



**AN ANALYSIS OF SURF & TURF EXPERIENCES OF TOURISTS FROM  
DIFFERENT NATIONS IN TURKEY FROM THE SUSTAINABLE  
GASTRONOMY TOURISM PERSPECTIVE**

**FARKLI MİLLETLERDEN TURİSTLERİN TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SURF&TURF  
DENEYİMLERİNİN SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİR GASTRONOMİ TURİZMİ  
PERSPEKTİFİNDEN İNCELENMESİ**

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**ABSTRACT**

*As tourism developed throughout the world, tourism types which may be counted as alternatives to mass tourism have developed in national and international levels and different touristic experiences and investigated in the literature every day. One of the alternative tourism types that is significant for the creation of a sustainable tourism climate, gastronomy tourism recently became a popular type of tourism due to the increase in individuals' income and their intellectual level. The increase in the number of tourists who solely travel for gastronomical pleasures today demonstrates the potential of the related type of tourism in the near future. The objective of the present study is to analyze the new alternative for sustainable gastronomy tourism, the food experience of surf and turf from the perspective of tourists visiting Turkey. This study, conducted in qualitative research design, consists of the views of 14 tourists visiting Turkey from different countries on their surf and turf experiences. Findings demonstrated that the gastronomy tourists did not know such a cuisine experience existed in Turkey, and stated that the presentations were generally impeccable and Turkish kitchen, known with red meat dishes, should be promoted with its seafood cuisine as well.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism, Gastronomy Tourists, Surf & Turf.

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## ÖZ

*Turizmin dünya çapında gelişmesi ile beraber kitle turizmine alternatif turizm türleri de ulusal ve uluslararası boyutlarda gelişmekte ve her geçen gün farklı turistik deneyimler alanyazında incelenmektedir. Sürdürülebilir turizm ikliminin yaratılması açısından son derece önemli olan alternatif turizm türlerinden birisi olan gastronomi turizmi de son yıllarda bireylerin sahip oldukları gelirlerde meydana gelen artışlar ve entelektüel düzeylerinin gelişmesi ile beraber adından sıkça söz edilmeye başlanan bir turizm çeşidi haline gelmiştir. Günümüzde sadece zevk için yemek seyahati yapan turistlerin sayısındaki artış, adı geçen turizm türünün yıllar içerisinde daha fazla kişinin katılacağı bir turizm çeşidi olacağını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Surf & Turf menüleri sürdürülebilir gastronomi perspektifinden incelemek ve Türkiye'yi ziyaret eden yabancı turistler örnekleminde analiz etmektir. Nitel araştırma deseninde organize edilen çalışma, farklı milletlerden 14 yabancı turistin Türkiye'de gerçekleştirdikleri Surf & Turf deneyimlerine ilişkin görüşlerinden oluşmaktadır. Elde edilen bulgular neticesinde; Gastronomi turistleri, daha önceden Türkiye'de böyle bir mutsak deneyimi olduğunu bilmeyiklerini, genel olarak gerçekleştirilen sunumların çok başarılı olduğunu ve yalnızca kırmızı et ile tanınan Türk mutfağının balık yönü tanıtımının da mutlaka yapılması gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Sürdürülebilir Gastronomi Turizmi, Gastronomi Turistleri, Surf & Turf.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of people who participate in tourism activities is increasing constantly each year. The ongoing upwards trend which continues at least for seventy years is expected to increase in the coming years. However this situation also leads to problems such as over density and an increase in population volume at touristic destinations which may not be compensated. It is possible to say that these problems which destinations face can be overrun by a sustainable tourism climate. Sustainable tourism is a positive approach which aims to reduce conflicts and negative aspects that may surface because of the multifaceted and mutual interactions between the visitors and the host society. This approach covers the entire efforts that aim to protect natural resources as well as human resources and their quality and continuance (Garrod and Fyall, 1998, p. 204). The concept of sustainable tourism is predicated on preservation of tomorrow's resources today and aims to effectively sustain tourism in future generations. Similar to sustainable tourism, sustainable gastronomy tourism, which is developed as an alternative to mass tourism, is a concept that corresponds to gastronomic tourism activities that more people participate in every passing year and activities that are conducted with this perspective in mind. The concept of sustainability, which has a significant role in sustaining the gastronomy tourism in the long run and its expansion to masses, is a factor that is related to touristic activities and gastronomic experiences, which also increases the quality of existing touristic movements.

