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REFLECTION OF LOCAL TASTE CULTURE IN THE PRESENTATION OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE ESTABLISHMENTS¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the inclusion of local meals of the destination in the menus of food and beverage establishments operating in Boyabat district, Sinop province in Türkiye. The study, which adopted a qualitative research approach, conducted a literature review and used a semi-structured interview technique. For this purpose, data was collected from seventeen officials of food and beverage establishments in Boyabat destination. As a result of the study, it was found that rice, sırık kebab and keskek products stand out as local products in the destination and foods related to these products are included in the business menus. On the other hand, it was found that these foods are not specifically requested in the outlets by local and foreign visitors to the destination but are requested as a result of advice and information given by the staff during the ordering and presentation process.

Keywords: Local culture, food and beverage establishment, gastronomy tourism, Boyabat (Sinop).

YÖRESEL LEZZET KÜLTÜRÜNÜN YIYECEK İÇECEK İŞLETMELERİNİN SUNUMUNA YANSIMASI

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'de Sinop ili Boyabat ilçesinde faaliyet gösteren yiyecek-içecek işletmelerinin menülerinde destinasyonun yöresel yemeklerine yer verme durumunu araştırmaktır. Nitel araştırma yaklaşımını benimseyen çalışmada literatür taraması yapılmış ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme tekniği kullanılmıştır. Bu amaçla Boyabat destinasyonundaki on yedi yiyecek-içecek işletmesi yetkilisinden veri toplanmıştır. Çalışma sonucunda pilav, sırık kebabı ve keşkek ürünlerinin destinasyonda yöresel ürünler olarak öne çıktığı ve bu ürünlerle ilgili yiyeceklerin işletme menülerinde yer aldığı görülmüştür. Diğer yandan, bu yiyeceklerin destinasyona gelen yerli ve yabancı ziyaretçiler tarafından satış noktalarında özel olarak talep edilmediği, sipariş ve sunum sürecinde personelin verdiği tavsiye ve bilgiler sonucunda talep edildiği bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yerel kültür, yiyecek ve içecek işletmesi, gastronomi turizmi, Boyabat (Sinop).

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Introduction

The concept of food, which is not only a means of survival but also a cultural element, serves as a lens through which to understand, examine and experience local culture. Food is a mediating element used to discover the cultures of different societies through tourism activities. While travelling and staying with visitors, tasting the local flavours of the destination, learning and experiencing the preparation of local dishes are among the activities valued in gastronomy tourism (Kokkranikal Carabelli 2024: 164).

Local flavors are among the most important elements of the culture of the region to which they belong. Considering local products as tourist values preserves the regional culture, ensures that the product reaches the national level from local to national markets, and even facilitates its transition to international platforms. This situation increases the possibility of the local product being preferred by potential local and foreign visitors and can increase the interest of visitors to the region. All these processes express the possible contribution of local products to destination-oriented travel plans (Esen 2022: 283).

It has been observed that consumer interest in locally produced food has increased, especially in the last twenty-five years. Support for producers, the growth of the local economy, expectations of quality and freshness, and healthy eating are among the reasons why consumers prefer local products (Li et al. 2020: 430). Studies on local products show that consumers are interested in local products and local and foreign visitors prefer food and beverage establishments that have local products on their menus (Sormaz 2024; Ayyıldız, Sağır 2024; Akhan 2015; Giray et al. 2012; Kelemci Schneider, Ceritoğlu 2010). In this regard, it is important to include local flavors in the menus of food and beverage establishments operating in the region to increase the recognition and awareness of the region.

Local flavors are increasingly being discovered and offered to consumers through the impact of tourism activities and the growth of gastronomic themes. Local and foreign visitors tasting local flavors in local restaurants, visiting local businesses and trying to discover local markets contribute socially and culturally to the destination. Incorporating local flavors into the menus of food and beverage establishments is an effective way of introducing local flavors. Eateries allow visitors to experience the gastronomic culture of a region. Using local flavors as a tourist product protects the cultural heritage of the destination and can make cultural elements universal (Çavuş 2024: 39). On the other hand, local flavours and the originality of local tastes can be one of the driving forces behind the choice of destination for local and foreign visitors (Soeroso, Susilo 2014: 37).

