



## A RESEARCH ON THE USE OF LOCAL GASTRONOMIC PRODUCTS IN SPECIAL CAFES

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### Abstract

In this study, local gastronomic products in businesses producing special cafe service here is a study to determine the level of use. In the research, it will be examined whether local products are used or preferred in special cafe enterprises. What are the reasons for the preference of gastronomic products or what they are preferred according to what constitutes the content of the research. Qualitative research method was used in the research and questions were asked to the participants through a semi-structured interview form as a data collection tool. The data obtained were evaluated with the descriptive analysis technique. The universe of the research consists of business owners providing special cafe services in Edremit district of Balıkesir province. The interview was carried out with a total of 21 people and 10 questions were asked to the participants. Three themes were created according to the answers obtained. These themes are; The knowledge and use of local products by the operators, the demands and feedbacks of the consumers about the products, the advantages of the local products to the region.

**Keywords:** Gastronomy, Special Cafe, Gastronomic Product, Local Product, Service Production

### Introduction

The aim of this research will be to determine the level of use of local gastronomic products in special cafe establishments and the factors affecting the use of these products. In this *context*, it is possible to talk about the importance of the use and consumption of local products in creating the gastronomic identities of businesses that produce special cafe services. A local gastronomic product can be defined as a product belonging to a region or a region. It is thought that the use of such products in businesses should increase for the protection and sustainability of local products. With the research, the importance of using local products will be emphasized and the benefits of these products for gastronomy tourism will be seen. The level of use of local gastronomic products has the power to affect the effects and advantages of gastronomy tourism and also opens up space for new destinations.

Businesses that offer special cafe services are businesses that have created a unique identity and a new concept and are progressing towards branding. Businesses in this concept want to offer a different experience to consumers and continue to continue their services by attracting the attention of consumers by creating new differences (Gündođan and Ventura, 2020, 319). With the development of the service sector, the word special has also shown its influence in many sectors. One of these sectors is the tourism sector. Today, consumer

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behavior is constantly changing. In special businesses, these changes and demands are determined by new practices based on consumers' behavior and purchases (Kaya, 2020). Special businesses are businesses that provide special services to consumers according to people's needs and changing consumption demands and must have certain features. These features may vary depending on the current structure of the businesses or their location (Eryılmaz and Zengin, 2014).

The word special is based on French and carries the meaning of producing and selling in small pieces, offering uniquely different services and offering special services to people according to their needs (Karakas, Tandođan and Özkerođlu, 2020). When the literature and dictionaries are examined, the word special has different meanings. In many areas, small business is mentioned as a type of business that continues its operations without being tied to any chain and provides real comfort to consumers. In order to open special businesses in Turkey, they must meet certain regulations. These regulations are defined by certain institutions (Pala and Bardakođlu, 2016: 274). It is stated that the word special entered the Turkish language from French. The origin of the word comes from "buotiqua" and its meaning is "produced as less than one product, personalized production, special products and small flashy businesses" (Baş and Yaman, 2015). Special businesses are types of businesses that differ according to the demands and needs of consumers and offer customer satisfaction. Since customers feel more special in such businesses, their preference rates are higher (Karakas, 2006).

As lifestyles have changed recently, people's purchasing priorities have also begun to change. With these changes, special business owners have also made changes in their businesses to gain competitive advantage. These changes may vary depending on the demands of consumers (Sađlam and Çakır, 2021). Special produced products create originality and quality for businesses. These elements create the reputation of businesses. These special products make businesses attractive and create the atmosphere of cultural capital in the market (Giorda, 2018).

### **The Relationship between Special Cafe and Gastronomy**

In order to form the gastronomic identity of a region, it is necessary to know the local products and local flavors of that region. Knowing and using these products will appear as a destination element in tourism, and these local products will also take place in the literature as elements of gastronomy tourism (Nebiođlu, 2017). The use of local products or flavors known as local products should be evaluated in order to revitalize the regional economy. These local products should be introduced to businesses, and if such studies are supported, their usage area will increase and contribute to the tourism economy (Özdemir and Zencir, 2017).

Tourists who come to the country try to meet their food needs in the region they visit. Tourists consume region-specific dishes and drinks to meet their needs, and with this consumption, tourists begin to get to know the culture of that region. With this trend, if the use of local flavors increases in the region, there will be development in the rural area and it will provide an advantage to the region in the field of economy and employment (Zengin and Kapucuođlu, 2019). Reflections of culinary culture are effective in the emergence of gastronomic products. Special restaurants in cities create a new synthesis by using global and local products, opening the door to new destinations in cuisine (Omholt, 2015).

