Reasons for choosing local restaurants: The case of the city of Kayseri

Yöresel restoranların tercih edilme nedenleri: Kayseri ili örneği

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Abstract

One important factor influencing people's choice of restaurants is the variety of dishes offered. Turkish cuisine is notable for its rich diversity and regional differences, and Kayseri cuisine is one of the leading examples of this variety. This study aims to identify the reasons domestic tourists prefer local restaurants, examine differences in preferences by demographic characteristics, and determine which foods come to mind when Kayseri is mentioned. The study used a survey of 429 domestic tourists who chose restaurants offering local cuisine in Kayseri. The results indicate that the reflection of the city's culture through local foods influences tourists' preference for local restaurants, that the foods most associated with Kayseri are, in order, mantı (Turkish dumplings), yağlama (Turkish layered flatbread with meat or cheese), and pastırma (Turkish cured beef), and that there are no significant differences in the preference for local foods based on gender.

Keywords: Local Restaurants, Local Food, Kayseri Cuisine

Jel Codes: Z32, Z33, Z39

Öz

İnsanların restoranları tercih etmesindeki önemli etkenlerden biri restoranda sunulan yemek çeşitleridir. Türk mutfağı, zengin çeşitliliği ve bölgesel farklılıklarıyla dikkat çekerken, Kayseri mutfağı bu çeşitliliğin önde gelen örneklerinden biridir. Bu çalışma, yerli turistlerin yöresel restoranları tercih etme nedenlerini belirlemeyi, demografik özelliklere göre tercih farklılıklarını incelemeyi ve Kayseri denilince akla gelen yiyeceklerin neler olduğunu tespit etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Araştırma, Kayseri'de yöresel yemek hizmeti sunan restoranları tercih eden 429 yerli turist üzerinde, anket yöntemi kullanılarak gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcıların yöresel restoranları tercih etmesinde yöresel gıdaların ilin kültürünü yansıtmasının etkili olduğu, Kayseri denilince akla sırasıyla mantı, yağlama ve pastırma ürünlerinin geldiği ve cinsiyete göre yöresel yemekleri tercih etme düzeylerinde anlamlı farklılık bulunmadığı sonuçlarına ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yerel Restoranlar, Yerel Yemekler, Kayseri Mutfağı

JEL Kodları: Z32, Z33, Z39

Introduction

The Turkish culinary culture, which has matured through the interaction and synthesis of different geographical regions over historical processes, is significant for its wide range of regional cuisines. The richness of Turkish cuisine stems not only from the abundance of ingredients used but also from the cultural heritage of the civilisations that have inhabited Anatolia throughout history. In this context, culinary culture has become deeply rooted through historical development and diversified under the influence of social structure, belief systems, climatic conditions, and economic factors (Derinalp Çanakçı, 2021). The current study focuses specifically on Kayseri cuisine, which is recognised for its unique use of local ingredients and distinct flavour profiles, to address a gap in the literature on regional preferences and consumer perspectives in central Anatolia.

Regional cuisines are considered important intangible cultural heritage elements that reflect a society's way of life, identity, and historical continuity (Lin et al, 2011; Bessiere and Tibere, 2013). These cuisines are not only gastronomic elements but also fundamental components of cultural transmission, identity construction, and regional development (Scarpato, 2002; Okumus, 2020). The preservation and promotion of local products are of great importance for both the sustainability of cultural heritage and the enhancement of the touristic appeal of destinations (Sabur and Güneş, 2023). In particular, this study seeks to differentiate itself from existing research by exploring domestic tourists' attitudes toward local products and restaurants in Kayseri. This region has received less attention than other regions of Turkish gastronomy.

The consumption of local foods provides consumers not only with physical satisfaction but also with psychological and socio-cultural benefits, such as experiencing authenticity, socialising, participating in culture, and gaining prestige (Meladze, 2015; Bayrakçı and Akdağ, 2016; Richards, 2012). With the rise of gastronomy tourism, local restaurants have become the venues where these experiences are materialised. Today, consumers choose local restaurants not only to eat but also to engage in cultural experiences, interact with the local community, and explore a place's identity through authentic flavours (Hjalager, 2003; Everett and Slocum, 2013). This link establishes continuity between cultural significance and consumer behaviour, indicating that Kayseri cuisine provides a distinct context in which tourists' preferences and local food experiences intersect.

