

**THE FACTORS EFFECTIVE IN THE SALE OF TRADITIONAL FOOD IN RESTAURANTS****Emel MEMİŞ KOCAMAN**

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**ABSTRACT**

With the increasing consumer demand and interest, traditional food has become an important sales, marketing and promotion tool for the food and beverage business. This study was conducted to evaluate the availability and the objective of having traditional food in restaurant menus, and customer group that prefers traditional food the most according to the country, years of operation and seating capacity of the business. The study used a questionnaire and was conducted in 576 restaurant employees in Italy, Czech Republic and Turkey. The study found that most businesses have traditional food in their menus and that there is a significant difference between restaurants when compared according to the years of operation and seating capacity ( $p<0.05$ ). There is also a significant difference between countries in terms of their customer group that prefer traditional food in restaurants ( $p<0.001$ ). This study provides information for restaurant managers about traditional food.

**Keywords:** Culture, menu, restaurant, traditional food.

## INTRODUCTION

For businesses, knowing who their customers are, which products bring in the highest revenue, and the reasons that lead customers buy a certain product or service will allow them to develop successful management strategies (Dobbins and Pettman, 1998). The quality of products-services and menu items are important in order to achieve a good sales profile in food and beverage businesses.

Traditional food has a significant marketing value for the food and beverage industry. Because there has been an increasing consumer interest in traditional food in recent years (Kivela and Crotts, 2005; Vanhonacker et al., 2010). For example, a survey conducted with foreign tourists in Korea found that 70.2% of the tourists try Korean food before they visit Korea (Chang and Cho, 2000). According to a research in France, 74.0% of the participants found authenticity of the food important (Ferrandi, 2012). In another research covering 6 European countries, in the total of the customers and (excluding Spain) on countries basis, the price of the food is not statistically important for the consumers' traditional food consumption and their approach to traditional food. Accordingly, it is possible to say that European consumers demand traditional food despite high prices (Pieniak, Verbeke, Vanhonacker, Guerrero and Hersleth, 2009). In the USA, an increasing interest in ethnic restaurants has been observed (Ha and Jang, 2010; Kim et al., 2017). Knowing this consumer trend and using this in the business management can provide a significant competitive edge for a business. Because accessibility to traditional food has a positive effect on the consumers' attitude towards traditional food (Pieniak et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2015).

The commercial value of traditional food is important not only to increase sales but to provide other benefits for businesses. Gastronomy is a growing segment of the tourism industry and plays an important role in the development and competitiveness of a tourism destination (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). One-third of the general tourism revenues comes from money spent on food and in addition to this, in recent years culinary tourism has become the main motivation for people to travel (Herrera et al., 2012). A study found that the main reasons to consume traditional food and drinks on holidays are to have an exciting and/or authentic experience, to escape the routine, health concerns, to obtain information, to have a sense of unity, for prestige, sensory pleasure and physical environment. With the increasing age and education level, people tend to explain their experience of eating traditional food as not just eating but also as a unique and original activity for their holiday (Kim et al., 2009). A survey conducted in the USA claimed that American customers expect to be given authentic food (Liu and Mattila, 2015). This proves that customers are willing to taste food from different cultures.

Gastronomy tourism is a tourism activity in which people plan their travels to taste, prepare, research, discover, understand, learn and experience food and/or drinks specific to a country/region (Fields, 2003:36; Hall and Sharples, 2003:7; Kivela and Crotts, 2006). Thus, traditional food can make a location a tourism destination and can also be used to help to increase tourism potential of and maintain continuous tourism activity in existing destinations (Kivela and Crotts, 2005).

In a study conducted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 88.2% of the respondents commented that gastronomy has a strategic importance in identifying the brand and image of a destination. Furthermore, respondents also reported that gastronomy tourism has approximately 30% share in tourism revenues of a destination (UNWTO, 2012). Another study shows that 20.8% of the touristic visits are made because of “gastronomy” (Kivela and Crofts, 2005). Among food and beverage stakeholders (food producers, food sellers, hotels, tour operators, local administration) cooperation especially with local restaurants plays an important role in the development of gastronomy tourism. However, it is also reported that this cooperation should be improved and maintaining this cooperation will have significant contributions (UNWTO, 2012). A study conducted by UNWTO (2017) among its members included people from 29 countries. According to its results, 70% of the participants have determined the gastronomy tourists as their marketing targets, while 46.5% of them have gastronomy tourism strategies in scope of their own destinations’ tourism action plan. Again, this study shows that 24.6% of the members define a certain budget to attract gastronomy tourists.