The objective of the present study is to introduce the Surf & Turf experience that could be qualified as a new experience in sustainable gastronomy tourism and to determine the views of foreign tourists, who classify themselves as gastronomy tourists on their Surf & Turf experiences in Turkey and their long term perspectives on Surf & Turf. Thus, the semi-structured interview form adapted from the one used in the study by Kivela, Crotts (2005) and Akdag et al. (2015) conducted with gastronomy

tourists, containing four open ended questions was applied face-to-face to gastronomy tourists. The findings were evaluated and both theoretical and empirical outputs were detailed at the end of the study.

## **2. GASTRONOMY AND SUSTAINABLE GASTRONOMY TOURISM**

Eating is one the fundamental physiological needs of the human beings. From the very existence until now humans had to eat either individually or in a community thus eating became an important argument of socializing. Today, the importance of food attained different dimensions due to increasing welfare and technology. In the century we live in, people started to perceive food as an art and chefs as artists especially in developed countries. Today, eating became an event, which has meanings beyond a physiological need. As a result of the importance given to food, gastronomy tourism became one of the most significant trends of our time.

Etymologically, gastronomy derived from the Greek words gaster (stomach) and nomos (law) (Kivela and Crofts, 2006, p. 355). Gastronomy concept is defined as a comprehensive process which covers people's eating and drinking habits in order to serve human consumption, storage of all food and drinks depending on their beliefs and tendencies, use, preparation, cooking and presentation methods/applications (Hegarty and O' Mahony, 2001, p. 10; Çalışkan, 2013, p. 40). The gastronomical tourism associated with gastronomy as a concept is a broad concept that describes the journeys of individuals which are performed in order to obtain gastronomical experiences. From this point of view gastronomy tourism in the literature is discussed by different authors with their different features.

Long (2004, p. 21) defined gastronomy tourism as a tourism type carried out in order to explore ways of eating, the consumption of food in a different culinary cultures, preparation, presentation of the cuisine and their eating systematic. Another approach suggests that gastronomy tourism is emerging from visits to orchards and agricultural activities which are considered in rural tourism and related research expresses the importance of the joy of drinking and eating activities and mentioned that the activities related to eating and drinking are extremely important (Yun et al., 2011). Harrington and Ottenbacher (2010) defined gastronomy tourism as a type of tourism that creates a travel motivation to experience a previously un-experienced food-drink experiences and that significantly helps motivation of travel behavior. Green and Dougherty (2008, p. 150) describe gastronomy tourism as chasing unique and unforgettable eating and drinking experiences. On the other hand, Hall et al. (2003) identified gastronomy tourism as food consumers visiting food festivals, restaurants, or special regions to taste or observe the preparation of a particular food as a main motivation factor, and proposed that tasting a special food, observation of different ways of producing food, or to taste the food of a famous chef should be considered as a part of gastronomy tourism. Descriptions of gastronomy tourism found in the literature demonstrated that its main motivation factor is to live through unique food-drink experiences and it is a type of tourism consisting of travels conducted for this purpose. Gastronomy tourism emerged as an alternative to the fatigue and monotony of the mass tourism. It is a tourism event that developed parallel to the increase in individuals' spare time, education and most importantly income levels in the times we live in.

Literature review demonstrated that the subject matter was scrutinized in several titles such as; gastronomy tourism (Fields, 2002; Kivela and Crotts, 2005; Kivela and Crotts, 2006; Sürenköt et al., 2010; Deveci and et al., 2013; Cömert and Özkaya, 2014), culinary tourism (Molz, 2004; Hashimoto and Telfer, 2006; Smith and Costello, 2008; Smith and Xiao, 2008; Montanari and Staniscia, 2009; Horng and Tsai, 2012;), cuisine tourism (Riley, 2000; Doğdubay and Giritoglu, 2008), tasting tourism (Boniface, 2003), gourmet tourism (Lemasson, 2006; Tussyadiah, 2006; Muntean et al., 2010), and food tourism (Telfer and Hashimoto, 2003; Cohen and Avieli, 2004; Du Rand and Health, 2006; Tikkanen, 2007; Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Mc Krecher et al., 2008; Lin et al., 2011; Bartella, 2011; Lertputtarak, 2012). Furthermore, there are the following studies in the literature, which scrutinized sustainable gastronomy tourism as well:

Özkaya et al. (2013) argued that sustainable gastronomy tourism was not an attraction created in the context of gastronomy tourism, but rather a concept that expressed a tendency towards food, regional and traditional gastronomical factors and rural areas. Researchers claimed that the motivation factor for sustainable gastronomy tourism movement was the emphasis on local, authentic, nostalgic, healthy, highly nutritional food and drinks that were produced, prepared and consumed with ecological and local methods. Yüncü (2009) argued that development of gastronomy tourism in a region had significant contributions to local structure. Consumption of local produce increases, local economies develop, hence attracting new investments into the region and both local cuisines and local values obtain a sustainable character as a result of gastronomy tourism. Kaşlı et al. (2015) stated that formation of sustainable gastronomy tourism is only possible through the definition and recording of gastronomical legacy, while Yurtseven (2011) claimed that sustainable gastronomy tourism promoted local production as a result of environmental and socio-cultural factors and local gastronomic systems promoted social justice and fair trade, thus deploying sustainable gastronomy as a significant factor in local development. Okumuş et al. (2007) stressed that local food culture that destinations possess and experiencing of this culture by the tourists are extremely important. This condition is a unique characteristic that distinguishes the related destination from others, providing a competitive advantage over those. Scarpato (2002) and Yurtseven (2011) argued that special restaurants, local food, food festivals, special eating organizations, nature shopping malls, natural and historical bazaars, local food culture, organic agriculture and products, traditional production and special food production systems were the most significant components of sustainable tourism movements (Özkaya et al., 2013, p. 15). Yurtseven and Karakaş (2013) argue that sustainable gastronomy tourism can be developed in different destinations with the help of the destinations' unique characteristics. They have also suggested different projects on revealing the potential for gastronomy tourism in a Cittaslow destination for a sustainable gastronomical tourism. Bucak and Ateş (2014) on the other hand argued that gastronomy tourism have a positive impact on destinations' tourism potentials as well as sustainable gastronomical tourism is one of the factors that contributes destination's supply factors. These components are quite important in realization of sustainable gastronomic tourism and in continuity of the touristic demand. One of the newest trends related to the special food production component is the Surf and Turf food menus.

### 3. SURF & TURF

Surf & Turf is an eating trend known in Australia, United Kingdom and the United States for several years and becoming popular throughout the world once more. The main idea behind the Surf & Turf experience is to serve seafood and red meat on the same plate. A review of Surf & Turf history would reveal that this habit, which middle classes preferred for food, started in 1960's in the United States of America. Surf & Turf eating habit that was created when individuals with limited budget combined seafood and red meat in the same plate providing a cheap and nutritional meal, today it is a new custom that finds itself a place in the menus of luxurious restaurants (Yaşın, 2015). The word "surf" in the phrase Surf & Turf corresponds to seafood items, especially lobster and shrimp. In contrast, "turf" depicts the red meat group. This recent trend also called Reef & Beef in Australia and the United Kingdom drew the interest of several people related to gastronomy and more people experience these menus everyday. Pillinger and Keenan (2008) argued that Surf & Turf type of foods should not be preferred by patients of gout disease due to their high protein content. However, as a result of the increase in individuals' income level and increasing demand on new eating trends everyday, it could be argued that Surf & Turf items would be seen in restaurant menus increasingly in the following years.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

### 4.1. The Objective

Surf & Turf eating concept is still a rather recent eating experience in Gastronomy Tourism. There are only a few restaurants that carry Surf & turf items on their menus and present these to their guests. However, due to the increase in gastronomy tourist numbers and the resulting increase in the demand for quality food, the number of individuals that experience Surf & Turf increase as well. The objective of the current study is to introduce the new gastronomy tourism trend of Surf & Turf experience and identify how gastronomy tourists from different nations defined their Surf & Turf experiences and their perspectives on this eating trend.

### 4.2. Sample, Data Collection Tool and the Method of Analysis

In this study, conducted in qualitative research design, purposive sampling (criterion sampling) method was used to collect qualitative data and to perform the analyses, bearing in mind the limitations established in advance. In purposive sampling method, the researcher determines the subjects that would be included in the sampling with his or her own judgment based on previous knowledge, experience and observations (Ural and Kılıç, 2011, p. 45). In this perspective and due to the specifications of the study, only the individuals that consider themselves as gastronomy tourists and had experienced Surf & Turf experience and could express their thoughts on this experience were included in the sample. This fact directed the researchers to determine the sample size based on homogenous sampling and criterion sampling methods. Homogenous sampling is conducted by creating a small and homogenous sample to determine a specific sub-group (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 137). Criterion sampling is conducted by studying all cases that meet a series of pre-determined criteria (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013, p. 140). The sample of the present study included 14 gastronomy tourists that met the related criteria. The interview

form that included semi-structured (standardized) 4 open-ended questions was developed based on the questions designed by Kivela, Crotts (2005) and Akdag et al. (2015) for their study conducted with gastronomy tourists. The questions posed to gastronomy tourists are presented in Table 1.