Therefore, regional cuisines are not only a gastronomic element but also hold strategic value for cultural sustainability, economic development, and tourism differentiation. For this reason, the preservation, documentation, and promotion of local gastronomy within the richness of Turkish culinary culture are of great importance for both the continuity of cultural heritage and the diversification of national tourism (Yurt, 2024). By focusing on Kayseri, this study offers insights into the ways local cuisine can contribute to tourism strategies and enhance understanding of domestic tourists' food choices.

This study examines Kayseri cuisine, the importance of local products from the consumer's perspective, and the reasons domestic tourists prefer local products and local restaurants. This study addresses an important gap in the literature. Although numerous studies have examined local food consumption and gastronomy tourism in different regions of Türkiye, empirical research focusing specifically on Kayseri cuisine and domestic tourists' restaurant preferences remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on well-known gastronomic destinations such as Gaziantep, Hatay, and Istanbul (Yaldız and Olcay, 2020; Kargiglioğlu and Akbaba, 2021; Ayyıldız and Sağır, 2025). Therefore, examining domestic tourists' perceptions and preferences toward local restaurants in Kayseri provides new empirical insights into the role of regional cuisines in destination attractiveness and in the development of gastronomy tourism.

Conceptual framework

The increase in tourism activities, and especially the growing interest in gastronomy tourism, has led to a rise in demand for local cuisines. As tourists become more interested in regional food experiences, recognition of local foods' social and cultural contributions has also increased. This increasing demand has highlighted not only the economic benefits of local foods but also their social and cultural contributions (Blumberg and Mincyt, 2019).

Local food is defined as a product with regional characteristics that is grown, produced, or processed within specific regional boundaries (Nummedal and Hall, 2006; Inwood et all, 2009). This understanding provides a framework for examining consumer behaviours and the economic dynamics surrounding local food. In addition to these definitions, the purchase of such local foods by businesses, either directly from local producers in the region or through various sales channels, is also considered in defining local food (Sharma et al, 2009; Kang and Rajagopal, 2014).

In recent years, it has been reported that both the purchase and consumption of local foods have been steadily increasing (Onozaka et al, 2010: 1). From the consumers' perspective, dishes belonging to regional cuisines are generally perceived positively. Among the main motivational factors that drive people to consume local foods are the taste, healthiness, reliability, and freshness of the dishes (Skallerud and Wien, 2019). These findings indicate how consumer motivations are directly linked to the attributes of local foods and the growing interest in regional products. Research has shown that numerous factors, including socio-demographic variables, attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavioural control, and price consciousness, influence consumers' purchasing or consumption behaviour of local foods (Özdemir et al, 2016: 233). Understanding these multifaceted influences provides a more comprehensive view of consumer choices.

One of the important elements that distinguishes and highlights regional culture and identity is the local culinary culture. The uniqueness of products belonging to regional culinary culture emerges from their historical depth, the skills involved, and the rooting of eating and drinking habits in a specific place and culture (Long, 2003; Berard and Marchenay, 2008; Doğdubay and Sünnetçioğlu, 2015). Exploring the cultural and historical roots of local cuisine helps to understand the broader socio-cultural context of food choices. Culinary culture encompasses all aspects of cuisine. It also reflects a society's food culture and habits, represents its way of life, and includes the traditions and customs specific to that community (Şahinbaş, 2018: 100). Experiencing local foods in their place of origin offers a unique opportunity to understand local culture and gain knowledge about different cultures. Knowledge of local and national cuisines is of interest to consumers motivated by this experience (Lee and Lee, 2001; Du Rand et al., 2003; Poria, Reichel, and Biran, 2006; Kim and Eves, 2012). Experiencing local foods first-hand provides insight into cultural practices and enhances tourists' understanding of regional identity.

Local restaurants are establishments where the service and atmosphere follow standard practices. In these types of restaurants, table service is generally provided. Depending on the kitchen's capacity, menus may include a variety of different dishes (Sökmen, 2014: 8). Visiting local restaurants allows consumers to engage directly with regional cuisine while observing traditional preparation methods. Local cuisine typically consists of dishes prepared with traditional recipes and methods using local ingredients, thereby supporting the preservation of regional food products (Gürsoy, 2014: 229). Preserving traditional practices through local restaurants strengthens the cultural value of regional food.

