



## Tourist Guides' Perceptions on Gastronomic Tourism in Turkey

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### Abstract

Gastronomic tourism has become central part of the alternative form of tourism recently with a substantial contribution to the economy; thus, countries are competing with each other to bring out flavors and dishes that reflect their culture and identity as an alternative to sea-sun-sand holiday and plan their promotional activities with the awareness of this potential attractivity. Turkey is also in this competition with the efforts of various stakeholders. There is a tremendous increase in the number of qualified chefs studying gastronomy at state and private universities. As these improvements will inevitably lead an increase on the gastronomic routes and tours, there will also be a need for tourist guides specialized in gastronomy. The aim of this study is to find out tourist guides' perceptions on gastronomic tourism in Turkey and their current backgrounds. Survey technique is used to collect data and draw out important managerial implications.

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## **Introduction**

Besides its direct and indirect revenues it provides to the countries' economies, tourism is also a social phenomenon that allows people from different cultures to get to know each other all over the world. The food culture of the destination is as important as the destination's historical monuments, natural beauties, archeological sites and the like on experimenting authentic experiences about the people and places visited. (Güdü, 2011). Although tourists participate in tourism activities with one primary motive such as holiday, entertainment, relaxing, faith tourism, health tourism, visiting friends and relatives, shopping, conferences, trade fairs; most of the time more than one motive is intertwined. People are included in eating and drinking activities wherever they go and culinary aspects of the destination stand out as an indispensable part of the tourism behavior (Yavuz, 2007). The effect of all these factors forms the touristic experience and plays a decisive role on the pleasure of the tourists' total experience as well as shaping the perception of tourists during their visits and influencing their intentions on revisiting the destination (Larsen, 2007). The number of people included in tourism activities already exceeded 1 billion by the end of 2014. While 88,2% of these tourists defined the food as a strategic tool on destination image and branding; 11,8% told that gastronomy is not a significant factor on deciding to visit a specific country (TÜRSAB, 2015). This result highlights the potential of gastronomic tourism as an alternative tourism activity and explains the reason of a constant rise in the number of the tourists who plan their travel routes according to flavor stops around the globe. One fifth of the overall spending of tourists who visit Turkey is allocated to eating and drinking activities and this ratio leaves accommodation expenditures far more behind. Again, World Tourism Organization's (UNWTO) 'Global Report on Food Tourism' which was published in 2012 revealed that food tourism is exceptionally favorable to rural communities and allows them to stick to sustainable and traditional production styles against rapid urbanization as well as providing them a comparative advantage with their proximity to agricultural lands; which in turn creates employment for local chefs and tour guides and vitalize the related sectors of the local economy (UNWTO, 2012).

The interest for food and drinks has witnessed an increase worldwide; thus, almost all of the countries are trying to put their cuisines in the forefront of the developments when tailoring their promotional activities. Some countries such as France, Italy and Spain, where gastronomic tours are more common, exclusively stand out as the locomotive countries in gastronomic tourism; also showing that culinary aspects of a country can be promoted globally through correct strategic plannings and marketing activities and also make up good examples on how to turn into an appealing destination with a specific type of tourism (Akman, 1998). Nowadays gastronomic tourism has turned into a main objective rather than a complementary activity of the travel for people who want to get away from the routine and chase different pursuits (Rand ve Heat, 2006).

As a result of its rooted history from the past and being shaped on a vast geography including Asia, Europe and Africa; Turkish Cuisine has enriched and diversified while influencing and also being inspired by other cultures. Besides traditional cooking and presentation techniques of nomadic Turkish tribes of Central Asia and the culinary cultures adopted from western societies in consequence of the late Ottoman Palace policies; Islam has also been influential on Turkish Cuisine which has a long history of thousands of years. However, when its gastronomic heritage is taken into consideration, it's seen that Turkish cuisine is not recognized enough amongst the

gastronomic tourism destinations and it is not effectively evaluated as a tourism product within cultural tourism activities (Seyitoğlu and Çalışkan, 2014).

Tourist guides are in direct contact with the tourists from the very first moment they arrive at the destination till the time they leave the country and function as the face of the country. As the cultural ambassadors of their countries, tourist guides transfers all the information about the historical, cultural, geographical, political, and economical aspects of the region as well as their knowledge on local cuisine of the destination visited (Koroğlu et al.. 2007).

