



Gastroia: Journal of Gastronomy and Travel Research, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 135-154, 2021

Evaluation of Gastronomy Tourism from Perspectives of Professional Tourist Guides

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***EVALUATION OF GASTRONOMY TOURISM FROM PERSPECTIVES OF PROFESSIONAL
TOURIST GUIDES***

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Yayın Bilgileri

Kabul tarihi: 02.01.2021

Yayın tarihi: 29.03.2021

İletişim Bilgileri

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to reveal gastronomy tourism potential in Canakkale from the perspective of professional tourist guides in Canakkale Regional Tourist Guides' Chamber. In accordance with this purpose, phenomenological research type from qualitative research methods was utilized. Research participants are composed of 11 professional tourist guides actively working and registered in the Canakkale Regional Tourist Guides' Chamber. Research data were acquired online through semi-structured interview forms. Content analysis was applied to them. As a result of the research, it is observed that gastronomic activities and resources belonging to gastronomy supply are inadequate despite its potential and demand for gastronomic products are not at high level in parallel with this result. In addition, the results demonstrate that education of tourist guides in gastronomy is insufficient, yet they would like to have this education and specializing in gastronomy makes contribution to both themselves and the region.

Keywords: Gastronomy, Gastronomy Tourism, Tourist Guide, Canakkale Regional Tourist Guides' Chamber



1. INTRODUCTION

Action of eating has been among fundamental necessities since the dawn of humankind. Humans preferred various eating methods and types in accordance with the conditions they lived. With their geography, weather patterns, and other possible conditions, they developed these eating types over time and passed down from generation to generation. For this reason, it can be possible to state that societies and civilizations that went through the above-mentioned conditions experienced shifts in their eating habits depending on technological, social and cultural improvements. It has become an indispensable part of human life when regarding it as one of the biggest pleasures (Avcıkurt, Sariođlan and Girgin, 2007). Individuals turn this process into an experience by combining eating with other actions (Richards, 2003: 11; Kim, Kim, Goh and Antun, 2011: 88; Kyriakaki, Zagkotsi and Trihas, 2016: 228), one of which is travelling or visiting different destinations. It is observed under the umbrella of tourism that classical tourism activities ought to be diversified and therefore, alternative tourism types have been at the center of attraction (Cohen, 1987; Isaac, 2010; Jovicic, 2016; Ei and Karamanis, 2017). In this regard gastronomy tourism is considered one of alternative tourism types (Alonso and Liu, 2011; Sánchez-Cañizares and López-Guzmán, 2012; Jiménez Beltrán, López-Guzmán, and Santa-Cruz: 2016; Sorcaru, 2019). Food & Beverage oriented tourism activities heavily make up gastronomy tourism while there are also other certain activities in the gastronomy tourism, consisting of food festivals, food-oriented events and others (Jalis, Zahari, Zulkifly and Othman, 2009: 32; Kim, Kim, Goh and Antun, 2009: 241). Today, tourists that seek for unique experiences of destinations (Bonow and Rytönen, 2012: 3) prefer participating in these events. Regarding as a tourism type which motivates tourists for experiencing unique food (Yılmaz and Yönet Eren, 2019: 143), provides competitive advantage to destinations with its food and beverage products and also gastronomic events (Tellstrom, Gustafsson and Mossberg, 2005). Tourists motivated by food experiences participate in food and beverage-oriented tourism activities, recommended by the tourist guide and where guidance is important. Therefore, gastronomy tourism acquires a different dimension when analyzing it in terms of tourist guide perspectives. A tourist guide is an individual that introduces destinations, informs about the tourist attractions, and has direct contact with tourists during a tour (Cohen, 1985; Lovrentjev, 2015). Direct and long-lasting contact with tourists can be turned into advantages. For example, tourists that attend package tours consider recommendations of tourist guides about gastronomic products of the destination; for this reason, they also give importance to information and suggestions about food and beverage culture of the destination (Çalışkan, 2013: 45). Considering the increase in alternative tourism activities, tourist guides are required to improve their knowledge about special interest areas (gastronomy, war fields, botany etc.) and specialize in these areas (Weiler and Ham, 2002: 54; Yu, Weiler and Ham,



2002: 79; El-Sharkawy, 2007: 91). Research on motivations of tourists is essential to understand the expectations of tourists.