The city of Kayseri, rich in culture and society, has been subject to migration and invasions by various peoples throughout history. The regional culinary culture of Kayseri has been shaped over time by its residents' dietary habits and beliefs, as well as by locally produced foods. Examining Kayseri provides a concrete example of how historical and cultural factors shape regional cuisine. Kayseri cuisine holds an important place in Turkish cuisine, both for its flavour and variety. Its rich culinary culture has made the city an important destination for gastronomy tourism (Deniz and Atışman, 2017). In the economy of Kayseri, the production of pastırma and sucuk represents a significant source of income, and these products are indispensable on Kayseri breakfast tables. Kayseri cuisine is renowned for its pastries and dough-based dishes such as mantı, katmer, yağlama, gözleme, yağ mantısı, and su böreği. Among the sweets unique to Kayseri, Güllü Baklava, Nevzine, and Aside desserts are frequently prepared and consumed at family gatherings, for guests, or on special occasions (Budak et al, 2004). This detailed example illustrates the connection between local food characteristics, cultural heritage, and tourism interest, creating a cohesive flow throughout the text.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to examine whether domestic tourists choose local restaurants based on their demographic characteristics, identify the foods that first come to mind when Kayseri is mentioned, and investigate the factors influencing preferences for local restaurants. Specific research questions include: What foods come to mind first when Kayseri is mentioned? What foods come to mind second? Which factors influence restaurant selection? How frequently do participants visit restaurants serving Kayseri cuisine? And how does participants' interest in Kayseri cuisine vary by gender?

The study is limited to domestic tourists visiting Kayseri. In 2024, approximately 200,000 domestic tourists visited Kayseri. The sample is restricted to domestic tourists visiting the tourist sites in Kayseri.

Data were collected from domestic tourists visiting major tourist attractions and local restaurants in Kayseri, including the city centre, historical sites, and popular gastronomy venues. Participants were selected based on the following inclusion criteria: (1) being a domestic tourist visiting Kayseri, (2) having visited or intended to visit a restaurant serving local cuisine, and (3) voluntarily agreeing to participate in the survey. Residents of Kayseri and individuals under 18 were excluded from the study.

The survey was distributed to domestic tourists visiting Kayseri using a convenience sampling approach. To obtain a sample size representing the main population, the following formula was used: [2500xNx(1.96)2]/[25(N-1)+(2500x1.962)]. The sample size calculation indicates that there are no issues regarding the confidence level or margin of error. Based on this calculation, 421 questionnaires were distributed to potential participants. After excluding incomplete or unusable responses, 383 questionnaires were deemed suitable for analysis, resulting in a response rate of approximately 91%. Since convenience sampling was used, the findings may be subject to selection bias. Participants were selected based on accessibility, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution.

Between July 1, 2025, and August 3, 2025, data were collected electronically and face-to-face using convenience sampling, in line with the study's purpose. A total of 429 surveys were found suitable for evaluation and included in the study.

The survey method was used to collect data in this study to determine the factors influencing domestic tourists' preferences for local restaurants. The survey form was prepared based on the study by Cömert and Özata (2016). The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section includes questions about the participants' demographic characteristics. The second section uses a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree, 5 = Strongly Disagree) to identify the factors that may influence consumer preferences. Ethics committee approval for the study was obtained on June 24, 2025. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Erciyes University (Decision No: 311). Participants were informed about the study's purpose and their voluntary participation. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality of responses were ensured.

The data were analysed using descriptive statistics and independent sample t-tests. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the foods associated with Kayseri cuisine and the factors influencing restaurant preferences. In addition, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to examine whether interest in Kayseri cuisine differed significantly by gender. Table 1 presents the results of the scale's reliability analysis obtained using different methods. According to Cronbach's alpha, the scale's alpha coefficient is greater than 0.90, indicating very high reliability. In the split-half method, the alpha coefficients for each dimension and for the entire scale are also greater than 0.90, suggesting a very high degree of reliability.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

| Method	Reliability Coefficient
Cronbach's Alpha	0.956
Split Half	
1st half	0.905
2nd half	0.946

Results

The demographic data of the participants are presented in Table 2. Of the participants, 51.3% were women and 48.7% were men. Based on participants' age distribution, the highest participation was in the 31-40 group at 35.9%, followed by the 21-30 group at 22.4%. Additionally, 17.9% of participants were 20 years old or younger, 16.1% were 41-50 years old, and 7.7% were 51 years old or older.

