

REVIEW ARTICLE

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Preference for Turkish ethnic foods in the USA

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Abstract

This research aims to explain why Turkish ethnic foods are preferred in the USA and the reasons for the success of Turkish restaurants. The research population consists of customers living in the USA who have been to Turkish restaurants. The convenience sampling method and a survey consisting of web surveys and e-mails were used for the data collection from the 13 states of the USA. Analysis, multivariate normal distribution test, factor analysis, and regression analysis were used to analyze the collected data. According to the findings, the reasons for preferring Turkish ethnic foods significantly and positively influence the intention to revisit Turkish restaurants. The kebab was the most popular and well-liked product. In terms of trials, kebab, baklava, Turkish tea, doner, and Turkish coffee follow, respectively. There is an increasing interest in research examining ethnic food consumption, reasons for ethnic food preference, and reasons for choosing ethnic restaurants. However, studies on Turkish cuisine are mostly in Turkey and have been carried out on domestic and foreign tourists. There are not enough studies about Turkish ethnic foods outside of Turkey from the consumer side. This study will be provided valuable information for the literature and practice as restaurant businesses.

Keywords Turkish cuisine, Ethnic restaurant, Ethnic food, Food preference

Introduction

People have needed to go to places where conditions are better throughout the historical process. Migration has become an essential issue in today's globalizing world [12]. Migrations are now made due to different lifestyles, consumption habits, and the desire to belong to a different cultural system, in line with technological developments and trade [14]. After the migration has taken place, "acculturation" emerges as one issue that draws attention together with migration [17]. Acculturation is the cultural exchanges between at least two cultures that emerge with the coming together of different cultures [7].

When the concept of acculturation is examined together with the consumption phenomenon, there is a bidirectional change in the interaction process of at least two different cultures. While the host culture affects the guest culture, the host culture is also affected [15]. Therefore, while acculturation consists of a two-way process in consumption, ethnic foods appear as a remarkable issue.

Ethnic foods contain the characteristics of the culture to which they belong and appear when interacting with another culture [6]. Ethnic food includes the national origin and cultural characteristics and draws attention to its difference in a different culture [10]. The USA is one of the countries where many different ethnic groups live, and therefore, the number of ethnic cuisines has increased thanks to the immigration it has received. From this point of view, the research aims to reveal why Turkish ethnic foods are preferred in the USA sample. In addition, it is among the aims of the study to determine the reasons for the success of Turkish restaurants in the USA.

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The research is essential because it will contribute to literature and practice. In the literature, there are studies examining ethnic food consumption [22, 26], reasons for ethnic food preference [20], and reasons for choosing ethnic restaurants [11]. Studies on Turkish cuisine were mainly carried out in Turkey. Most of the studies have been carried out on domestic and foreign tourists [1, 5, 9, 23]. There are no studies examining Turkish food and beverages as ethnic food. This study will contribute to the literature examining Turkish cuisine and the preference status of Turkish dishes in the USA. Based on the information obtained from the study, suggestions can be made to Turkish restaurants in the USA.

Turkish cuisine

All societies in the world have different cultural and social structures. The lifestyles, cultural, social and religious structures of societies affect their eating and drinking habits ([13]: 24). Therefore, every cuisine in the world has certain characteristics that distinguish it from each other. Culinary cultures are formed by being influenced by many factors such as geography, climate, vegetation and religious beliefs and passing through a historical process ([24]: 10, [9]: 216).

Considering the adventure of the emergence of Turkish cuisine, the Turks adopted the products here with the change of nomadic lifestyle and settling in Anatolia. In addition, they created a strong mixture by bringing with them various foods and food cultures from Central Asia, where they continued their nomadic life, with the products found here. Later, with the wide geography of the Ottoman Empire and the addition of different ethnic cuisines, Turkish cuisine, which is a very rich cuisine, was formed ([2]: 17). Turkish cuisine is a rooted and versatile culinary culture with original local cuisines ([13]: 29). Turkish cuisine is a cuisine that has emerged with various geographical locations, all phases and religious elements that Turkish society has experienced in the historical process ([4]: 145). Turkish cuisine has a rich culinary culture with a long history.