This study hypothesizes that there is going to be an increasing demand for gastronomic tourist guides in Turkey along with the increasing participation of tourists in gastronomic tourism. Considering their role in promoting a country, tourist guides' background knowledge on local gastronomy and perception of gastronomic tourism along with their self-evaluations on readiness for gastronomic tours are evaluated.

### **Gastronomic Tourism**

Gastronomic tourism, which is a part of cultural tourism, is a type of tourism that considers eating and drinking experience as the reason of visiting a specific destination or a plant. Eating and drinking activities, which was defined as a physiological need on Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), have always had vital importance for people; but today, these activities turned into a way of getting pleasure with the increase of tourism activities and the need of eating out. The desire to taste new flavors and tasting them in their place of origin, observing the production phase and participating in tasting events, visiting the restaurants of world-famous chefs or food festivals are becoming main motivations within tourism activities. In other words, eating is no longer just a biological phenomenon, but it has also gained a social, cultural and economic dimension. This actual situation reveals the linear relationship between gastronomy and tourism. People can thus not only relieve the feeling of hunger, but also enjoy the atmosphere and develop new friendships as well as getting a chance to get away from their routines and to go beyond the usual; all contributing to the increase in the number of people traveling as part of gastronomic tourism (Bekar and Kılıç, 2014). Every tourist wonders about the cuisine and delicacies of the country being visited. Discovering what local people eat and drink attracts tourists at the destination

Food, as one of the most important elements of the culture, is a strong tool that expresses the local identity, lifestyle and the values of a country. Travels with the purpose of becoming familiar with culinary cultures of the others in recent years have gone out of complementary component of tourism activities and become the main purpose. Some of the good examples of the linear relationship between gastronomic identity and destination choice can be seen in French Cuisine, Italian Cuisine and Far East Cuisine examples; in these countries, some foods and drinks have become famous with the name of the country they were originated and contribute to their countries' reputation and create demand towards their cuisines (Cömert and Özkaya, 2014). Additionally, this shows that gastronomic tourism contributes to

cities' and countries' cultural exchanges; bringing further benefits such as enabling them to develop and adding up to destination branding. Because tourists return to their countries by buying local products as well as experimenting this experience in its place. Besides in-house consumption, this unknown products that are shared with acquaintances can be forceful on creating new demands (Yüncü, 2010).

Maviş (2003) defines cuisine as all kinds of ingredients, food and beverages that are used as a source of nutrition and also their process of preparation, cooking, storing and consumption including the physical place and equipment. Eating and drinking traditions that are shaped with beliefs and practices are evaluated from a holistic and distinctive cultural structure. Musmann and Pahalı (1999) define cuisine as a culture which uncloses eating ceremonies, the intricacies of the art of cooking, tools and equipment used in the preparation of food and beverages; emphasizing the relation between cuisine and culture. In other words, gastronomic tourism is an industry and not just about eating and drinking facilities. In addition to food and beverage outlets, the industry has various stakeholders and related industries. These are factories that produce food and drinks, culinary museums, cooking workshops, gastronomic festivals, open bazaars, food fairs, bookshops that sell books about culinary culture, guiding booklets, television channels broadcasting about gastronomy, magazines and books, grapes and vineyards, tasting outlets, distilled drink manufacturers, agricultural farm owners, beer factories, olive oil production facilities. Local community also plays an important role in preserving flavors and passing on to future generations, public and private institutions collaborates on publicity, image, promotion, cooperation and partnership agreements, tour operators organizes gastronomic tours and tour guides leads these tours. While participating in gastronomic tourism can be towards a unique product as in the examples of wine tourism, cheese tourism, chocolate tourism or beer tourism; it can be in the form of an exploratory tour of a country's cuisine for all tastes at the destination (Bucak and Aracı, 2013; Çağlı, 2012; Güzel and Ünver, 2015).

According to Kivela and Crotts (2006), distinguishing features of gastronomic tourism from other forms of tourism could be listed as follows:

- 100% of tourists are included in eating and drinking activities during the time away from home and each experience is an opportunity to get to know local dishes and local people;
- Eating and drinking ranks in the top three favorite activities for tourists;
- Gastronomy or the art of good eating and drinking along with wine tasting is the only type of art that activates five senses at the same time; those are being touching, tasting, smelling, hearing and sight;
- There is a positive relation between tourists who are keen on wine and cuisine and those keen on museums, shopping, shows, musicals and film festivals and cultural attractions;
- The interest in cuisine is not contingent upon a specific age group, gender or ethnicity during the travel;

- Gastronomy is not dependent on weather conditions like any other travel activities and events; and also available any moment and all year round;
- Gastronomic tourists are discovery-oriented people;
- Gastronomy is experiential in terms of interactive experiences and activities as it satisfies new tourist types who like one-on-one participation.

