

## **Advances in Tourism Marketing**

*Metin Kozak, Antónia Correia and Alan Fyall*

The purpose of this series of cutting-edge research-informed edited books is to introduce the reader to a range of contemporary marketing phenomena in the domain of travel and tourism. Authored by leading academics in their fields of research interest, each book will bring together a selection of related themes with individual chapters contributing theoretical, methodological, policy-related and/or practical outcomes for the reader. Each book will be introduced and brought to a conclusion by the series editors who between them have many decades of research and publishing experience. The singular aim of this advanced series of scholarly texts is to stimulate and engage readers in the fast-changing, complex and increasingly interdisciplinary nature of tourism marketing, and serve as a catalyst for future intellectual, academic, and professional-driven research agendas. This series encourages critical, participatory and humanistic approaches to research and welcomes contributions from all over the world. In particular, the series welcomes contributions from a non-Western perspective as tourism becomes truly global in both its reach and impact.

## **Experiential Consumption and Marketing in Tourism within a Cross-Cultural Context**

**Editors:**

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## Part IV: Gastronomy Experiences

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# 12 The role of local gastronomy in destination marketing

*Gurel Cetin, Bendegul Okumus and  
Zaid Alrawadieh*

#### The objectives of this chapter are to:

- Discuss the role of local food in tourism marketing and explore Istanbul as a culinary destination;
- Content analyze hard copy and online official promotional materials;
- Determine themes representing Istanbul as a culinary destination informed from the data;
- Communicate if culinary resources in Istanbul are sufficiently marketed and represented within the official promotional materials;
- Offer a typology of local food representation in destination marketing communications;
- Provide suggestions for destination marketing and culinary tourism.

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**Keywords:** Culinary tourism, destination marketing, gastronomy, food, Turkey

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## Introduction

The quality of a tourist experience is closely related to a destination's capacity to satisfy tourists' needs. Local gastronomy is among the many factors (e.g. climate, service, scenery) that affect tourist decision-making and destination satisfaction (Henderson, 2016; Sotiriadis, 2015; López-Guzmán et al., 2017). Consuming food is both a physical need and socio-cultural activity. Food is consumed by tourists at a destination not only to satisfy their hunger but also to experience the authentic culture and to interact with the locals. The demand for local foods may occur in various stages of intensity (Almeida & Garrod, 2017). However, local foods are usually listed at the top of activities desired by tourists (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). While food consumption may be an extension of the daily experience, it can sometimes turn into a significant part of unique touristic experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004). Recent studies have called for better understanding of local food experiences and their implications for destination marketers (e.g. Alderighi et al., 2016; Tsai, 2016; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Almeida & Garrod, 2017). For instance, Folgado-Fernández, Hernández-Mogollón and Duarte (2017) surveyed over 600 participants in two popular Spanish gastronomic festivals and proposed that gastronomic experiences have a positive effect on destination image and loyalty. While the role of local food in enhancing positive tourist experience and eventually fostering favorable behavioral intentions is widely acknowledged (e.g. Alderighi et al., 2016; Tsai, 2016; Andersson et al., 2017), the extent to which DMOs dedicate space for gastronomy in their official promotion materials and the volume, quality, and nature of these elements remain under-studied issues.

As an important element in destinations, local gastronomy has attracted increased attention (Lee & Scott, 2015; Ottenbacher et al., 2016) and has been suggested as an effective component of destination marketing (Okumus et al., 2013; Silkes et al., 2013). Food also makes up a major share of tourist consumption at a destination. According to the World Health Organization (2015), about one-third of overall tourist spending goes to food. Therefore, if gastronomy activities are utilized effectively, food can play a crucial role in marketing destinations (Okumus et al., 2013; Seo et al., 2017; Tellstrom et al., 2005) since tourists spend a respectable share of their time in destinations searching for and consuming local foods (Robinson & Getz, 2014; Sotiriadis, 2015). Moreover, local foods at a destination are not only a physical need but also a source of tourist experience (Beer et al., 2015; Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Henderson, 2016; Sanchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2015).

Istanbul is one of the world's top ten destinations in terms of international visitors, hosting more than 11 million arrivals annually (McCarthy, 2017). Turkey is a transcontinental country that has borders with eight other countries: Georgia to the northeast, Armenia, the Azerbaijan enclave of Nakhchivan and Iran to the east, Iraq and Syria to the south, and Greece and Bulgaria to the northwest. As the trade center of Turkey, exceeding 17 million in population, Istanbul is also a major destination for locals and immigrants (Turkstat, 2016) and thus, it is a good representation of different cultural groups in Turkey. Rich culinary resources in Turkey are already recognized as popular international dishes (Okumus et al., 2007).