This study was conducted to identify the factors that are effective in the sales of traditional food in restaurants in order to encourage restaurant owners/managers to include traditional food in their menus. Therefore the objectives of this study are (1) to find out whether restaurants with different profiles in different countries have traditional food in their menus, (2) to identify the objectives of the businesses to have traditional food in their menus, (3) to identify the customer groups that prefer traditional food the most in businesses that serve traditional food.

## METHOD

### Research Model

This study was planned and conducted to identify the factors related to the business profile and customer group that has an effect on the sales of traditional foods in restaurants. A structured questionnaire form was used to collect data. The survey was conducted in restaurant employees (n=576) in three different countries (Italy, Czech Republic and Turkey).

Cozensa province from Italy, Prague province from the Czech Republic and Antalya province from Turkey were selected for the study. The reason for selecting two European countries (Italy and Czech Republic) and one Asian country (Turkey) as study locations was to evaluate the impact of different cultures. Again, since the cities in Turkey and Italy are located on the Mediterranean coast, they have similar geographical features and thus similar life styles and diets (Mediterranean diet). On the other hand, the fact that Italy and the Czech Republic are European countries and have similar life styles and cultures and Turkey is an Asian country with most of its people are of Asian origin creates a difference in culinary culture between Italy and the Czech Republic and Turkey. Accordingly, the study investigated the impact of a country's geographic location and cultural differences on the sales of traditional food in restaurants.

Businesses were classified into four groups by their years of operation and the relationship between the years of operation and sales of traditional food in restaurants was investigated. Considering that the size of a business can be related to the menu contents and sales of traditional food, the businesses were classified into three groups by their annual seating capacity and the effect of the seating capacity was tested. Based on these, the following hypotheses were developed.

H1a: The availability of traditional food in restaurant menus varies depending on the geographical location of the country (European - Asian or Mediterranean countries - Central Europe).

H1b: Availability of traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the years of operation of a business.

H1c: Availability of traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the seating capacity of a business.

H2a: The objective of having traditional food in restaurant menus varies by the geographic location of the country (European - Asian or Mediterranean countries - Central Europe).

H2b: The objective of having traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the years of operation of a business.

H2c: The objective of having traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the seating capacity of a business.

H3a: The customer group that prefers traditional food in restaurant menus varies depending on the geographic location of the country (Europe - Asia or Mediterranean countries - Central Europe).

H3b: The customer group that prefers traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the years of operation of a business.

H3c: The customer group that prefers traditional food in a restaurant menu varies depending on the seating capacity of a business.

### Participants

In countries where the research was conducted, restaurant employees were randomly selected on a voluntary basis. The participant profile is shown in Table 1.

34.0% of the participants were female and 66.0% were male. The majority of the participants were aged 35 years or younger and the average age was  $31.28 \pm 9.11$ . When we look at the job titles of the participants, 9.4% were managers, 6.3% were executive chefs, 11.8% were cooks, 12.2% were assistant cooks, 12.2% were restaurant supervisors, 30.4% were waiters/waitresses, 8.2% were busboys and 9.5% were other personnel (bar personnel, dishwashers, employees in supportive services).

**Table 1.** Descriptive Characteristics of Employees.

Variables		Italy (n=145)	Czech	Turkey	Total
		n (%)	Rep.(n=218) n (%)	(n=213) n (%)	(n=576) n (%)
Gender	Male	83 (57.2)	127 (58.3)	170 (79.8)	380 (66.0)
	Female	62 (42.8)	91 (41.7)	43 (20.2)	196 (34.0)
Age (year)	≤ 25	34 (23.4)	69 (31.7)	82 (38.5)	185 (32.1)
	26-35	52 (35.9)	91 (41.7)	85 (39.9)	228 (39.6)
	≥36	59 (40.7)	58 (26.6)	46 (21.6)	163 (28.3)
Status	Manager	20 (13.8)	26 (11.9)	8 (3.8)	54 (9.4)
	Executive chef	23 (15.9)	7 (3.2)	6 (2.8)	36 (6.3)
	Cook	14 (9.7)	5 (2.3)	49 (23.0)	68 (11.8)
	Assistant cook	12 (8.3)	14 (6.4)	44 (20.7)	70 (12.2)
	Restaurant supervisor	21 (14.5)	29 (13.3)	20 (9.4)	70 (12.2)
	Waiter/ waitress	34 (23.4)	99 (45.4)	42 (19.7)	175 (30.4)
	Busboy	7 (4.7)	18 (8.3)	23 (10.8)	48 (8.2)
	Other personnel	14 (9.7)	20 (9.2)	21 (9.8)	55 (9.5)

### Measures

The questionnaire to collect data consisted of questions about sales of traditional food in restaurants, business profile and demographics of participants.