A limited number of studies analyzing gastronomy tourism from the perspectives of professional tourist guides were encountered in the literature. Therefore; this research aims to reveal gastronomy tourism potential of Canakkale province from the perspectives of professional tourist guides, the members of *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides*. This study will contribute to the relevant literature.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Origins of the term “gastronomy” date back to the 4th century BC. According to one belief, Sicilian Archestratus had written a book entitled “Gastronomia” focusing on food and wine in the Mediterranean; however, the book didn’t survive until today. On the other hand, Scarpato (2002: 52) states that the word gastronomy was first seen in the title of a poem published by Jacques Berchoux in 1804. Since then, the term of gastronomy has been utilized in various fields for different aims and described in different forms. Richards (2002: 17) describes gastronomy as ‘the reflexive cooking, preparation, presentation and eating of food’. The term accounts for not only actions; but also a multidisciplinary approach (Maberly and Reid, 2014: 273). For this reason, gastronomy cannot be regarded as a homogeneous discipline. Gastronomy is one of the elements characterizing a society and an aspect of a culture (Moulin, 2000: 20). It is not only composed of qualified food but also healthy food. It is a combination of food and beverages and an approach following international traditions and fashion; a respect for traditions of a community such as special recipes (Callot, 2004). Gastronomy Tourism is defined by Santich (2004: 20) as follows: “Tourism or travel motivated, at least partially, by an interest in food and beverages”. However, in terms of tourism [phenomenon](#), this definition deficient. Since gastronomy contains all issues about food and beverages, the definition should include activities, events and festivals. Gastronomy tourism is defined as “a type of tourism where an opportunity for memorable food and drink experiences contributes significantly to travel motivation and behavior” (Ottenbacher and Harrington, 2011: 4). In gastronomy tourism the action of eating constitutes a touristic experience.

Gačnik (2012: 40) argues that gastronomic products do not only meet biological needs; they are motivative factors for individuals for culture and travel and also indispensable cultural issue of gastronomy term; therefore, gastronomy tourism is a sub-element of cultural tourism (Chaney and Ryan, 2012: 310). For tourists seeking quality, it also matters the ingredients used in a dish; its cooking style, presentation of the food, and the atmosphere the meal is served. For this reason, local food is a taste of unfamiliar culture (Fields, 2003: 38). Tourists acquire knowledge about the culture and the tastes. For example, a guest visiting a family house for the first time are offered bread. If s/he doesn’t accept to taste the bread, it is highly



possible s/he might find him/herself unwelcome visitor (İnce, 2016: 288). Gastronomic traditions/habits are reflections of a specific culture. In this regard, it can be concluded that gastronomy tourism is relevant to the culture of a community and also it is an interdisciplinary field (Kivela and Crotts, 2006: 355).

Gastronomy discipline is related to other disciplines such as psychology, Sociology, physics, chemistry, anthropology, history, handicrafts, philosophy, music and biology. In other words, the action of eating reach a different dimension by combining these various fields (Aksoy and Sezgi, 2015: 80).

The other definition in the literature is as follows by (Ignatov and Smith, 2006: 238): ‘Tourism trips during which the purchase or consumption of regional foods (including beverages), or the observation and study of food production process (from agriculture to cooking classes) represent a significant motivation or activity’.

In this regard, the leading roles of tourist guides is significant. In Turkey, tourist guides tend to specialize in various special interest tours (Başoda, Aylan, Kılıçhan and Acar, 2018: 1810). The city of Çanakkale hosts rich historical, natural and cultural resources. However, it also has potential in gastronomy tourism and it is essential to take the advantage of this potential for the development of tourism. In this regard, experiences and views of tourist guides, an inseparable part of the tourism sector make a major contribution.

As tourist guides contribute to the experience of tourists,, tourists heavily rely on the recommendations of guides in the destination (Heungh, 2008: 306). Therefore, the contribution of tourist guide to gastronomic tourism experience is invaluable.

