

A Study on the Satisfaction Level of Tourists with Turkish Cuisine

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Abstract: Indispensable part of tourism activities in the country, Turkish cuisine is among the biggest cuisines of the world together with French and Chinese cuisines. Turkish cuisine has been developed and enriched with the contributions of many different civilizations inhabiting the Turkish land. The Turkish cuisine has been affected by Western cuisines but it has also affected them. The present study was carried out on 138 foreign tourists visiting Alanya in July. The sample of the study consists of 4 four-star hotels in Alanya. While, selecting the hotel organizations to be included in the study factors, such as the owners' willingness to participate and environment comfortable enough for the researcher to work effectively and accessibility to the hotel organizations were taken into consideration. The tourists stated that when they came to Turkey on holiday, they preferred Turkish foods (52.9%), they preferred their own countries' foods (25.4%) and they preferred both Turkish foods and their own countries' foods (19.6%), only 2.2% of them stated that they preferred the foods of countries other than Turkey and their own country. The most liked foods by the tourists are yoghurt-soup among the soups, shish kebab among the meat dishes and dry bean dish with meat among the legumes, green beans among vegetable dishes prepared with meat, stuffed paper with olive oil among stuffed dishes, pilaf with rice among pilaffs, water heurek among pastry, potato salad among the salads, rice pudding among the desserts and lemonade among beverages. The tourists were asked whether they would recommend Turkish foods to other people when they went back to their countries. The 68.1% of them stated that they would recommend and 31.9% stated that they would not.

Key words: Turkish cuisine, tourist, tourism, meat, green, beans

INTRODUCTION

Turkey realized the potential of tourism in 1980s, hence started to develop its tourism sector a bit late but made great strides in relatively short time. In addition to its natural beauties, it has also many cultural and historical assets as it has hosted many civilizations throughout the human history and as a result, it is now like an open-air museum (Kizilirmak and Kurtuldu, 2005). Hospitality organizations see their quests as the source of their existence and thus they have always been on the centre of tourism activities. The importance attached to quests has been increased with quest-focussed management orientation. One of the most important factors affecting customer satisfaction in hospitality organizations is food and beverages offered in these organizations. A society's diet culture is closely related to the way of life. Change of life style, nutrition, over time, lead to changes in the culture. In the first ages,

people hunt animals in nature to sustain their lives had to collect plants. Over time, their own training was raised a store and learned to become more delicious baking. As in other communities, the animal husbandry and agriculture were attached to life the ancient Turks. Terms of agriculture when it comes to the worst situation in Central Asia with better conditions had migrated to the West and South. While enjoying the natural animals and plants grow where they go, these local conditions are not available when workers trained and raised a simple processing techniques used (Baysal *et al.*, 2005).

Turkish cuisine has evolved under the influence of many cultures established in Middle Asia and Anatolia and has become one of the most famous kitchens of the world with its rich variety of recipes, methods of preparation, storing and cooking and types of serving. Today in the Turkic world covering a very large geography, there are many different colorful and rich

cuisines. Particularly in terms of cooking styles, table arrangements and service types, it is among the few well-known cuisines of the world (Surucuoglu, 2001). Turkish cuisine has mostly become famous for its meals prepared with lamb and sheep meat, such as shish kebab and doner kebab. The place of bread in Turkish cuisine is very important. Vegetables occupy an important place in Turkish cuisine. In the field of botanic, nascent flowers and seeds of plants are called fruit and their flowers, leaves and stems are called vegetables (Baysal, 1993). For a family, the most important thing is to bring bread to home, hence the return of working in Turkey is called bread money and this explains how bread is important in the daily life (Gunduz, 1990). Turkish desserts are among the indispensable foods of Turkish cuisine. Coming from Ottoman kitchen to the day, the desserts are the symbol of richness of our kitchen culture, our past and traditions. Great part of royal kitchen in Ottoman Empire is reserved for desserts. The most commonly used sweeteners are honeys and molasses. But over time, they have been replaced by sugar (Baysal, 1990). As can be understood from various idioms in the language, such as eat sweet and talk sweetly, sweet answer turns away wrath, desserts occupy important place in our culture. As they are loved a lot, they are in great variety. Dumplings sweets, fruit desserts, bakery desserts, desserts produced from legumes are the main groups of desserts (Tezcan, 2000).