The study investigates the inclusion of local flavors in the menus of food and beverage establishments operating in the Boyabat district of Sinop province in Türkiye. In the literature review, although studies on the presentation of local flavors in food and beverage establishments were found in tourism establishments in general and in food and beverage establishments in particular, the fact that no study was found specifically for Boyabat (Sinop) contributes to the originality and importance of the research.

Literature Review

Gastronomy and the Gastronomy Tourism

It is known that the word gastronomy was used in ancient Greek times and has survived from that time (4th century BC) to the present day (Gönül 2025: 53; Seyitoğlu 2018: 317). The word gastronomy, consists of two Greek words. The first is the word 'gaster', which means stomach, while the word 'nomos' means law. The combination of these two words gave rise to the word gastronomy, which means 'law of the stomach' (Holloway et al. 2025: 293; Algün 2016: 5). Today, gastronomy has many definitions. According to the definitions in the relevant literature, gastronomy is a culinary art in which products are prepared according to the technique within a system in accordance with food safety rules and made ready for service to the satisfaction of consumers (Özdemir, Altınır 2019: 1). Gastronomy can be described as the combination of eating, drinking and actually everything related to cuisine with science and art (Bucak, Aracı 2013: 207). Gastronomy actually includes all phenomena that support tradition, custom, culture, originality, experience, sustainability, and maintaining health along with food and drink (Küçükkömürlü et al. 2018: 79).

Although the origin of the word gastronomy dates back to ancient times, the phenomenon of gastronomy tourism has actually gained momentum in the last two decades / twenty-five years and emerged as a field that has been studied, discussed and evaluated from various perspectives (Sarıışık, Özbay 2015: 264). It is known that Archestratus, known as a gourmet in ancient times, undertook various journeys to discover where the best products were and where to consume which products. This situation takes its place in the literature as one of the first known examples of gastronomy tourism (Cassandra 2025: 98; Seyitoğlu 2018: 317). Gastronomy tourism can be defined as a branch of tourism to experience food and/or beverages in a destination (Vu et al. 2025: 1; Küçükkömürler et al. 2018: 78). Nowadays, people have easy access to all kinds of information through technology, which has revealed the phenomenon of conscious and experienced tourists. However, tourists want to achieve more experiences during their travels, and gastronomy has an important place among these experiences in tourism (Adirestuty et al. 2025: 189; Akyol 2018: 144).

Interest and experience in gastronomy tourism is growing rapidly in the tourism industry. Visitors who travel primarily to experience food and related culture may be more interested in tourism activities. Traditional cuisine and local flavors are becoming an increasingly important feature in the marketing of a destination. The growing interest in local flavors increases the importance and impact of gastronomy tourism on the image of the destination (Sio et al. 2024). Gastronomy tourism takes many forms, including eating and drinking in local restaurants, food festivals and exhibitions, visits to farms and food production centres, farmers' markets, attending cooking classes and demonstrations, staying in homes, home cooking lessons and eating in local households (Azavedo 2019: 44; Bell 2015: 90).

Food and beverage services, which are an important factor in tourism activities, can represent a significant proportion of the consumer's travel budget. Food and beverage products, which are also among the most important competitive factors of the destination, can influence the motivation of visitors and contribute to an increase in overnight stays and travel time (Khun et al. 2024: 6). Nowadays, gastronomy tourism, whose value and importance are growing rapidly and which is in demand among tourism trends, also plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the local population through the organisation of various activities and events in the region and district where it is located (Bucak, Aracı 2013: 214).