Şahin et.al (2011) focused on gastronomy tourism and the role of tourist guide in introducing the food culture that the certain marketing strategies; books, documentaries, gastronomy competitions are not as effective as a tourist guide’s role and contribution. Being a bicultural person a tourist guide has a major responsibility to introduce traditional culinary culture. İrigüler and Güler (2017) investigated the perceptions of tourist guides towards gastronomy tourism in Turkey. Tourist guides have an important intermediary role to introduce gastronomy potential of Turkey and they are required to have sophisticated education and specialization in gastronomy. Authors argue that when compared to the number of specialized tourist guides tourist guides specialized in gastronomy are inadequate. Therefore, institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, The Association of Turkish Travel Agencies, The Union of Turkish Tourist Guides should have a leading role in educating the qualified guides.

Akay and Özögütçü (2018) conducted a conceptual study on gastronomy tours and guiding. The authors defined the gastronomy expert as “a competent individual that provides tourists



with in-depth guiding services about traditional cuisine, practices and experience of a destination in terms of subject, activity and space”.

Focusing on the effect of tourist guides on the recommendations and perceptions towards gastronomy, Keskin, Yetiş and Yorgancı (2020). determined meaningful and positive relations between the recommendations and perceptions. They suggest that tourist guide candidates should be systematically educated on food and beverage traditions of destinations which they visit during their training trip organized by the Union of Turkish Tourist Guides.

As there are limited number of studies focusing on the gastronomy tourism from tourist guide's perspectives in this research it is aimed to fill the gap in the literature and present some practical implications.

Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides* (ÇARO) is a professional chamber holding public institution status, which was founded on 11th of March in 2013 by the law no. 6326. Guides working in the provinces of Canakkale, Balıkesir and Tekirdag are in the jurisdiction of the chamber. ÇARO is a member of the *Turkish Tourist Guides Union*. Its mission is to protect the legal rights of its members, contribute to tourism development in Turkey and enable visitors to have correct and accurate knowledge about the region and country. According to data of the Union of Turkish Tourist Guides, 155 (111 territorial and 44 regional) active while 39 (30 territorial and 9 regional) inactive professional tourist guides are registered in the chamber . Number of the total registered tourist guides in the chamber is 194.

3. METHOD

A qualitative research method was adopted in this study. Qualitative research is an in-depth research investigating and elaborating the meaning of an event, a subject or a situation from the perspective of participants, which enables it to be holistically analyzed (Patton, 1990). In this sense, phenomenological research type was used in this research. Since the research aims to evaluate gastronomy tourism potential of Canakkale from the perspectives of professional tourist guides, phenomenological research method is convenient for the analyzes. In phenomenological research, participants need to experience the research subject beforehand (Rolfe, 2006).

3.1. Study Group

In the phenomenological research, groups constituting the sample of the study should have certain characteristics and the number of participants could be between 5 to 25 individuals (Creswell, 2013; Neuman, 2014). Participants of this research consist of 11 professional active tourist guides registered in *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides*. Purposeful sampling method, a non-random sampling method, is used to determine the



perspectives of participants. It enables researchers to understand the research subject/s in-depth. Also, it allows them to discover and explain the relations between the research subjects as well as to utilize their own judgements for selection and involving fit for purpose ones in the sampling (Balcı, 2005; Büyüköztürk, Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz ve Demirel, 2017). , one of the authors who is a member of *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides* facilitated the process of selecting and reaching participants. Participants are given code numbers such as P1, P2, P3. Information about participants and interviews is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Information about Participants and Interviews

| Participant | Date | Duration | Gender | Professional Experience (year) |
|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|---|
| P (1) | 30.10.2020 | 21 min | Male | 9 |
| P (2) | 15.07.2020 | 15 min | Male | 15 |
| P (3) | 30.10.2020 | 18 min | Female | 2 |
| P (4) | 10.06.2020 | 27 min | Female | 4 |
| P (5) | 30.10.2020 | 12 min | Male | 13 |
| P (6) | 11.06.2020 | 32 min | Male | 15 |
| P (7) | 12.06.2020 | 17 min | Female | 3 |
| P (8) | 26.10.2020 | 19 min | Female | 2 |
| P (9) | 17.08.2020 | 18 min | Male | 9 |
| P (10) | 18.05.2020 | 23 min | Male | 2 |
| P (11) | 19.09.2020 | 26 min | Male | 2 |