Turkish cuisine are known as one of the world's three most famous cuisine with Chinese and French cuisines. Turkey is a tourist country is an advantage to introduce Turkish cuisine to world country. For this reason, as well as independently in accommodation establishments providing food and beverage service enterprises should raise awareness of Turkish cuisine. Turkish cuisine is a good way to share the responsibility for the introduction of a large food and beverage establishments. The present study aims to determine foreign tourists' opinions about Turkish cuisine.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted on 138 foreign tourists visiting the city of Alanya in July. The sample of the study consists of 4 four-star hotels in Alanya. While selecting the hotel organizations to be included in the study, factors such as the owners' willingness to participate and environment comfortable enough for the researcher to work effectively and accessibility to the hotel organizations were taken into consideration. The data were collected through a questionnaire developed based on a literature review. The questionnaire was administered to the tourists by the researcher. Moreover,

another questionnaire form was developed to collect general information about the hotel organizations and this questionnaire was administered by the researcher through face-to face interviews. The data were analyzed through SPSS 16.0 program package. When considered necessary, Chi-square significance test was administered.

General information about the hotel organizations: As all-inclusive system is adopted by the hotels analyzed within the context of the present study, food services are given in the form of open-buffet. The organizations stated that the most waste is produced in the open-buffet and the type of waste changes depending on the day. The hotel organizations were asked which countries' cuisines they serve and it was found that the first place was taken by Turkish cuisine and in a La carte restaurants, they also serve foods from French and Chinese cuisines. In all the organizations, the planning of menus is under the responsibility of food and beverage manager. An all the purchasing is made by purchasing manager.

General information about the tourists: The ages of the tourists range from 16-80 years old and their mean age is 35 ± 1.2 . The ages of 50% of the tourists are 35 or under and 50% of them are 36 years old or older. When their gender is considered, it is seen that 46.4% of them are females and 53.6% of them are males. The 27.5% of the tourists are students, 20.3% of them are businessmen, 15.2% of them are civil servants, 12.3% of them are retired, 12.3% of them are housewives, 10.1% of them have their own business and 2.2% of them are unemployed. The 59.4% of the tourists are high school graduates, 33.3% of them are university graduates. The percentage of elementary school graduates is 7.2. The 51.4% of the tourists stated that they stayed for 7 nights or less, 21.7% of them stayed for 7-14 nights, 14.4% of them stayed for 15-30 nights, 1.4% of them stayed for 60 nights and 11.1% of them stayed for >65 nights. The 25.4% of the tourists haven been to Turkey once or twice, 12.3% of them have been to Turkey 3 times, 36.9% of them have been to Turkey 4 times or more. The 67.4% of the tourists stated that they would like to come to Turkey once more, 30.4% of them stated that they might come and 2.1% of them stated that they would never come to Turkey again.

The reasons why the tourists come to Turkey: The reasons why the tourist come to Turkey their responses are presented in Table 1. According to Table 1 when the reasons why the tourists visit Turkey are examined, it is seen that the primary reason is to travel (19.2%). This is followed by seeing natural and historical beauties, cheap shopping opportunities and getting to know Turkish people, getting to know Turkish cuisine and wondering what Turkey is like, considering Turkey a

Table 1: The reasons why they come to Turkey

Reasons	S	%
Travel	45	19.20
Cheap shopping opportunities	37	15.80
New and modern hospitality organizations	3	1.28
Getting to know Turkish people	37	15.80
Getting to know Turkish cuisine	25	10.70
Wondering about Turkey	25	10.70
For business	4	1.70
It is a secure country	6	2.60
It is a clean country	10	0.42
Historical and natural beauties	42	17.90
Total	234	100.00

secure country, for business, presence of new and modern hotel organizations and considering Turkey a clean country.

The reasons why the tourists would like to come to turkey once more: The tourists were asked whether they would like to come to Turkey once more. According to their responses, 67.4% of them would like to come to Turkey once more, 30.4% of them might come to Turkey and 2.1% of them would never come to Turkey.

The tourists were asked why they would like to come to Turkey once more, the primary reason why they would like to come to Turkey is the fact that the travel is cheap (45.2%) and this is followed by cheap shopping opportunities (32.4%). The percentage of those wanting to come to Turkey for its historical and natural beauties is 8.2%, the percentage of those wanting to come to Turkey to get to know Turkish people is 4.6%, the percentage of those wanting to come to Turkey to get to know Turkish cuisine is 3.7% and the percentages of those wanting to come to Turkey as it is secure, clean and hospitality organizations are cheap are 2.3, 1.8, 1.3 and 0.5%, respectively.