Turkish cuisine differs from other cuisines in terms of food varieties and taste. These differences arise due to reasons such as the Turkish society's adopting a nomadic lifestyle before, being affected by the cuisine cultures of the places it goes without compromising its own culture, the characteristics of its geographical location when it is settled and being a society that gives importance to nutrition ([13]: 24). The reasons for the richness of Turkish cuisine are expressed as follows ([25]: 25):

- Nomadic culture in Central Asia and settled life in Anatolia and communication and interactions with many societies in this process,

- Presence of Anatolian cuisine, which developed with Mesopotamian cuisine,
- Interaction with the culinary cultures of Asia, Europe and Africa, where the Ottoman Empire ruled,
- Taking some of the cooking methods of French cuisine.

Turkish cuisine is a culinary culture that is formed as a result of traditions and customs, religious structure and the influence of Islam and interaction with the West and differs from other countries. Among the differences from international cuisines, the geography where Turks live also includes the diversity of agricultural and animal foods, the materials used and cooking methods ([3]: 5054). Elements that make Turkish cuisine a rich and diverse cuisine can be summarized as follows: the existence of the European Cuisine developed under the Mesopotamian Cuisine, the product diversity provided by the Asian and European lands, the cultural interactions of the Turks with other societies throughout the historical process, and the new dishes developed during the Seljuk and Ottoman empires ([13]: 24).

Methods

Research hypothesis

In the research, the preference of Turkish ethnic dishes and the success of Turkish restaurants were tried to be determined. The relationship between the reasons for preferring Turkish ethnic dishes and the intention to revisit Turkish restaurants was examined. A hypothesis was developed to be tested in the research.

Kim et al. [21] studied the effects of food-related dramas on the image of Korea and found that the "Korean food culture characteristics" factor, which is one of the reasons for choosing Korean food, affects the intention to revisit Korea. Based on this, the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 1 The reasons for preferring Turkish food positively affect the intention to revisit restaurants.

Data collection

The survey form was used as a data collection tool in the research. In the survey, there are six questions to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, three questions to obtain preliminary information about the Turkish cuisine experience, a total of 9 questions, and four different scales. In the survey form, Kim et al.'s [21] reasons for ethnic food preference scale were used. As a measure of restaurant repeat intention, Kim et al.'s [19] three-item scale was used. Finally, in the survey form, Hwang et al. [16], the scale of ethnic restaurant

success reasons and the scale related to trying and liking ethnic food were used. The surveys were collected between January 1 and March 31, 2019, via a website and e-mail sent to the participants. The surveys were applied to Turkish cuisine consumers in the US states.

Statistical analysis

In total, 175 surveys suitable for analysis were collected. The data obtained with the collected surveys were coded and transferred to the statistical package program data set. Before multivariate analyses of the obtained data, frequency distributions, mean and minimum, and maximum values were checked. Missing data were checked, and it was completed with the average assignment, which is frequently used in social sciences. Then, multiple deviant and multiple normal distribution tests were applied. Reliability analysis was

applied to the scales used in the study, taking the Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient into account. Reliability analysis results are shown in Table 1. Results show that the reliability of the scales is high [18].

Participants

The demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the research are given in Table 2. 80.6% of the participants are between the ages of 23–53. Accordingly, it is seen that 74 of the individuals participating in the research were men, and 101 were women. As for the educational status of the participants, it is seen that 53.8% of them are at the undergraduate education level. When the ethnic origins of the participants are examined, it is seen that 74 of them are Turkish and 67 of them are American.

Table 1 Reliability analysis results for scales

Scales	Success factors for a Turkish restaurant	Reasons for preferring Turkish food	Intention revisit the Turkish restaurant
<i>Coefficients</i>			
Sample size			
Number of items	14	11	3
The alpha coefficient for the whole scale	0.882	0.869	0.901
The smallest and largest item-whole correlation value	0.484–0.636	0.426–0.685	0.778–0.857
The negative item-whole correlation value	No	No	No
The minimum and maximum values Alpha takes when the item is deleted	0.871–0.879	0.849–0.868	0.817–0.881
Average	3.910	3.833	4.135
Response categories	1: I totally disagree...5: I totally agree		

Table 2 Distribution of participants by demographic characteristics

Categories			Categories		
Gender (n:175)	Frequency	Ratio	Age (n:175)	Frequency	Ratio
Male	74	42.3	18–22	21	12.0
Woman	101	57.7	23–37	75	42.9
Marital status (n:175)	Frequency	Ratio	38–53	66	37.7
Married	84	48	54–72	13	7.4
Single	91	52	Educational status (n:173)	Frequency	Ratio
Ethnicity (n: 170)	Frequency	Ratio	Primary school	2	1.1
Turkish	74	42.3	High school	41	23.4
American	67	38.3	Bachelor’s Degree	93	53.8
Other	29	16.6	Postgraduate	37	21.4
Those Who didn’t answer	5	2.8	Those Who didn’t answer	2	1.1
Total	175	Total	175		

