



## The Typology of Gastro Tourists: A Study on Foreign Tourists Visiting Turkey

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### Article History

Received: 16.02.2020

Accepted: 12.06.2020

### Keywords

Gastro tourists

Gastronomy

Typology

### Abstract

The aim of the study is to determine the gastro-tourist profiles of foreign tourists visiting Turkey. In line with this aim, a quantitative questionnaire has been conducted to 606 foreign tourists that have visited and left Turkey. Subsequent to the cluster analysis that has been conducted on the data collected to determine the typology of foreign tourists, four typologies have emerged: Neglectors, Experimental Tourists, Recreational Tourists, and Gastro Tourists. The present study holds significance considering the small number of studies on the characteristics and typologies of gastro tourists. Therefore, the study holds importance with regard to determining the typology of gastro tourists.

### Article Type

Research Article

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DOI: 10.21325/jotags.2020.574

## INTRODUCTION

Through the past century, gastronomy has experienced a significant improvement, and developed into a psychological and sociological phenomenon, along with satisfying individuals' physiological needs. The phenomenon of eating has particularly developed into a research subject that has been focused on by many academic disciplines, such as sociology, economy, and food science, nutrition, and dietetic (Reynolds, 1993; Santich, 2004; Beardsworth & Keil, 2011). Additionally, the strong relationship between gastronomy and tourism has become one of the most researched subjects (Hall & Mitchell, 2002; Richards, 2002; Du Rand, Heath & Albert, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Okumuş, Okumuş & McKercher, 2007; Smith & Xiao, 2008; Everett & Aitchison, 2008; Onozaka, Nurse & McFadden, 2010; Jahromy & Tajik, 2011; Yurtseven & Kaya, 2011; Lillywhite & Simonsen, 2014; Birdir & Akgöl, 2015; Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2018; Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019).

Considering the fact that gastronomy tourism is one of the most significant tourism trends, the increase in the number of gastro tourists is to be expected. Hence, for the development of gastro tourism, it is crucial to determine gastro tourists' level of involvement in food-related-activities and their attitudes towards these activities. Especially from an economic point of view, tourists' food and beverage expenditures during their travels indicate the significance of gastronomy in tourism industry. Hall and Sharples (2003, p. 3) state that food (28 %) is the second most important factor after accommodation (36 %) in tourists' daily expenditures. Other studies indicate that food expenditures can range from 25 % to 40 % out of total tourist expenditures. For instance, while Boyne, Williams and Hall (2002, p. 91) indicate that food expenditures constitute 40 % of tourists expenditures, Hudman (1986), Ardabili and Rasouli (2011, p. 827), and Canizares and Guzman (2012, p. 230) state this rate as 25 %. Meanwhile, Rimmington and Yüksel (1998, p. 41), Telfer and Wall (2000, p. 422), and Torres (2002, p. 283) assert that one third of tourist expenditures is comprised of food expenditures. Based on these studies, the proportion of gastro tourists' expenditures in tourism industry will be quite high. The aim of the study is to determine the gastro tourist profiles of foreign tourists visiting Turkey. The present study holds significance considering the small number of studies on the characteristics and typologies of gastro tourists (Derinalp Çanakçı, 2016; Şimşek & Selçuk, 2018). In addition to determining gastro tourist profiles, one of the most important results expected in the study is to determine the general food and beverage preferences of the tourist type that places emphasis on food and beverages. The study includes a short literature review concerning gastro tourists. Subsequently, it describes the data collection tool used in the study, along with the methods of data analysis, and findings, and concludes with suggestions.

### Gastro Tourist Profiles

As the individuals who expect different experiences from various foods, gastro tourists are in pursuit of unique and novel experiences, not of satiating their hunger (Long, 1998, p. 21). Meanwhile, Stewart, Bramble and Ziraldo (2008, p. 310) assert that gastro tourists should be reviewed along with wine tourists; and they define them succinctly as individuals who exhibit a distinct interest in wine and food. On the other hand, Murray (2008, p. 12) describes gastro tourists as individuals who travel to geographical regions which are famous for their food and beverages (like Tuscany, Italy), and who participate in regional cooking courses during their travel. Overall, gastro tourists are defined as individuals who are eager to learn cooking certain meals, and willing to taste indigenous food and beverages such as wine, beer, whisky, tea and coffee.