The flavors of a region are the result of traditions, historical interactions, climate and culture. These flavors are indicators of a region's identity and consuming local flavors is, in a sense, an experience of that culture. Through gastronomy tourism activities, tourists are offered different experiences and cultural exchanges. In addition, gastronomy tourism activities play an important role in the development, rise and branding of cities. Tourists have the opportunity to get to know the local people and their way of life in the destinations they visit, and they can also taste the food and drinks of the region on the spot, prepare these flavors with the local people of the region, and thus learn about the culture and life of the local people. The effective and efficient implementation of gastronomy tourism can bring many benefits, such as creating an emotional bond between tourists and local people, ensuring cultural interaction and involving local people in the local economy and tourism (Köksal et al. 2023: 1457). As a result, gastronomy tourism is an alternative form of tourism that creates quality food experiences through the application of knowledge and skills, involving many stakeholders and many interactions (Yentür, Demir 2022: 166).

Boyabat Destination

Boyabat district is located in the west of the Black Sea region, in Sinop province, with an area of 1475 km², covering ¼ of Sinop city in terms of area in Türkiye (Zeyrek 2013: 2). It includes the districts of Durağan and Dikmen to the east of Boyabat, Saraydüzü and Kargı to the south, Hanönü and Taşköprü to the west, and the central districts of Ayancık, Erfelek, Gerze and Sinop to the north. By 2024, the district will have a population of 45.833 with 9 neighborhoods and 107 villages and will be the largest district in Sinop province (Boyabat District Governorship, 2020; Ünal, Akyol 2022: 48). The employment of people in the region is considered to be in brick factories and the production of rice from agricultural products (Ünal 2021: 718). Gökırmak, a tributary of the Kızılırmak River, flows through the borders of Boyabat District and provides a positive separation for agriculture (Ünal, Akyol 2022: 49). In terms of tourism, Boyabat's historical houses, Boyabat Castle and the underground city in the castle, the rock tomb in Salar village, the basalt rocks in Kurusaray village, as well as the presence of alternative types of tourism with its history, nature, culture, local

and it creates potential for foreign visitors. On the other hand, the unique flavors of the district show that the destination is an important city in terms of gastronomy tourism (Ünal, Akyol 2024: 145).

Local Flavors of Boyabat

When considering the destination of Boyabat in terms of gastronomy, it has been observed that there are traces of traditional Turkish culinary culture (Akyol 2018: 147). The existence of agriculture in the district center and villages, especially paddy production, shows that the grain group comes to the fore in the local flavors of Boyabat (Ünal, Akyol 2022: 49). Generally known products and food types in Boyabat, which has different local flavors; gastronomic elements such as rice, sırık kebab², keskek, fig anesthesia, pita, ezme (atom), tarhana, sallı soup, crocus pilaf, tomato and water pastry (Ünal, Akyol 2024: 145; Ünal, Akyol, 2022: 48). It is important for these local products to be registered as geographical indications by the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office under the Ministry of Industry and Technology in order to increase recognition and awareness among local and foreign tourists, expand marketing channels and benefit the people of Boyabat in a socio-economic sense (Ünal 2021: 719).

A geographical indication is a name or sign that allows the registration and protection of products with a certain reputation (Şahin 2013: 35). In addition to protecting the heritage, traditions, values, various products and local flavors of a region, geographical indication also plays an important role in promoting the region (Çekal, Doğan 2021: 50). From the perspective of gastronomy, geographical indications emerged to protect local delicacies and to provide material and spiritual benefits to the local people who are the source of these delicacies (Mercan, Üzülmöz 2014: 69). Boyabat local flavor products that have received geographical indication registration are Boyabat Gazidere Tomato (2019) and Boyabat Sırık Kebabı (2020) (Turkish Patent and Trademark Office 2024).

Methodology

The aim of the study is to investigate the inclusion of local foods related to the destination in the menus of food and beverage establishments operating in Boyabat, Sinop district, in Türkiye, within the framework of the opinions of business officials. Qualitative research method was preferred in the study with the idea that it would contribute more to the research in terms of subject and scope.