Despite diverse culinary resources in Istanbul, research on utilizing local gastronomy in destination marketing is still scant. Recently, there have been debates as to whether Istanbul can harness its rich local food culture and utilize these gastronomy resources more effectively to market Istanbul as a culinary destination. Given this, this chapter evaluates the representation of food within the offline and online official promotional materials. It also offers recommendations for the more effective use of culinary resources in the destination marketing of Istanbul.

## Culinary destinations

Foods at a destination might be described as local if the ingredients are locally produced and served (Sims, 2009). Food tourism, also referred to as culinary, gastronomy and gourmet tourism, is primarily motivated by attending food festivals, visiting wineries and farmers' markets, and trying and experiencing cuisine at a destination (Getz, 2000; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Okumus et al., 2007). Food is also one of the significant factors for traveling activities since it physically and mentally prompts all five senses as an experience-intensive tourist activity. Tourists can be categorized into different typologies, ranging from tourists who have less interest in local food to those who search and travel extensively to experience local food (Boyne et al., 2002). Previous studies confirmed that the majority of tourists perceive local food as an essential part of their experience, which influences the holiday decision making-process (Okumus et al. 2007).

The experience of local foods can satisfy travelers' physical (e.g. hunger, safety), psychological (e.g. esteem, relaxation), social (e.g. interaction, entertainment) and intellectual (e.g. culture, ingredients) needs (Bell & Valentine, 1997; Ryu & Jang, 2006). The availability, diversity and authenticity of gastronomic culture can affect tourists' purchasing decisions, pulling them to the destination and generating positive post-pur-

chase behavior – such as the intention to recommend and return (Gursoy & McCleary, 2004; Henderson, 2016). However, the effect of local food experiences may vary based on travelers' preferences and motivations. For instance, Almeida and Garrod (2017) proposed that consuming local foods may be either a peak experience or a secondary experience for tourists. The study also clustered tourists based on their level of engagement with local food.

Food associated with a particular region can be used as a promotional material for all types of tourist activities and destination marketing to create a differentiated image for the destination (Nelson, 2016; Pike 2015; Truong et al., 2017). Food is an important factor for travelers, which makes food tourism a large segment rather than an elite, niche market (McKercher et al. 2008; Spilkova & Fialova, 2013). Although there are different stages of intensity for tourists' food interests, harnessing local cuisines to enhance a positive local image and attract a wide segment of tourists is a viable destination marketing strategy (Boyne et al., 2002; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Silkes et al., 2013).

Local food might be treated as a distinct attribute that differentiates the destination and creates a sustainable, competitive advantage (Everett & Slocum, 2013; Horng et al., 2012). Unlike generic tourism resources, such as sun lust, local food cannot be easily imitated, is unique to each specific region, and has few substitutes (Okumus et al., 2007). Although some travelers avoid tasting local dishes (food neophobia), many adventurous visitors are always curious about ethnic and local food (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). Therefore, local food can be a sustainable way of creating differentiation by stressing both unique physical and cultural characteristics of local gastronomy (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Silkes et al., 2013). Current research in culinary tourism has concentrated on motivations of tourists, sustainability of local food, and the restaurant industry (Chang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2009; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Mak et al., 2012; Telfer & Wall, 2000). However, the tactics for utilizing gastronomy in a holistic destination promotional and marketing strategy are neglected in destination marketing literature.

The local gastronomy, representing unique ingredients, combinations, rituals, cooking styles, eating styles, social environment, atmospherics and representation, might be used as effective elements in destination image and brand formation (Andersson et al., 2017; Bessiere, 1998; Horng et al., 2012; Jolliffe, 2016; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Silkes et al., 2013). With a well-designed marketing communication strategy, destinations can attract culinary tourists who come to the destination with

major motivations other than the local gastronomy (Jalis et al., 2014; Tsai & Wang, 2017; TanSiew & Hashim, 2013). A central marketing strategy supported and facilitated by the local governments can be an important requirement for culinary marketing efforts of destinations (Ottenbacher et al., 2016). Many well-established destinations such as Italy and France and some other emerging tourist destinations such as Thailand and Singapore have already been investing in their culinary resources to differentiate themselves from their competitors and offer unique destination brand experiences (Henderson, 2009; Horng & Tsai, 2010).

### Marketing destinations by using local foods

The role of local food experiences in fostering the development of tourism in destinations is widely recognized (Antón et al., 2019; López-Guzmán et al., 2017; Lee & Arcodia, 2011). This recognition stems from the fact that food consumption is a salient factor that enhances tourism experiences by both creating a sense of the "ontological comfort of home" as well as a sense of novelty (Quan & Wang, 2004: 302). Therefore, the demand for local foods has notably grown as experiencing local gastronomic products in destinations has become among the top activities preferred by visitors while on vacation (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Many mature and some emerging destinations seem to recognize the role of local foods in attracting larger numbers of visitors and extending the length of their stay. This is evidenced by the increasing number of food and wine festivals taking place in several destinations over the globe (Lee et al., 2017).