Regarding the sales of traditional food in restaurants; questions about "whether there is any traditional food on the menu (yes/no) ", for restaurants that have traditional food on their menu "the objective(s) of having traditional food on the menu" and "the customer group (local customers, local tourists, foreign tourists) that prefers traditional food the most "were asked. More than one answer could be selected for the following questions; "the objective(s) of having traditional food on the menu" and "the customer group (local customers, local tourists, foreign tourists) that prefers traditional food the most". Therefore, each answer's distribution was evaluated separately (if selected, "yes"; if not "no").

Regarding business profiles, the country, years of operation and annual seating capacity were asked. The number of years of operation of businesses was structured in 4 groups through 3 closed-ended answers (3 years and less, 4-6 years, 7-10 years, 11 years and more). For annual seating capacity of a business, open-ended questions were asked and the distributions were classified in three groups (less than 10000, 10000-21999, 22000 and more). However, since 412 people answered this question, distributions were given according to n=412.

During data gathering the participants were informed about the subject of the research, the purpose and the issues to be followed during filling the survey forms and the importance of their answers. The participant who voluntarily accepted to participate to the surveys were interviewed with the survey forms.

### Data Analysis

SPSS 16.0 statistics package program was used for data analysis. The Distribution of traditional food availability in restaurants was compared using  $X^2$  test according to the country where the business is located, the number of years of operation of the business and seating capacity. The difference in the distribution of "the objective(s) of selling traditional food" in businesses that have traditional food in their menus and the distribution of the customer group that prefers traditional food the most was evaluated with the  $X^2$  test by years of operation and seating capacity of the businesses and presented in tabular form.

### FINDINGS (RESULTS)

Table 2 shows the relationship between the profiles of the businesses in which the participants of this study worked (the country the business is located, years of operation and annual seating capacity) and the availability of traditional food on the menu.

**Table 2.** The Impact of a Restaurant Profile on the Availability of Traditional Food in That Restaurant's Menu.

Variables	Whether there is any traditional food on the menu		Total		
	Yes	No			
Country (n=576)	Italy	125 (86.2)	20 (13.8)	145 (25.2)	$X^2= 5.786$ $p=0.055$
	Czech Rep.	170 (78.0)	48 (22.0)	218 (37.8)	
	Turkey	182 (85.4)	31 (14.6)	213 (37.0)	
	Total	477 (82.8)	99 (17.2)	576 (100.0)	
Years of operation (n=576)	≤ 3 year	110 (88.0)	15 (12.0)	125 (21.7)	$X^2=9.986$ $p=0.019^*$
	4-6 year	69 (79.3)	18 (20.7)	87 (15.1)	
	7-10 year	155 (87.1)	23 (12.9)	178 (30.9)	
	≥ 11 year	143 (76.9)	43 (23.1)	186 (32.3)	
	Total	477 (82.8)	99 (17.2)	576 (100.0)	
Annual seating capacity (n=412)	< 10000	99 (72.8)	37 (27.2)	136 (33.0)	$X^2=26.132$ $p=0.000^{***}$
	10000-21999	124(91.2)	12 (8.8)	136 (33.0)	
	>22000	129 (92.1)	11 (7.9)	140 (34.0)	
	Total	352 (85.4)	60 (14.6)	412 (100.0)	

\*:  $p<0.05$ , \*\*\*:  $p<0.001$

As shown in Table 2, 25.2% of the participants were from Italy, 37.8% were from the Czech Republic and 37.0% were from Turkey. More than half of the participants reported that the restaurants they work in have been in operation for 7 years or longer, 21.7% reported that they have been in operation for 3 years and less.

It was observed that 82.8% of the businesses had traditional food on the menu and there was no statistically significant difference between the countries ( $p>0.05$ ).

