



Swot Analysis of Kuşadası's Gastronomy Tourism From Restaurant Managers' Perspectives

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Abstract

Gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism that covers the travel and accommodation of tourists to experience different culinary cultures, eating and drinking habits, food and beverage types. It is very important in terms of promoting, marketing, and creating the image of a destination. The development of gastronomy tourism in a region can enable the region to get more share from tourism revenues by attracting more tourists to that region. In this context, the aim of this research is to determine the potential of Kuşadası in gastronomy tourism with SWOT analysis and to make inferences about the future of gastronomy tourism in the region. The research adopts a qualitative approach to identify and analyse the strengths and weaknesses, future opportunities, and possible threats/obstacles of Kuşadası gastronomy tourism, as well as suggestions and solutions to improve Kuşadası's gastronomy tourism potential. As a result of the interviews with the owners/managers of the restaurants operating in Kuşadası, the main strengths are the proximity to many historical sites and national parks including the surrounding districts, the presence of tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, the adequacy of accommodation establishments and facilities, and being preferred by foreign tourists. Under the heading of distance from localism, the statements that there are no local restaurants in the district, local dishes are not included in restaurant menus, local dishes are not known or ignored by restaurant operators, and therefore the intensity of ready-made food consumption has shown the weaknesses of the district in terms of gastronomy tourism. However, as threats/obstacles, it was observed that the discomfort arising from the existence of similar types of restaurants offering similar menus was mentioned. In addition, preparing menus and determining the dishes according to the incoming tourists is another important issue. The fact that gastronomy tourism is not known or ignored by tourism investors and the public is one of the biggest obstacles to the development of the district in this sense. In addition, unlike previous studies, the suggestions of the participants are also included.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, people's perception of travel has undergone significant changes, with a growing interest in alternative tourism types such as health tourism, faith tourism, and winter tourism. Gastronomy tourism is one such type that has gained increased attention. Gastronomic tourism is an emerging phenomenon that is developing like a new tourist product due to the fact that one third of the trip budget is spent on food consumption. Gastronomi turizmi, gastronomik kaynaklar açısından zengin bölgelerde rekreasyonel deneyimler üreten veya eğlence amaçlı bir yolculuktur (Lee vd., 2015). This journey of experiences is on a close connection with a lifestyle that includes experimenting, learning from different cultures, accumulation of knowledge and lessons learned, by eating, about the qualities or attributes related to culinary tourism, and culinary specialties produced in the regions visited. The rise in interest and participation in gastronomy tourism began with people who were curious about the food and beverage culture of different regions when traveling to countries, cities, or centers (Say & Ballı, 2012).

Activities organized for gastronomy tourism have contributed to the rapid development of a tourism market for various destinations (Aydoğdu et al., 2016). The concepts of gastronomy and gastronomy tourism have become significant factors in individuals' choices of travel destinations (Çalışkan, 2013). Although gastronomy tourism is based on food and beverage culture, it also includes travels to farms and wine production sites, including testing food and beverages. Gastronomy tourism provides tourists with the opportunity to experience the culture and history of a region and is defined as a form of tourism that creates travel motivation to experience a new food and beverage experience and is effective in shaping travel behavior (Akbaba & Kendirci, 2016).

Kuşadası and the province it is located in have various historical, geographical and cultural riches, and these riches are reflected in the culinary culture of the province. However, despite this, the district is preferred for sea-sand-sun tourism rather than gastronomy tourism. The reason for this is that the flavors of Aydın province are not included in the district. This study aims to present a SWOT analysis of Kuşadası, which is currently a significant tourist destination, in terms of its potential for gastronomy tourism. SWOT analysis is a technique used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of a sector, destination, region, activity, or business, as well as to determine opportunities and threats arising from external factors (Ersoy et al., 2018). Therefore, this study employs the SWOT analysis technique to identify Kuşadası's strengths and weaknesses in the context of gastronomy tourism and to highlight its opportunities and threats. In addition, the suggestions of the participants were also included at the end of this study. In addition to its academic value, this study will provide insights to local administrations, tourism businesses, tourism operators in the district, and other stakeholders interested in the gastronomy tourism potential of the area.

Gastronomy Tourism

Tourism encompasses the act of welcoming guests, ensuring their comfort and peace of mind, satisfying their needs, and fulfilling their requirements related to accommodation, meals, and beverages. In essence, the hospitality industry's primary focus is to provide food, beverages, lodging, and transportation services to meet the basic needs of individuals from the moment they depart from their homes (Brotherton & Wood, 2000; Santich, 2004).