**Table:1. Key Questions Posed to Participants and Included in the Semi-Structured Interview Form**

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- |   |
|---|
| 1. How informed you consider yourself on the subjects of food and gastronomy?                                   |
| 2. How significant are eating and gastronomical experiences in your destination that you visit in your travels? |
| 3. Do you often travel for different and special food in your destinations?                                     |
| 4. Would you consider visiting a destination solely to have a Surf&Turf experience?                             |
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Data was collected via face-to-face interviews conducted with foreign tourists that define themselves as gastronomy tourists and had Surf & Turf experiences between January 1<sup>st</sup> and December 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 after their eating experiences. Information about the project was explained to 103 individuals that had Surf & Turf menu experiences and they were asked to answer the question “*Would you consider yourself as a gastronomy tourist?*” on the basic criterion of the study. 89 individuals that answered the question negatively were thanked and these individuals were excluded from the study. 14 individuals that were included in the study were initially asked about their points of view on gastronomy (questions 1 and 2), then about their passion for new food and new tastes (question 3), and finally their perspective on the Surf & Turf experience (question 4) was questioned.

## 5. FINDINGS

### 5.1. Demographic Findings

Demographical characteristics of the individuals that experienced Surf & Turf dining and qualified themselves as “gastronomy tourists” are presented in Table 2.

**Table:2. Demographic Characteristics of Individuals that were Interviewed in the Study**

Variable	Number	Variable	Number
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Nationality</b>	
Female	5	Australia	2
Male	9	United States	4
<b>Age Group</b>		Switzerland	1
29 and below	1	Qatar	2
Between 30-39	3	Greece	1
Between 40-49	4	France	2
50 and above	6	Russia	2
<b>Marital Status</b>		<b>Income</b>	
Married	9	30.000 USD and below	-
Single	5	30001-40000 USD	-
<b>Education</b>		40001-70000 USD	2
Elementary	0	70001-100000 USD	7
Secondary	4	100001-15000USD	4
Higher education	10	150001USD and above	1

Gender distribution of the foreign tourists participated in the study showed that 5 participants were female and 9 were male. Predominantly middle-aged individuals participated in the study. 7 participants were between the ages of 30 and 49. Majority of the participants that had middle-high and high income levels had an income of USD 70,001 or higher. It was observed in the study that almost all of the participants were educated individuals. As seen in the table, only four participants were secondary education graduates, while the rest had undergraduate or graduate education. Nationality distribution of the participants was quite homogenous. Four participants were United States citizen; there were two participants from France, Russia, Australia, and Qatar, and one was from Switzerland and one was from Greece.

### **5.2. Views on Gastronomy and Food**

The answers of the participants to the first question of the study “How informed you consider yourself on the subjects of food and gastronomy?” demonstrated that 10 participants considered themselves as quite informed about the subject matter. 4 participants considered themselves as informed about gastronomy and food when compared to their peers. On this question, the participant coded as GST7 reflected her or his self-confidence on the matter: “I work professionally in tourism sector – I own a restaurant- thus I am an expert in food and beverages.” Another participant, the gastronomy tourist coded as GST5 narrated his or her interest on the subject: “Eating is a hedonic joy. I am a specialist on red meat. I have deep knowledge on red meat’s purchasing, cooking and servicing processes.” Participant GST14 said “I’m quite experienced in food, also I could cook international dishes successfully as a hobby,” while participant GST1 answered the question with a rather impartial response: “I have been interested with gastronomy only for a few years, thus I still have many things to learn.”

### **5.3. Gastronomy as a Motivation for Travel**

The travels that gastronomy tourists, which are the basic elements of the gastronomy tourism, make to different destinations to experience food and drinks are extremely valuable for sustainable gastronomy tourism. Thus, the second question in the study was formed as follows: “How significant are eating and gastronomical experiences in your destination that you visit in your travels?” Participant coded as GST3 expressed a special interest in the subject: “I do research in social media before my visit to destination because I am a person who enjoys eating. I never ever travel randomly and I do take into consideration the gastronomical experiences of people who have traveled to that destination.” Participant coded GST9 said “Destinations which offer authentic taste of meals have always been attractive for me. My priority in my travels has been getting to know new destinations as well as new meals.”; GST6 said “I am a member of a meal club. Because of this we have the possibility to travel a lot which are eating motivated. Either in my country (Greece) or in different countries I have participated in gastronomy events” as an expression of his interest in gastronomy. For all individuals that considered themselves as gastronomy tourists, food and gastronomy experiences have significant roles in travel decisions and travel priorities.