There is a significant difference between years of operation of a business and availability of traditional food ( $p<0.05$ ) and availability of traditional food was the highest in the businesses that have been in operation for 3 or less years (88.0%) and the lowest in the businesses that have been in operation for at least 11 years or

longer (76.9%). The availability of traditional food increases in direct proportion to the restaurant's seating capacity and this result is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The employees who were working in restaurants that served traditional food were asked about the objectives of having traditional foods on the menu and as they could select more than one answer, each answer was evaluated and distributed separately. The objective of having traditional food on the menu was evaluated by business profile and shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Factors Affecting the Objective of Having Traditional Food in Restaurant Menus.

Variables		Promote/ Conserve(%)	Customer Satisfaction(%)	Customer Expectations(%)	Competitive Edge (%)	Profitability(%)
Country (n=576)	Italy	49.0	33.1	24.8	12.4	15.2
	Czech Rep.	31.7	45.4	30.7	15.6	12.4
	Turkey	47.9	36.2	22.1	6.6	4.7
	Total	42.0	38.9	26.0	11.5	10.2
	X <sup>2</sup> =	<b>15.501</b>	<b>6.619</b>	4.351	<b>8.821</b>	<b>12.052</b>
	p=	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.037*</b>	0.114	<b>0.012*</b>	<b>0.002**</b>
Years of operation (n=576)	≤ 3 year	39.2	40.8	24.8	8.8	12.0
	4-6 year	40.2	37.9	17.2	8.0	6.9
	7-10 year	39.3	40.4	24.2	6.7	6.7
	≥ 11 year	47.3	36.6	32.8	19.4	14.0
	X <sup>2</sup> =	3.191	0.833	<b>8.332</b>	<b>17.204</b>	6.676
	p=	0.363	0.842	<b>0.040*</b>	<b>0.001**</b>	0.083
Annual seating capacity (n=412)	< 10000	44.9	25.7	14.0	3.7	6.6
	10000- 21999	50.7	38.2	34.6	9.6	8.8
	>22000	44.3	57.1	27.1	17.1	17.9
	Total	46.6	40.5	25.2	10.2	11.2
	X <sup>2</sup> =	1.403	<b>28.677</b>	<b>15.680</b>	<b>13.754</b>	<b>9.909</b>
	p=	0.496	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.001**</b>	<b>0.007**</b>

\*,  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*,  $p < 0.001$

According to the restaurant personnel, the main objective of having traditional food in restaurant menus is to "promote/conservate a country's cuisine" (42.0%). This is followed by achieving customer satisfaction (38.9%), meeting customer expectations (26.0%), developing a competitive edge (11.5%) and increasing profitability of the business (10.2%) respectively.

When the objectives were compared according to the country of the business, the participants from the percentage of participants from the Czech Republic who report (31.7%) about the objective of promoting/supporting the country's cuisine was lower and (45.4%) about the objective of achieving customer satisfaction was higher compared to those in the other two countries (Italy and Turkey) and the difference is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$  and  $p < 0.05$  respectively) The percentage of participants who reported the objectives of achieving competitive edge (6.6%) and increasing business profitability (4.7%) was the lowest in Turkey and there is a statistically significant difference between countries ( $p < 0.05$  and  $p < 0.01$  respectively).

When objectives are evaluated based on years of operation of businesses; Participants who worked in restaurants that have been in operation for 11 or more years reported that the objectives of having traditional food in their menus are to meet customer expectations (32.8%) and to achieve competitive edge (19.4%) and no significant difference was found for other objectives depending on years of operation ( $p > 0.05$ ).

When the objectives of businesses were compared by seating capacity; the percentage of those who reported that their objective is to promote/conservate the country's cuisine do not differ significantly ( $p > 0.05$ ). For all other objectives, the lowest percentage was among the employees of the restaurants with less than 10,000 seating capacity, and the highest percentage was among the employees of the restaurants with a customer capacity of 22,000 or more ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Participants were asked about the customer group who prefer traditional food the most in their restaurants and since they could select more than one answer, each customer group was evaluated and distributed separately. The customer group that prefers traditional food is evaluated based on business profile and the results are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** The Percentages of Customers Who Prefer Traditional Food in Restaurants Based on Business Profile.