Gastronomy tourism, also known as food tourism or culinary tourism, refers to traveling to a destination with the primary motivation of experiencing the local food and beverages. It has gained significant attention in recent years as a specialized form of tourism that centers around culinary experiences, including traditional cuisines, local food

markets, cooking classes, food festivals, and visits to wineries, breweries, and distilleries. Consequently, there has been a growing body of interdisciplinary research exploring various aspects of gastronomy tourism (De Jong et al., 2018).

The concepts of gastronomy and tourism, which emerged in the literature around 1983 (Belisle, 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983), are often mentioned together to denote how different societies learn about each other's cultures through their food (Karim & Chi, 2010; Horng & Tsai, 2012). Lin et al. (2011) redefined gastronomy tourism as "traveling with the purpose of tasting food and beverages or at least having a part of the trip motivated by culinary experiences." Gastronomy tourism is considered a type of tourism with the potential to contribute significantly to economic and social development (Wolf, 2006) due to the role of food and beverages in the tourism industry.

Hall and Mitchell (2000) define gastronomy tourism as "trips aimed at visiting primary and secondary food producers, food festivals, and recognizing and tasting specific types of food in accommodation facilities and restaurants in destinations renowned for their culinary offerings." Richards (2002) defines it as a growing creative sector that allows tourists to learn cooking techniques, understand ingredients, and actively participate in culinary traditions. Akgöl (2012) defines gastronomy tourism as "visiting food producers, food festivals, restaurants, and specific areas to taste unique types of food or witness their production." Another definition of gastronomy tourism is "traveling to consume food and beverages specific to different cultures in a manner unique to each culture" (Durlu-Özkaya & Can, 2012).

Gastronomy tourism enables travelers to immerse themselves in the local food scene, savor traditional dishes, and delve into the culinary heritage of a particular region. According to Sormaz (2017), motivations for engaging in gastronomy tourism can be summarized as follows:

Culinary Exploration: One of the primary motivations for gastronomy tourism is the desire to explore and discover new flavors, ingredients, and cooking techniques. Travelers often seek authentic and traditional food experiences that are unique to specific destinations.

Cultural Immersion: Gastronomy tourism provides an opportunity to learn about the local culture and traditions through its cuisine. Food is deeply intertwined with a region's history, customs, and social practices. By tasting local dishes and interacting with local chefs and food producers, travelers can gain insights into the cultural fabric of a place.

Food Education: Many individuals travel to enhance their culinary knowledge and skills. Gastronomy tourism allows them to participate in cooking classes, workshops, and food-related events. They can learn from renowned chefs, visit local markets, and gain a deeper understanding of different cuisines.

Unique Experiences: Gastronomy tourism offers the chance to indulge in extraordinary dining experiences that cannot be replicated elsewhere. This can include visiting Michelin-starred restaurants, exploring street food markets, or dining in unconventional settings such as underwater restaurants or pop-up eateries.

Health and Wellness: Some travelers seek destinations known for their healthy and nutritious cuisine. They may be interested in exploring regions with a reputation for organic farming, vegetarian or vegan options, or specific diets that promote well-being.

Türkiye's diverse culinary heritage inspires the creation of distinctive local dishes in every city and region, influenced by their unique taste preferences, geographical features, and historical customs. This leads to a remarkable array of unique specialties, signature main courses, and desserts in these renowned areas (Çağlı, 2012). Türkiye, located in the middle belt and experiencing four seasons a year, attracts tourists with its natural beauty (fauna and flora diversity) as well as its rich historical and cultural heritage. Furthermore, Türkiye has tremendous potential for gastronomy tourism as it is a country divided into seven regions, each offering its own culinary diversity. Therefore, the value of "gastronomy," which serves as a powerful promotional tool in tourism, should be emphasized in every region, and existing regional flavors should be promoted through projects that enhance the attraction of each respective area (Dilsiz, 2010). Sormaz (2017) underscores the importance of gastronomic festivals, gastronomy museums, cooking courses, and gastronomy tours in Türkiye as key factors contributing to the country's gastronomy tourism potential.

Gastronomy Tourism Potential of Kuşadası

Regions whose economies are based on tourism activities are commonly referred to as destinations (Çelik & Sandıkçı, 2015). On the other hand, the Turkish Language Association defines the word "destination" as "the place to be reached" (TDK, 2023). The concept of destination arises from the collective desire of individuals to engage in tourism activities and venture away from their homes. It represents a significant phenomenon where tourism-related production and consumption practices thrive (Yüksek, 2014; Başarangel & Tokatlı, 2018).