To determine the regions from which participants came, a survey question asked, and 56.4% reported coming from Central Anatolia. The data also show that 15.2% of participants were from the Mediterranean region, 8.4% from the Black Sea region, 5.8% from the Southeastern Anatolia region, and 5.6% from the Eastern Anatolia region.

Table 2: Distribution of Participants by Demographic Characteristics

	F	%
What's your gender?		
Female	221	51.3
Male	208	48.7
Total	429	100.0
What is your age range?		
20 and younger	77	17.9
21-30	96	22.4
31-40	154	35.9
41-50	69	16.1
51 and older	33	7.7
Total	429	100.0
Which region are you visiting from?		
Mediterranean	65	15.2
Black Sea	36	8.4
Central Anatolia	242	56.4
Marmara	16	3.7
Aegean	21	4.9
Eastern Anatolia	24	5.6
Southeastern Anatolia	25	5.8
Total	429	100.0
Are you interested in Kayseri cuisine?		
Yes	308	71.9
No	121	28.1

The responses to the question "Which foods come to mind first when Kayseri is mentioned?", asked to determine which dishes participants are familiar with in Kayseri cuisine, are shown in Figure 1. Among the foods that first come to mind, mantı stands out. Among 270 participants, the first food associated with Kayseri was "mantı," while 56 mentioned "yağlama," 28 "pastırma," and 13 "sucuk."
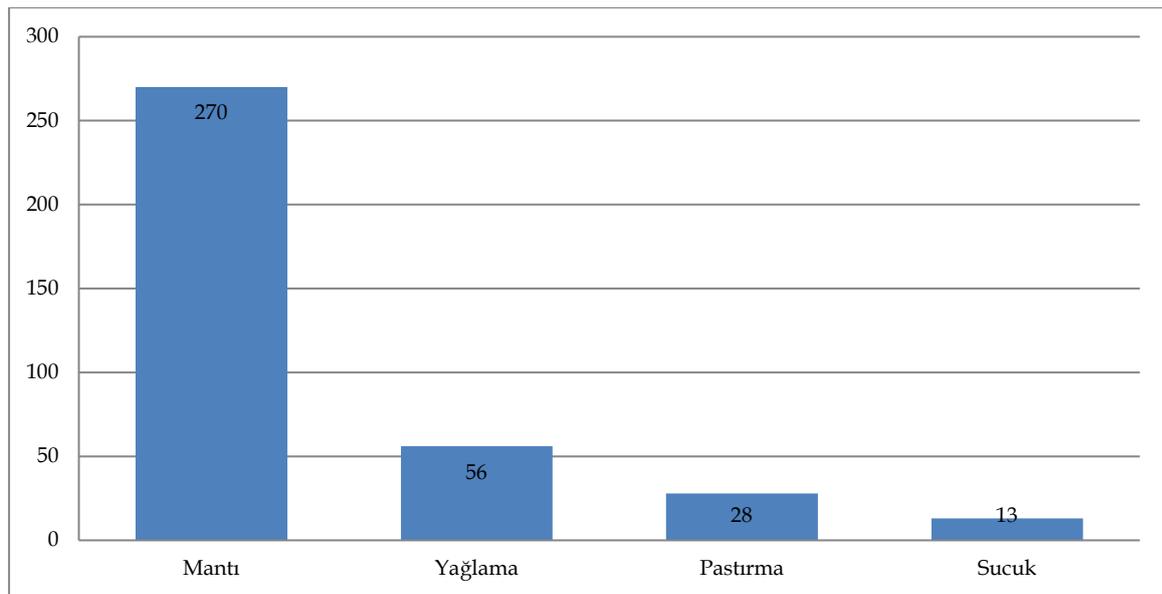
Figure 1: Foods That First Come to Mind When Kayseri is Mentioned