Variables		Local Customers(%)	Local Tourists(%)	Foreign Tourists (%)
Country (n=576)	Italy	42.1	42.1	26.9
	Czech Rep.	42.2	25.7	40.4
	Turkey	23.5	23.5	52.6
	Total	35.2	29.0	41.5
	X <sup>2</sup> =	<b>20.513</b>	<b>16.350</b>	<b>23.629</b>
	p=	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.000***</b>
Years of operation (n=576)	≤ 3 year	39.2	28.0	36.8
	4-6 year	32.2	29.9	33.3
	7-10 year	36.0	25.8	46.6
	≥ 11 year	33.3	32.3	43.5
	X <sup>2</sup> =	1.551	1.915	5.778
	p=	0.671	0.590	0.123
Annual seating capacity (n=412)	< 10000	27.9	23.5	32.4
	10000-21999	31.6	28.7	55.9
	>22000	39.3	36.4	45.7
	Total	33.0	29.6	44.7
	X <sup>2</sup> =	4.193	5.592	<b>15.328</b>
	p=	0.123	0.061	<b>0.000***</b>

\*\*\*:  $p < 0.001$

In general, 41.5% of the participants reported that foreign tourists prefer traditional food the most, followed by local customers (35.2%) and local tourists (29.0%). When customer groups that prefer traditional food are examined based on the country a restaurant is located, local customers in Italy (42.1%) and Czech Republic (42.2%) prefer more traditional food than the local customers in Turkey ( $p < 0.001$ ). The percentage of local tourists who prefer traditional food in Italy (42.1%) is a higher rate than the other two countries. This

difference was statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ). Participants working in restaurants in Turkey reported that foreign tourists prefer traditional food the most (52.6%) and a similar result was found in the Czech Republic (40.4%). A lower percentage of foreign tourists in Italy prefer traditional food (26.9%), and the difference between the countries was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ).

When the customer groups that prefer traditional food the most was evaluated based on years of operation of the business, no significant difference was found between customer groups ( $p > 0.05$ ). Similarly, there is no significant difference between local customers and local tourists for seating capacity ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, the businesses in which traditional food is mostly preferred by foreign tourists are businesses with a seating capacity of 10,000 ( $p < 0.001$ ).

### CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

This research is an intercultural study covering three countries to reveal the factors affecting the customer profile preferring traditional food with the situation and reasons of the restaurants to keep traditional food on their menus.

In a study, 31.1% of the participants reported that the availability of traditional food is very important when they are choosing a restaurant and 45.1% reported that it is partially important (Sparks et al., 2003). Therefore, this study's finding that almost all of the restaurant employees reported that they have traditional food in their menus is consistent with the study on consumer demands in the literature. It is important for the success of a business that the restaurant manager knows customer demands and takes necessary actions accordingly (Sukalakamala and Boyce, 2007).

According to study results, newly established restaurants ( $\leq 3$  year) have more traditional food when compared to the old ones ( $\geq 11$  year) (Table 2). This can be interpreted as the impact of increasing consumer interest in traditional food in recent years (Kivela and Crofts, 2005; Vanhonacker et al., 2010; Almlı et al., 2011) and of the new rising star of tourism; "gastronomy tourism" (Kivela and Crofts, 2005; 2006; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006; López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012) on the concept of recently established businesses.

By increasing the customer capacity, the enterprises increase their offering for traditional food (Table 2). The increase in the variety of food in the menu in parallel to the increasing seating capacity could have played a role here. Again, increasing number of customers results in more customers with different preferences and expectations. Therefore, there is a need to include different variety of food items in the menu to meet a wide range of expectations. On the other hand, the variety of food in a menu can be a reason to prefer a restaurant. In fact, Sparks et al. (2003) proved in their study that that food diversity on a menu has an important role in customers' restaurant selection criteria.

The study revealed that the preliminary reasons (respectively) of the restaurants to have traditional food on their menu; "to represent / sustain country's cuisine", "to ensure customer satisfaction", and "to meet

customer expectations" (Table 3). A study reported that the main reasons for customers to prefer ethnic restaurants were that these restaurants "have food different from those they have at home, food of different cultures and tastes" (Roseman, 2006). Another study claimed that a customer's decision to buy certain food is influenced by the perception of that food as authentic and therefore customers not knowing food names and the ingredients used in such food would not have a negative effect on the sales (Kim et al., 2017). Sukalakamala and Boyce (2007) found that people who want to know and learn about different cultures go to ethnic restaurants and the most important criteria to choose an ethnic restaurant are the authentic taste of food and use of authentic ingredients. In parallel to the findings of this study, the above studies demonstrate that customers are interested in food of different countries/cultures and there is a demand for local food. Moreover, a study reported that the level of satisfaction of Japanese tourists visiting Korea from Korean food is associated with their intention to visit Korea again. (Lee et al., 2005).