Each region in Türkiye possesses its own distinct culinary culture, featuring local foods and culinary rituals. The formation of these regional culinary cultures is primarily influenced by elements such as the region's climate, geographical structure, religious beliefs, agricultural flora, and the potential for edible herbs (Beşirli, 2010; Üner & Güzel-Şahin, 2016).

Kuşadası, a coastal town situated in the Aegean region, is renowned for its abundant variety of edible herbs. It serves as a melting pot of Turkish and Greek culinary cultures, representing an intersection of two distinct culinary traditions. The district, located in close proximity to major cities like Izmir while still retaining its settled village life, holds significant potential for gastronomy tourism, attracting visitors with its enticing local flavors. The local gastronomy products of the Kuşadası district primarily revolve around olives and olive oil, seafood, and edible herbs. Additionally, Kuşadası offers its guests the traditional and special Bolama dish, which is unique to the Aydın province, contributing to the promotion of the region (Sezgin & Sezgin, 2019). Furthermore, Kuşadası organizes various local events with great potential for gastronomy tourism, including the Cherry Festival and the Kuşadası Street Festival.

Kuşadası, a popular coastal town located in the Aegean region of Türkiye, has significant potential for gastronomy tourism. With its rich culinary heritage, fresh local produce, and diverse dining options, Kuşadası offers a delightful gastronomic experience for visitors. The main elements that contribute to the gastronomy tourism potential of Kuşadası can be summarized as follows:

Local Cuisine: Kuşadası is renowned for its traditional Turkish cuisine, which features a wide range of flavors and dishes. Visitors can indulge in delicious kebabs, mezes (appetizers), fresh seafood, and traditional Turkish desserts such as baklava and Turkish delight. The town's proximity to the Aegean Sea ensures a variety of fresh

seafood options, including grilled fish and calamari. Kuşadası also combines Turkish and Greek culinary influences, offering traditional herb dishes, salads, vegetable dishes with olive oil, and appetizers.

Regional Specialties: The Aegean region is famous for its unique culinary specialties. Visitors to Kuşadası can savor dishes like "çökertme kebabı" (grilled meat with yogurt and tomato sauce), "tava" (oven-baked dishes), "sakızlı muhallebi" (a dessert made with mastic gum), and the "Bolama" dish, which is unique to Aydın province. These regional specialties showcase the distinct flavors and techniques of Aegean cuisine.

Local Markets: Kuşadası is home to vibrant local markets where visitors can explore and purchase fresh produce, spices, and local delicacies. The main market, known as the Grand Bazaar, offers a wide range of food products, including olive oil, olives, herbs, and traditional Turkish spices. Exploring these markets provides an opportunity to experience the local food culture firsthand.

Wine Tourism: The Aegean region is renowned for its vineyards and wineries. Kuşadası and its surroundings boast several vineyards that produce high-quality wines. Wine enthusiasts can take part in wine tasting tours and learn about the local grape varieties, production processes, and wine pairings. Some wineries also offer on-site dining experiences, combining excellent food with their wines.

International Cuisine: Kuşadası is a cosmopolitan town that caters to a diverse range of international tourists. As a result, it offers a wide array of international cuisines, including Mediterranean, Italian, Mexican, and Asian. Visitors can enjoy a fusion of global flavors alongside traditional Turkish dishes, making it a diverse culinary destination.

Food Festivals: Kuşadası hosts various food festivals throughout the year, celebrating local and international cuisines. Festivals such as the Kuşadası Street Festival and the Cherry Festival bring together food vendors, chefs, and enthusiasts, providing an opportunity to taste a wide range of dishes, attend cooking demonstrations, and experience the vibrant food culture of the region.

Overall, with its local cuisine, regional specialties, markets, wine tourism, international flavors, and food festivals, Kuşadası has tremendous potential for gastronomy tourism. Visitors can immerse themselves in the rich culinary traditions of the region, enjoy diverse flavors, and create lasting memories through food experiences. Kim et al. (2009) indicates that food is one of the important parts of holiday. Eating food which forms one third of total consumption expenses of tourists during their holidays is also seen in the studies performed that it is a factor that tourists take into consideration when choosing a destination (Gyimothy et al., 2000; Telfer and Wall, 2000; Timothy and Ron, 2013).