In order to form the gastronomic identity of a region, it is necessary to know the local products and local flavors of that region. Knowing and using these products will appear as a destination element in tourism, and these local products will also take place in the literature as gastronomy tourism elements (Nebiođlu, 2017). Gastronomy tourism has become a widely preferred type of tourism recently (Sezen, 2021). The contributions of this type of tourism are quite many and varied. Gastronomy tourism has its own stages of development. Within these steps, the use of local products, marketing of local products and presenting local flavors by synthesizing them with today's conditions without breaking away from the past are among the qualities of gastronomy tourism and are seen to be evaluated within the destination (Sökmen and Özkanlı, 2018).

One of the important ways to get to know a region is to know the culinary culture of that region. This awareness is gained mostly through tourism (Bayat, 2020). The gastronomy element is an important element for tourism travels. Creating a local identity in a region contributes to the attractiveness of the destination. Among the items that tourists see as more attractive are local gastronomy products. Local products are also effective in creating brands (Gordin, Trabskaya and Zelenskaya, 2016).

### **Use of Local Gastronomic Products**

Local products or the use of local resources can be described as capital. In the field of tourism, these types of capital transform into a product as a marketing element to tourists. These capitals provide advantages in the

development of rural tourism (Tokmak and Sever, 2018). In the current situation, it is observed that festivals aimed at promoting local gastronomic products are increasing. These festivals and activities contribute to the promotion of that region and to increase its gastronomy tourism potential (Bakırcı, Bucak and Turhan, 2017).

When local products are examined within destinations, they stand out as an element of attraction for tourists traveling for gastronomy tourism. It is possible to accept local products as products that reflect the cultural elements of a region (Kapucuođlu and Nergiz, 2018). Products belonging to a region have the ability to make that region attractive. When Turkey's local product potential is examined, it is in a center with a very high diversity. It should be used as a marketing tool to transform this diversity into alternatives (Yalçın, 2013). People's consumption preferences change from day to day. It is seen that consumers prefer local products and businesses or regions that support local products. This orientation contributes to the sustainability of local products and the development of gastronomy tourism (Yenipınar, Köşker and Karacaođlu, 2014).

The fact that the tourism sector has a rapidly developing structure and its place in the economy is undeniable is important in terms of tourism income. If it is desired to be in the market in terms of touristic features, product diversity needs to be increased and developing new strategies will provide advantages (Ertuđrul and Demirkol, 2007). Gastronomy tourism can be defined as an attractive tourism sector. Today, this sector has become a sector that provides indispensable experiences for tourists and has the effect of attracting tourists. Gastronomy tourism provides the benefit of revitalizing production for local communities engaged in local production (Kyriakaki, Zagkotsı and Trihas, 2013)

The use and consumption of local products is considered a new activity for tourists. This activity creates opportunities for the promotion and marketing of local products. It also allows the development of the local economy (Jalis et al., 2009). The main products of destination cuisines are local foods. These foods represent the regions they belong to. For these products to be sustainable, there must be production and consumption. Such developments offer new employment opportunities for local people in the region (Eren, 2018). The concept of motivation in gastronomy tourism is an important concept for tourists. One of these sources of motivation can be said to be the demand for local dishes. There are various factors affecting the production and use of local products. These factors may vary by region. Tourists' consumption perceptions change depending on these factors (Sengel et al., 2015).

Local products or foods have the ability to add value to a region's destination. The masses now turning to gastronomy tourism are turning to places with local gastronomy and local production (Velıssariou and Vasılakı, 2014). Some modules are being developed to preserve gastronomic products or traditional foods. In order to protect these products in our country, these products have been registered with the "Geographically Indicated Products" system and new gastronomic products are discovered and the registration continues. Gastronomic products not only protect the product, producer, consumer and cultural values, but also provide an advantage in increasing tourism revenues in the country (Üzümçü, Alyakut and Fereli, 2017).

### **Values Provided by Using Local Gastronomic Products**

One of the important elements for development is the food sector. The food industry has become a sector that supports the tourism industry. Both sectors benefit from each other. In order to increase this benefit, sector representatives will come together and create a community, which will add value to both sectors (Dhora and Dionizi, 2014). Producing local products has now become a fashion for businesses. The existence of such production means that the demand for these products increases and these products gain value. However, it cannot be said clearly whether this phenomenon is temporary or permanent (Angler, Gonda and Csoka, 2020).