3.2. Data Collection

One of the most appropriate in-depth data collection tools is semi-structured interviews (Tomaş, 2014: 32). In this regard, a semi-structured interview technique was utilized to collect data in this study. Semi-structured interviews enable to discuss the research subject in a deeper way with the participants. Besides, interviewers have freedom to elaborately analyze the answers and to follow a line of inquiry (Mathers, Fox and Hunn, 1998: 2). As information about gastronomy tourism and tourist guiding in the literature is limited, interviews were structured using open-ended questions based on the related literature (Heungh, 2008; Şahin et al., 2011; Akay and Özöğütçü, 2018; Keskin et al., 2020) to acquire detailed information from participants.

An expert in gastronomy, in tourist guiding and in qualitative research methods make a great contribution in preparing the interview questions. Upon having their feedback, some of the interview questions are corrected while some questions are combined to each other. Next, a pilot interview was carried out with two professional tourist guides that are active in the Canakkale region. As a result of this pilot study, interview questions were put into final form. Interviews were conducted between the dates of 18.05.2020-30.10.2020. Due to the pandemic COVID-19, no face to face interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted through phone, e-mail and Whatsapp and recorded. Interviews, lasted between 15 and 25 minutes.

3.3. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using content analysis method, which is a research method enabling to analyze the qualitative data in systematic and reliable way. According to Merriam (2015), the process in content analysis is composed the phases of constituting categories and themes. Interviews records were deciphered and meaningful and frequent statements were determined and encoded. Upon encoding the data, common and different statements were determined. Following analyzing the relationship between these statements, similar ones were categorized under same themes. Themes, categories and codes were constituted for further common and similar statements.

3.4. Reliability

For the reliability and validity of the research the interview questions were consulted by some experts, the modifications were made. Reliability calculations were conducted. According to the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994: 64), $Reliability = \frac{Consensus}{Consensus + Disagreement}$ was calculated. In accordance with the formula, encoding was performed and degree of internal validity was calculated. In parallel with the dimension and interval of the encoding schema, consensus should be between 85% and 90%. Besides, research results are regarded reliable if reliability results are higher than 70% (Miles and



Huberman, 1994: 64). In data analysis, average reliability was found to be 100%, which shows that the research is reliable.

4. FINDINGS

Themes and codes obtained from data analysis are presented in the following tables. These themes are supported with direct quotations from participants' narratives.

4.1. Gastronomic Activities

The following question was asked to participants: "What are the gastronomic tourism activities in the region?". This theme is entitled as "Gastronomic Activities" and two categories namely Festival and Event were determined (see Table 2). Table 2 shows the frequencies of these activities.

Tablo 2. Gastronomic Activities

| Theme 1 | Categories | Codes |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|
| Gastronomic Activities | Festival | Bozcaada Festival (8) Festival of Canakkale Culinary Culture (4) |
| | Event | Event of Gökçeada Marine Products (3) |

Participants express their opinions regarding gastronomic tourism activities in the region. P1, P6 and P11 Ali mention that such events are only a few in Çanakkale province.

"I don't think gastronomic activities account not more than 10% of all tourism activities in the province of Canakkale. However, Food & beverage festivals organized on Bozcaada are important for the region" (P1)

"A couple of gastronomic events such as Festival of Canakkale Culinary Culture are organized but they are not so efficient since there are no various options" (P6)



Gastronomic activities constitutes a very low percentage of all tourism activities. However, there is high demand for the Bozcaada Vintage Festival” (P11)

4.2. Gastronomic Supply

The replies given to the questions “What are the resources for gastronomic tourism activities in the region?” and “Are these resources adequate?” were analyzed, the theme entitled “Gastronomy Supply” was formed and four categories in the theme were determined (Table 3). Table 3 shows the categories and the frequencies of this theme.

