



Research Article

**THE CURRENT PERCEPTIONS OF TRAVEL AGENCIES IN İZMİR ABOUT GASTRONOMY  
TOURISM AND THEIR ACTUAL GASTRONOMIC TOURISM OFFERS**

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**Abstract**

Gastronomy tourism is not only captivating tourists' attention, but also contributing to the social, economic and environmental development of destinations. Even though it has emerged as a crucial segment of the tourism industry, gastronomy tourism development has not been analyzed in the context of travel agencies. The aim of this research is to find out whether travel agencies in İzmir make any efforts for gastronomy tourism development and also analyze their approaches, perceptions and overall support to gastronomy tourism. Travel agencies in downtown İzmir were surveyed in terms of their actual gastronomy tourism product offers and any future plans about creating one. Results indicated that gastronomy is not promoted as a principal theme. Travel agencies were also analyzed in terms of their gastronomy tourism knowledge, their approaches and perceived positive and negative effects of gastronomy tourism indicating that there is a lack of awareness about potential local and regional culinary sources. However, they have a positive approach for its development. And finally, their opinions were referred to highlight their overall support to gastronomy tourism; results indicating agencies' high interest for its development in İzmir as well as supporting increased number of gastronomy tourists.

**Key words:** Gastronomy tourism, travel agency, tour development, tourism product differentiation

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