Tourists take care to consume quality local food in the places they go on holiday. These products are actually part of the cultural heritage. It should be known that the definitions of these products need to be made and that they are an important factor (Cianflone and Cardile, 2014). Local production systems in rural areas, which is an important development in terms of productivity, contribute greatly to the economy. Places that produce such products arouse curiosity among consumers. Today, local production both preserves the past and tries to present a modern style (Bessiere, 1998). Local production systems have the ability to serve many stakeholders. These stakeholders cover almost the entire society. Tourists traveling for gastronomy tourism examine the local products and local dishes of the region to be visited. This factor is effective in creating the identity of the destination region (Björk and Kauppinen, 2014).

Consuming local products has the feature of representing the traditions of a society. The demand for these traditional products is increasing. Consumers stated that these products are more reliable in terms of nutrition and that they prefer them for sustainability. Whether these demands will become a more important market in

the future should be investigated and necessary action should be taken (Contini, Romano, Boncinelli, Scozzafava and Casini, 2017). In order to serve consumers in local areas in the long term, a policy to develop quality products and products should be followed. As a result, it will contribute to the welfare of the local people or that region (Alonso and Liu, 2011).

### **Local Gastronomic Products in Gastronomy Tourism**

Food products are of great importance for touristic travels. Among these products, local food products are also indispensable elements of travel (Sezen, 2018). It can be said that these elements stimulate the local economy and create an image to create a local brand (Nummedal and Hall, 2006). While reviewing the literature, tourists' interest in local foods is not included in many studies. While conducting research, interest in local products should also be emphasized. Because local foods affect tourists' purchasing behavior during consumption (Şengel et al., 2015). Local food markets or products meet the needs of tourists. This feature affects the satisfaction of tourists after their travels. As a result, it is possible to be preferred or not to be preferred again (Privitera, Nedelcu and Nicula, 2018).

According to research, holiday foods are important for tourists. These foods have important impacts in terms of locality and sustainability. For such developments, the necessary connections should be established between the tourism and food sectors and contribute to the growth of this sector (Sims, 2009). Gastronomy tourism unites cultures. Local gastronomic elements have the power to create brands and have become a niche market. It also allows the preservation and rediscovery of traditional values (Marius, Gheorghe and Miheala, 2018).

### **Methodolgy**

In this study, questions were asked to the participants through the semi-structured interview form, which is one of the qualitative research methods and is frequently used. Qualitative research is conducted within the scope of research designs developed within a specific strategy. After creating the interview form, the data obtained was evaluated using the descriptive analysis method. In descriptive analysis, the researcher makes inferences by transferring the findings directly to the reader and reflecting the information obtained from the participants into the text. The population of the research consists of Edremit District of Balıkesir Province, and the sample consists of business owners producing special cafe services in this district. The interview was held with a total of 21 people and 10 questions were asked to the participants. Three themes were created based on the answers obtained. These themes; Businesses' knowledge about local products and the usage of these products, consumers' demands and feedback about the products, and the advantages that local products provide to the region.

The following questions were asked to the participants in the interview form;

- 1- How many of the local products of the region do you know and what are they?
- 2- Do you use local gastronomic products in your business? If so, what are they?
- 3- Do you prefer to use local gastronomic products in your business? What is the reason for your preference or not?
- 4- Do you encounter any problems (supply, transportation, seller relations, availability of the product, etc.) regarding the local products you use in your business? If so, please specify?
- 5- Are there any local products that your guests request? If so, what are they?
- 6- Do your guests have feedback about local products? If so, what kind of reactions do you encounter?
- 7- What kind of contributions does the use of local gastronomic products provide to the region/region?
- 8- Is it possible to use completely local gastronomic products in your business? If possible or not, please specify the reason?
- 9- Does anyone want to buy raw local products that you offer to your guests?
- 10- What are the advantages of using local products in businesses that offer special cafe services?

For the interview form used in this study, the Ethics Committee Report dated 22.06.2023 was taken from Balıkesir University, Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee.

## Findings and Discussion

In this part of the study, the data obtained from the participants were evaluated. Accordingly, face-to-face interviews were held with a total of 21 participants. A total of 16 men and 5 women among the participants were interviewed. Additionally, the demographic information of the participants is shown in Table .