Research Methodology

The aim of this research is to determine the potential of Kuşadası in gastronomy tourism through SWOT analysis and to make inferences about the future of gastronomy tourism in the region. The research adopts a qualitative approach to identify and analyse the strengths and weaknesses, future opportunities and possible threats/obstacles to Kuşadası gastronomy tourism, as well as suggestions and solutions to improve Kuşadası's gastronomy tourism potential. A case study, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in the research. This study is based on research questions formed as a result of literature review rather than hypotheses. Convenience sampling, which is one of the purposive sampling method, is used in the study. Purposive sampling is a technique widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This

sampling method involves the identification and selection of individuals or groups who are knowledgeable and experienced about the topic of interest. With convenience sampling, the sample closest to the researcher and the easiest to access is reached. The population of the study consists of owners/managers of restaurant businesses operating in Aydın and the sample consists of owners/managers of restaurant businesses operating in Kuşadası.

According to 2022 data, the number of certified restaurants operating in Kuşadası is six. However, one of them has been closed and five of them are currently being actively operated. In addition, there are six municipality-certified safe tourism certified restaurants in Kuşadası (aydin.ktb.gov.tr). The majority of these restaurants are fast food restaurant businesses. Within the scope of the research, it was aimed to reach all businesses, but in terms of diversity, luxury restaurant businesses that are frequently preferred and known by people were also interviewed. In order for the businesses in Kuşadası to be included in the scope of the study, certain criteria were taken into consideration. The criteria for ensuring external validity are as follows (Allmark et al., 2009; Streubert & Carpenter, 2011):

- Having knowledge about gastronomy tourism,
- Having a sense of responsibility towards gastronomy tourism
- Providing objective answers to research questions,
- Not withdrawing from the process during the interview and completing the entire interview,
- Being willing to share knowledge, opinions, and suggestions regarding gastronomy tourism.

Within the framework of these criteria, in-depth interviews were conducted with eleven business owners/managers in their workplaces through semi-structured questionnaires. The answers received from the participants were subjected to content analysis, and the themes that emerged as a result of coding the data in content analysis were interpreted according to the frequency level. One of the primary purposes of content analysis is to establish relationships between the obtained data through concepts. The basic process in this analysis is to gather similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them by arranging them in a way that the reader can understand (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

In the in-depth interview, the participants were asked the following five questions;

- What are the strengths of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism?
- What are the weaknesses of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism?
- What are Kuşadası's future opportunities for gastronomy tourism?
- What are the future threats of Kuşadası for gastronomy tourism?
- What are your suggestions for developing the gastronomy tourism potential in Kuşadası?

The responses from the participants were documented in written form. To ensure internal validity in the study, the writings transcribed into plain text were presented to the participants in the sample group for their review, and the accuracy of the information was confirmed (Houser, 2015). The data processing was carried out simultaneously but independently by the authors. The responses provided by the participants in the research were coded as P1, P2, P3,... P11 to prevent ethical violations and were transferred accordingly.

Findings

Within the scope of the research, eight of the participants who agreed to be interviewed were male and three were female. The ages of the participants are between 68 and 34 years old. Six of the participants are business owners and five of them are managers. The sector experience of all participants is twelve years or more. When age and sector experience are compared, it is concluded that the majority of the participants started working in the sector before the age of 25. Table 1 provides a detailed profile of the participants.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

CODE	Gender	Age	Sectoral Experience	Role
P1	Male	43	22 years	Manager
P2	Male	56	31 years	Business Owner
P3	Female	34	12 years	Manager
P4	Male	47	18 years	Business Owner
P5	Male	62	39 years	Manager
P6	Female	39	15 years	Manager
P7	Male	35	18 years	Business Owner
P8	Male	51	24 years	Business Owner
P9	Male	48	25 years	Manager
P10	Male	67	32 years	Business Owner
P11	Female	68	40 years	Business Owner

Findings Regarding the Strengths of Kuşadası in terms of Gastronomy Tourism

The responses regarding the strong aspects of Kuşadası in Terms of gastronomy tourism are grouped under 3 themes and 14 expressions (Table 2). Historical sites, cultural heritage elements, and national parks in Kuşadası and its vicinity stand out in terms of the natural and cultural features the district possesses. Within the framework of tourism and tourist activities, which is an important advantage for Kuşadası, high visitation by foreign tourists, sufficiency in accommodation establishments and facilities, potential workforce related to tourism, and the organization of gastronomic festivals in the district are significant findings. According to the participants, ease of access to Kuşadası is a strong factor for gastronomy tourism. Being surrounded by many major cities, proximity to the airport, and accessibility by both sea and land transportation enhance the attractiveness of the district.

K8: Kuşadası is particularly fortunate due to its geographical location compared to many other tourist centers. Firstly, it is very close to major cities and İzmir airport. A tourist wanting to explore this area can not only benefit from the sea, sun, and sand but also enjoy their holiday by visiting the historical sites around Kuşadası. For tourists who come here only for these reasons, the meals they consume outside the hotel are also important.