Akman in a study conducted on Turkish cuisine on the tourists, foreign tourists prefer Turkey ranks 5th among the reasons that Turkish cuisine has been concluded.

Sanlier (2005) found that the views of local and foreign tourists about Turkish cuisine. Tourists have said that Turkish food is delicious, appetizing, aromatic, hearty, good-looking and more calories. Foreign tourists have said that Turkish food is delicious, attractive, oily and spicy.

The cuisines preferred by the tourists in Turkey: The tourists were asked which cuisine they prefer in Turkey. About 52.9% of the tourists stated that they prefer Turkish cuisine, 25.4% stated that they prefer their own countries' cuisine, 19.6% of them stated that they prefer both Turkish cuisine and their own countries' cuisines and 2.2% of them stated that they prefer the cuisines of

different countries. The ratios of the females and males preferring Turkish cuisine are close to each other (53.1% males and 52.7% females). There is no significant difference based on gender in terms of preferring Turkish cuisine ($\chi^2 = 1.4$, $df = 3$, $p > 0.05$).

When the education status of the participants is considered, it is seen that the 50.7% of the tourists preferring Turkish cuisine are high school graduates, 28.8% of them are university graduates. The ratio of the elementary school graduates is 20.5% and there is no significant difference based on education status ($\chi^2 = 10.075$, $df = 9$, $p > 0.05$).

The opinions of the tourists about Turkish cuisine: The most liked foods by the tourists are yoghurt-soup among the soups, shish kebab among the meat dishes and dry bean dish with meat among the legumes, green beans among vegetable dishes prepared with meat, stuffed paper with olive oil among stuffed dishes, pilaf with rice among pilaffs, water heurek among pastry, potato salad among the salads, rice pudding among the desserts and lemonade among beverages (Table 2).

Arslan reported the most liked foods by tourists are soups (63.8%), dishes with meat (44.8%), fishes (35.2%), stuffed vegetables (33.3%) and desserts (50.5%).

Akman and Hasipek conducted a study in Antalya and found that the tourists have positive opinions about Turkish foods.

Ozdemir and Kinay carried out a study to elicit the opinions of German and Russian tourists about Turkish cuisine yet they reported some negative opinions such as including too much oil or fat, too much spice and desserts being too difficult to digest. Ozdemir (2003) compared Turkish, French and Italian cuisines and found that Turkish and French cuisines are more costly than Italian cuisine and Italian cuisine is less preferred than the others. Turkish cuisine is a bit time-consuming and costly this may reduce the exploitation of Turkish cuisine.

The places where Turkish foods are tasted: When the places where the tourists taste Turkish foods are examined, it is seen that 56.4% of the tourists taste the foods in their hotels, 26.3% of them in restaurants. The rations of those tasting Turkish foods in their friends' houses or from vendors are 9.0% and 1.3%, respectively. The tourists were asked whether they had information about Turkish foods before coming to Turkey and 75.4% of them stated that they did not have information and 24.6% had some information.

