

## TOURISM-ORIENTED RESTAURANTS: THE INTERPLAY OF THE COLLECTIVE TOURIST GAZE AND DESTINATION GASTRONOMY STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explores the emergence and defining characteristics of tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya, Türkiye, within the context of mass tourism dynamics and destination gastronomy strategies. Data were collected through focus-group interviews, document analyses, and participant observations. The research is theoretically grounded in the concepts of the collective tourist gaze and destination gastronomy tourism strategies. The findings indicate that the primary forces shaping the formation of tourism-oriented restaurants are mass tourism and the all-inclusive holiday system. Tourists' demand for familiar food—driven by factors like food neophobia, desire for authenticity, information asymmetry, and time constraints—has prompted local stakeholders to develop restaurants with low investment costs and high-profit expectations. These restaurants are characterized by ambiguous concepts, standardized food presentation, pseudo-local dishes featuring simplified and vulgarized recipes, and strategies prioritizing visibility over cultural identity. They occupy a distinct position between global fast-food chains and culturally embedded destination restaurants. This study offers a contextual perspective on the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants by showing how tourism can transform local culinary culture and restaurants.

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## INTRODUCTION

Restaurants have been examined recently in relation to tourism, particularly regarding tourists' reasons for seeking information about them (Batra, 2008), the factors influencing restaurant selection (Lillywhite & Simonsen, 2014), and the effects of dining experiences on satisfaction and behavioral intentions (Sparks et al., 2003). The close association of restaurants with tourism stems from their important role in gastronomy tourism (Bertan, 2020; Lin et al., 2022), particularly as important venues for representing a destination's local gastronomy (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016b; Choe & Kim, 2018; Hernandez-Rojas et al., 2021; Presenza et al., 2013). By encouraging restaurants' use of local products, gastronomy tourism is also socioeconomically valuable (Lytvynenko, 2025; Meneguel et al., 2019). However, tourists may not always be attracted to experiencing a destination's local cuisine (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016a), while restaurant operators may not always recognize that local products can also be profitable (Nebioğlu, 2021).

The relationship between tourism, gastronomy, and restaurants can also be considered in terms of tourism's transformative influence on local cuisines within the globalization—localization dialectic (Mak et al., 2012a), which reshapes both the content of local dishes and the operational structures of the restaurants that serve them (Avieli, 2013). Within this transformation, certain establishments—here referred to as tourism-oriented restaurants—deliberately adapt their offerings to meet tourists' expectations by blending globally recognizable dishes, service protocols, and presentation styles with locally sourced ingredients, traditional cooking techniques, and cultural narratives. This hybridization produces dining experiences that negotiate authenticity and familiarity to appeal simultaneously to a diverse range of tourist profiles. For example, Barcelona's El Poble Sec blurs the boundaries between tradition and innovation by reimagining Basque pintxos (tapas) as glocal culinary icons (Londoño et al., 2018), while York's, a city in the UK, food offerings reflect the coexistence of cultural homogenization, pluralistic diversity, and adaptive hybridity, thereby supporting sustainable destination identity-building (Stalmirska, 2023).

On the other hand, the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants can also be understood by considering the motivations of the entrepreneurs who establish them and the tourists who visit them. On the supply side, entrepreneurs are often motivated by economic opportunities associated with growing tourist demand, as well as lifestyle considerations, social

recognition and the strategic use of cultural heritage as a marketable asset (Chen & Elston, 2013; Mak, 2025; Mottiar, 2016; Wang et al., 2019). On the demand side, tourists are looking for authenticity, novelty and pleasure, but also for convenience and familiarity (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016a; Wareebor et al., 2025). These shared influences can explain why such restaurants adapt to global expectations while also incorporating elements of local food culture.

While research has demonstrated how tourism can transform local cuisines, researchers have paid less attention to the transformation of the restaurants where these changes occur. The few relevant studies suggest that tourism can encourage various forms of restaurants that differ in suitability for tourists (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015; Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017). The literature often discusses tourism-oriented restaurants in terms of changes to culinary heritage (Avieli, 2013) or the tourist–local food relationship (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). However, the restaurants’ specific dynamics, adaptations, and operational characteristics remain underexplored.