#### **5.4. Gastronomy Travel**

The third question of the study was “Do you travel often for different and special food in your destinations?” The purpose of this question was to identify the degree of passion the individuals had for food. Gastronomy tourists explained in detail what they risked for a gastronomical experience in their responses. GST2 said “Since I love their authentic food I often travel to Morocco and Algeria. Traveling for food is a priceless pleasure,” while GST11 stressed that distance does not mean anything: “We come to Turkey every year to experience Turkish cuisine.” On the other hand, GST4 shared her or his international experiences: “I went to Russia for hunting and we ate the animals we hunted with pleasure, next year I am planning a visit to South America for a long period to get to know their cuisine.” As could be observed from the experiences of gastronomy tourists, individuals that consider themselves as real gastronomy tourists ignore kilometers or time when it comes to experiencing food. Food becomes a passion, even an obsession under certain circumstances for gastronomy tourists. These examples demonstrated that individuals could make great sacrifices to fulfill their interests when they have economic power and time.

#### **5.5. Perspectives of Gastronomy Tourists on Surf & Turf Experiences**

After determining the significance of food for gastronomy tourists and the degree of sensitivity that these tourists have for gastronomy, the forth question of the study, “Would you consider visiting a destination solely to have a Surf & Turf experience?” was posed to the gastronomy tourists. All of the gastronomy tourists had a positive approach to the question and stated that the existence of supportive gastronomic products in addition to Surf & Turf experience would definitely increase their motivation for travel. The gastronomy tourist coded GST13 said “Surf & Turf is a different experience, we love to discover different things and travel to destinations that we never visited with a motivation for food in the food club that I am a member of, for that reason, I would like to join such a trip if there will be a good presentation and if I will have a new experience.” GST10 expressed his or her approach to Surf & Turf experience by stating that “We have a dining group, because gastronomical experiences are more pleasurable when they are experienced in small groups. I have my personal plane and trips of a few hours are always worth it when they end up with a pleasurable dinner.” The gastronomy tourist coded GST12 expressed his passion for wine in addition to food: “I don’t know if I would take a trip for only Surf & Turf. But, if I’m enticed by the wine menu and the quality of the cheese that would accompany the food, then I would definitely take the trip.” as an expression of the effects of supportive gastronomical components in food and beverage experiences. GST8 summarized his or her perspective on Turkish cuisine and Surf & Turf food style by saying “Surf & Turf is not a widely known style. Traditionally Turkish cuisine is more oriented towards red meat but it could be remembered that Turkey is surrounded by sea as a Mediterranean country. If you use seafood more in Turkish cuisine, you could promote it better and change the image of the country, which is limited to kebabs today.”

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

Tourism is an indispensable economical element for today's globalized world. Specifically mass tourism has great contributions either economically or socially to destinations. However, with the passing years the destruction caused by mass tourism at the destinations and the negative impacts that could be observed on the sustainable tourism elements has led a trend towards alternative tourism types and their development as well. Gastronomy tourism which has been recently gaining importance in alternative tourism literature, refers to individuals' personal hedonic feelings and people who are participating in such activities are increasing each year. Gastronomy tourism in a broader sense; is the travels of participants with the aim of getting to know different meals, tastes and cultures. The high profile of the participants (high educational levels, economic powers, etc.) makes the gastronomy tourism to be accepted as the very valuable events of 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the other hand, accurate expression of the passion that gastronomy tourists feel about food and gastronomy is important for sustainable gastronomy tourism. Recognition of gastronomy tourists and identification of these tourists' expectations from the destinations and food experiences would help improve the satisfaction of the gastronomy tourists. Satisfied tourists would ensure the development and sustainability of both the destinations and the gastronomy tourism.

While the present study aimed to introduce Surf & Turf dining habit that could be named as a powerful alternative to sustainable gastronomy tourism, it also analyzed Surf & Turf food style from the perspectives of gastronomy tourists of different nationalities visiting Turkey. Findings demonstrated that gastronomy tourists were generally middle age, with high income and predominantly well-educated. Individuals that define themselves as gastronomy tourists defined Surf & Turf experience as an independent touristic product and expressed that the related style could reach wider audiences with the help of supporting alternative touristic elements. In the proceeding stage, inclusion of Surf & Turf type of alternatives in the menus of restaurants which cater to experienced gastronomy tourists will increase the interest for both local and international gastronomical tourists to such restaurants. Study findings reveal that gastronomy tourists are insensitive to time or financial constraints towards their demand for quality food and beverage alternatives. Further studies could scrutinize sustainable gastronomy tourism with customer demand towards Surf & Turf menu items, customer satisfaction, food festivals, or alternative food and drink experiences. Furthermore, research on festival events based on gastronomy tourism, the effects of gastronomy tourists' experiences of food and beverage on the destination and influence of gastronomical tourists on the sustainability of the local culture would eventually contribute to the related literature.

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