According to TAMS (Travel Activities & Motivation Survey, Wine & Cuisine Report) published by Canadian Tourism Commission (Murray, 2008, p. 7), gastro tourist attitudes are as follows: They attend food and beverage festivals, attend cooking / wine tasting courses, dine at restaurants serving local food, dine at farmhouses, buy gourmet food from retail stores. Moreover, they visit the wineries daily and taste wine, visit breweries daily and taste beer, observe fruit harvests, visit food producers (such as cheese factories), stay in the schools that offer cooking courses, stay in the schools that offer wine tasting courses, and finally, stay in boutique hotels. In addition to these definitions, McIntosh, Goeldner and Ritchie (1995) have allowed definitions to be more comprehensive by means of detailing gastro tourists' food motivation tools. Accordingly, gastro tourist motivations include physical, cultural, individual, and status and prestige motivations. Physical motivations contain factors such as the appearance, smell, taste, and the appetizing quality of the foods specific to different destinations, all of which influence the traveller. Cultural motivations entail learning how to make authentic and traditional foods and tasting them. Individual motivations can be defined as social attachment to food. Talking about foods and being interested in activities can be examples of these motivations. As for status and prestige motivations, they include visiting popular restaurants and being proud of these visits (Fields, 2002, p. 37). Hjalager (2004, pp. 195-201) divides gastro tourists into four categories based on his model of gastronomy tourism lifestyles regarding tourists' food and beverage preferences and attitudes, which are existential, experimental, recreational, and diversionary.

*Existential gastronomy tourists* consist of individuals that enjoy experiencing different and novel foods, and intend to gain in-depth knowledge about the local and regional cuisine and wines. Existential gastronomy tourists, who do not prefer dining out in typical or popular chain restaurants, would rather witness the preparation of traditional local foods. As for *experimental gastro tourists*, they enjoy the dining experience in the smartest and the most popular restaurants with modernised menus. On the other hand, *recreational gastro tourists* are comprised of individuals who only seek similar foods in their holiday destinations to the ones they consume at home. The accommodations they prefer consist of apart hotels solely due to their desire to cook their own food, and they dislike consuming unfamiliar foods. *Diversionary gastro tourists* enjoy cooking for their families. Food consumption in their holidays is a simple activity. They usually eat out at chain restaurants, as they prefer familiar foods.

One of the few studies that have researched travel tendencies of gastro tourists divides gastro tourist experiences into five categories (Mitchell & Hall, 2003): eating at home (pre-travel), eating out (pre-travel), food at destination, vacation experience, eating (post-travel). Mitchell and Hall (2003) categorise gastro tourists as gastronomes (gourmets), indigenous foodies, tourist foodies, and familiar foods.

*Gastronomes (gourmets)* present a high level of interest and involvement in gastronomy tourism. These types of tourists conduct extensive research on local foods and enjoy consuming various cuisines. *Indigenous foodies* exhibit a high to moderate level of interest and involvement in gastronomy tourism. They predominantly prefer eating out in ethnic restaurants. Meanwhile, they are enthusiastic about culinary courses, local restaurants, local food, and food markets. *Tourist foodies*, on the other hand, present a low level of interest and involvement in gastronomy tourism. They are keen on cooking some pre-prepared ethnic foods at home due to neophobia. Compared to the previous gastro tourist types, they eat out less frequently, and prefer mainstream or chain restaurants. *Familiar foods* also exhibit a low level of interest and involvement in gastronomy tourism. They prefer eating at home (pre-travel), and

rarely eat out. Furthermore, they only take package tours, and, owing to their neophobia, they opt for international fast food chains.

## Methodology

### Data Collection Tools and Method of Analysis

The main aim of the study is to determine the gastro tourist profiles of foreign tourists visiting Turkey. Convenience sampling method has been employed to select the respondents consisting of foreign tourists who have visited Turkey, and left Ataturk Airport between the dates of 14 and 15 October 2015. The reason for choosing convenience sampling method is that it is a fast, economical and easy to apply sampling type (Nakip, 2006, p. 127) based on the interviewer selection of the sample units. 647 foreign tourists have participated in the research, in which the data have been collected through questionnaires. Following the removal of 41 incorrectly and deficiently filled questionnaires, 606 surveys have been included in the research.

In order to determine tourists' general food preferences, the questionnaire form that Shenoy (2005) employed to determine tourists' general food preferences has been utilised. The scale consists of 29 items and five response categories, which are (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes, (4) Usually, and (5) Always.