Accordingly, the present study has two main objectives: first to explain the supply and demand dynamics behind the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants using Urry and Larsen’s (2011) collective tourist gaze theory and Seyitoğlu and Ivanov’s (2020) theory of destination gastronomy tourism strategies; second to identify these restaurants’ characteristics. A key tenet of the proposed framework is the positioning of tourism-oriented restaurants between global fast-food restaurants—indicative of globalization—and destination restaurants—embodying local culture. Using a phenomenological research design, we examine their characteristics (location name, physical features, atmosphere, menu, and food) to provide a structured analysis of their ambiguous position within the literature.

This study contributes to the literature by shifting focus from tourism’s influence on local cuisines to the restaurant settings where these changes occur, thereby offering an integrated demand and supply perspective that has been largely overlooked. The study provides theoretical insights into the globalization–localization dialectic by showing how tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya balance global standardization and local adaptation. It also offers practical recommendations for improving quality standards, enhancing the representation of local gastronomy, and integrating local products into tourist dining experiences. The remainder of this paper is structured as follows: the next section

reviews the relevant literature and theoretical background; the methodology section details the research design; the subsequent section presents the findings; the discussion and conclusion outline the theoretical implications, practical recommendations, and directions for future research.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### The Gastronomic Dimensions of the Collective Tourist Gaze

The literature investigating the roles of food, place, and experience within tourism includes notable studies drawing on several theoretical perspectives regarding tourism's impact on local cultures (Sujood et al., 2024). These studies generally conclude that tourism commodifies or commercializes local cultures (Cohen, 1988), causes syncretism (Hunter, 2020) and cultural homogenization (Hall & Sharples, 2003), and creates destinations lacking distinctive qualities (Ritzer, 2011). Urry (2002) specifically defines tourism's effects through the *tourist gaze* framework, which treats tourism as a socially constructed way of seeing rather than merely activity involving travel or consumption. It emerges from a desire to disconnect from everyday life, with tourists seeking unique experiences that differ from their daily routines.

Yet this search for an authentic experience can, paradoxically, lead to familiar, widely accepted tendencies. Urry and Larsen (2011) refer to this as the *collective tourist gaze*, primarily motivated by social approval, risk aversion, and the pull of popularity. For example, many tourists choose internationally recognized chain restaurants serving globally familiar dishes like pizza, burgers, or sushi over local eateries, because the former offer comfort and reassurance. This theoretical lens is particularly valuable for understanding how tourists' dual drivers—authenticity versus familiarity—influence both tourism-oriented restaurants' adaptation of local cuisines and their operational choices. Rozanis et al. (2024), for example, demonstrated ethnographically how tourist expectations, sensory triggers, and preconceived imaginaries shape how culinary heritage is adapted and persists within tourism settings.

This perspective can also be analyzed in gastronomic terms. Regarding food and culinary cultures, tourist destinations have undoubtedly experienced cultural commercialization, homogenization, and standardization (Timothy & Ron, 2013), primarily due to tourists' demand for destination cuisines. According to Cohen and Avieli (2004),

people live in a culturally determined environmental bubble that accompanies them and determines their behavior patterns, including eating and drinking, while travelling. Hence, people consuming as tourists tend to maintain these habits as an extension of their home routine (Quan & Wang, 2004), thereby tending to eat mostly familiar foods (Lytvynenko, 2025; Mak et al., 2017). That is, experiencing food is a supportive activity rather than travelling's main purpose.

This conservative behavior may also stem from informational and sociocultural constraints, such as hygiene concerns, fear of illness, issues with table manners, and communication difficulties (Cohen & Avieli, 2004), which may promote neophobic tendencies and, in turn, a search for familiar flavors (Mak et al., 2012b). Furthermore, information asymmetry, by creating uncertainty regarding food quality, may lead to a majority of tourists preferring familiar flavors (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Drawing on Bourdieu's perspective on lifestyles, Hjalager (2004) classifies tourists into four categories based on their interest in gastronomy, noting that those participating in mass tourism activities are more likely to avoid local gastronomy and favor familiar foods.

In short, research suggests that tourists are more likely to prefer familiar foods if they cannot escape the influence of their own culture, wish to maintain their eating routines, exhibit neophobic tendencies, lack extensive knowledge of the destination, and usually purchase vacations as a package. Tourists' preferences for familiar food can also be explained by the exposure effect (Kim et al., 2019; Mak et al., 2012b). That is, they either seek food from their own culture or internationally familiar foods like hamburgers, pizza, and sushi because they have experienced them before, even if not part of their own culture (Aybek & Özdemir, 2022). This demand for familiar food results in these dishes entering the cuisine of tourist destinations.