Results and discussions

Results of factor analysis regarding scales

In the factor analysis, it was decided that a substance must have a load of at least 0.500 with the factor [8], the cross section of homogeneity is 0.500, the number of factors should be taken into account in the determination of the number of factors greater than 1 [18] and the varimax rotation technique should be used. In the case of adjacent material, it is decided that the load difference should be more than 0.100 and that one factor consists of at least three items.

In Table 3 shows the factor analysis results on the scale of reasons for success of Turkish restaurant. The three factors identified due to factor analysis explain 61.6% of the total variance. The factors are called "Food and Service", "Awareness" and "Physical Conditions ". These results are partly similar to the results of a study [16]. In this study, the reasons for restaurant success are collected under four factors: "Easy and Comfortable," "Hygiene and Sanitation," "Awareness," and "Food and Culture".

Table 4 shows the results of factor analysis applied to the scale of the reasons for preference for Turkish food. The three factors identified due to factor analysis explain 71.1% of the total variance. The factors are named "Health Value," "Content Richness" and "Cultural Features". Similar results were obtained in a previous study of literature [16]. In the study, Korean food preferences were collected

in three dimensions: "Health," "Original and Varied," and "Sociocultural".

The factor analysis results applied to the scale of the intention to revisit the restaurant are shown in Table 5. The only factor identified due to factor analysis explains 83.7% of the total variance. The factor collected in one dimension is "intention to revisit to the Turkish restaurant."

Results of analysis for Hypothesis testing

Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis. As a result of the regression analysis examining the effect of the reasons for choosing Turkish food on the intention to revisit to the restaurant, it is given in Table 6. The reasons for choosing Turkish food explain 28.1% of the intention to revisit to the restaurant. It has been determined that there are no multi-connection problems in the model (Tolerance: 0.666–0.707; VIF: 1414–1503; CI: In the range of 1000–16,609). It has a positive and meaningful effect on the intention to revisit to the restaurant in terms of negative and meaningful content richness and cultural characteristics due to choosing Turkish food ($p \leq 0.05$). From here, H1 is partially accepted.

The fact that the participants think that Turkish food is rich in content and find characteristics from the culture to which it belongs allows them to prefer Turkish food. This result is

Table 3 Factor Analysis Results of Success factors for an ethnic Turkish Restaurant

	Communality	Factor Load	Eigenvalue	Explained variance	Average	Standard deviation	Alpha
Factor I: food and service			5.279	22.584	4.164	0.636	0.802
8. Cultural experience	0.654	0.769			4.177	0.8694	0.744 *
7. Portion size	0.557	0.695			4.251	0.8127	0.767
4. Variety of food	0.540	0.674			4.104	0.9289	0.771
10. Table service quality	0.507	0.637			4.166	0.8030	0.781
6. Quickness of service	0.566	0.618			4.126	0.8416	0.756
II. Factor: awareness			1.730	20.163	3.410	0.892	0.818
11. Being a famous chef	0.749	0.852			3.137	1.1859	0.751
12. Brand image	0.788	0.850			3.276	1.1566	0.705
13. Promoted well	0.664	0.743			3.600	1.0559	0.773
9. Availability of price discounts	0.586	0.592			3.629	1.0307	0.839
Factor III: physical conditions			1.008	18.918	4.059	0.645	0.778
2. Convenient facilities of the restaurant	0.725	0.786			3.885	0.8012	0.668
1. The location of the restaurant	0.646	0.766			3.863	0.8799	0.726
3. Easy reservation	0.546	0.639			3.994	0.8270	0.729
14. Cleanliness of restaurant and kitchen	0.490	0.552			4.497	0.8226	0.769

Factor extraction method: Principal component analysis; Rotation method: Varimax

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy: 88.1%;

Chi-Square for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 896,356 degrees of freedom (df): 78 $p < 0.0001$;

Total variance explained: 61.665%; n :175; Overall average: 3.900; S. deviation:0.587; Reliability coefficient for the whole scale: 0.873

Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree *: Reliability coefficient of the factor when the item was deleted