Gastronomic tourists can be categorized under three groups. First group of tourists are called gastronomic tourists and they are specialists who are composed of individuals who examine the gastronomy of the region into the smallest detail; they travel individually and then shares their experiences in international magazines or gourmet columns. The second group is composed of either individuals or groups with preliminary information on the subject who are extremely interested and have a desire to gain deeper knowledge; thus preferring to make the travel with an expert guide. Tourists in the third group consist of enthusiastic people about eating and drinking activities who participate in a tour with a particular gastronomic theme (Çağlı, 2012). It's indispensable that tourist guides have the knowledge of culinary practices and all related information to be able to respond to the needs of these tourists, and also transfer this information to the participants of the tour.

Gastronomic tours to Adana, Hatay, Mersin, Nevşehir and Gaziantep cities, Gökçeada eco-tours; Bozcaada, Şarköy, Ürgüp, Kalecik and Urla vinatage carnivals, herb festivals of the Aegean Region, traditional dishes and desserts workshops for tourists in İstanbul and local festivals of region-specific agricultural products are among the activities that are subject to gastronomic tourism in Turkey. There are also gastronomic museums in different cities such as olive oil museums (Çanakkale, Balıkesir, İzmir), wine museum (Tekirdağ) and traditional culinary museums (Hatay, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep). Additionally, "Tourism Strategy of 2023 Program" of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey has a thematic tourism development corridor called the "Olive Corridor", with which the development of South Marmara Region as a gastronomic destination with its olive, olive oil and wine production capacities is aimed. TÜRSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) published the "Gastronomic Tourism Report" in 2012 to be able to make comparative evaluations of Turkey and other cities of the World and offers suggestions for the development of gastronomic tourism. "Gastronomic Tourism Committee", consisting of 63 different tourism agencies, started their activities under TÜRSAB as of the beginning of 2015 to exchange ideas about what can be done jointly for the development of gastronomic tourism. They decided to work jointly with Turkish Airlines Gourmet Committee as a first start. In 2008, Ankara Chamber of Commerce and Patent Bureau of Ankara joined together to establish "Turkey's Flavor Map" with inspecting all 81 cities and recorded 2205 kinds of local foods and beverages. "Turkish and World Cuisine Research and Application Center" within Adnan Menderes University was also founded on February the 1st, 2015 to carry out researches on Turkish and Ottoman Culinary Culture, contribute to putting the local recipes in writing and also create Turkish Gastronomic Tourism routes. Besides, chambers of commerce in other cities organize local festivals and try to create awareness on Turkey's authentic flavors at the same time. Academic researches in the field of gastronomic tourism activities in Turkey analyze the present situation and offer suggestions to contribute to the development of gastronomic tourism which has become a niche pull factor for destinations (Bucak and Aracı, 2013; Çağlı, 2012; TÜRSAB, 2015; Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2007; www.adu.edu.tr, Accessed on: 15.08.2015).

When considered as a promising source for the future with significant economic benefits, the perception of gastronomy tourism by tour guides who serve as the pathfinder to tourists from different countries, determination of their competence in this field is also important. Gastronomic tours, which is an opportunity for tourists who are in the pursuit of different cultures and flavors, have already taken place in travel agency catalogs of many countries. But the gastronomic tours on offer for Turkey are still not at the point where it is supposed to be. Thus, proficiency and preliminary knowledge of tourist guides play a key role in creating a positive culinary image as well as a unique and memorable tourist experience who participate in gastronomic tours that are recently being organized.

### **Tourist Guiding and Gastronomic Tourism**

A tourist guide is the person who makes tourists aware about natural and cultural attractions of their country, region or destination and promotes it in all aspects to them that they are not familiar with. Tourist guide is the person who is in intense face to face relation with the tourists and interacts the most with them. The service provided by the guide is influential on the pleasure of the tourists they get from their holidays as well as repeat visits and loyalty. The guide himself / herself should represent a good example to be able to represent the values of the country and the country itself in the best way. At this point, it is of great importance that the tourist guide has taken a good education, is competent to be able to respond to the contents of the tour program and be able to renew himself / herself constantly. It's expected that tourist guides give a high standard guidance and expertise of service in terms of all tourism activities within cultural tourism in particular (Tetik, 2006).