Tourism can also transform local dishes. For example, Timothy and Ron (2013) claim that the Hungarian dish goulash served in tourist destinations differs from the traditional dish. The incorporation of both local and global cultural elements can be explained in terms of glocalization (Mak et al., 2012a). These transformations occur in three stages: adaptation, simplification, and vulgarization (Avieli, 2013). In short, most tourists demand familiarity, so they want the local to adapt to their own culture. This leads to global dishes being included on restaurant menus, while local dishes are gradually adapted to tourists' tastes through simplification and vulgarization.

Authenticity is the primary factor underlying tourism's transformative effects on local dishes (Aybek & Alphan, 2021; Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Authenticity refers to carrying inherent characteristics of the past. Tourism has three forms: objective, staged, and existential. While objective and existential authenticity mostly reflect an object's genuine state, staged authenticity involves designing touristic elements based on the expectations and beliefs of tourists or tourism operators (Lee et al., 2022; Wang, 1999). Hence, transformed dishes represent a culinary culture staged to meet tourists' criteria of authenticity. In summary, the collective tourist gaze is evident in gastronomic tourist demand, as evidenced by behavioral patterns, such as seeking out familiar foods, exhibiting neophobic tendencies, and seeking staged authenticity at the destination.

### **Gastronomy's Strategic Role in Tourism Destinations**

Gastronomy's strategic role in tourism destinations depends not only on tourists' own demands but also on factors reflecting gastronomic attitudes within the destination, such as gastronomic identity—defined as the culinary culture formed under the influence of environmental and cultural factors (Harrington, 2005). Destinations can gain substantial socioeconomic benefits by strategically deploying gastronomic identity in their tourism marketing (Lytvynenko, 2025). That is, a destination's unique resources give it a competitive advantage (Vu et al., 2025). However, destinations vary in their representations of gastronomic identity. For instance, Croatia has not effectively used its gastronomic identity in tourism marketing (Fox, 2007), primarily because of its gastronomic strategy.

According to Seyitoğlu and Ivanov (2020), destinations can use gastronomy in tourism marketing strategies as either as a primary or secondary element in tourism marketing activities. For example, it is difficult to change the culinary culture in destinations like France and Italy, which view local gastronomy as a significant tourism activity (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Conversely, culinary adaptation is easier in destinations like Antalya (Türkiye), where classic sea, sand, and sun tourism strategies prevail over gastronomy (Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst, 2016).

The transformation of culinary cultures reflects the interplay between global and local cultures, and between global and local consciousness (Mak et al., 2012a). In destinations with a strong local cultural identity and consciousness like France and Italy, culinary transformation is more protective and regulated, being often maintained through measures

like appellations and the Slow Food movement. In contrast, in destinations where global culture and consciousness dominate, culinary cultures tend to evolve more rapidly. Indeed, such destinations may even lack any formal gastronomy strategy; instead, factors like existing gastronomic products, market structure, leadership, and stakeholders can result in an emergent, self-developing gastronomy strategy (Aydın, 2019). This strategic orientation, whether explicit or implicit, shapes gastronomy's role in tourism, whether as a complementary offering (home eating routines etc.) or as the primary reason for visiting (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020).

Thus, gastronomy's strategic role in tourism depends on how destinations position it within their tourism strategies—as primary driver or secondary element—and on the relative strength of local and global cultural consciousness. Destinations that prioritize gastronomy within their tourism identity tend to safeguard their culinary heritage against globalization's homogenizing effects, whereas those that deprioritize it are more susceptible to transformative or even disruptive change. Tourist typologies further influence this dynamic: for example, mass tourists with little interest in local gastronomy often catalyze its transformation into more familiar, globally recognized offerings. Taken together, these factors demonstrate that gastronomy's strategic role extends beyond simple marketing to shaping both the resilience and evolution of a destination's culinary identity. In short, changes in culinary culture depend on factors like the collective tourist gaze and the destination's gastronomy tourism strategy, which transform both the destination's culinary heritage and the restaurants offering culinary experiences.