Numerical data scored and organized on the statistic programme that is employed to analyse data in social sciences. Afterwards, the frequency distributions, mean and standard deviation have been checked for the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, along with examining the missing values in the data. The missing value rates of the items in the gastronomy scale have ranged between 0% and 1.2%. Due to the few numbers of the respondents with incomplete answers, (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2007, p. 143) the means of other respondents have been assigned to the missing parts. As the research will utilise explanatory factor analysis, the scale has been analysed by means of normal distribution test and outlier analysis. As part of normality testing, skewness and kurtosis analyses have been conducted. Subsequently, the skewness and kurtosis values have been found out to vary in the range of  $\pm 3$ , indicating a normal distribution of data, as is also pointed out by Kalaycı (2009, p. 209), who accepts the skewness and kurtosis values in the range of  $\pm 3$  as a suitable condition in terms of normality. Meanwhile, t-distribution of the scale has been measured in the significance level of 1%, which points out that the scale does not contain any outlier values. Finally, following reliability analysis, Cronbach's Alpha value has been measured as 0.893.

## Findings

The following table shows respondents' demographic characteristics. Of all respondents, 55 % are male, and 45% are female. While participants of English nationality constitute the majority of the respondents (19.1%), 18.3% are Americans. Of all respondents, 50.7% are married, and have moderate-income levels (65.3%). The respondents between 25-35 years of age constitute 31.8%, and 39.8% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 43.1% of the respondents are private sector employees.

**Table 1.** Respondents' Demographic Characteristics (n: 606)

	<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>		<b>F</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Age</b>		
Female	273	45.0	Between 15-24	91	15.0
Male	333	55.0	Between 25-35	193	31.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>	Between 36-46	101	16.7
<b>Nationality (max.10)</b>			Between 47-60	119	19.6
English	116	19.1	61 and over	102	16.8
American	111	18.3	<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Indian	50	8.2	<b>Education</b>		
German	23	3.8	Primary School	1	0.2
Spanish	21	3.4	Middle School	24	4.0
Russian	18	3.2	High School	131	21.8
Iranian	15	2.5	Bachelor's Degree	241	39.8
Finnish	14	2.3	Graduate Degree	209	34.5
Australian	13	2.1	<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>
French	13	2.1	<b>Occupation</b>		
Other	212	35.0	Private sector employee	261	43.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>	Government employee	65	10.7
<b>Marital Status</b>			Business owner	73	12.0
Married	307	50.7	Student	75	12.4
Widow	17	2.8	Retired	73	12.0
Divorced or Separated	31	5.1	Housewife	11	1.8
Single	201	33.2	Unemployed	15	2.5
Partners	50	8.3	Other	33	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Income</b>					
Minimum	15	2.5			
Low	62	10.2			
Moderate	396	65.3			
High	118	19.5			
Very high	15	2.5			
<b>Total</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>100.0</b>			

Factor analysis conducted on 29 items in the questionnaire, which aims to determine the gastro tourist profiles of foreign tourists visiting Turkey, has revealed 5 dimensions, named as (1) Local food, (2) Familiarity, (3) Luxury food, (4) Local beverages, and (5) Local shopping. Subsequently, cluster analysis has been conducted on the aforementioned dimensions to determine tourist profiles.

Cluster analysis connotes the methods that aim to group unprocessed X data matrix or sometimes variables, and form homogenous subgroups in the scope of their characteristics (Alpar, 2011, p. 309). Namely, it combines individuals or objects that are being researched in accordance with their similarities. Hence, it results in within-group homogeneity and inter-cluster heterogeneity. Cluster analysis consists of two main methods, which are called hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis (Arimond & Elfessi, 2001, p. 394; Alpar, 2011, p. 314). Hierarchical cluster analysis combines groups that are sequentially created by systematically merging similar clusters together (Alpar, 2011, pp. 314-333). As for non-hierarchical cluster analysis, the researcher needs to establish the number of clusters a priori, and re-group the observations until there is a balanced distribution between the clusters. Table 2 shows the results of Two Step Cluster Analysis conducted on the factors discovered by means of the factor analysis on the scale.

**Table 2.** Cluster Analysis Conducted on Overall Food Choices

Clusters	N	(%)	Local Food	Familiarity	Luxury Foods	Local Beverages	Local Shopping
1. Neglectors	145	23.9	2.294	2.982	3.339	2.708	2.969
2. Experimental Tourists	177	29.2	2.210	4.029	4.044	3.710	3.850
3. Recreational Tourists	127	21.0	3.263	3.298	3.703	3.786	3.813
4. Gastro Tourists	157	25.9	3.208	4.295	4.596	4.683	4.562
<b>Overall Mean</b>			2.743	3.651	3.920	3.721	3.798

Based on the means of respondents' overall food choices, the clusters are identified as "Neglectors", "Experimental Tourists", "Recreational Tourists", and "Gastro Tourists", as indicated in Table 2. The means of each tourist type are predicted to be statically different. T-test is applied on the aforementioned tourist types in order to test the prediction (Table 3). The results make it evident that there are statistically significant differences between each tourist type at all factors (0.000).