Table 3. Gastronomic Supply

| Theme 2 | Categories | Codes |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Gastronomic Supply | Facilities | Inadequate (10) Unqualified (5) |
| | Educational Institutions | Present and adequate (2) Present but inadequate (5) |
| | Competent Individuals | Inadequate (8) |
| | Practice Areas (Kitchens etc.) | Inadequate (10) |

Opinions of participants about gastronomic supply in gastronomy activities are as follows:

“I always hear good things about educators although I don’t have too much knowledge about gastronomy education in Canakkale but I think the problem is the lack of infrastructure. As far as I am concerned, practice areas are limited. These can be enhanced



by the management of the university. Number of Gastronomic facilities is quite inadequate. Regarding the number, it is even inadequate at the city center, it creates a huge problem for my tours in the Gallipoli Peninsula.” (P3)

“I don’t think there is an attractive facility in the region in terms of gastronomy tourism. As far as I know, the gastronomy department at the university has been recently opened. Therefore, I don’t have as much knowledge and experience as I can make a remark”. (P7)

“I don’t know whether qualified experts in gastronomy are raised or not in the region but I am experiencing the fact that quality of facilities are lower than gastronomy potential in the region.” (P10).

4.3. Demand for Gastronomy

Answers to the question “How do participant evaluate the demand for gastronomy tourism activities in the region?” were analyzed, the theme entitled “Demand for Gastronomy” was formed and two categories in the theme were determined (Table 4).

Table 4. Demand for Gastronomy

| Theme 3 | Categories | Codes |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|
| | Demand for Festivals | Bozcaada Festivals (3) |
| Demand for Gastronomy | Demand for Products | Peynir Helvası (10) |
| | | Ezine Cheese (8) |
| | | Wine (5) |
| | | Oil (5) |
| | | Sardine (3) |
| | | Goat Meat (3) |
| | | Grapes produced in Bozcaada (3) |

Comments of the participants on demand for gastronomy activities are given below:



“There is no high demand for gastronomic products since tourists are more interested in history of the region. However, when they ask about it, I recommend sardine, cheese and halva.” (P6)

“My guests don’t have high demand for gastronomy but sometimes they are interested in peynir helvası as a gastronomic product and festivals in Bozcaada as gastronomic events.” (P11)

4.4. Level of Gastronomic Knowledge

Answers to the question “Do you consider that you have knowledge about the region in terms of gastronomy tourism at an adequate level?” was analyzed and the theme “Level of Gastronomic Knowledge” was formed. Also, two categories in the theme were determined (Table 5). Frequencies are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Level of Gastronomic Knowledge

| Theme 4 | Categories | Codes |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Level of Gastronomic Knowledge | About Products | Adequate (8) |
| | | Partially adequate (3) |
| | About Facilities | Adequate (8) |
| | | Partially adequate (3) |
| | About Activities | Adequate (2) |
| | | Partially adequate (3) |
| | | Inadequate (6) |

Opinions of participants about level of gastronomic knowledge are as follows:

“I am as knowledgeable about gastronomic products and facilities as I can give recommendations to my guests.” (P6)



“I have adequate knowledge about local gastronomic products such as peynir helvası or tomato but I am not informed enough about gastronomic activities.” (P11)

4.5. Education of Tourist Guides in Gastronomy

Participants' answers to the questions “Have you had any training/education in gastronomy?” and “Would you like to have any training/education in gastronomy in the future?” were analyzed, the theme entitled “Gastronomy Education” was formed and two categories in the theme were determined (Table 6). Categories, codes and the frequencies are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Gastronomy Education

| Theme 5 | Categories | Codes |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Gastronomy Education | Any education/training in the past | No education (8) |
| | | As a course at the university (2) |
| | | As special gastronomy-oriented course (1) |
| | Desire for having education in the future | I would like to (8) |
| | | May be (2) |
| | | I don't prefer (1) |

Comments of the of participants on gastronomic education/training are as follows:

“I took a gastronomy course at university. Besides, I participated in gastronomy workshops organized by the Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution, the Commodity Exchange, universities and NGOs.” (P2)

“I don't have any unfortunately. I would like to attend if any educational program is organized.” (P4)

“I don't have any. I don't plan to have any education/training in the future.” (P8)



Specialization in Gastronomy

The results of data analysis regarding the question “Do you agree with the fact that specializing in gastronomy is beneficial for tourist guides and the region?” entitled “Specialization in Gastronomy” and three categories in the theme were determined (Table 7).

