for gastronomic purposes?

Participants were given the necessary time to answer all questions. After reaching sufficient participants, the questionnaire was closed for responses, and the process of analyzing the answers began. Throughout the research, all ethical rules were taken into consideration.

## Results and Discussion

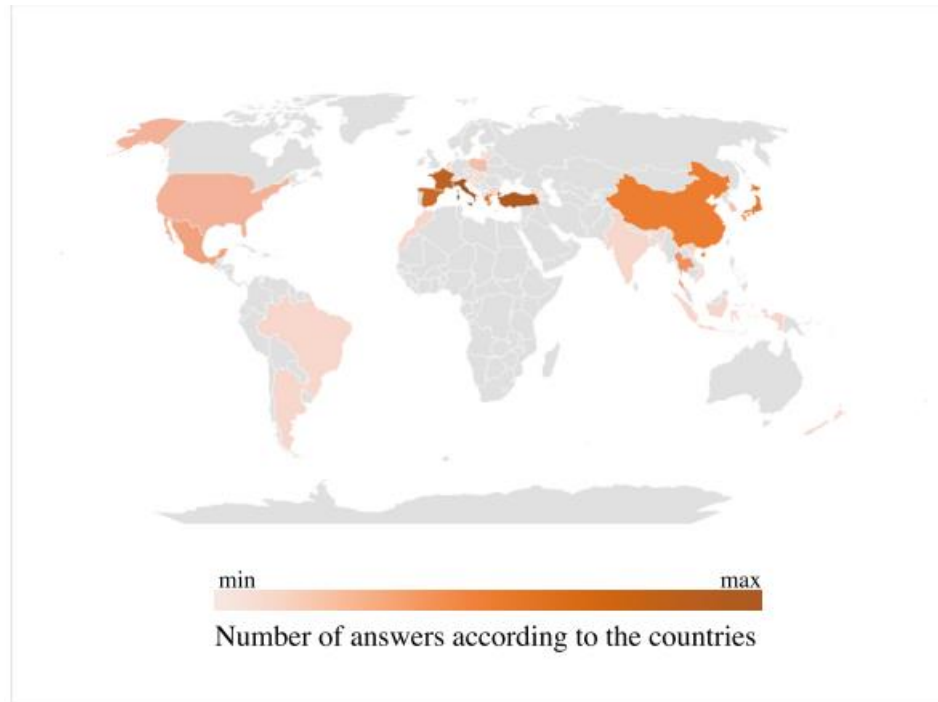
The demographic characteristics of the participants in the study are shown in Table 4. When the answers are examined, it is seen that the majority of the participants, 73.6%, are women. The age ranges show that 31.1% of the participants are 18-22 years old, and 26.1% are 40 years and over. The majority of the participants are young and late-to-middle-aged groups. 58.7% of the participants stated that they were single. With 39.9%, master's graduates are the most significant participant group. High school graduates, with 38.4%, followed this group. 47.3% of the respondents stated that their monthly income was between 0-30,000 zloty.



**Table 4.** Descriptive information of participants

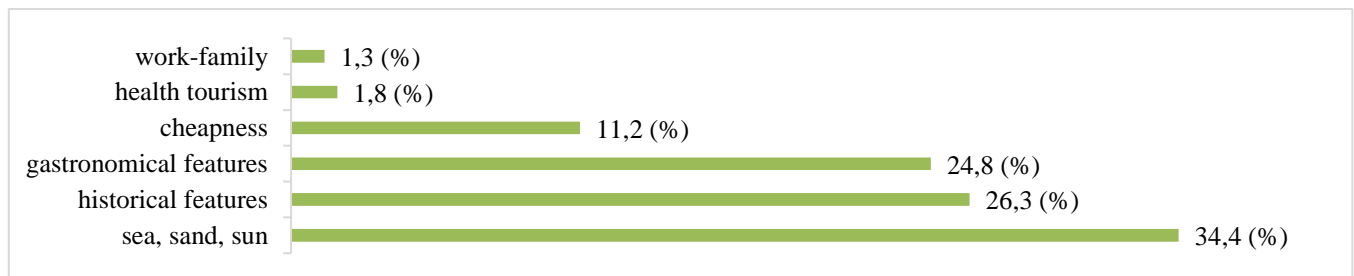
Parameters	<i>f</i>	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	282	73.6
Male	101	26.4
<b>Age</b>		
18-22	119	31.1
23-29	68	17.8
30-39	96	25.1
40+	100	26.1
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	158	41.3
Single	225	58.7
<b>Education</b>		
High school	147	38.4
University	70	18.3
Master's degree	153	39.9
PhD	13	3.4
<b>Monthly income (złoty)</b>		
0 – 30.000	181	47.3
30.000 – 50.000	81	21.1
50.000 – 70.000	60	15.7
+75.000	61	15.9