Research result shows that foreign tourists consume traditional food more when compared to the total number (Table 4). A desire to learn about different cultures can be an important reason for foreign tourists to prefer traditional food (Roseman, 2006). According to the research, local customers and local tourists in Italy and local customers in Czech Republic prefer traditional food with a high amount of number. In Turkey, mostly the foreign tourists prefer traditional food (Table 4). Main reasons for local tourists and local customers to prefer traditional food in restaurants are that preparation of traditional food requires a long time, special skills and sometimes special equipment (Gaudin et al., 2015).

Milošević et al. (2012) found that the motivations that affect European consumers' food choices are similar. In their study in four Asian countries, Prescott et al. (2002) found that the food choices of consumers are different. While in this study local customers in Italy and the Czech Republic showed similar preferences in food to those in the study of Milošević et al. (2012) which are compatible with the findings in the literature, preferences of local customers in Turkey differ from these two European countries. According to the World Tourism Organization, food tourism is a regional phenomenon. In other words, regional markets are the first to market products of gastronomy tourism, followed by national and local markets and thirdly by international market (UNWTO, 2012). While the above data of the World Tourism Organization and the findings from Italy and Czech Republic are similar, in Turkey foreign tourists show the highest interest in traditional food.

In recent years, traditional food has become more popular with the influence of driving factors such as the desire to learn other cultures, and have different experiences. People specifically plan their holidays to experience traditional food in their original locations (which has led to a new tourism segment called gastronomy tourism) but also, they try traditional food in their travels for other purposes. This study has shown that businesses in this industry are well aware of this new trend and therefore include traditional food in their menus. Considering the fact that this consumer demand is a new development in the industry, newer, younger businesses tend to offer traditional food more.

Besides, the findings of this study show that the people in the industry are aware of this increasing interest of consumers. Because the main objective of having traditional food in menus is "to promote/conservate a country's cuisine" followed by "to achieve customer satisfaction" and "to meet customer expectations". This new trend can help a business increase their revenues by reviewing their restaurant menus to include more traditional foods as well as increasing restaurants' success in terms of popularity, continuity, and recognition.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

The findings of this study can help restaurant owners/managers in developing their menu strategies. Further studies using higher populations in different countries can investigate sales of traditional food in the industry and affecting factors. Furthermore, this study is focused on traditional food in general. Further studies can focus on more specific traditional food and drinks.

## RESTORANLARDA GELENEKSEL YİYECEKLERİN SATIŞINDA ETKİLİ OLAN FAKTÖRLER

### TÜRKÇE GENİŞ ÖZET

#### GİRİŞ

Geleneksel gıdalar yiyecek içecek sektörü için önemli bir pazarlama değeri taşımaktadır. Çünkü son yıllarda geleneksel gıdalara artan bir tüketici ilgisi vardır (Kivela and Crotts, 2005; Vanhonacker et al. 2010). Geleneksel gıdaların ticari değeri işletme satışlarını artırmanın da ötesinde önem taşımaktadır. Turizm pazarının büyüyen segmenti olan gastronomi, bir destinasyonun gelişmesinde ve rekabet gücü kazanmasında önem taşımaktadır (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). Böylece geleneksel gıdalar kullanılarak bir bölgeye turizm destinasyonu olma özelliği kazandırılabilir gibi, mevcut destinasyonlarda turizm potansiyelinin artırılması ve yıl boyu turist sürekliliğinin sağlanması bakımından da önemli bir katkı oluşturulabilir (Kivela and Crotts, 2005).

Restoran yöneticilerini menü geliştirme stratejilerinde geleneksel yemekleri kullanmaya cesaretlendirmek için restoranlarda geleneksel yiyeceklerin satılmasında etkili olan faktörleri tespit etmek amacıyla bu araştırma yapılmıştır. Bu nedenle araştırmanın amaçları; farklı ülkelerde bulunan, farklı profildeki restoranlarda (1) menüde geleneksel yiyecek bulunma durumunu anlamak, (2) menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunan işletmelerde, menüde geleneksel yiyecekleri bulundurma amaçlarını belirlemek, (3) menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunan işletmelerde, geleneksel yiyecekleri en fazla tercih eden müşteri grubunu tespit etmektir.