Table 2: The opinions of the tourists about Turkish cuisine

	I have not tested yet		I have tested it		I have tested it and I did not like it		Total	
	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%
Foods								
Soups								
Tripe soup	101	73.2	12	8.7	25	18.1	138	100
Ezogelin soup	84	60.9	6	4.3	48	34.8	138	100
Yay la soup	82	59.4	5	3.6	51	37.0	138	100
Soup with dried yoghurt	99	71.7	13	9.4	26	18.8	138	100
Wedding soup	108	78.3	10	7.2	20	14.5	138	100
Lentil soup	108	78.3	12	8.7	18	13.0	138	100
Paca soup	114	82.6	11	8.0	13	9.4	138	100
Tomato soup	129	93.5	1	0.7	8	5.8	138	100
Dishes with meat								
Eggplant kebab	79	57.2	19	13.8	40	29.0	138	100
Lamb with potatoes	84	60.9	10	7.2	44	31.9	138	100
Border kebab	88	63.8	9	6.5	41	29.7	138	100
Doner kebab	91	65.9	14	10.1	33	23.9	138	100
Shish kebab	45	32.6	9	6.5	84	60.9	138	100
Baked lamb	94	68.1	12	8.7	32	23.2	138	100
Fried meat	80	58.0	18	13.0	40	29.0	138	100
Fried meatballs	79	57.2	15	10.9	44	31.9	138	100
Kibbeh	86	62.3	14	10.1	38	27.5	138	100
Raw meatballs	94	68.1	12	8.7	32	23.2	138	100
Skewer meat	84	60.9	15	10.9	39	28.3	138	100
Grilled meatballs	77	55.8	10	7.2	51	37.0	138	100
Chicken dishes								
Circassian chicken	85	61.6	11	8.0	42	30.4	138	100
Chicken with rice pilaff	66	47.8	15	10.9	57	41.3	138	100
Chicken meat stew with onions	82	59.4	15	10.9	41	29.7	138	100
Chicken shish kebab	58	42.0	15	10.9	65	47.1	138	100
Chicken meatballs	84	60.9	14	10.1	40	29.0	138	100
Compacted sliced chicken meat	91	65.9	17	12.3	30	21.7	138	100
Fish dishes								
Grilled fish	50	36.2	21	15.2	67	48.6	138	100
Anchovy frying pan	101	73.2	12	8.7	25	18.1	138	100
Stuffed and fried anchovies	116	84.1	9	6.5	13	9.4	138	100
Stuffed mackerel	98	71.0	9	6.5	31	22.5	138	100
Fish in tile	88	63.8	13	9.4	37	26.8	138	100
Fish to kiln-dry	97	70.3	13	9.4	28	20.3	138	100
Egg dishes								
Poached eggs with yoghurt	87	63.0	12	8.7	39	28.3	138	100
Egg with tomato and pepper	72	52.2	12	8.7	54	39.1	138	100
Fried egg	122	88.4	5	3.6	11	8.0	138	100
Legumes								
Dry bean with meat	91	65.9	6	4.3	41	29.7	138	100
Chickpea with meat	101	73.2	10	7.2	27	19.6	138	100
Lentil and wheat croquettes	90	65.2	20	14.5	28	20.3	138	100
Red multet vinaigrette cold white	92	66.7	14	10.1	32	23.2	138	100
Cold white green lentil vinaigrette	91	65.9	12	8.7	35	25.4	138	100
Vegetable dishes								
Green beans with meat	79	57.2	14	10.1	45	32.6	138	100
Okra with meat	101	73.2	6	4.3	31	22.5	138	100
Split eggplant with (minced) meat filling	102	73.9	6	4.3	30	21.7	138	100
Eggplant mousaka	96	69.6	6	4.3	36	26.1	138	100
Eggplant with olive oil	104	75.4	9	6.5	25	18.1	138	100
Green beans with olive oil	102	73.9	6	4.3	30	21.7	138	100
Stuffed vegetables								
Stuffed pepper with meat	77	55.8	18	13.0	43	31.2	138	100
Dish made of rice and meat wrapped up in grape leaf	91	65.9	14	10.1	33	23.9	138	100
Stuffed pepper with olive oil	88	63.8	5	3.6	45	32.6	138	100
Dish made of rice and meat wrapped up in grape with olive oil	95	68.8	7	5.1	36	26.1	138	100
Pilaffs								
Rice pilaff cooked with tomato	62	44.9	10	7.2	66	47.8	138	100
Pilaff with vermicelli	93	67.4	7	5.1	2	1.5	138	100
Cracked wheat cooked with tomatoes	90	65.2	12	8.7	36	26.1	138	100
The pilaff with liver and spices	96	69.6	10	7.2	32	23.2	138	100