**Table 3.** The Results of the T-test Conducted on Tourist Types based on Overall Food Choices

Overall Food Choices	Clusters	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-Value	S.D.	Significance Level
<b>Local Food</b>	Neglectors	145	2.294	0.4231	208.508	602	.000***
	Experimental Tourists	177	2.21	0.33617			
	Recreational Tourists	127	3.263	0.40141			
	Gastro Tourists	157	3.208	0.69662			
<b>Familiarity</b>	Neglectors	145	2.982	0.72146	168.260	602	.000***
	Experimental Tourists	177	4.029	0.49539			
	Recreational Tourists	127	3.298	0.54143			
	Gastro Tourists	157	4.295	0.5529			
<b>Luxury Food</b>	Neglectors	145	3.339	0.79174	129.416	602	.000***
	Experimental Tourists	177	4.044	0.50933			
	Recreational Tourists	127	3.703	0.52665			
	Gastro Tourists	157	4.596	0.43114			
<b>Local Beverages</b>	Neglectors	145	2.708	0.71431	243.094	602	.000***
	Experimental Tourists	177	3.71	0.73604			
	Recreational Tourists	127	3.786	0.6313			
	Gastro Tourists	157	4.683	0.39368			
<b>Local Shopping</b>	Neglectors	145	2.969	0.8958	114.618	602	.000***
	Experimental Tourists	177	3.85	0.78034			
	Recreational Tourists	127	3.813	0.79644			
	Gastro Tourists	157	4.562	0.46048			

Note: \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\*p<.001

### Defining Tourist Types in accordance with Demographic Characteristics

Table 4 indicates the results of the analysis that has examined cluster distributions in accordance with demographic variables. Namely, the analysis has revealed that most neglectors are male (60.7%), between 25 and 35 years of age (42.8%), English (17.9%), married (51.8%), with a bachelor's degree (45.1%), and have moderate-income levels (64.1%).

**Table 4.** Tourist Type Distributions in accordance with Demographic Variables

	Neglectors		Experimental Tourists		Recreational Tourists		Gastro Tourists	
<b>Gender</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Female	57	39.3	89	50.3	58	45.7	69	43.9
Male	88	60.7	88	49.7	69	54.3	88	56.1
Total	145	100	177	100	127	100	157	100
Note: $X^2$ : 3.984; s.d.: 3; $p=0.263$								
<b>Age Groups</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Between 15-24 years of age	14	9.7	28	15.8	26	20.5	23	14.6
Between 25-35 years of age	62	42.8	47	26.6	41	32.3	43	27.4
Between 36-46 years of age	30	20.7	30	16.9	20	15.7	21	13.4
Between 47-60 years of age	28	19.3	29	16.4	24	18.9	38	24.2
61 and above	11	7.6	43	24.3	16	12.6	32	20.4
Total	145	100	177	100	127	100	157	100
Note: $X^2$ : 34.261; s.d.: 12; $p=0.001$								
<b>Top Nationalities</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
English	26	17.9	36	20.3	14	11.0	40	25.5
American	23	15.9	54	30.5	9	7.1	25	15.9
Indian	20	13.8	6	3.4	18	14.2	6	3.8
German	2	1.4	8	4.5	6	4.7	7	4.5
Spanish	10	6.9	1	0.6	5	3.9	5	3.2
Russian	5	3.4	4	2.3	6	4.7	3	1.9
Iranian	3	2.1	2	1.1	9	7.1	1	0.2
Other	56	38.6	66	37.3	60	47.3	70	45.0
Total	145	100	177	100	127	100	157	100
Not: $X^2$ : 3.476; s.d.: 204; $p=0.000$								
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Married	74	51.0	88	49.7	65	51.2	80	51.0
Widow	2	1.4	3	1.7	5	3.9	7	4.5
Divorced or Separated	10	6.9	7	4.0	5	3.9	9	5.7
Single	48	33.1	62	35.0	45	35.4	46	29.3
Partners	11	7.6	17	9.6	7	5.5	15	9.6
Total	145	100	177	100	127	100	157	100
Note: $X^2$ : 8.849; s.d.: 12; $p=0.716$								
<b>Education</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Primary School	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.8	0	0.0
Middle School	3	2.1	5	2.8	10	7.9	6	3.9
High School	27	18.8	28	15.8	33	26.2	39	25.2
Bachelor's Degree	65	45.1	73	41.2	49	38.9	54	34.8
Graduate Degree	49	34.0	71	40.1	33	26.2	56	36.1
Total	144	100	177	100	126	100	155	100
Note: $X^2$ : 22.418; s.d.: 12; $p=0.033$								
<b>Income</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
Minimum	4	2.8	4	2.3	2	1.6	5	3.2
Low	15	10.6	20	11.4	9	7.3	16	10.2
Moderate	91	64.1	106	60.6	94	75.8	103	65.6
High	29	20.4	39	22.3	17	13.7	31	19.7
Very high	3	2.1	6	3.4	2	1.6	2	1.3
Total	142	100	175	100	124	100	157	100
Note: $X^2$ : 9.722; s.d.: 12; $p=0.640$								