#### YÖNTEM

Bu araştırma restoran menülerinde geleneksel yiyeceklerin satılmasında etkili olan işletme profili ve müşteri grubu ile ilgili faktörleri ortaya çıkarmak için planlanıp yürütülmüştür. Verilerin toplanmasında yapılandırılmış anket formu kullanılmıştır. Anket formları üç farklı ülkede (İtalya, Çek Cumhuriyeti ve Türkiye) restoran çalışanlarına (n=576) uygulanmıştır. İşletmeler faaliyet süresine göre dört gruba ayrılarak, faaliyet süresi ile restoranda geleneksel yiyecekler satılması arasındaki ilişki araştırılmıştır. Yine işletme büyüklüğünün menü içeriği ve geleneksel yiyecek satışı ile ilgisi olabileceği düşünülerek, işletmeler yıllık müşteri kapasitesine göre üç gruba ayrılmış ve kapasitenin etkisi test edilmiştir.

Verilerin toplanmasında kullanılan anket formu restoranlarda geleneksel yiyecek satışı, işletmenin profili ve katılımcıların demografik özelliklerini içeren sorulardan oluşturulmuştur. Verilerin analizinde SPSS 16.0 paket programı kullanılmıştır. Restoranlarda geleneksel yiyecek bulunma durumunun dağılımı işletmenin bulunduğu ülke, işletmenin faaliyet süresi ve müşteri kapasitesi bakımından  $X^2$  testi ile karşılaştırılmıştır. Menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunan işletmelerdeki "geleneksel yiyecek satmalarındaki amaç/amaçlar" ile işletmede en fazla geleneksel yiyecek tercih eden müşteri grubunun dağılımı işletmenin bulunduğu ülke, işletmenin faaliyet süresi ve müşteri kapasitesine göre farklılığı  $X^2$  testi ile değerlendirilerek, tablolar halinde sunulmuştur.

**BULGULAR**

Tablo 2’de görüldüğü gibi araştırmaya katılanların %25.2’si İtalya, %37.8’i Çek Cumhuriyeti ve %37.0’ı Türkiye’dir. Katılımcıların çalışmakta oldukları işletmelerin faaliyet süresine bakıldığında, yarısından fazlası 7 yıl ve daha uzun süredir, %21.7’si ise 3 yıl ve daha az süredir işletmenin faaliyette olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. İşletmelerin %82.8’inin menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunduğu, ülkeler arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark olmadığı görülmüştür ( $p>0.05$ ).

İşletmenin faaliyet süresi ile geleneksel yiyecek bulundurma durumu arasında önemli fark bulunup ( $p<0.05$ ), en fazla 3 yıl ve daha az süredir faaliyette olan işletmelerin menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunduğu (%88.0), en az da 11 yıl ve daha uzun süredir faaliyette olan işletmelerin menüsünde geleneksel yiyecek bulunduğu (%76.9) tespit edilmiştir. İşletmenin müşteri kapasitesi ile doğru orantılı bir şekilde geleneksel yiyecek bulundurma durumunda artış görülmüş ve bu sonuç istatistiksel olarak da önemli bulunmuştur ( $p<0.001$ ).

Personele göre işletme menülerinde geleneksel yiyecek bulunmasındaki amaçlar arasında en önde “ülke mutfağının tanıtılması/yaşatılması” (%42.0) gelmektedir. Bunu sırasıyla müşteri memnuniyeti sağlamak (%38.9), müşteri beklentilerini karşılamak (%26.0), rekabet üstünlüğü elde etmek (%11.5) ve işletme karlılığını artırmak (%10.2) izlemektedir. İşletmenin bulunduğu ülkeye göre amaçlar kıyaslandığında Çek Cumhuriyetinde ülke mutfağının tanıtılması/yaşatılması amacı diğerlerine (İtalya ve Türkiye’ye) kıyasla daha az (%31.7), müşteri memnuniyeti sağlamak amacı ise diğer iki ülkeye kıyasla daha fazla (%45.4) belirtilmiş olup farklılık istatistiksel açıdan da önemlidir (sırasıyla  $p<0.001$  ve  $p<0.05$ ). Rekabet üstünlüğü elde etmek (%6.6) ve işletme karlılığını artırmak (%4.7) en az Türkiye’deki katılımcılar tarafından belirtilmiş olup, istatistiksel açıdan ülkeler arasında önemli fark tespit edilmiştir (sırasıyla  $p<0.05$  ve  $p<0.01$ ).