In a country or region that is totally unfamiliar to tourists in all senses who take part in various tourism activities with a specific purpose, tourist guides function as the pathfinders. The tourist guide plays a major role in intercultural interactions. Tourist guides, while filling the cultural gap between local community and tourists, also hold the mediator role between the host country and the visitors who are exploration enthusiasts. Also serving as an ambassador, the tourist guide makes sure the tourists feel secure in an environment that they are not accustomed to. When compared to other staff working in the field of tourism, the tourist guide has the most direct communication with the tourist in person. Tourists' perception of the destination and standard of knowledge at the end of the trip are shaped according to the performance of the tourist guide throughout the tour. These impressions not only have a positive impact on the country's image, but also increase the satisfaction levels of tourists; resulting in thinking about revisiting the destination and conveying positive word of mouth to their acquaintances once they go back home. Unlike the static guides such as magazines, books and brochures; tourist guides would appeal to the five senses as they enrich the transfer of information with the power of interpretation which increases the memorability of information. Tour operators and travel agencies offer touristic products and services to tourists as a package. However, no matter how perfect a tour program is organized in terms of its content; the tour guide is the key person for the smooth flow of such a successful tour. On the other hand, a tour program that is not very well planned can also progress seamlessly thanks to the skills of the tourist guides. Because each group or visitor is different from one another and unique in personality, it's tourist guides' responsibility to ensure the balance and harmony between people. A tourist guide without sufficient knowledge or current information may cause visitors to leave a country as

unhappy tourists and develop negative prejudices and judgements (Ap and Wong, 2001; Aktaş and Batman, 2010; Yazıcıoğlu et al., 2008).

According to the definition of Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey, a tourist guide is defined in the Tourist Guiding Law as a person who have the authority to perform the guiding profession in accordance with the principles and procedures defined in the regulation, guides the local and foreign tourists in accordance with the languages specified on their guidance identity cards that is compatible with tourists' choice before the visit, interprets them the cultural and natural heritage of the visited regions, executes the tour program that was sold to the consumer in accordance with the printed documents of the tour operator or travel agency, manages the tour program on behalf of travel business (<http://teftis.kulturturizm.gov.tr>, Accessed on: 15.08.2015). However, their duties and responsibilities are not just limited to fulfillment of procedures defined in the regulation or information giving. Tourist guides must have a wide variety of skills. It's one of the functions of the tourist guide to build a positive image of the country through effective publicity and promotion and entertain tourists to create an unforgettable travel experience, deal with extraordinary conditions such as accidents, deaths and health issues. They are expected be honest and fair, renew themselves continuously in terms of knowledge, deal with questions on various subjects and use body language efficiently to manage the group, act responsibly and be well disciplined. Tourist guides should also use their management skills which may also be influential on tourist satisfaction. These skills can be listed as demonstrating a strong leadership, developing an effective communication, working coordinated, and having strong organizational skills (Güzel, 2007).

According to Jensen (2010) tourist guides are the social and cultural intermediaries between the tourist and the host country. Because a tourist guide doesn't just mean a tour escort who speaks tourists' language but also someone who facilitates to comprehend the unknown using their mediation roles. Tourist guide is the person who develops strong ties with the local society and indigenous values of a specific destination. Tourist is unfamiliar to the culture of the host community. It's the role of tourist guide to fill the cultural gap between the locals and the tourists to help them internalize the cultural attributes of the host countries cognitively. It's important to provide communication for the exchange of cultural values which will enable the both parties to get blended mutually and accurately assess and understand each other. It's necessary for the formation of a strong social bond and to be accurately informed that tourist guides should have the adequate background of knowledge and effectively transmit it to the visitors. The reason why tourists prefer guided tours instead of travelling individually is due to the fact they need a pathfinder who will facilitate their travel experience and avoid any unexpected events during their visits. At this point, it's an obligation rather than necessity that tourist guides comprehend and internalize the tourism product with all of its aspects besides possessing the knowledge of a foreign language specified on their licences.