The survey population of food and beverage managers is limited to Boyabat, one of the districts of Sinop province. In addition to the researcher's interest and knowledge of the destination, the reason for choosing the study area is to contribute to the tourism literature of the Western Black Sea region. Furthermore, the fact that the destination has a rich culinary culture and incorporates elements of local cuisine is among the reasons why Boyabat was chosen as the study area. The sampling process involved selecting a sample group from which the data obtained could be clearly, accurately and easily analyzed. To this end, attempts were made to contact food and drink industry representatives who were likely to contribute to the study.

As a sample in the research, seventeen people were selected who voluntarily participated in the interviews among the officials of food and beverage companies operating in Boyabat district. Interviews were conducted with food and beverage business managers using the semi-structured interview technique, which is one of the purposive sampling methods using the maximum variation sampling method. The maximum variation method allows the subject to be studied in depth, where the elements that make up the sample are people who are believed to be able to provide an answer to the research problem (Somekh, Lewin 2005).

In line with the purpose of the study, interviews, which are a data collection technique through talking to the person or persons from whom information will be obtained about the subject, were conducted as a data collection tool, and descriptive analysis was applied through the answers given to the questions directed to the participants (İslam 2013: 40). The main purpose of descriptive analysis, which is a qualitative data analysis in which the researcher analyzes and interprets the data obtained through tools such as interview forms, documents and observations according to themes, is to present and interpret the summary of the obtained data (Özen, Hendekçi 2016: 625).

² A traditional meal made in many different regions of Sinop, especially during holidays and crowded events.

Several steps were taken during the validity and reliability phases of the research (Şehirli 2025: 77). To ensure the credibility of the research (internal validity), participants were given detailed preliminary information about the purpose, content and method of the study. To ensure transferability (external validity), direct examples of participants' opinions were included in the research text. To ensure consistency (internal reliability) and confirmability (external reliability), the expert review method was employed. Accordingly, the research was presented in detail to an expert in food and beverage studies. The expert reviewed the research in terms of its integrity and consistency.

The following interview questions were used to determine the participants' thoughts on the topic with the support of the relevant literature (Ünal, Akyol 2024: 147; Kızıldemir, Şimşek 2021: 234).

1. Do you know the concept of gastronomy tourism?
2. What are the reasons why tourists choose this region?
3. What are the local products of the region?
4. Do you have local products on your menu? If so, what are they?
5. How is the material supply of local products ensured?
6. Is there a demand for local products in your business?

The interview questions were finalized with the checks and suggestions of 2 academicians who are experts in the fields of Food and Beverage Management and Tourism Management (Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Department of Tourism Management).

Participant interviews were conducted at pre-arranged dates and times at the premises of the food and drink company representatives taking part in the research. The interviews were face-to-face and lasted an average of 20 minutes. The semi-structured interview technique was used to uncover the current situation on the topic, the data obtained was analyzed using a descriptive approach and the opinions of the participants were quoted.

Findings

The demographics of the F&B professionals interviewed are their connection to the company, their work experience, their age and their educational level. The demographics of the participants who were interviewed face-to-face as part of the research are shown in Table 1.

Demographic Findings

Details of the demographic information of the participants who agreed to a face-to-face meeting as part of the study are given in Table 1. Participant codes from B1 to B17 are defined for the participants in the tables and in the text, representing the research area of the study (Boyabat district).

Table 1. Demographics Characteristics of Participants

| Participants | Gender | Age | Educational Level | Work Experience |
|--------------|--------|-----|----------------------------|-----------------|
| B1 | Male | 60 | Primary School | 47 Years |
| B2 | Male | 30 | Associate Degree | 16 Years |
| B3 | Male | 52 | Secondary Education | 35 Years |
| B4 | Female | 49 | High School | 6 Years |
| B5 | Female | 37 | High School | 3 Years |
| B6 | Male | 30 | Secondary Education | 9 Years |
| B7 | Female | 34 | High School | 3 Years |
| B8 | Male | 58 | Primary School | 40 Years |
| B9 | Male | 28 | Undergraduate Education | 3 Years |
| B10 | Male | 50 | Primary School High School | 25 Years |
| B11 | Female | 29 | Primary School High School | 6 Years |
| B12 | Male | 40 | High School | 27 Years |
| B13 | Female | 21 | High School | 4 Years |
| B14 | Male | 25 | High School | 11 Years |
| B15 | Male | 51 | High School | 31 Years |
| B16 | Male | 35 | High School | 20 Years |
| B17 | Female | 28 | High School | 4 Years |