The most common answer to the question "What is the first country that comes to your mind when you think of gastronomy?" was Italy, with 28.9%. Türkiye ranked second with 21.4%, followed by France with 9.3%, Spain with 8.3% and Greece with 7.8%. Japan (5.2%), China (4.6%), Thailand (3.6%), Mexico (2.3%), USA (1.5%), South Korea (0.7%), and Poland (0.7%) were the other frequent responses. Nineteen countries (India, Armenia, Georgia, Vietnam, Israel, Macedonia, Macedonia, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, Hungary, Croatia, New Zealand, Bulgaria, Bulgaria, England, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, Lithuania and Morocco) responded once. The responses given by the participants are shown on the World map in Figure 3. When the map is examined, it is seen that different countries from different continents, especially Europe and Asia, are included in the answers. However, it is noteworthy that the most frequently preferred countries are generally Mediterranean. The top five most pronounced countries (Italy, Türkiye, France, Spain, and Greece) were all Mediterranean countries in Europe. These countries are followed by Asian, South American, and North American countries.



**Figure 3.** Display of responded countries for gastronomy on the world map

In response to the question "What is your main reason for choosing Türkiye?", 34.4% of the participants stated that they visit Türkiye for vacation purposes (sea, sand, and sun), 26.3% for its historical features, 24.8% for its gastronomic features, 11.2% because it is cheap, 1.8% for health tourism, and 1.3% for business and family ties. The responses given by the participants are shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4.** Participants' reasons for choosing Türkiye

In response to the question "What is the impact of gastronomy on your preference for Türkiye?", most of the participants (41.2%) stated that the impact of gastronomy on their visit was at an importance level of four out of five. 25.5% of the participants reported that the impact of gastronomy was five out of five, 25.0% three out of five, 4.7% two out of five, and 3.4% one out of five.

When the participants were asked about their opinions about Turkish cuisine, 39.9% of the 383 answered "delicious". 22.1% of the 383 respondents said it was cheap, 15.9% said it was fatty, 14.3% said it was healthy, and 7.3% did not express an opinion. It is noteworthy that most of the responses are positive in terms of Turkish cuisine. Offering delicious, affordable, and healthy options is one of the strengths of Turkish cuisine. When the Zloty-Lira parity in Figure 2 is analyzed, it is seen that tourists' perception of the cheapness of Türkiye is significant. In recent years, the Turkish Lira has lost significant value against the Polish Zloty. The answers given to question 4 are shown in Table 5 in detail.

**Table 5.** Participants' opinions on Turkish Cuisine

Opinions	<i>f</i>	%
Delicious	153	39.9
Cheap	85	22.1
Fatty	61	15.9
Healthy	55	14.3
No opinion	28	7.3

When the participants were asked about the dishes they knew the most from Turkish cuisine as the fifth question, it was determined that the most known food was döner kebab with 48.3%. Döner kebab is followed by baklava with 20.6% and shish kebab with 15.1%. These options were followed by lahmacun with 9.9%. Five respondents (1.3%) stated they were most familiar with tantuni, iskender, and lentil soup, respectively. Turkish delight, pita bread, dolma, kokoreç, gözleme, çiğ köfte, etli ekmek, and ice cream were mentioned once by eight participants (2.0%). The answers given for question 5 are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Most familiar dishes from Turkish cuisine

Dishes	<i>f</i>	%
Döner kebab	185	48.3
Baklava	79	20.6
Shish kebab	58	15.1
Lahmacun	38	9.9
Tantuni	5	1.3
İskender	5	1.3
Lentil soup	5	1.3
Other	8	2

When the participants were asked about the drinks they knew the most from Turkish cuisine, it was seen that the most known beverage was Turkish coffee, with 32.8%. Turkish coffee is followed by ayran at 31.3% and Turkish tea at 28.1%. These options are followed by raki with 5.4% and wine with 0.7%. Five respondents (1.3%) answered turnip, soda, salep, whiskey, and beer once. The answers to the 6th question are shown in Table 7 in detail.