When the impact of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviors of tourist guides on tourists' perception are taken into consideration, the content of their education programs, experience and practices are particularly noteworthy. The process of selection and education of tourists guides should be executed meticulously whose role in tourism industry is indisputable. While tourist guidance training was only given by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism until 1995; today, individuals graduated from undergraduate and graduate programs of tourism faculties, such as departments of tourist guidance and travel management of state universities and private universities, are also

eligible to be a tourist guide if they succeed in the foreign language exam and complete the domestic field tour which is obligatory by the Ministry. There are 12 universities with 2-year undergraduate programs and 16 universities with 4- year graduate programs that train tourist guides as of year 2015 (<http://universitetercihleri.com>, Accessed on: 16.08.2015). There are also tourist guiding certificate programs available with the acceptance of “Tourist Guiding Law” that came into force in 2012 with the suggestion of associations and TUREB and the approval of the Ministry. These courses are organized in designated languages as regional or territorial guidance courses (Güven ve Ceylan, 2014). But the research of Değirmencioğlu (2001) revealed that 49,7% of tourist guides think that the education programs are not adequate and does not meet their requirements. As it’s a profession that requires the use of comprehensive information on a wide array of things, majority of tourist guides in general are trying to eliminate their inadequacies through their own efforts or benefit from the master-apprentice relationship before the tour starts (Değirmencioğlu, 2001).

**Table 1:** Tourist Guiding Certificate Programs and Associate-Graduate Degree Course Contents

<b>Tourist Guiding Certificate Program Courses given by TUREB with the permission of Ministry of Culture and Tourism:</b>	<b>Tourist Guiding Graduate Degree Courses:</b>
General Knowledge on Tourism and Legislation	General Information on Tourism
Business Ethics	Tourism Geography
Turkey’s Tourism Geography	Tourist Guiding
Turkish History and Culture	Archeology and Museology
Turkish Language and Literature	History of Art
Archeology and Museology	History of Anatolian Civilizations
Mitology and Iconography	History of Religions
History of Art	Mitology and Iconography
History of Religions and Sociology	Basic Health Practices and First Aid
Basic Health Practices and First Aid	Travel Management and Tour Operators
Communication Skills	Recreation Management
History of Anatolian Civilizations	Tourism Sociology
Turkish Folklore and Traditional Turkish Hand Crafts	Special Interest Tourism Types
Turkey’s flora and fauna, history of nature	Traditional Turkish Hand Crafts

**Source:** <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/06/20120622-2.htm>, Retrieved on: 16.08.2015; Güven and Ceylan, 2014.

A particular attention must be given to the training of tourist guides to ensure the successful development of tourism industry. However, when the duration of their training is taken into consideration, they participate in a

certificate course for 3 months to become a regional guide and 6 months for national guidance; 2-year associate degree programs at the undergraduate level; and a 4-year education program at the graduate level. In addition to a lack of standardization in terms of duration, it's seen that there are no courses related to eating and drinking practices such as national or local cuisine and gastronomic tourism when the content of the education is analyzed. While food and beverages were complementary elements of tourism product until recently, shifting demands replaced its position from being part of tourism product to the subject of tourism movement. Tourist guides will be the mediators who will give information and promote about this very new tourism product of Turkey to the tourists. In this regard, it's requisite to reorganize the education programs at the earliest to adapt it to the gastronomic tourism activities to be able to fill the gap.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

In this study, the questionnaire is applied in order to determine the potential contribution and the views on gastronomic tourism of tourist guides in Turkey. The questionnaire developed by K rođlu et. al. (2007) is generated and used for collecting data. It consists of 5 sections in which first section represents the level of knowledge of participants on local cuisine; second has the statements about the perception of gastronomic tourism; in third, there are statements to measure the opinion of participants about the branding of Turkish Cuisine; participants' idea on specialization as gastronomic guides has been tried to determine in fourth section and the last section of questionnaire has the questions about socio-demographic characteristics of participants as gender, age, education level, years working in vocational guidance, work area, the most studied countries, specialty. Participants have evaluated the questionnaire using a 5-point Likert Scale from 1 "absolutely disagree" to 5 "absolutely agree".