Tourists collect information about a destination before travelling. They also seek information on local food, restaurants and popular eating venues. Information on local food is particularly important if the destination is unfamiliar to the travelers and if they have a special interest in the local gastronomy (Pawaskar & Goel, 2016). Therefore, both generic information about the local food targeted to mainstream markets and specific information of local gastronomy targeted to culinary tourists should be easily accessible in printed and electronic promotional materials of destinations (Jalis et al., 2014; Silkes et al., 2013). Printed materials are usually available at tourism information offices and visitor centers, whereas electronic materials are available online at several platforms including DMO websites and user-generated-content (UGC) platforms. There is also a shift to utilizing electronic resources from printed material in promoting the destinations. Websites are now more convenient, dynamic and can provide a more complete experience via text, audio and visual messages (Kim et al., 2009). They also offer the ability to

search for information and options to interact with other customers and make easy reservations for travelers (Surenkok et al., 2010).

The mission of creating and promoting a culinary image of a destination lies primarily within the responsibility of the DMO rather than the individual stakeholders. Local food festivals, special events and street markets can be marketed through electronic materials in addition to printed materials. This is of significant importance since travelers are more likely to consider official information resources as more credible (Horng & Tsai, 2010; Lin et al., 2011). Therefore, the utilization of electronic promotional tools of DMO, websites, social media and mobile apps is important in order to attract tourists to the destination and improve their culinary experiences.

### Turkish food

The variety of local foods is one of the main motivations for tourists who visit Turkey (Okumus et al., 2012; Yuksel, 2001). Turkey boasts different cultures, civilizations, and the legacy of three global empires (Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman). The country is placed en route to important trade routes (e.g. Silk Road) and religious pilgrimages since the middle ages. The hospitality of the local people creates a welcoming environment for visitors from different cultures and culinary habits (Cetin & Okumus, 2018).

The Turks themselves were based in Central Asia and lived as nomadic tribes using different ingredients available in varied natural environments. They practiced diverse cooking and preservation methods to make the food durable and storable to use during their travels. When Turks came to Anatolia, the region already had a rich culinary background, with a variety of ingredients which created diversity and improved food, as cultural interactions and trade flourished (Biringen et al., 2013; Guler, 2016; Ozdemir et al., 2007). A large portion of the culinary products are already known globally (i.e. yoghurt, Turkish coffee). They are patented and protected by geographic indications. Some culinary goods (e.g. Turkish coffee) are also included in the UNESCO list (Okumus et al., 2013; UNESCO, 2015).

Istanbul, as the capital of two major empires (Byzantine and Ottoman), is located on the trade route between Asia and Europe and is recognized as a business and cultural hub. The city itself attracts more than 11 million international visitors annually (Istanbul Directorate for Culture and Tourism, 2018). Despite these advantages, there have been debates as to whether Istanbul is properly utilizing its culinary poten-

tial in destination promotion. Particularly, the effectiveness of the large-scale promotional campaigns is argued (Alvarez, 2010) and the special interest tourism is somewhat neglected (Okumus et al., 2012). Although its significance is acknowledged by various governmental organizations, utilizing culinary resources in the official promotion of the destination is still insufficient and requires further interest and research. Therefore, using this case study, the chapter examines how local gastronomy and food are used as a tool to create a positive brand image by TMOCT (Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism) and its representative office in Istanbul.

As a leading international destination, and given its rich culinary resources, Istanbul can be considered an ideal domain to analyze culinary tourism. In this chapter, the printed and electronic gastronomic materials about Istanbul are analyzed in order to evaluate the representation of local gastronomy and the utilization of culinary resources in destination marketing. Based on the content analysis and inter-coder consensus, the content was divided under origin of the food (regional, national and international), atmospherics (scenery, people, entertainment) and content of the representation (raw food, ingredients, entrees, main courses, desserts and drinks). The findings show that food makes up only 8% of the total promotional material of Istanbul. Instead, sun lust tourism, cultural tourism and meetings were highlighted most, as well as various activities like shopping, sports and camping. Food only received space under these headings as a supportive activity, rather than an attraction worthy of standalone attention and design. While several studies highlight the cultural and historical heritage of Istanbul as key assets enhancing its image and, eventually, its competitiveness (e.g. Alvarez & Yarcin, 2010; Sahin & Baloglu, 2011; Kladou & Mavragani, 2015; Alrawadieh et al., 2018), local gastronomy is a key attribute that visitors appreciate as a part of their tourist experience in Istanbul (Alrawadieh et al., 2018; Korzay & Alvarez, 2005). In other words, our findings indicate that the current marketing strategies underestimate the potential of local food as a key factor in enhancing the competitive advantage of the destination. To harness the power of food experience, destination marketers should view food as a 'peak experience' rather than a 'supporting activity' (Quan & Wang, 2004).