Information on the second food that comes to mind when Kayseri is mentioned is presented in Figure 2. Following the first food that participants associated with Kayseri, the second foods mentioned were "yağlama" by 64 participants, "pastırma" by 62 participants, "mantı" by 37 participants, and "sucuk" by 31 participants. The majority of participants provided only one food item in response to the question, which foods come to mind first when Kayseri is mentioned?
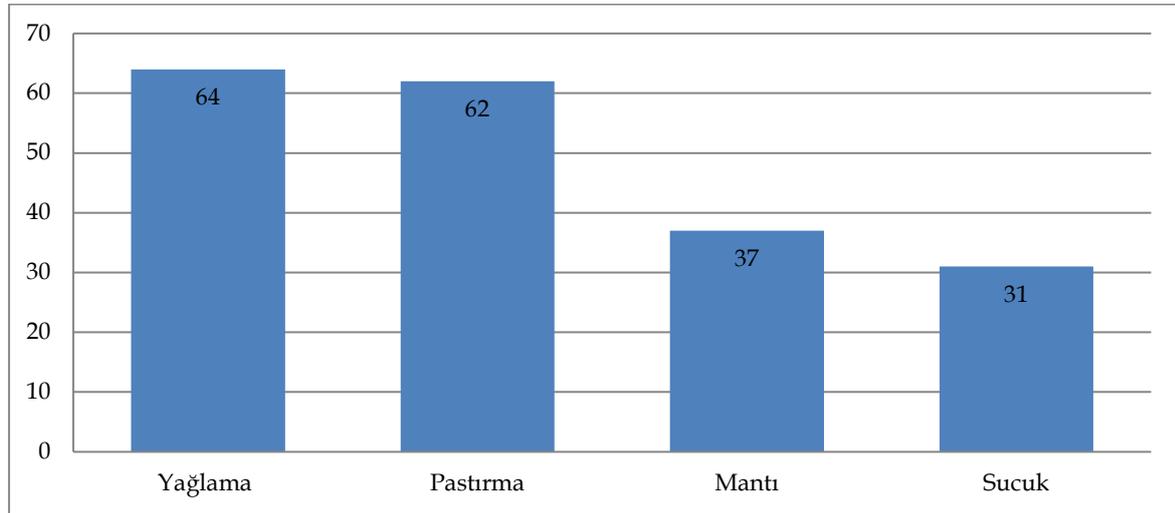
Figure 2: Second Foods That Come to Mind When Kayseri is Mentioned

The participants' responses regarding the factors influencing their restaurant choice are presented in Table 3. Analysis of the data shows that the most important factor affecting participants' restaurant selection was the statement "local foods reflect the culture." Other significant factors, in order, were: "the sourcing of ingredients from the local area affects my purchase preference," "local foods provide information about the region," "the affordability of local foods based on their quality affects my purchase preference," "local foods are a distinguishing factor in food and beverage establishments," and "the variety of local foods in the restaurant affects my preference."

According to Table 3, the statement that does not affect participants' restaurant preference is "Having staff wearing regional clothing in the restaurant would influence my preference." Moreover, participants were uncertain about the extent to which some factors influence their restaurant choice. These statements were "playing music from the region in the restaurant affects my purchase preference" and "the media influences my preference to local flavours."