### **Method of Sampling, Data Collection Process and Analysis Techniques**

The questionnaire of this research is applied on Tourist Guides that have performed active guidance and also have direct relationship with tourists. In this context, 152 of the tourist guides have constituted on the sample of this research. The questionnaire has been prepared only in Turkish language. The data has been collected in 2015 between July and October via e-mail and social media accounts and also physically from the Chamber of Tourist Guides (such as İstanbul, Antalya, İzmir, Aydın, Muđla, Ankara, Nevşehir, Adana, Bursa, anakkale, Adana, Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa and Trabzon). The questionnaire has been sent to each tourist guide who has a membership on chamber of tourist guides; as a result, 152 of the tourist guides have participated in survey. The data collected by questionnaire has been imported to and analyzed in the statistical software.

### **Limitations of the Research**

In this study, only 152 questionnaire forms were collected from the tourist guides, because the summer season in which the study has been applied is the peak season for the tourist guides and also they have been reached mostly by e-mail which is sent through Chambers of Tourist Guides. For further studies, it is suggested that the sample can be expanded with the larger groups.

**Research Findings**

**Socio-Demographic Variables of Tourist Guides**

Socio-demographic attributes of tourist guides have been shown in Table 2 below. According to the Table 2, 76,3 percent of the respondents consist of men and 23,7 percent of respondents are women. By age, 20,4 percent of the respondents are between the ages of 25-34 and 31,6 percent of respondents between the ages of 35-44, 27,6 percent of respondents between the ages of 45-54 and 20,4 percent of respondents above the age of 55. In educational attainment, 7,2 percent of respondents have achieved a high school degree, 12,5 percent of respondents having achieved associate degree, 59,9 percent of respondents having achieved graduate degree and 20,4 percent of respondents having a post-graduate school degree. By experience, the percentage of respondents has the experience that between 1-4 years are 8,6 percent, between 5-10 years of experience are 21,1 percent, between 11-15 years of experience are 14,5 percent and above 15 years of experience are 55,9 percent. By region in which the respondents mostly have given guidance are respectively as follows: Aegean Region (36,8%), Central Anatolia region (26,3%), İstanbul (25,7%), Marmara Region except İstanbul (15,8%), Mediterranean Region (12,5%), South Eastern Anatolia Region (4,6%), Black Sea Region (2,6%), and Eastern Anatolia Region (1,3%). Respondents have pointed out that their specializations are mostly in cultural tours (86,8%) and respectively others are cruise tours (6,6%), religious tours (3,3%) and alternative tours (2%). On the other hand, in specialization of gastronomy and health, there are 0,7 percent of respondents for each. By language, the respondents have stated that they mostly know English (61%) and also 20 percent of respondents can speak German and 15 percent of them can speak French. Countries the respondents mostly serve are respectively as follows: France (19,7%), America. (17,1%), England (16,4%), Germany (15,1%), Far East countries (10,5%), Spain (9,9%), Middle East countries (5,9%) and Russia (5,3%).

**Table 2:** Tourist Guides’ Socio-demographic Variables

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	116	76,3
Female	36	23,7
<b>Age</b>		
24 and under	-	-
25-34	31	20,4
35-44	48	31,6
45-54	42	27,6
55 and above	31	20,4
<b>Education</b>		
High School	11	7,2
Associate Degree	19	12,5
Graduate Degree	91	59,9
Post Graduate Degree	31	20,4
<b>Experience</b>		
1-4	13	8,6
5-10	32	21,1
11-15	22	14,5
15 years and above	85	55,9

<b>Variables</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Countries they serve</b>		
Germany	23	15,1
England	25	16,4
France	30	19,7
Spain	15	9,9
Russia	8	5,3
Far East	16	10,5
America	26	17,1
Middle East	9	5,9
<b>Specialization</b>		
Culture	132	86,8
Religion	5	3,3
Health	1	0,7
Gastronomy	1	0,7
Alternative	3	2
Cruise	10	6,6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 2:** Tourist Guides' Socio-demographic Variables (devamı)

<i>Region</i>		
İstanbul	39	25,7
Other than Istanbul	113	74,3
If other than Istanbul;		
Marmara Region	24	15,8
Aegean Region	56	36,8
Mediterranean Region	19	12,5
Central Anatolia R.	40	26,3
Black Sea R.	4	2,6
Eastern Anatolia R.	2	1,3
South Eastern Anatolia	7	4,6