Most experimental tourists consist of female respondents (50.3%), who are between 25 and 35 years of age, American (30.5%), married (49.7%), and have a bachelor's degree (41.2%), and moderate-income levels (60.6%). As for the recreational tourists, they consist of male respondents (54.3%) who are between 25 and 35 years of age (32.3%), Indian (14.2%), married (51.2%), and have a bachelor's degree (38.9%) and moderate-income levels (75.8%). Gastro tourists consist of male respondents (56.1%), who are between 25 and 35 years of age (27.4%), English (25.5%), married (51.0%), and have a graduate degree (36.1%) and moderate-income levels (65.6%).

## Conclusion

Considering that gastronomy tourism is one of the significant tourism trends today, it is inevitable that the number of gastro tourists will increase. Determining the participation levels and attitudes of gastro tourists for food-related activities is of great significance for the development of gastro tourism. On the other hand, determining the typologies of gastro tourists will help establish the goals of those who participate in gastro tourism and create critical strategies in this direction. The study has been conducted to determine the gastro tourist profiles of foreign tourists visiting Turkey. Subsequent to the cluster analysis, respondents have been grouped into four clusters, which are “Neglectors”, “Experimental Tourists”, “Recreational Tourists”, and “Gastro Tourists”.

Not only do “Neglectors” usually ignore local food, beverages or local shopping during their travel, but also they do not consume familiar foods frequently and sometimes tend to consume luxury food. This result supports Boyne, Hall and Williams (2003)’s tourist typology identified as “Type 3”, and Hjalager (2004)’s tourist typology identified as “Diversionsary”.

In general, experimental tourists not only consume familiar foods during their travel, but also present a high level of involvement in luxury food, local beverages, and local shopping. Experimental tourist typology coincides with the “Innovator” tourist type identified by Şimşek and Selçuk (2018). Experimental tourists are keen on innovation in all types of food-related activities. Going beyond their routines, they can taste a new type of food.

Recreational tourists frequently and occasionally exhibit an approximately equal level of interest in local food, familiarity, luxury food, local beverages, and local shopping. They are defined as individuals who are aware of the importance of gastronomy, but not prioritise it during their travel. In this respect, Recreational tourist typology coincides with Sanchez-Canizares and Lopez-Guzman (2012)’s “Type 2” tourists, who state that gastronomy is “Important but not the first reason”.

Gastro tourists, on the other hand, frequently or always prioritise familiarity, luxury food, local beverages, and local shopping. They consume local food only occasionally. They constitute the group expressing the most interest in food. Additionally, they actively research food pre-travel. In this respect, this tourist type not only coincides with Boyne et al. (2003)’s “Type 1” tourists, but also Ignatov and Smith (2006)’s food tourists, and Busby, Huang and Jarman (2013)’s “Number 1” tourists.

The findings that most of the respondents in the study are between 25 and 35 years of age, have high educational levels, along with moderate-income levels, should be taken into account by tourism enterprises. Based on the four different tourist profiles revealed in this study, which examines foreign tourists, there have emerged some contributions to sector representatives. Turkey is an important attraction centre for foreign tourists. In this sense, it is recommended to develop the supply of gastro tourism that creates tourist expectations in the context of food and beverage. Facilities (wineries, culinary museums, restaurants, and farms, etc.), as well as activities (tasting centres, cookery schools, having picnics with local food, visiting wineries etc.), and events (food festivals, harvest festivals, and cooking shows, etc.) that can attract the attention of the four different tourist profiles, and increasing such organisations that can meet the expectations of foreign tourists visiting the country are significant in terms of their contribution to gastro tourism.



The study has been conducted on foreign tourists who have visited Turkey and left Ataturk Airport. Domestic tourists have been excluded. In order to contribute to the literature, future studies could delve into the relation between gastro tourists, who can be found out by means of a study on foreign tourists visiting Turkey solely for gastro tourism, and the variables such as motivations, satisfaction levels and complains, as well as the impact of gastro tourists on the aforementioned variables.

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