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

<u>Participant Code</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Education Level</u>	<u>Years in the Profession</u>
P1	Male	47	High school	22
P2	Male	38	High school	9
P3	Male	41	High school	12
P4	Woman	44	Associate Degree	8
P5	Male	53	Middle school	25
P6	Male	51	Middle school	14
P7	Male	43	High school	20
P8	Woman	34	Licence	8
P9	Male	49	High school	14
P10	Male	42	Associate Degree	11
P11	Male	38	Licence	4
P12	Male	44	Middle school	20
P13	Male	54	Middle school	21
P14	Woman	47	Associate Degree	13
P15	Male	49	High school	22
P16	Male	38	Licence	6
P17	Male	42	Licence	7
P18	Male	39	Associate Degree	12
P19	Woman	45	High school	14
P20	Woman	47	Associate Degree	19
P21	Male	52	High school	22

## Operators' Knowledge About Local Products and The Usage of These Products

The operators who provide special cafe services were asked about gastronomic products known and specific to the region. In addition, the use of these products in their businesses and the reasons why they are preferred or not are expressed.

P3: The most consumed foods here are wedding soup and herbal foods. I also use these products in my business. I have guests coming for these. We collect some of the herbs here ourselves. But there are times when we cannot find it. Sometimes we buy it. If we had the opportunity, we would like to add more products to our menu, but we may have problems with supply.

P6: I use all the products available as raw materials in this region in my business. These are mint, thyme, olive oil, olives and some edible plants growing in the region. We are extremely pleased to use these products. Because we produce some of them ourselves. In addition, the taste of these products is different. We do not encounter any problems when using these products, except seasonal transitions. But in some periods, some plants do not grow. In this case, we can use the products we prepared for the winter.

P10: We tried to use local products in our kitchen, but we encountered some problems. Not only were they not preferred by our guests, but access to these products also created problems. But there are many local products available in our region. We are aware of this wealth. We want to use these products by bringing innovations to them in the future.

P12: Products such as wedding soup, local cheeses, jam types (fig, rose, black mulberry, olive) are very famous in our region. We try to use these products in our business as much as we can. Because these are our wealth. We need to protect these products. These should be known by all operators.

P14: There are many products from the region. However, in my business, I mostly use three products that belong entirely to this region and are prepared with the cooking techniques of this region. These; grass, tangle and herb pastry.

P18: I take care to use all the natural breakfast products we prepare with local products such as sage tea, black mulberry juice, grape juice from here, quince toast, herb vaccine, which we make a lot in these parts, and all the natural breakfast products we prepare with products from the region, in my business. We generally do not have any problems, people are very satisfied with these products. But sometimes we cannot access some products because if the product was harvested poorly that year, we may experience supply problems.

### **Consumer Demands and Feedback About Products**

The operators who provide special cafe services were asked about the opinions of consumers about the gastronomic products offered in the region and their feedback.

P1: These are not the products our guests request, but we get positive reactions after tasting these products. Sometimes there are people who want to buy these products. It also happens to those who place orders. For example, those who like our olives very much want to buy them the next time they come.

P4: Yes, there are products in demand. There is a lot of demand for our black mulberry jam, herb pastry, olive varieties and breakfast products. We are very pleased with this situation. Because we are trying to present all the natural beauties of our region to people.

P7: There is a high demand for our herb pancakes, tarhana, and breakfast varieties. Especially in the summer months, the number of our guests increases significantly. This situation also develops our region and gives us an advantage. Many of our guests order from us. There are even people who want to make their preparations for the winter. They prepare and purchase products such as tomato paste, olives and tarhana. We are trying to meet these demands as much as we can.

P9: We generally receive positive feedback and requests. We strive to use local products and increase satisfaction in our business.

P11: We receive extremely positive feedback about our olives and olive oil. These motivate us more. Especially in the summer months, the number of our guests increases. And our guests who came in previous years ask us about these products. People do not forget the taste of what they eat here.

P13: We are definitely getting good feedback and requests. Those who taste these products want to buy them. We try to increase the variety of these products as much as possible and offer these products to our guests. We have guests who come for our food. Many people ask us about the pancakes we make using plants grown entirely in this region.

### **Advantages of Local Products to The Region**

The operators who provide special cafe services were asked what the advantages of the local gastronomic products found in the region and used in the businesses are.

P2: Using these products allows us to discover the diversity and richness of our region. In this way, guests who come to travel see the riches here and promote these riches.