### Opinions on the Necessity of Specialization as a Gastronomic Tourist Guide

When respondents were asked whether specialization as a gastronomy guide is essential, 91,4 percent of respondents answered “yes” and also 88,2 percent of respondents found it necessary to participate in a specialization course about gastronomic guiding. While 60,5 percent of respondents requested this kind of course as on the job training, others pointed out that they would like to take this course respectively from courses of ministry, private courses and graduate degree education. According to the respondents, specialization type of the gastronomic guiding should be general with the 73,7 percent, while 26,3 percent of respondents agreed on regional specialization of gastronomic guiding. Summary of these results are demonstrated in Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Opinions on the Necessity of Specialization as a Gastronomic Tourist Guide

<b>Variables</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<i>Do you believe in the necessity to specialize as a gastronomy guide?</i>		
Yes	139	91,4
No	13	8,6
<i>Would you consider in participating a course about specialized gastronomic guiding ?</i>		
Yes	134	88,2
No	18	11,8
<i>Where do you think this course should be taken?</i>		
Graduate degree education	15	9,9
On the job training courses	92	60,5
Private courses	18	11,8
Courses of Ministry	27	17,8
<i>What should be the type of specialization?</i>		
General	112	73,7
Regional	40	26,3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>100</b>

**Analysis Results of Scale items**

Reliability analysis have been applied on the scale items due to measure the consistency of response and Cronbach Alfa ( $\alpha$ ) value has been determined as 0,865.

**Table 4:** Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alfa	Cronbach's standards-based item	Number of Scale Items
,835	,865	29

Alfa ( $\alpha$ ) value for all statements has been found to indicate total reliability of questionnaire and this value must be larger than 0,7; if  $\alpha$  value is less than this value, it can be said that questionnaire has the weak total reliability. On the contrary, if  $\alpha$  value of questionnaire is greater than 0,8, it can be said that the questionnaire has the high reliability degree.

Statements and the scale items in the questionnaire that applied on respondents has been analyzed and the results have been demonstrated in Table 5 below.

**Table 5:** Analysis Results of Scale Items

<b>Statements to Identify Background Knowledge on Gastronomy</b>			
	<b>N</b>	<b>Arit. Mean</b>	<b>Std. D.</b>
I have a general background on local cuisine	152	4,09	,841
I have educational background about local cuisine	152	2,02	1,165
I get information from local cookbooks, magazines, TV programs and using internet resources effectively	152	3,59	1,204
I definitely inform group members about culinary culture of the sites visited	152	4,24	,853
I inform group members about culinary culture of the sites visited only if they ask about it	152	3,65	1,382
If I'm taking a group to a place for the first time, I make a research about the local cuisine in advance and I get myself informed	152	3,99	1,073
The knowledge I already have is sufficient to serve as a gastronomic guide	152	3,11	1,213
<b>Statements to Identify Perceptions on Gastronomy Tourism</b>			
I would say group members in general, like the flavors they try in Turkey	152	4,13	,766
I think the restaurants on the travel itinerary offer menus that reflect the Turkish Cuisine	152	2,80	1,192
I think the first time visitors don't know much about Turkish cuisine	152	3,97	,924
I can say that the group members are curious about the local cuisine	152	3,97	,767
I believe that I have an active role in the promotion of Turkish cuisine	152	3,86	,952

I believe that gastronomic tourism will contribute to Turkish tourism	152	4,54	,660
I think that gastronomic tourism could be a solution to seasonality issue	152	3,88	1,057
I believe that Turkey, with its actual gastronomic heritage, is a country of high potential for gastronomic tourism	152	4,57	,677
I think that gastronomic tourism has already developed in Turkey	152	2,23	,966
I believe that Turkish Cuisine has an effective role in the promotion of the country	152	4,20	,892
I think gastronomic tourism might be the primary reason to visit Turkey	152	3,19	1,200
<b>Opinions about the Branding of Turkish Cuisine</b>			
Accommodation establishments should organize regional and local Turkish Cuisine days	152	4,36	,645
Food and drinks that are original to Turkish cuisine should be prepared with organic vegetables and fruits	152	4,16	,902
Scientific researches about local cuisines should be done and shared through printed and visual documents	152	4,53	,539
Dishes that are special to Turkish cuisine must be prepared according to their original recipes.	152	4,55	,561
Brochures and books containing explanatory information about the dishes in the Turkish cuisine must be enlisted	152	4,57	,627
Restaurants that reflect special dishes of the Turkish Cuisine on their menus should be registered and inspected regularly by Ministry of Culture and Tourism	152	4,61	,610
Turkish cuisine practices matching with healthy eating practices should be highlighted.	152	4,40	,816
Qualified personnel should be trained about Turkish Cuisine	152	4,75	,434
Strategies towards gastronomic tourism should be initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism	152	4,53	,608
Turkish food and culinary culture should be promoted on the international arenas	152	4,78	,434
Turkey's flavor mapping should be constructed and supported with tour programs and events	152	4,74	,481