**Table 7.** Most familiar drinks from Turkish cuisine

Drinks	<i>f</i>	%
Turkish coffee	126	32.8
Ayran	120	31.3
Tea	108	28.1
Raki	21	5.4
Wine	3	0.7
Other	5	1.3

The last question asked of the participants was, "Would you consider visiting Türkiye again for gastronomy purposes?" to which 78.3% of the participants answered yes and 21.6% answered no.

The results obtained in the study are compatible with many previous studies in the literature. Özdemir and Kınay (2004), in their study with 313 tourists, stated that 87.2% of the participants liked Turkish food, while 80.1% of the participants stated that Turkish cuisine did not affect on their visit to Türkiye. Again, the majority of the participants stated that they found Turkish desserts heavy and Turkish dishes spicy.

Şanlıer (2005) reported that foreign tourists evaluated Turkish food as "delicious" and "spicy". In addition, found that the most preferred foods and beverages of foreign tourists were kebabs, stuffed grape leaves (sarma), pastry with

cheese (börek), pastries, and alcoholic beverages.

Albayrak (2013) reported that the most liked dishes by tourists are kebabs and lahmacun/pide. Also determined that tourists find Turkish cuisine "fragrant, appetizing, and delicious".

Johann and Anastasova (2014), in a study conducted with Polish tourists visiting Bulgaria, reported that the most emphasized positive comments of tourists after their holiday experience were that hotels offered delicious, varied, and high-quality food. Frequent serving of similar foods and limited choice of dishes were among the most frequently mentioned negative comments. In our study, the participants were asked, "What is the impact of gastronomy on your preference for Türkiye?". The fact that 65.7% of the answers to the question consist of 4 (important) and 5 (very important) answers is significant in that Polish tourists attach great importance to their eating and drinking experiences during their holidays.

Bekar and Belpınar (2015) evaluated tourists' views on gastronomic tourism according to their nationality. Accordingly, it has been determined that European tourists mostly prefer to eat in themed restaurants, go to restaurants only to taste the flavors prepared by famous kitchen chefs, dine in luxury restaurants, and watch and follow regional cooking programs and shows. The gastronomy preferences of Polish tourists, who are included in the universe of European tourists, can be understood more clearly by supporting the data obtained in this study.

Birdir and Akgöl (2015), in their research on tourists visiting Türkiye, reported that the main reasons for foreign tourists' visits are the natural and historical beauties of Türkiye in parallel with the data obtained in this study. The study also found that Turkish cuisine ranked third in the reasons for tourists' visits. Affordable vacation opportunities and cheap shopping opportunities were also reported to be among the reasons why tourists prefer Türkiye.

In their study, Şahin and Ünver (2015), unlike the findings of this research, stated that the tourists involved in gastronomic tourism activities generally consist of high-income people. They also reported that the groups generally comprised tourists aged 35-55 and over 55. In this study, on the other hand, it was observed that the participants generally consisted of low-income groups, that the cheapness of the country had an important place among the reasons for choosing Türkiye, and that the largest group in the average age of tourists consisted of young participants (18-22).

Wendt et al. (2017), in their study examining the changes in Poland's tourism mobility, reported that Poles who traveled abroad in 2015 mostly preferred Italy, Croatia, Greece, Spain, Austria, Türkiye, and France and that these movements were mostly for vacation, entertainment, and recreation. When the data obtained in this study are analyzed, it is significant that all of the answers given for the question of countries visited for gastronomy purposes were also determined by Wendt et al. In addition, the fact that the market share of the tourism activities of Polish tourists between 2011 and 2015 consisted of 20% Italy, 13% Greece, 12% Spain, and 9% Türkiye is interpreted as the gastronomic characteristics of these countries play a role in the preferences of Polish tourists.

Efendi and Atay (2020), in their study, showed that one of the factors that tourists attach importance to in terms of gastronomy is the affordability of prices. In the study, it was observed that price/quality disproportion was one of the factors that did not satisfy tourists. In this study, the second most common descriptive response for Turkish cuisine was "cheap". The same study reported that tourists are satisfied with delicious meals prepared using natural and fresh ingredients, while too much doughy, syrupy, fatty, and heavy foods are generally not liked by tourists. The data

obtained are similar to the results of this study.

## Conclusion

This study analyzed the choices and thoughts of Polish tourists, a significant visitor segment, regarding the rich culinary culture of Türkiye to provide a better understanding and enhance Turkish gastronomic tourism. The findings of this research shed light on some crucial aspects and implications for both the Turkish tourism industry and the broader field of gastronomic tourism.