İşletmenin faaliyet süresine göre amaçlar değerlendirildiğinde; 11 yıl ve daha uzun süredir faaliyette olan işletmelerde çalışan katılımcılar işletmelerinin menülerinde geleneksel yiyecek bulundurma amaçları arasında müşteri beklentilerini karşılama (%32.8) ve rekabet üstünlüğü elde etme (%19.4) daha fazla olup, istatistiksel olarak diğer amaçlar ile işletmenin faaliyet süresi arasında fark bulunamamıştır ( $p>0.05$ ).

İşletmenin müşteri kapasitesine göre amaçları kıyaslandığında; ülke mutfağının tanıtılması/yaşatılmasını geleneksel yiyecekleri menüde bulundurma nedeni olarak belirtenlerin müşteri kapasitesine göre fark göstermediği ( $p>0.05$ ) bulunmuştur. Diğer bütün amaçlarda en düşük dağılım müşteri kapasitesi 10000’den az olan işletme çalışanlarında, en fazla dağılım da müşteri kapasitesi 22000 ve üzerinde olan işletme çalışanlarında belirlenmiştir ( $p<0.01$ ).

Genel toplamda katılımcıların %41.5’i en fazla işletmeye gelen müşterilerden yabancı turistlerin geleneksel yiyecek tercih ettiğini belirtmiş, bunu sırasıyla yerli müşteri (%35.2) ve yerli turist (%29.0) izlemiştir. Geleneksel yiyecekleri tercih eden müşteri grupları restoranın bulunduğu ülkeye göre incelendiğinde; İtalya (%42.1) ve Çek

Cumhuriyetinde (%42.2) yerli müşteriler Türkiye'ye göre daha fazla geleneksel yiyecek tercih etmektedir ( $p<0.001$ ). İtalya'da geleneksel yiyecek tercih eden yerli turistler (%42.1) diğer iki ülkeden daha fazla dağılım göstermektedir. Bu fark istatistiksel olarak da önemli bulunmuştur ( $p<0.001$ ). Türkiye'deki restoranlarda çalışan katılımcılar en fazla yabancı turistlerin geleneksel yiyecekleri tercih ettiğini (%52.6) belirtmiş, Çek Cumhuriyetinde de yakın bir sonuç elde edilmiştir (%40.4). İtalya'da ise geleneksel yiyeceklerin tercihinde yabancı turistler daha az bir dağılıma sahip (%26.9) olup, ülkeler arasındaki fark istatistiksel açıdan da önemli bulunmuştur ( $p<0.001$ ).

Geleneksel yiyecekleri en fazla tercih eden müşteri grubu işletmelerin faaliyet süresine göre değerlendirildiğinde müşteri gruplarının hiçbirinde işletmenin faaliyet süresine göre önemli bir fark bulunamamıştır ( $p>0.05$ ). Benzer şekilde işletme kapasitesine göre de yerli müşteriler ve yerli turistler için istatistiksel açıdan önemli bir fark yoktur ( $p>0.05$ ). Ancak geleneksel yiyecekleri en fazla yabancı turistlerin tercih ettiği işletmeler, müşteri kapasitesi 10000'den fazla olan işletmeler olarak ortaya çıkarılmıştır ( $p<0.001$ ).

## SONUÇ

Son yıllarda insanların başka kültürleri öğrenme isteği, değişik tecrübeler yaşama arzusu gibi itici faktörlerin etkisi ile geleneksel yiyecekler popülerlik kazanmıştır. Bu araştırma göstermiştir ki, bu yeni eğilimin işletmeler de farkında ve menülerde geleneksel gıdalara yer verilmektedir. Hatta tüketici yönündeki bu talebin yeni bir gelişme olmasına bağlı olarak daha genç işletmelerde geleneksel gıdalar daha fazla kullanılmaktadır. Bu yeni trend restoranlarda menülerin gözden geçirilip yöresel gıdalarla zenginleştirilmesi sayesinde işletme gelirlerine önemli bir katkı sağlayabileceği gibi, işletmenin tanınırlığı, popülerliği ve devamlılığı açısından da başarısını artırabilir. Bu araştırmanın bulguları, restoran sahiplerine /yöneticilerine menü geliştirme stratejilerinde katkı sağlayabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Kültür, menü, restoran, geleneksel gıda.

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