According to the research findings; eleven of the participants are male (65%), six are female (35%) and the age ranges of the participants are; it is seen that there are seven people (41%) between the age of 18-30, four people (24%) between the age of 31-45 and six people (35%) over the age of 45. The level of education of the participants; four people (24%) with primary education, two people (12%) with secondary education, nine people (52%) with high school education, one person (6%) with associate's degree and one person with bachelor's degree. Looking at the distribution of the participants' work experience, 5 people (29%) had 1-5 years of experience, 4 people (24%) had 6-15 years of experience and 8 people (47%) had 16 and more years of experience.

Findings Obtained from Participant Opinions

In response to the question "Do you have any information on the concept of gastronomy tourism?", five of the participants (29%) stated that they did not have much information on the subject, while 11 of them (71%) stated that they had information on the subject. This can be interpreted as the majority of participants being knowledgeable about the subject. The participants' opinions on the subject are as follows:

B2: "It means travelling from your own city to another city to eat a food".

B10: "It is the promotion of food culture in a city.

B11: "To create a motivation to travel by experiencing new food and drink in different environments.

B13: "Discovering new places and experiencing the local flavors of that region.



Figure 1. Prominent Statements About the Concept of Gastronomy Tourism (Created by the Authors)

Another question asked to the participants was; "What are the reasons why tourists prefer the region?" Six of the participants answered that they came because of the history of the region (35%), eight because of the local delicacies (47%) and three for business reasons (18%). The participants' opinions on this subject are as follows:

B1: "Being a historical region and natural formations".

B8: "Visiting historical and cultural sites".

B13: "Mainly business trips.

B14: "Food culture and local delicacies.



Figure 2. Prominent Statements About Why Tourists Choose the Region (Created by the Authors)

Another question asked to the participants in the study was "What are the local products of the region?" The local products mentioned by the participants are ice (9 persons / 53%), kebab (5 persons / 29%), keskek (2 persons / 12%), halva (1 person / 6%). The participants' opinions on this subject are as follows:

B3: "Rice, sırık kebab, mantı, keskek."

B4: "Sırık kebab, keskek, rice."

B15: "Sırık kebab, rice, pita."

B17: "Taktak halvah, rice."



Figure 3. Featured Statements About the Region's Local Products (Created by the Authors)

Another question asked of the participants was; "Are there any local products on your menu? If so, what are they?" It was found that three of the participants (18%) had no local food on their menus and the remaining fourteen (82%) had local food on their menus. Local meals on the menus of businesses that serve local food are listed as rice pilaf, kebab, keskek, ravioli, noodles, village yoghurt and pita. The participants' opinions on this subject are as follows:

B5: "Sırık kebab, rice pilaf".

B7: "Keşkek, rice pilaf."

B9: "Rice pilaf, village yoghurt".

B16: "Rice pilaf, kebab."



Figure 4. Prominent Statements About the Presence of Local Products in Business Menus (Created by the Authors)

"How is the material supply of local products ensured?" is another question asked of the participants in the study. The participants' opinions on this question were mainly from the village (11 people / 65%) and the wholesaler (6 people / 35%). The participants source local products mainly from local areas, especially from their own villages and gardens. The participants' opinions on this issue are as follows:

B6: "From our own garden".

B10: "From our own field in the village.

B12: "From the wholesaler in the neighboring province.

B14: "Sometimes from the village, sometimes from the wholesaler.