As a result of the research, it was determined that the participants were most impressed by the gastronomy of the Mediterranean countries from the European continent and that Türkiye has an essential place among these countries. In addition, gastronomy ranked third after sea-sand-sun and historical values in tourists' preference for Türkiye. While it was determined that the participants found Turkish cuisine delicious, cheap, heavy, and healthy, the most well-known examples of Turkish cuisine were döner kebab, baklava, and shish kebab, as well as Turkish coffee, ayran, and Turkish tea. It was also found that the majority of the participants had a desire to visit Türkiye again with a focus on gastronomy.

As stated in the discussion section, the results previously reported in the literature are mostly compatible with the results of this study. While Özdemir and Kınay (2004), Şanlıer (2005), Albayrak (2013), Birdir and Akgöl (2015), Efendi and Atay (2020) reported similar results, Şahin and Ünver (2015) reported differently. In their studies focusing on Polish and European tourists, Johann and Anastasova (2014), Wendt et al. (2017), and Bekar and Belpınar (2015) provided reference results that can be important considerations for this study.

The fusion of history, culture, and cuisine has the potential to create memorable and immersive journeys. Therefore, collaborations between the tourism sector and local businesses to provide unique gastronomic experiences can significantly elevate the appeal of Türkiye as a gastronomic tourism destination for Polish travelers.

Addressing these preferences can contribute to creating more attractive and accurate gastronomic experiences for Polish tourists. On the other hand, a proper understanding and evaluation of Turkish gastronomic tourism through these studies will result in the gaining of tourists from different nationalities to the country's tourism industry. Türkiye can undoubtedly capitalize on its culinary treasures to attract and captivate a growing number of tourists. This study contributes valuable insights into the field of gastronomic tourism with actionable recommendations to empower the Turkish tourism industry in its journey toward gastronomic excellence.

In order to improve this study, similar research can be applied to different tourist groups. The intersections of the obtained data with the preferences of other tourist groups in similar studies will provide useful information and applications in terms of gastronomic tourism. In addition, similar studies can be applied to a broader audience in areas such as cultural and historical tourism, nature tourism, etc., and more detailed and specific inferences can be made. All these efforts will contribute to the tourism sector and play a role in its development by correctly evaluating Türkiye's gastronomic heritage.

## Declaration

All authors of the article contributed equally to the article process. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. The ethics committee permission required for the collection of the data used in this study was obtained by

the Ethics Committee of Alanya University on 05.07.2023.

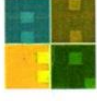
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**Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission**

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 16.08.2023-11381



ALANYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

**T.C.  
ALANYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ  
ETİK KURUL KARARI**

**Tarih :14.07.2023**  
**Karar Sayısı :13**

- İlgi:** a) Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü'nün 14.07.2023 tarih ve 10980 sayılı yazısı ekinde sunulan Gastronomi ve Mutfak Sanatları Anabilim Dalı Başkanlığı'nın 13.07.2023 tarih 10968 sayılı yazısı.
- b) Öğr.Gör.Tuğe řAHİN ERDEM'in 12.07.2023 tarih ve 10958 sayılı yazısı.
- a) Yazarlığını Prof.Dr.Birol SAYGI ve Dr.Öğr.Üyesi Esra MANKAN'ın yürüttüğü **“Humus ve Mutabbel Yemeklerinin Gıda İşleme Yöntemleri Kullanılarak Raf Ömrünün Uzatılması”** başlıklı çalışma ile yazarlığını Öğr.Gör.Erdi EREN, Öğr.Gör.Tamer TAŞÇI ve Öğr.Gör.Kemal COŞKUN'un yaptığı **“Evaluation of Polish Tourists Knowledge and Thoughts on Turkish Gastronomy Tourism”**
- b) Öğr.Gör.Tuğe řAHİN ERDEM'in ilgi (b) yazısında belirtilen **“Genlerin Farklı Müzik Türleri Algısına Metaforik Bir Bakış”** konulu bilimsel çalışmalarını içeren arařtırmalarını tamamlayabilmesi için ek'te sunulan anket uygulamaları,

Üniversitemiz Etik Kurulu'nun 14.07.2023 tarih ve 13 sayılı Etik Kurul Kararı kurulumuzca uygun bulunmuřtur.