### **Mirrors of Change in Culinary Culture: Tourism-Oriented Restaurants**

Many studies have demonstrated how tourism transforms destinations. Urry and Larsen (2011), who provide one of the most detailed conceptualizations of place in tourism, define tourism as the reproduction and presentation of authentic values and lifestyles, exemplified by the transformation of factories in Lancashire, England. Tourism not only transforms industrial landscapes but also redefines everyday consumption places, such as the restaurants visited by tourists and the inclusion of cheese production facilities in tour programs (Sims, 2009).

In altering a destination's cuisine, tourism can also transform the venues for dining experiences—particularly restaurants—as key stakeholders within the tourism system (Sparks et al., 2003). Studies examining tourism's transformative effects classify restaurants in various

ways. For example, Terhorst and Erkuş-Öztürk (2015) analyze the diversification of Amsterdam's restaurants through the lens of urban tourism movements and gentrification, categorizing them according to the diversity of national culinary identities across districts and identifying the city's most dynamic restaurant areas. Their typology divides restaurants into five tourism-related quality classes: high, craft-high, craft, craft-low, and low. Similarly, Yılmaz and Özdemir (2017) classify restaurants in Cappadocia (Türkiye) into five groups—hotel, group, boutique, ethnic, and kebab and pide—based on tourist profiles, behaviors, and prevailing tourism approach. These classifications reveal how tourism shapes restaurant typologies and identify which formats best align with tourist demand. More specifically, hotel and group restaurants in Cappadocia are more tourism-oriented than others (Yılmaz & Özdemir, 2017), while craft restaurants in Amsterdam depend significantly on tourists. Terhorst and Erkuş-Öztürk (2015) label restaurants preferred by tourists “standardized restaurants”.

Other research focuses on tourism-oriented restaurants specifically, a concept first articulated by Cohen and Avieli (2004) in their discussion of whether local cuisine attracts or deters tourists. Tourism-oriented restaurants modify local dishes to be more palatable for tourists who might otherwise avoid their authentic versions. These venues have two principal functions: enabling tourists to maintain elements of their home-country routines; and granting them access to products that ostensibly represent the local cuisine (Avieli, 2013). Many originated as local restaurants before gradually becoming tourism oriented (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). For instance, restaurants in Bali (Indonesia) have progressively replaced traditional dishes with more familiar offerings in response to rapid tourism growth, thereby shifting from local to tourism-oriented establishments (Reynolds, 1993). In some cases, tourism-oriented restaurants are established directly by tourism businesses (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). In Venice, for example, the number of restaurants increased by 160% between 2008 and 2019 due to tourism (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019).

Tourism-oriented restaurants can define in contrast to other restaurant types. For example, they differ from global chains like McDonald's and Burger King, which focus on specific products and operate in distinct markets with fixed quality standards visible to most customers, resulting in low information asymmetry (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Although tourism-oriented restaurants also aim to minimize information asymmetry, their service standards are less consistent, making them less predictable for customers.

They are also distinct from another category attracting increasing scholarly interest, namely destination restaurants, which offer distinctive cuisine (Huang et al., 2022) that attracts tourists specifically for a dining experience (Mohamed et al., 2022). As part of higher-status cultural tourism, tourists often select them based on prior knowledge (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015), while the restaurants differentiate themselves through cultural elements like philosophy, origins, and the head chef's biography (Huang et al., 2022). For some tourists, such restaurants can significantly influence destination choice and travel intention (Mohamed et al., 2022).

Tourism-oriented restaurants differ from both global fast-food chains—predictable establishments in a standard market and easily visited by locals—and destination restaurants, which represent the destination through local culture and motivate tourists to visit the specific destination. Many studies have examined the emergence and characteristics of global chain restaurants, such as Ritzer's (2011) widely discussed sociological analysis of McDonald's. Despite their recent emergence, destination restaurants have also been widely studied in detail. In contrast, research is lacking in tourism-oriented restaurants, which lie somewhere between global fast-food brands representing the standard market and destination restaurants representing the high-status market. The few studies of tourism-oriented restaurants examine either changes in dynamic culinary heritage (Avieli, 2013) or tourist behavior related to food consumption (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Accordingly, we focus on this neglected area in the literature to clarify the key factors behind the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants and their characteristic features.