Table 3: Statements Regarding the Factors Influencing Restaurant Choice

	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	Standard Deviation
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
1	Local food is a differentiating factor in the food and beverage business.	39	9.1	33	7.7	49	11.4	171	39.9	137	31.9	3.79	1.226
2	Affordable food prices relative to their quality are a factor in my purchasing decisions.	43	10.0	26	6.1	29	6.8	177	41.3	154	35.9	3.89	1.235
3	Social circles with friends influence my preference for local products.	50	11.7	65	15.2	103	24.0	149	34.7	62	14.5	3.24	1.222
4	The media influences my preference for local flavours.	56	13.1	99	23.1	85	19.8	124	28.9	65	15.2	3.09	1.282
5	The restaurant's traditional staff attire influences my preference.	108	25.2	95	21.9	94	21.9	85	19.8	48	11.2	2.68	1.331
6	The presence of staff who are knowledgeable about the local culture in the restaurant affects my preference.	39	9.1	38	8.9	51	11.9	173	40.3	128	29.8	3.75	1.226
7	The variety of local foods offered in the restaurant influences my preference.	40	9.3	29	6.8	54	12.6	167	38.9	139	32.4	3.79	1.229
8	Playing region-specific/local music in the restaurant influences my purchasing preference.	70	16.3	67	15.6	114	26.6	103	24.0	75	17.5	3.08	1.317
9	The use of regional decorations in the restaurant influences my purchasing preferences.	54	12.6	49	11.4	92	21.4	142	33.1	92	21.4	3.38	1.287
10	Locally sourced ingredients influence my purchasing preferences.	35	8.2	35	8.2	37	8.6	149	34.7	173	40.3	3.91	1.239
11	The use of local tools and utensils in the restaurant influences my purchasing preference.	60	14.0	34	7.9	71	16.6	164	38.2	100	23.3	3.48	1.310
12	I choose local food and beverage establishments because I want to try new flavours.	42	9.8	43	10.0	76	17.7	157	36.6	111	25.9	3.59	1.237
13	Local foods enrich the palate.	39	9.1	27	6.3	46	10.7	169	39.4	148	34.5	3.84	1.226
14	Local foods provide information about the region.	41	9.6	28	6.5	30	7.0	174	40.6	156	36.4	3.89	1.234
15	Local foods reflect the culture.	36	8.4	24	5.6	24	5.6	155	36.1	190	44.3	4.02	1.229
16	Local foods are more reliable.	39	9.1	50	11.7	95	22.1	146	34.0	99	23.1	3.55	1.196
17	Local foods are fresher.	43	10.0	48	11.2	102	23.8	133	31.0	103	24.0	3.49	1.249
18	Local foods are healthier.	41	9.6	45	10.5	88	20.5	152	35.4	103	24.0	3.52	1.237
19	Local foods are tastier.	39	9.1	34	7.9	78	18.2	151	35.2	127	29.6	3.68	1.236

Information on participants' frequency of visiting local restaurants serving dishes specific to Kayseri cuisine is presented in Table 4. The results show that 45.2% of participants choose local restaurants 6-10 times per year. Additionally, 8.4 % of participants reported visiting local restaurants daily, 15.4% weekly (1-5 days), 15.2% monthly (1-5 days), and 15.9% yearly (1-5 days).

Table 4: Frequency of Visiting Restaurants Serving Kayseri Cuisine

Frequency of visits	Frequency	%
Every day	36	8.4
1-5 days per week	66	15.4
1-5 days a month	65	15.2
1-5 days per year	68	15.9
6-10 days per year	194	45.2
Total	429	100.00

Table 5 presents information on whether there is a significant difference in interest in Kayseri cuisine by gender. The mean score for female participants (221 individuals) was 1.25, while that for male participants (208 individuals) was 1.32. Whether there is a significant difference in the interest of female and male participants in Kayseri dishes is determined by the Sig. (2-tailed) value. As the Sig. (2-tailed) value is 0.09 > 0.05, indicating no significant difference in interest in Kayseri cuisine between female and male participants.

Table 5: Participants' Interest in Kayseri Cuisine by Gender

	Gender			Mean	Standard Deviation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Are you interested in dishes from Kayseri cuisine	Female	Yes	166	1.25	0.431	0.099
		No	55			
	Male	Yes	142	1.32	0.467	
		No	66			

The independent-samples t-test results presented in Table 6 indicate that perceptions of local food in food and beverage businesses differ significantly by gender. Across all statements, female participants exhibit higher mean scores than male participants.

For the statement "Local food is a differentiating factor in food and beverage businesses," the mean score for females (M=3.91) is higher than that for males (M=3.56), and this difference is statistically significant (t=2.245; p<0.05). Similarly, regarding "affordable local food prices influencing purchasing decisions," females (M=4.08) report significantly higher agreement than males (M=3.61) (t=2.554; p<0.05).

Significant gender differences are also observed in perceptions of the "variety of local foods offered in restaurants" (t=2.671; p<0.01), "the influence of locally sourced ingredients on purchasing preferences" (t=2.867; p<0.01), and "local foods being fresher" (t=2.901; p<0.01), with females consistently reporting higher mean values.