Table 6. Specialization in Gastronomy

| Theme 5 | Categories | Codes |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------|
| | Revenue | Beneficial (9) Not beneficial (2) |
| Specialization in Gastronomy | New Opportunities | Beneficial (7) Not beneficial (4) |
| | Image of the Region | Beneficial (8) Not beneficial (3) |

P10 and P 11 explained their opinions on specialization in gastronomy as follows:

“Specialization in gastronomy is advantageous especially in terms of our colleagues working with local tourists. One of the first important things given emphasis for these local groups is what to eat and drink in the region. Therefore, guides specialized in gastronomy are able to communicate with their guests in a more strong way. In this regard, it increases guest satisfaction.” (P10)

“In terms of specialization and new job opportunities, it can be advantageous, and it also contributes to the region, too. However, this will take time.” (P11)



5. RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research's aim is to reveal gastronomy tourism in Canakkale from perspectives of professional tourist guides registered in *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides*. While no studies on evaluating gastronomy tourism from tourist guides' perspectives were encountered in the foreign literature, there are a limited number of studies discussing the subject from different perspectives. Some of these studies focused on tourist guides' perception towards gastronomy (İrigüler and Güler, 2017; Keskin et al., 2020) whereas others are on the role of tourist guides in introducing culinary and food culture (Şahin et al., 2011). In addition, there are also some studies based on the usage of gastronomic elements in tours (Akay and Özögütçi, 2018). Results demonstrate that gastronomic activities and gastronomic resources in the region are inadequate despite the high potential of local food . In addition, it is clear that demand for gastronomic elements in the region is not high. On the other hand, tourist guides' gastronomic knowledge about the region is satisfactory although their educational background is not sufficient. However, tourist guides desire to have education/training in gastronomy in the future, this will contribute to both guides and the region

Regarding the results of the research, for the improvement of gastronomic tourism in the region hereinbelow recommendations can be given:

- The number and quality of food and beverage facilities for high-level customers are very limited. In order to increase the entrepreneurship in the region, institutions such as Çanakkale Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Çanakkale Commodity Exchange should encourage initiatives through policy instruments.
- Gastronomy and culinary art programs at the university and practice opportunities for students need to be enhanced. This should be led by related bodies of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University.
- Frequent and systematical promotion of gastronomic elements and resources in the region should be carried out through travel agencies. This can be managed by *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides* and regional representative of TÜRSAB (Association of Turkish Travel Agencies)
- Tourist guides, cultural ambassadors of the region, should be active stakeholders in organization and promotion process of gastronomic events held in the region (for example, Bozcaada Vintage Festival etc.). For this reason, *Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides* and other bodies should work in collaboration.
- Clustering and geographical indication studies can be carried out to increase recognition and competitiveness of the leading gastronomic products in the region such as peynir helvası. In the region, South Marmara Food Cluster was founded under the leadership of South Marmara Development Agency. Development studies



should be professionally conducted under the umbrella of this cluster. This process should be led by Çanakkale Chamber of Industry and Commerce which was the partner of the project.

- *Çanakkale Regional Chamber of Tourist Guides* should organize gastronomic-oriented trainings in its in-service trainings and raise awareness among its members. These trainings should be delivered by experts from either university or related NGOs (such as Association of Canakkale Professional Cooks). Besides, these trainings should be certificated..
- Regarding today's marketing strategies and technological opportunities, it is inevitable for the region to promote its gastronomic values on digital platforms. In addition, projects on gastronomy tourism in the region can be financially supported by national and international fund programs from development agencies or the EU.

More research and studies are required to analyze impacts of gastronomy tourism in destinations. This research is limited to the remarks of tourist guides, one of the important actors in the tourism sector. In this regard, further studies should be carried out with other stakeholders of tourism industry by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative methods.



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Gastroia: Journal of Gastronomy and Travel Research, Vol. 5, Issue 2, 135-154, 2021

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