K3: In Kuşadası, there are a lot of hotels where tourists can stay, spread across an area from Güzelçamlı to the vicinity of Selçuk. With such abundant accommodation options and captivating natural beauty, gastronomy tourism is inevitable for tourists. In this regard, as restaurants, we strive to enhance our menus and do our best to differentiate ourselves from our competitors.

K2: Recently, Kuşadası has made a good progress in sea tourism, especially with the decrease in the pandemic. There is an increase in the number of tourists compared to previous years. Tourists who visit the nearby historical sites and want to enjoy the sea have also enjoyed experiencing Kuşadası restaurants. Especially restaurants serving Far Eastern cuisines and seafood come to the fore in our district.

Table 2. Strengths of Kuşadası's Gastronomy Tourism

Themes	Expressions
Natural and cultural features	Proximity to many historical sites, including neighboring districts.
	Presence of tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements.
	Proximity to national parks.
Tourism and Touristic Activities	Preference by foreign tourists.
	Presence of accommodation establishments
	Adequacy of accommodation facilities
	Presence of labour force for tourism
	Being a prominent destination due to its location.
	Hosting gastronomic festivals.
Transportation facilities	Proximity to touristic destinations
	Proximity to the airport
	Proximity to major cities
	Ease of access to islands due to their location
	Providing different experiences through sea voyages.

Findings Regarding the Weaknesses of Kuşadası in terms of Gastronomy Tourism

The responses given by the participants regarding the weaknesses of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism are grouped under 3 themes and 14 expressions (Table 3). When the responses of the participants are evaluated, it is noteworthy that one of the most prominent weaknesses in gastronomy tourism in Kuşadası is the non-use of local products and local dishes by restaurants. In general, the lack of diversity in local dishes specific to Kuşadası is one of the weakest aspects in terms of gastronomy tourism. Business owners, who do not have sufficient knowledge about the importance of locality and gastronomy tourism, mostly prefer to have a single type of restaurant. This situation emerges as one of the weaknesses of the district in terms of gastronomy tourism. Another finding of the research is the emergence of problems related to lack of education and communication, especially with the changing profile of staff after the pandemic. The shortcomings in the promotion of gastronomic activities and restaurants in Kuşadası are among the findings of the study. Another finding from the study is the significant infrastructure and superstructure problems in the district. Examples include water scarcity due to the increase in the summer population, security issues, traffic, etc. Additionally, the flooding of businesses and resulting distress due to heavy rains is the weakest aspect of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism.

P1: The weakest aspect of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism is the absence of restaurants offering local dishes. As far as we know, there are few local dishes specific to Kuşadası, but dishes from Aydın can be served. Most restaurants offer seafood or various kebab options. However, many restaurant owners are not familiar with local dishes. In today's world where ready-made food consumption is prevalent, I believe more research should be conducted, and a departure from the seafood concept should be considered.

P5: Kuşadası faces serious infrastructure problems both in terms of its facilities and overall structure. Customers who opt for all-inclusive hotels tend to stick to hotel restaurants due to the congestion in Kuşadası. Especially during rainy weather, the district becomes completely chaotic, with flooding occurring in many places. Kuşadası is a beautiful district with attractiveness in many aspects, but these problems negatively influence people's restaurant preferences. There should be a menu that entices people to leave their hotels and come to the restaurants. Here, of course, locality becomes important. The limited variety of local dishes is one of the weakest aspects. Additionally, the lack of knowledge among restaurant owners about this matter is another weakness.

P11: There are so many similar restaurants... Seafood, fast food, kebab places... We need to introduce tourists to different dishes. If we were to examine the menus, we would see similar dishes in all restaurants. Both restaurant owners and staff need to be educated about local dishes.

P9: The municipality and non-governmental organizations are working for Kuşadası. Especially in terms of engaging the public in events, festival-like activities are occasionally organized. However, I believe that promotional and marketing activities fall short for Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism; this, in my opinion, is the weakest aspect...

Table 3. Weaknesses of Kuşadası's Gastronomy Tourism

Themes	Expressions
Distance from local authenticity	Absence of local restaurants
	Lack of diversity in local cuisine
	Unfamiliarity with local dishes
	Absence of local dishes on restaurant menus
	Prevalence of processed food consumption
Inadequate promotion	Inadequate marketing efforts
	Lack of knowledge about gastronomic tourism by businesses
	Undertrained staff
	Communication problems among staff
Comfort and safety problems	Inadequate infrastructure and superstructure
	Inadequacy of audit facilities
	Seasonal population growth in summer and crowding
	Excessive tourism during the summers

Findings Regarding the Gastronomy Tourism Opportunities in Kuşadası

The responses given by the participants regarding the gastronomic tourism opportunities in Kuşadası have been categorized under 2 themes and 9 expressions (Table 4). Being a tourist town due to its location, having natural and historical assets, and various alternative tourism options make it a prominent opportunity in terms of recognition and visibility. Furthermore, the tourism schools and businesses in Kuşadası, which can be used as a field of practice, are considered opportunities by the participants.