The share of food was greater within recent material, which shows a gradual improvement in recognizing the significance of food for Istanbul as a tourist destination. There were also some inconsistencies among different electronic and printed materials. Specifically, content translated from Turkish lacked professional marketing language and

design. Yet the new website, introduced by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (GoTurkeyTourism.com), has represented local gastronomy more professionally. Not surprising given the ability to publish various high-quality contents (e.g. pictures and videos) with low costs, electronic material in general allocated more space to culinary resources in Istanbul than the printed material.

Concerning the origin of the food, national food had a larger share (6%) than regional (2%) and international food (1%) in the promotional material. Regarding the distribution of atmospherics, a major portion of the material included scenery (44%), people (22%), entertainment (12%), and other typologies for representing food. Concerning scenery, the Bosphorus and historic monuments were the most frequently used images. People interacting, dancing, nightclubs and belly dancers were other images often used symbolizing atmospherics with food. The content of the food (Table 12.1) was represented under raw food (21%), ingredients (7%), entrees (17%), main courses (15%), desserts (12%), and drinks (34%).

Table 12.1: Share and representation of food in promotional material

Origin	Percentage of Total	Content	Percentage of Total
International food	1%	Raw food	21%
Regional food	2%	Ingredients	7%
National food	6%	Entrees	17%
Atmosphere		Main courses	15%
Scenery	44%	Desserts	12%
Entertainment	12%	Drinks	34%
People	22%		

The presentation and content of the materials were inadequate due to translation errors, simplistic approaches to descriptions, and the limited number and quality of the images used. Despite the other activities, the visual streams were also missing food. The information about the local and international food and beverage outlets was limited, particularly within DMO web pages, which should be able to offer various alternative venues at the destination to taste local food along with their contact information. Although a detailed list of alternative tourism was provided, food tourism alternatives were scarce. As a result, gastronomic alternatives for the current official promotions are still seen as a supporting activity and not a major tourist motivation for destination marketing in Turkey.

## Conclusion

Utilizing tangible and intangible culinary resources and attractions in destination marketing is attracting increased attention. Yet there is limited activity and understanding in some tourist destinations as to how to operationalize local gastronomy and to what extent food should be employed in promotional materials. The chapter explored the representation of gastronomy within the official printed and electronic promotional materials. Istanbul is a suitable domain to explore the role of food in destination marketing. Culinary resources of Istanbul have been overlooked since other strong alternative tourist products are still offered in Istanbul. Currently, food is treated as a supporting attraction that may improve tourists' experience, rather than a principal motivation. However, considering the share of alternative tourism types, culinary tourism should receive more coverage and attention from the government as well as local and private organizations.

The chapter classified food-related materials based on three main typologies: origin of the food (regional, national and international), atmosphere in which food was presented (scenery, people and entertainment) and type of food (raw food, ingredients, entrees, main courses, desserts, drinks). Although the framework is destination-specific (i.e. Istanbul), it may still be adopted by other destinations seeking to assess their culinary marketing. A similar classification might also be used to evaluate destination promotions, and marketers might plan their culinary representation in destination marketing based on the typology offered in this study.

Drawing off the chapter's findings, Turkey is a world leader in the production of grape. Not surprisingly, there are a number of indigenous grape varieties in Turkey. Here is the summary information about the major Turkish grapes that are used to make wine., Istanbul has been, unfortunately, unsuccessful in fully utilizing its culinary resources in destination marketing compared to other tourism activities and alternative motivations. Turkey has more than 1,500 named grape varieties, of which 800 are genetically unique (GoTurkeyTourism.com, 2018). However, culinary resources like these have only lately been leveraged by the government's websites, and not aggressively. Coordinated marketing and private partnership efforts to create holistic culinary marketing have been neglected by the stakeholders, with inadequate utilization of food festivals, events and local farmers' markets. Therefore, more experiential marketing, cooking courses, electronic recipes, interactive maps of local food, and certification and promotion of restaurants and wineries would

offer broad and memorable local gastronomy experiences to visitors of Istanbul and other diverse culinary cities in Turkey.

The chapter explained the role of gastronomy in official destination promotion materials for Istanbul. It can be summarized that:

- ◆ Official destination promotional materials both printed and electronic were content analyzed.
- ◆ Only eight percent of the promotional material is dedicated to food.
- ◆ Concerning the type of food, national food was represented more than regional and international food.
- ◆ Regarding atmospherics, food was depicted with scenery, people and entertainment respectively.
- ◆ Types of food used in promotional material were classified under raw food, ingredients, entrees, main courses, desserts and drinks.
- ◆ For a more effective culinary destination marketing, various suggestions with respect to promotional material, their design, and content were offered.

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