### **The Development of Tourism and Restaurants in Alanya, Türkiye**

Alanya, a district of Antalya Province, is one of Türkiye's most popular mass tourism destinations. Having been economically dependent on agriculture since the 1950s, Alanya's first tourist accommodation facility was established in 1963. Tourism activities increased following Türkiye's transition to a free-market economy in 1980 and the tourism incentive law of 1982, which further increased tourism investments in Alanya (ALTSO, 2024). As shown in Table 1, from the 1980s to the 2020s, the number of hotels increased by about 12 times from approximately 53 in the 1980s to over 600 in the 2020s, while the number of beds increased about 28 times from 6,489 before mass tourism investments began to 182,526 (ALTID, 2024; ALTSO, 2024). Owing to these investments, Alanya now accommodates over seven million tourists annually, especially from Germany, Russia, and the Netherlands. This represents over 20 times the local population.

Table 1. *Changes in the Number of Accommodation Facilities, Beds, and Restaurants*

Years	Accommodation		Total Tourist
	Facilities	Number of Beds	Numbers
1980	53	6,489	N/A
1990	224	35,210	341,000
2000	629	104,306	677,340
2010	526	140,249	1,848,607
2020	638	182,526	2,462,735
2023	607	176,959	7,093,599

Created by the authors using data from ALTID, ALTSO, and Alanya Municipality.

Alanya has also developed socio-economically and culturally by allowing foreigners to invest in property. Currently, 45,756 properties in Alanya are foreign owned while 27,819 foreign residents are registered in Alanya (Alanya City Council, 2024).

The growth in accommodation establishments has also encouraged the development of other businesses, including restaurants. For example, the number of restaurants in Alanya has increased from 576 in 2015 to over 1,000 in 2024 (Alanya Municipality, 2024). Whereas Antalya is dominated by Turkish-Ottoman restaurants (Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst, 2016), Alanya's cosmopolitan population structure has encouraged the development of tourism-oriented restaurants (ALTSO, 2024; Eren & Şahin, 2022; Uyar, 2023).

Alanya has also recently made gastronomy an important part of its strategic tourism plans, implemented through a web-based culinary heritage application to publicize local products with geographical information (Nebioğlu & Ak, 2023). However, these efforts have not yet enabled Alanya to integrate gastronomy and tourism successfully (Nebioğlu, 2017). This problem also extends to Alanya's restaurants, which almost never serve local dishes, while only about one third of dishes represent Türkiye's national cuisine. That is, unlike Antalya's restaurants (Erkuş-Öztürk & Terhorst, 2016), Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants currently fail to represent Turkish-Ottoman cuisine culture. The preponderance of this restaurant type makes Alanya a suitable destination for detailed analysis of tourism-oriented restaurants.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a phenomenological research design (Heidegger, 2005; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010) to explore the experiences and subjective meanings of different stakeholders in tourism-oriented restaurants. Data were collected through focus group discussions, interviews, document analysis, and observations. Figure 1 presents the integration of research design and data collection tools. To prepare the interview form, a 78-minute focus group interview was conducted with seven experts in tourism and/or restaurant management, selected via purposive sampling. In addition, the concepts of the collective tourist gaze and destination gastronomy strategies were considered in shaping the question framework. The interview form was drafted and finalized after receiving expert feedback in three sections: (1) factors promoting tourism-oriented restaurants, (2) characteristics of tourism-oriented restaurants, and (3) demographic information.