P8: This town has many opportunities for the development of gastronomic tourism. One of them is having the potential for alternative tourism, such as health tourism, for example... Serious efforts are being made for the development of health tourism. Sea tourism is already the most important type of tourism. It enhances the recognition of the town. Therefore, being a tourist town and having potential tourism types create opportunities for gastronomic tourism.

P10: The geographical location of the region, its historical background, and of course, the existing tourism infrastructure are opportunities for gastronomic tourism. To provide gastronomic activities to tourists coming for different purposes and to offer attractive gastronomic products in restaurants, given the gastronomic experience to the incoming tourists, is essential.

P4: In this town, education is highly valued. As far as I know, there is a faculty, a vocational school, and high schools with tourism departments. One of the most important aspects to focus on to turn a situation into an opportunity is education. If restaurant employees are well-trained in gastronomy, Kuşadası can gain value in terms of gastronomic tourism.

Table 4. The Opportunities Offered by Kuşadası in Gastronomy Tourism

Themes	Expressions
Recognition and familiarity	Being a touristic district
	Geographical location
	Having natural and historical assets
	Increased recognition thanks to sea tourism
	Having alternative tourism types (Health tourism)
Educational opportunities	Existing tourism infrastructure
	The presence of faculties and vocational schools providing tourism education
	Availability of high schools providing tourism education
	Use of hotels and restaurants as practical training grounds

Findings on Threats / Obstacles to Gastronomy Tourism in Kuşadası

The findings regarding the threats/obstacles to Kuşadası's gastronomy tourism are categorised under 3 themes and 9 statements (Table 4). Participants draw attention to the existence of similar types of restaurants in Kuşadası. According to the participants, offering seafood and appetisers in the menus of restaurants is not sufficient for gastronomy tourism alone. Another important issue is that food is cooked according to the nationality of tourists in the district. The fact that business owners do not attach importance to localism and gastronomy tourism is not considered important by tourism investors are among the findings regarding threats. Economic barriers also affect both business owners and managers. Economic problems in the country and the lack of support from local administrators are some of the obstacles to gastronomy tourism.

P6: Menus are generally prepared for tourists, as is the case in many restaurant businesses. This needs to end, and meals should be presented by emphasizing locality while thinking globally. I attribute this to lack of knowledge. I believe this situation will change if business owners, managers, and staff are informed and work with the right people.

P7: Investors in tourism have relied on the trio of sea, sun, and sand for years. Currently, sea tourism is coming to the forefront. In fact, tourism investors need to know and value gastronomic tourism. Local authorities should also support businesses in this regard.

P2: I believe the economic crisis the country is going through is a major obstacle, affecting everything and especially tourist businesses. The biggest problem is the infrastructure in our district... The problem is growing with the increase in the summer population.

P8: The people of Kuşadası lack awareness of gastronomic tourism. In fact, perhaps changes in restaurant menus could be made with public pressure. We can't say much to the public, considering the economic crisis affecting the entire country. In previous years (except for the pandemic), there was more customer density in restaurants.

Table 5: Threats / Obstacles to Gastronomy Tourism in Kuşadası

Themes	Expressions
Limitations	Recognition through sea, sand, and sun tourism
	Presence of similar types of restaurants
	Seafood-orientated menus
Level of awareness	The public's lack of awareness about gastronomy tourism
	Lack of awareness about gastronomic tourism among tourism investors
	Restaurants tailoring menus according to tourists
	Restaurants are not emphasizing the importance of locality
Economic variables	Economic fluctuations experienced in the country
	Local authorities are not supporting businesses for gastronomy tourism

Finally, the participants were asked the question "What are your suggestions for developing the gastronomy tourism potential in Kuşadası?". The answers given by the participants to this question are presented in the results and suggestions section.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Changing tourism trends have led people to explore alternative forms of tourism, such as gastronomy tourism. Gastronomy tourism is one of the alternative tourism types that involve traveling and accommodation for people seeking to taste new flavors and discover new cuisines and cultures. It plays a vital role in promoting and marketing a destination, creating a distinct destination image. As a result, the development of gastronomy tourism in a region can increase the region's share of tourism revenues by attracting more tourists.