Table 4 Factor analysis results applied to the Turkish food preference scale

	Communality	Factor Load	Eigenvalue	Explained variance	Average	Standard deviation	Alpha
Factor I: health value			4.024	25.106	3.434	0.810	0.779
5. Low calorie	0.699	0.830			3.023	1.0055	0.759*
6. Provide good nutrition as it contains various vegetables	0.707	0.788			3.651	0.9818	0.632
9. Being balanced in terms of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats	0.708	0.727			3.629	0.9311	0.709
Factor II: content richness			1.343	23.831	4.141	0.723	0.806
1. Richness of food content	0.785	0.862			4.213	0.8274	0.689
3. Providing beautiful combination due to diverse food	0.792	0.752			4.194	0.7634	0.735
2. Being healthy	0.758	0.727			4.017	0.9558	0.783
Factor III: cultural characteristics			1.038	22.225	3.901	0.706	0.672
11. Experiencing traditional culture through Turkish dish	0.662	0.767			4.091	0.8392	0.553
10. Feeling familiar with Middle Eastern food compared to Western food	0.712	0.740			3.680	0.9770	0.616
4. Consuming dishes both pots and grilled dishes together	0.582	0.654			3.931	0.9071	0.567

Factor extraction method: Principal component analysis; Rotation method: Varimax

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Sample Adequacy: 81.4%;

Chi-Square for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 608,142 degrees of freedom (df): 36 $p < 0.0001$;

Total variance explained: 71.162%; n :175; Overall mean:3.826; S. deviation: 0.605; Reliability coefficient for the whole scale: 0.840

Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree

* Reliability coefficient of the factor when the item is deleted

Table 5 Factor analysis results applied to the intention to revisited to restaurant scale

	Communality	Factor Load	Eigenvalue	Explained variance	Average	Std. Deflection	Alpha
Factor: intention to revisited to Turkish restaurant			2.511	83.713	4.135	0.839	0.901
1. I intend to revisit this restaurant in the near future	0.816	0.903			4.126	0.9445	0.879*
2. It is very likely that I will revisit this restaurant	0.884	0.940			4.183	0.8780	0.817
3. I would like to visit this restaurant more often	0.812	0.901			4.097	0.9326	0.881

Factor extraction method: Principal component analysis; Rotation method: Varimax

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sample adequacy: 73.1%;

Chi-Square for Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: 339.422 degrees of freedom (df): 3 $p < 0.0001$;

Total variance explained: 83,713%; n :175; Overall mean: 4.135; S. deviation:0.839; Reliability coefficient for the whole scale: 0.901

Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Undecided, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree

* : Reliability coefficient of the factor when the item is deleted

Table 6 The effects of preferring Turkish food on intention to revisited to the Turkish restaurant

	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-Value	Sig	Tolerance	VIF	C.I
	B	Standard error	Beta					
Constant	1.416	0.356		3.972	0,000			1.000
Health value	-0.179	0.079	-0.173	-2.261	0.025	0.707	1.414	11.671
Content richness	0.473	0.091	0.408	5.174	0.000	0.666	1.503	15.865
Cultural characteristics	0.352	0.093	0.297	3.790	0.000	0.675	1.482	16.609

Dependent Variable: Intention to Return to the Restaurant; R :0.541 R^2 : 0.293; adjusted

R^2 :0.281 for model F :23.644, $p < 0.0001$

similar to the findings of previous studies that cultural characteristics are the reasons for choosing ethnic food [13, 22].

Conclusions

With the information detected in the study focusing on the reasons for the preference of Turkish ethnic food and beverages, inferences that will benefit many practitioners were obtained. Information is provided to all ethnic food-related restaurant businesses, states that want to promote their ethnic food abroad, ethnic food marketers and distributors, and food and beverage magazines.

Changes to ethnic food and beverages offered in restaurants may be recommended. Ensuring that Turkish ethnic food is globalized while maintaining its local values is an important step. However, revisions should be applied, taking into account the characteristics and demands of the host culture.

In this research, the reasons for preference of Turkish ethnic food and the reasons for the success of Turkish restaurants were examined from the perspective of the intention to revisit the restaurant. In future research, it may be recommended that issues such as customer satisfaction and quality of service be examined together with the topics studied in this research. In addition, it is recommended that this type of research be carried out in different overseas countries regarding Turkish ethnic food and beverages for future studies. These studies can also be conducted as comparative research on different ethnic groups.

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Author contributions

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Availability of data and materials

The data obtained within the scope of the research and the results of the analysis of the data are included in the appendices.

Declarations

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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