Table 2: Continue

Foods	I have not tested yet		I have tested it		I have tested it and I did not like it		Total	
	S	%	S	%	S	%	S	%
Pastry, meat pastry								
Water heurek	73	52.9	4	2.9	61	44.2	138	100
Pastry made of avery thin sheet of dough is roll like	72	52.2	7	5.1	59	42.8	138	100
Pancake	84	60.9	8	5.8	46	33.3	138	100
Pancake with spicy meat filling	90	62.2	16	11.6	32	23.2	138	100
Pitta bread with meat	94	68.1	10	7.2	34	24.6	138	100
Meat pasty	97	70.3	10	7.2	31	22.5	138	100
Salads								
Eggplant pur'ee	91	65.9	7	5.1	40	29.0	138	100
Shepherd salad (a dish made of tomato, pepper, onion and cucumber)	77	55.8	15	10.9	46	33.3	138	100
Potato salad	65	47.1	14	10.1	59	42.8	138	100
A dish made of chopped cucumber in garlic-flavoured	89	64.5	15	10.9	34	24.6	138	100
Haricot bean salad	91	65.9	9	6.5	38	27.5	138	100
A dish made of boiled and pounded wheat, tomato, pepper, onion and parsley	100	72.5	9	6.5	29	21.0	138	100
A dish made of chickpea and sesame oil	118	85.5	4	2.9	16	11.6	138	100
Desserts								
Rice pudding	63	45.7	14	10.1	61	44.2	138	100
Chicken breast pudding	105	76.1	6	4.3	27	19.6	138	100
A sweet made of fresh cheese	103	74.6	13	9.4	22	15.9	138	100
A sweet made of dry dough with cheese	94	68.1	7	5.1	37	26.8	138	100
A sure Noah's pudding (a dessert with wheat grains)	108	78.3	6	4.3	24	17.4	138	100
Lokma Morsel (Lokma; a kind of sweet fritter)	105	76.1	9	6.5	24	17.4	138	100
Baklava Firely (Layered pastry filled with nuts and steeped in)	94	68.1	9	6.5	35	25.4	138	100
Pumpkin with syrup and walnuts	90	65.2	11	8.0	37	26.8	138	100
Stewed fruit	81	58.7	9	6.5	48	34.8	138	100
stewed fruit	87	63.0	11	8.0	40	29.0	138	100
Beverages								
Drink made of yoghurt and water	96	69.6	10	7.2	32	23.2	138	100
Thick fermented grain drink	96	69.6	10	7.2	32	23.2	138	100
Lemonade	70	50.7	10	7.2	58	42.0	138	100

Table 3: Sources of information about Turkish foods

Sources	S	%
Friends	22	42.30
Tourism agency	12	23.00
Media	4	7.70
Books	8	15.40
School education	6	11.50
Total	52	100.00

Where did you get the information about Turkish foods:

The tourists having some information about Turkish foods were asked where they got this information and the sources of information are stated to be as follows: Friends (42.3%), tourism agencies (23.0%) and books (15.4%). Some of them got this information when they were students (11.5%) and some of them got from media (7.70%) (Table 3). The tourists were asked whether they would recommend Turkish foods to their friends and 68.1% of them stated that they would and 31.9% stated that they would not.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One of our countries' most important assets is our kitchen culture. There are important roles to be assumed by the whole society and particularly by tourism sector to

promote Turkish cuisine nationally and internationally. As all-inclusive system adopted by the hotel organizations is very popular, the tourists usually do not go out of the hotels and this prevents the promotion of Turkish culture. In hotels, there are three meals served in the form of open-buffet and many of the foods in these open-buffets reflect Turkish cuisine and there are no name tags for many of them.

The present study revealed that many of the foreign tourists have not tasted and do not know some of the meals specific to Turkish cuisine. The most popular and liked food is shish kebab but Turkish cuisine does not only consist of shish kebab. There are many other very delicious foods in Turkish cuisine. Especially in tourist areas, there should be restaurants to promote local foods and hotels and travel agents should try to promote restaurants serving Turkish foods and brochures should be designed to promote these foods. Tourist guides should assume great responsibilities to promote Turkish cuisine. While tourist guides promote natural, historical and cultural assets of the country, they need to pay special attention to the promotion of the cuisine and direct tourists to restaurants serving local foods.

When the kitchen art criteria of 21st century are taken into consideration, it is seen that Turkish cuisine does not have the place it deserves among the world cuisines though the country has a rich cultural and historical heritage. One of the reasons for Turkish cuisine not to have the position it deserves among the world cuisines is the lack of publicity. Professional tourist guides play very important role in satisfying tourists with their tour organizations and travel experiences, shaping the images of Turkey and Turks introducing Turkish people, culture and cuisine. While workers of the tourism organizations apart from tourist guides may not have direct contact with tourists, professional tourist guides can have direct contacts with tourists. Therefore, if they are equipped with correct information about Turkish cuisine, they can play a vital role in the promotion of Turkish cuisine. In the present study, a questionnaire administration was conducted to determine the importance of professional tourist guides in the promotion of Turkish cuisine all over the world.

CONCLUSION

Within the study, demographic features of professional tourist guides and then their information level about Turkish cuisine and their contribution to the promotion of the cuisine was determined. Some suggestions based on the findings of the study were made.

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