Furthermore, gastronomy tourism, which has gained popularity in recent years, also provides cities with the opportunity to showcase their own cultures. Gastronomy tourism, categorized as a form of experiential tourism, can be defined as a destination area known for its rich culture and culinary experiences (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Chaney & Ryan, 2012).

In this study, which aims to assess the potential of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism through SWOT analysis and make predictions about the future of gastronomy tourism in the region, the strengths of Kuşadası were examined. Interviews with participants revealed several key strengths, including proximity to numerous historical sites and national parks in the surrounding districts, the presence of tangible and intangible cultural heritage elements, an abundance of accommodation options and facilities, and its popularity among foreign tourists. Bozkurt and Altundas (2017) noted in their study that natural beauty and historical richness make a destination a center of attraction. Additionally, the district's strengths in gastronomy tourism include a tourism-oriented workforce, hosting gastronomic festivals, its favorable location, and proximity to large cities and islands.

Analysis of the participants' responses regarding the weaknesses of Kuşadası in terms of gastronomy tourism highlights several issues. Notably, there is a lack of local restaurants that offer regional dishes, local cuisine is not adequately represented on restaurant menus, local dishes are unfamiliar or overlooked by restaurant operators, resulting in a reliance on ready-to-eat food. Previous studies have shown that a destination's food culture significantly influences tourists' preferences and interests (Bessiere, 1998; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Long, 2004; Polat, 2020). Additionally, Chen (2013) emphasized the importance of food in destination preference. Another significant weakness is the limited promotion of gastronomy tourism in the district. Effective promotion is crucial for a destination to utilize its resources optimally. Therefore, destinations should use food and beverage offerings to

distinguish themselves (Kercher, Okumuş & Okumuş, 2008). The inadequacy of training for staff in the field of gastronomy, employing untrained staff, and communication problems further underscore Kuşadası's weaknesses in gastronomy tourism. Infrastructure and superstructure issues in Kuşadası become most evident when the summer population swells, making the district less attractive for gastronomy tourism.

Participants identified opportunities in the district for gastronomy tourism. Notably, Kuşadası's status as a tourist destination due to its location, its natural and historical assets, and the presence of various alternative forms of tourism are key opportunities for enhancing recognition and awareness. One recent example of these opportunities is the district's rapid growth in sea tourism. Furthermore, the availability of tourism schools and enterprises in Kuşadası as practical training areas is considered advantageous by the participants. Hacıoğlu et al. (2009) also emphasized the importance of local food and regional culture in attracting tourists to a destination.

When considering the participant responses regarding threats and obstacles to Kuşadası's gastronomy tourism, several issues emerge. Concerns were raised about the discomfort caused by the presence of similar restaurants offering identical menus. Furthermore, preparing menus and selecting dishes based on incoming tourists' preferences pose challenges. Studies have shown that the rate of including local dishes in menus is low (Akkuş & Şimşek, 2019; Esen & Seçim, 2020; Oğan & Özkaya, 2021). The lack of awareness about gastronomy tourism among tourism investors and the general public is a significant obstacle to the district's development in this regard. Economic hurdles affect both business owners and managers, with economic problems in the country and limited support from local administrators serving as obstacles to gastronomy tourism.

Suggestions for Developing Gastronomy Tourism Potential in Kuşadası

According to the findings obtained through SWOT analysis, Kuşadası has strengths and opportunities in terms of gastronomic tourism potential. It possesses natural and cultural richness, making it suitable for alternative forms of tourism such as health and sea tourism, in addition to the traditional sea, sand, and sun tourism. The ease of transportation is also a strength. However, weaknesses and threats such as insufficient promotion in general, lack of awareness of local people, operators and local administrations on this issue, the insecurity environment created in the region due to excessive tourism, especially in the summer months, the fact that food and beverage establishments mainly serve seafood products, and the fact that gastronomy tourism is not known by tourism investors prevent the gastronomy tourism potential in Kuşadası from being brought to the fore. In this context, at the end of the research, unlike the previous SWOT analyses, the participants were asked for their suggestions to improve Kuşadası's gastronomy tourism potential. Table 6 shows the suggestions of the participants.