P5: It brings advantages to our region in terms of advertising and promotion. We are aware of this and take care to use this rich diversity more.

P7: We have many guests coming from out of town. Here, they taste foods they have never tasted before or even heard of. Our feedback is always positive. For example, there are people who want to buy products such as tomato paste, olives and tarhana from us for the winter. These are the guests who bring each other. After a person buys these products, his friend also wants to buy them. As a result, the riches of our region are introduced and employment is provided.

P10: Of course, using these products is important for the promotion and marketing of our region. We need to use and market these products more. In this way, we can advertise our region.

P14: Guests even come to buy our products here. We are very pleased with this situation. We try to use almost all our products from this region. Naturally, the demand for these products is increasing. As a result, there is a sweet competition between businesses and an important development in terms of promoting our region.

P17: It provides significant advantages in terms of promotion and advertising. We are aware of this and will prefer to use gastronomic products grown and available in our region.

P20: Of course, there are advantages. While we supply our products, it provides employment to people who produce and engage in agriculture in the region. From now on, we prepare and present the products we supply and thus promote our region.

**Table 2. Local Gastronomic Products Most Used in Businesses**

Olive	Black Mulberry Jam	Herb Pie
Spiced Olive Oil	Olive Jam	Herb Pancake
Tarhana	Black Mulberry Juice	Chibez
Keşkek	Herb Pita	Wedding soup
Thyme Cheese	Roasted Zucchini Flowers	Roasted Herb

Table 2 lists the gastronomic products most frequently mentioned in the answers given by the participants. It is stated that these products may vary depending on the seasons and the supply situation may sometimes be disrupted. In addition, all operators stated that they strive to use these products and will continue to include them in their menus.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Nowadays, increasing competitive conditions have become important in the tourism sector. Therefore, destinations' use of the attractiveness elements they possess, which are necessary for competitiveness, provides an important opportunity for regional development. In this regard, the preparation and promotion of local gastronomic products and local dishes, which are the most important elements that can be used as an element of attraction, appear to have a supporting effect on gastronomy tourism. This study was carried out based on the idea of the use of food and beverages in the gastronomy culture of a region in special food and beverage businesses operating in that region and whether these products can contribute to the region. The study also aims to raise awareness about local gastronomic products belonging to the gastronomy culture of Edremit District, to support efforts to add economic value to these products, to draw attention to the presentation of these products in restaurants by adhering to traditional production and presentation techniques, and to contribute to their sustainability.

According to the data obtained as a result of the study, it is understood that the operators are knowledgeable about local products and take care to use these products in their businesses. When the products preferred by special businesses in Edremit District are examined, it has been determined that they pay more attention to the use of homemade and natural products. This is because the region is very rich in edible plants. In particular, many businesses produce their own olives and olive oil, and it has been determined that these products are used in almost all their dishes. In addition, tomato paste and tarhana are among the important products in the region. Because, in addition to preparing these products for themselves, they also sell them. After face-to-face interviews with the operators, when we look at the products used in their businesses, they mostly include products made from edible plants and belonging to the region. These dishes are prepared by various methods such as boiling, roasting or frying.

Operators stated that they were extremely satisfied with the use of local gastronomic products. They also stated that this contributes both to the added value it provides to the region and to making the region a more preferred destination. Again, when looking at the full availability of products from the region, they stated that this may not be possible due to the effects of both supply and seasonal conditions. However, they also stated that it may be possible to use some products after they are prepared and frozen.

- Intensive promotional activities need to be carried out to raise awareness about local gastronomic products belonging to the gastronomy culture of Edremit District, to ensure their transfer to future generations and to support their use in the food and beverage industry.
- In order to draw attention to the presentation of local gastronomic products in the Edremit District gastronomy culture inventory in restaurants by adhering to the production and presentation techniques, informative studies should be carried out by public institutions on the subject.
- According to the results of the research conducted within the scope of this study, scientific book studies that will provide scientific resource support to the food and beverage sector operating in the district and include local food and beverage recipes and production methods should be encouraged.

- Regional knowledge in Gastronomy and Culinary Arts or food and beverage fields operating in Balıkesir and its districts must be taught to students through applied lessons.
- Support should be provided for promotional activities highlighting the region as a touristic gastronomy destination by organizing gastronomy festivals and festivities and local food competitions, which have become very popular in the world in recent years, and by drawing attention to the rich plant diversity of the region.

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