The results of the analyses have shown that “I have a general background on local cuisine” item has one of the highest values whereas “I have educational background about local cuisine” item has one of the smallest values. Respondents have indicated that they acquire information about local cuisine using regional cookbooks, magazines, TV programs and internet resources effectively. They have also stated that they definitely give information to the group members of tourists about regional culinary culture in which they visit. The great majority of respondents have investigated the local foods of region in which the first time they serve, however, they think that the level of knowledge they have is not enough to do gastronomic guidance. The respondents have expressed that tourists visiting Turkey usually like local flavors they try, but there is no restaurant on the route of tour that offer menus

reflecting traditional Turkish Cuisine and also tourists who visit Turkey does not sufficiently recognize the Turkish Cuisine. On the other hand, tourist guides attending this survey think that group members of tourists are very interested in local cuisine and they play an effectively active role in promotion of the Turkish Cuisine; besides, tourist guides also consider that the gastronomic tourism is likely the solution of the seasonality issue in tourism. They also denoted that Turkey has a large potential for gastronomic tourism due to its rich gastronomic heritage, however, gastronomic tourism has not been delivered enough. Tourist guides believing that Turkish Cuisine has an important role in advertising of Turkey have been notified that they are undecided or disagree about the idea that the gastronomic tourism may be the primary cause for visiting Turkey.

Most of the tourist guides attending the survey have agreed on the statement as “accommodation establishments should organize regional and local Turkish Cuisine days”. Moreover, they have supported the necessity of preparing food and drinks in Turkish Cuisine using organic vegetables and fruits and of doing scientific researches about local cuisines of Turkey and sharing them through printed and visual documents. The ideas that special foods in Turkish Cuisine should be prepared according to the original recipes and books and brochure about Turkish Cuisine should be published have been supported by the respondents and they have also noted that the companies in which serve special Turkish foods and drinks should be certified and monitored constantly by Ministry of Culture and Tourism. At the same time, respondents have completely agreed the statements on that the quality and attributes of Turkish Cuisine which correspond to healthy diet should be acquaint with the experimental and visual promoting activities and qualified personnel should be trained about Turkish Cuisine. They have also evaluated high level of agreement on statements that strategies about gastronomic tourism should be given greater emphasis by ministry, Turkish food and culinary culture should be promoted on the international arena and Turkey’s flavor mapping should be constructed and supported with tour programs and events.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Tourist guides should learn the culinary culture, traditions and practices in depth to be able to promote the local and traditional flavors that needs to be protected and communicated to visitors who are not familiar to them. The promotion of Turkey’s rich culinary culture that vary from region to region must be the primary target for the development of gastronomic tourism. They should create awareness for the potential gastronomic tourism visitors to let them know that the destination has a wide variety of culinary offers to satisfy food tourists to differentiate the destination. When considering the scarcity of specialized tourist guides in the field of gastronomy compared to specialization rates in various other fields; it’s necessary to give them a diversified education to well equip them with a strong background in this field so that they will be ready to be able to provide efficient services in gastronomic tourism.

Tourist guides, who are in frequent and intensive encounters with tourists, have two roles in terms of development of gastronomic tourism concept in Turkey; first, to make tourists feel that this type of tourism is in its development phase in Turkey and potentially present; and the second, developing their own skills to communicate culinary richness and variety effectively and correctly while serving potential gastronomic tourists and shaping their next travel decisions. The results of the survey also support this foresight as the majority of tourist guides think that Turkey is a highly potential country for gastronomic tourism with its rooted culinary heritage and

specialization in gastronomy field is essential. However, training in gastronomic tourism should not be limited to personal efforts of tourist guides but supported by Ministry of Culture and Tourism, TUREB (Association of Tourist Guides), TÜRSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies) and other related authorities. Gastronomic tourism courses should be organized by these foundations and universities should include gastronomic tourism courses to their graduate education curriculums as part of their tourist guiding departments; the lack of literature on this subject should be eliminated with books, research papers and other written sources.

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