Figure 5. Prominent Statements About the Sourcing of Local Products (Created by the Authors)

"Is there a demand for local products in your business?" was another question asked of participants in the study. The majority of respondents (12 people / 71%) said that there is no specific demand for local products in their business and that they order local products as a result of advice and recommendations from staff during service and presentation. The respondents' opinions on this issue are as follows:

B2: "It is requested after providing information during the order".

B8: "Products can be selected based on our recommendations.

B11: "It can also be requested during the service.

B17: "It is not specifically requested, but from time to time people get curious and order it on our recommendation.



Figure 6. Prominent Statements About Local Product Demand in Businesses (Created by the Authors)

Discussion and Conclusions

The inclusion of regional meals or food and drink elements in the menus of food and drink establishments operating in a destination is an important situation in terms of recognition and awareness of these flavors. Steps such as highlighting local flavors, demonstrating their importance and recording them can ensure that these flavors attract the attention of local and foreign visitors. The preparation of a local flavor in the kitchens of food and beverage establishments and its presentation on their menus can contribute to the preservation of the local cuisine and can also be evaluated as a gastronomic element in terms of tourist supply and demand. In this context, food and beverage establishments and managers should pay attention to the sale and presentation of local flavors in their establishments.

As a result of the study, which examined the inclusion of local meals of the destination in the menus of catering establishments operating in the Boyabat destination, it was found that local meals are included in the menus of the establishments. As part of the study, participants were asked questions about gastronomy tourism, why the region is preferred by visitors, local products of the region, methods of supply of local products, demand for local products.

Findings on this topic show that food and beverage business representatives operating in the Boyabat destination focus more on gastronomy tourism; is defined with expressions such as travel, food and beverage culture, and discovery of local flavors. According to the participants, tourists prefer Boyabat destination; the visits are based on history, culture, local delicacies and business. According to the participants, the local products of the region are; they are listed as rice, sırık kebab, keskek and halva. Local products are included in the menus of the food and beverage establishments where the participants serve. Local flavors are mostly included in the menus of the establishments; they are available in the form of rice pilaf, sırık kebab, keskek, mantı, noodles, village yoghurt and pita. The food and beverage businesses operating in the destination offer mostly local products; it is produced by wholesalers in the surrounding provinces, including their own villages and gardens. Local and foreign visitors mostly prefer food and beverage establishments in Boyabat district; they do not specifically demand local products from the establishments, but orders for local products are made as a result of the guidance, advice and information provided by the staff during service and presentation.

The fact that the products offered in the food and drink sector are regional and have the characteristics of local products is a situation that supports agriculture and tourism. The local product reminds the consumer of the naturalness, freshness and taste of the product and makes them accept it. On the other hand, consumers may prefer local products for reasons such as healthy eating, improving their quality of life and strengthening their physical fitness. This situation is also reflected on the producers. It contributes to the increase of producers' income and the development of production processes.

Local products, which include natural products produced in a particular region, are among the factors that increase and strengthen the recognition of Boyabat district, especially in terms of gastronomy. Boyabat, which with its history and culture is one of the most important tourist destinations in Sinop province and the Black Sea region, offers different values to Turkish cuisine in terms of diversity and richness of local tastes. Especially rice, kebab and keskek are local delicacies that are not only consumed by the local people but also attract the attention of local and foreign visitors.

As a result, the situation identified by the study is that there is an interest in local flavors in the food and beverage establishments operating in the Boyabat destination. Local delicacies are included in the menus of these establishments and efforts are made to order and consume local delicacies by local and foreign visitors. This interest and effort in local flavors is seen as an element that increases the choice of destination for current and potential local and foreign visitors. Gastronomy and its elements play an important role especially in a sustainable tourism concept. This situation includes not only local flavors, but also local culture, traditional life and environmental elements. Incorporating local flavors into tourism activities will contribute to the branding of food and drink businesses in the destination, increase local entrepreneurship and increase applications for future generations.

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