Table 6. Participant Suggestions for Developing the Gastronomy Tourism Potential of Kuşadası

Participants	Suggestions
P1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>The gastronomic history of Kuşadası from past to present can be analysed and its cuisine can be researched in more detail.</i> ➤ <i>Standard recipes can be created for Kuşadası cuisine and these can be taught in educational institutions.</i> ➤ <i>In order to promote local products, promotional activities can be increased and various events can be organised.</i>

Table 6. Participant Suggestions for Developing the Gastronomy Tourism Potential of Kuşadası (devamı)

P2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Organisation of local administrations for the development of Kuşadası gastronomy tourism</i> ➤ <i>The establishment of publicly supported local catering businesses could be encouraged.</i>
P3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>It may be recommended to conduct field research on local foods and record the data obtained.</i> ➤ <i>It can be suggested that local products should be included more in restaurant menus and the authenticity of these products should be protected.</i>
P4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Digital technologies can be utilised for the promotion, marketing and presentation of Kuşadası gastronomy. It is necessary to ensure that gastronomy activities are announced and promoted to large masses with the active use of popular social media tools.</i> ➤ <i>The number and scope of events and festivals related to gastronomy tourism in the district can be increased.</i>
P5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Studies can be carried out to determine and standardise the local dishes of Kuşadası.</i> ➤ <i>Encouraging businesses to include local products in the menus of accommodation establishments and food and beverage establishments operating in Kuşadası</i> ➤ <i>Local food menus can be created by researching the dishes that tourists are interested in and curious about and plans could be created accordingly.</i>
P6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>By emphasising gastronomy tourism in the promotion of Kuşadası in the national and international tourism market, gastronomy tourists can be attracted to the region.</i>
P7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Preference for employing qualified and specialized individuals in accommodation and food and beverage establishments operating in Kuşadası</i> ➤ <i>Providing necessary knowledge and training on gastronomic tourism to entrepreneurs and employees in Kuşadası to create awareness of the importance of gastronomic tourism in terms of economic development</i>
P8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Businesses offering regional cuisine, considering the demands of tourists seeking local culinary flavors instead of meals they can have in their place of residence, can be established.</i> ➤ <i>Inclusion of local dishes in business menus is necessary.</i>
P9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Necessary efforts to compile and document Kuşadası's unique local dishes for preservation</i> ➤ <i>Facilitation of collaborations with local authorities to better promote and market Kuşadası's local products</i> ➤ <i>Enhancement of support from both public and private organizations in gastronomic tourism initiatives, with promotional activities regarding gastronomic products conducted on these organizations' websites and social networks.</i>
P10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Research can be conducted by schools and associations in the district to create written and visual materials promoting local dishes</i> ➤ <i>Universities, community centers, and associations can provide authentic local cooking courses to the local population and tourists, and at the end of these courses, certificates can be provided to revive disappearing dishes, gain new culinary skills, and improve the culinary image of the region.</i>
P11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Through workshops to be held in the district, visitors can participate in the production stages of local dishes, allowing them to engage in practical experiences.</i> ➤ <i>Traditional production methods in the district should be maintained to prevent the loss of authenticity.</i>

Limitations and Further Studies

This research only includes SWOT analysis regarding the potential gastronomy tourism in Kuşadası. In future studies, different cultural elements of Kuşadası can be revealed in a more comprehensive manner. Additionally, in future studies, researchers can examine Kuşadası gastronomy tourism from different perspectives and make evaluations about consumers' opportunities to access local products. However, studies can be carried out to ensure that businesses do not include local products in their menus.

Declarations

The contribution of all authors of the article to the article process is equal. The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. For the questionnaire form used in this study, the Ethics Committee Report dated 06.06.2023 and numbered 31906847/050.04.04-08-403 was obtained from Aydın Adnan Menderes University, Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

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Appendix 1. Ethics Committee Permission

T.C.
ADNAN MENDERES ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĐÜ
SOSYAL VE BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI
ETİK KURULU

SAYI: 31906847/050.04.04-08-403
KONU: Başvurunuzun deęerlendirilmesi

AYDIN
06.06.2023

Sayın Dr. Ahu SEZGİN
Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi

Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'nun 06.06.2023 tarihinde yapılan olağan toplantısında çalışmanızla ilgili alınan 49 nolu karar aşağıda sunulmuştur.
Bilgilerinize sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Muhammet Bilal ARIK
Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları
Etik Kurulu Başkanı



KARAR-

Protokol No :.....
Sorumlu Yürütücü : Dr. Ahu SEZGİN
Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi

Aydın Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'na yukarıda ismi belirtilen araştırmacının yürütücülüęünü yapmış olduęu "Restoran İşletmecilerinin Bakış Açısıyla Kuşadası İlcesinin Gastronomi Turizmine İlişkin SWOT Analizi" başlıklı çalışmaya ait 06.06.2023 tarihli başvuru dilekçesi görüşüldü.

Çalışmanın Etik Kurul Uygunluk Onayını almasına oy birlięi ile karar verilmiştir.