Overall, the findings suggest that female consumers have stronger perceptions and attitudes toward local food compared to male consumers. This highlights the importance of considering gender differences when developing marketing strategies in the food and beverage sector.

Table 6: T-test Analysis of the Differences in Interest in Kayseri Cuisine by Gender

Factors	Gender	n	Mean	Std. Dev.	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Local food is a differentiating factor in the food and beverage business.	Female	221	3.91	1.153	2.245	0.025
	Male	208	3.56	1.284		
Affordable food prices relative to their quality are a factor in my purchasing decisions.	Female	221	4.08	1.151	2.554	0.011
	Male	208	3.61	1.331		
The variety of local foods offered in the restaurant influences my preference.	Female	221	3.94	1.104	2.671	0.008
	Male	208	3.52	1.339		
Locally sourced ingredients influence my purchasing preferences.	Female	221	4.09	1.132	2.867	0.004
	Male	208	3.61	1.331		
Local foods are fresher.	Female	221	3.85	1.143	2.901	0.004
	Male	208	3.20	1.330		

Discussion and conclusion

Turkish cuisine has been shaped over a historical process extending from Central Asia to the present day through the interaction of different cultures, resulting in a rich gastronomic heritage that spans a wide geography. This heritage, supported by cultural diversity and local production practices, has positioned Turkish cuisine as having a significant presence among world cuisines (Önçel, 2015). In particular, with appropriate marketing strategies and positioning policies, Turkish cuisine can become a strong attraction that contributes to gastronomy tourism.

With globalisation, the growing tendency toward cultural uniformity has heightened tourists' interest in authentic, local experiences. Today, tourists not only seek to meet their physical needs at their destinations but also hope to experience the region's identity, history, and way of life (Kuşat, 2012). In this context, local foods offer tourists the opportunity to engage with the local culture, experience authenticity, and interact with the local community. The study's findings show that among domestic tourists visiting Kayseri, mantı was overwhelmıngly the first food that came to mind, followed by yağlama, pastırma, and sucuk, indicating a clear recognition of these iconic local dishes. This awareness reflects the strong cultural identity embedded in Kayseri cuisine and supports previous findings that local culinary products are key elements in cultural transmission (Long, 2003; Berard and Marchenay, 2008).

From a restaurant's perspective, local dishes are strategic elements that highlight a destination's identity. Integrating local flavours into menus helps tourists develop an emotional connection, enhances their satisfaction, and fosters destination loyalty (Albayrak, 2014). The survey results show that the most influential factors in restaurant selection were cultural authenticity, sourcing ingredients locally, and the informative value of local foods regarding regional culture. These findings align with prior research emphasising that the cultural and educational value of local foods plays a decisive role in consumer behaviour (Meladze, 2015; Richards, 2012). Interestingly, elements such as staff clothing or regional music were found to have minimal influence, suggesting that authenticity and food quality are more impactful than thematic presentation.

Local dishes are also considered carriers of a region's cultural heritage. Traditional recipes, local ingredients, and region-specific cooking techniques create a unique experience for tourists, which plays a significant role in differentiating tourist destinations (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2006). The study additionally found no significant difference in interest in Kayseri cuisine by gender, indicating that the appeal of local culinary experiences transcends demographic categories. Furthermore, the frequency of visits to local restaurants—ranging from daily to yearly—highlights tourists' consistent engagement with authentic regional gastronomy.

In conclusion, local foods are not merely a means of nourishment for tourists but also a source of cultural learning, identity exploration, and experiential satisfaction. This study contributes to the field by clarifyıng which specific dishes are most recognised by tourists in Kayseri, identifying the primary factors influencing local restaurant choice, and demonstrating the consistent interest across genders, thereby providing both theoretical and practical insights. Theoretically, it strengthens understanding of the relationship between regional culinary culture and tourist perceptions, complementing previous studies on gastronomy tourism and cultural heritage. Practically, it informs local restaurateurs and

tourism managers about which dishes to emphasise, which factors to prioritise in marketing strategies, and how to design experiences that maximise tourist engagement with local culture. Overall, the findings underscore that integrating local gastronomy into tourism products enhances the attractiveness, cultural sustainability, and economic value of destinations, confirming the pivotal role of local foods in both visitor satisfaction and destination branding (Yüncü, 2010).

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