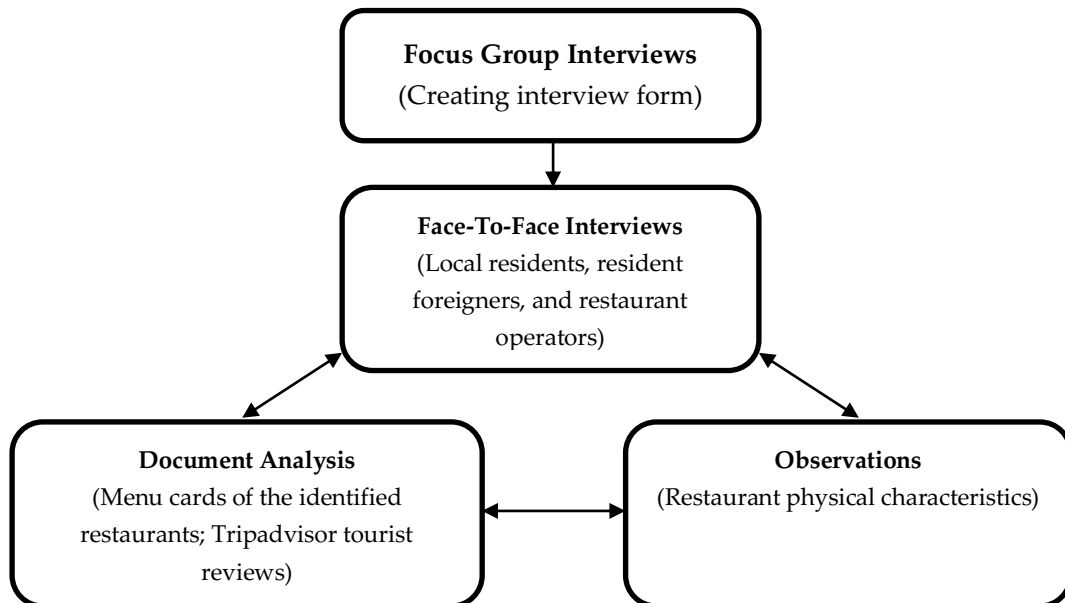


Figure 1. *Research Design and Data Collection Tools*

Face-to-face interviews were conducted using this form, with participants recruited through purposive and snowball sampling. The participation criteria were residing in Alanya for at least five years and having knowledge and experience related to tourism-oriented restaurants. Based on these criteria, 18 participants were identified and interviewed (Table 2). The sample size was determined by theoretical sampling, with the sampling limit defined as the point at which responses became repetitive and no new information emerged. This saturation point was reached after 15 interviews and verified by three additional interviews. The average interview lasted 48 minutes.

Table 2. *Interview Participants' Demographic Details*

	Age	Nationality	Education	Occupation	Residence Duration (Year)	Interview Duration (Min.:Sec.)
P1	30	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Head chef / owner	10	65:30
P2	58	Türkiye	High School	Restaurant supplier	30	56:16
P3	51	Türkiye	Primary School	Restaurant owner	51	33:42
P4	30	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Dietitian / owner	27	71:51
P5	41	Türkiye	High School	Restaurant owner	41	79:43
P6	43	Türkiye	High School	Head chef	10	
P7	51	Norway	Bachelor's	Consultant / sommelier	15	84:37
P8	36	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Restaurant owner	36	43:02
P9	59	Türkiye	High School	Consultant	19	35:34
P10	52	Germany	High School	Journalist	19	53:46
P11	36	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Food engineer	15	51:19
P12	32	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Food engineer	6	
P13	52	Russia	Bachelor's	Sworn translator	20	41:37
P14	45	Netherland	High School	Restaurant owner	23	97:22
P15	58	Türkiye	High School	Restaurant owner	30	
P16	41	Türkiye	Primary School	Restaurant owner	25	43:38
P17	65	Türkiye	Bachelor's	Hotel manager	26	63:02
P18	55	Iran	High School	Consultant	5	42:43

The participants' ages ranged from 30 to 65 years. The majority (eight participants) held a university degree. Thirteen were Turkish citizens, while the remaining five were resident foreigners from Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Iran—selected because these nationalities represent a significant share of Alanya's tourist market. All participants were professionals directly involved in restaurant management, including operators, suppliers, chefs, dieticians, food engineers, sommeliers, and consultants. Residence in Alanya ranged from 5 to 51 years.

Two types of document sources were analyzed: first, 5,757 customers' reviews of 39 restaurants in Alanya with high tourist activity, identified on TripAdvisor; second, restaurant menus collected through site visits to the same 39 establishments. Additionally, after obtaining consent from the respective restaurants, on-site observations were conducted and supported by photographic documentation.

The data collected from the four different sources were subjected to content analysis, assisted by Maxqda. Qualitative analysis can be conducted inductively or deductively (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). In the present study, the key factors, namely collective tourist gaze and destination gastronomy tourism strategy, were already known.

Hence, the deductive approach was employed, although the inductive approach was also used at certain stages to discover new information. The data from the various sources was meticulously synthesized, and the analyses were conducted by two researchers who subsequently reached a consensus. The participants' direct statements were included before the findings were shared with the participants to obtain participant confirmation (Decrop, 1999).

### **Trustworthiness**

Qualitative research must define the following four concepts to be considered trustworthy: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (McGinley et al., 2020). To ensure the study's trustworthiness, several methodological strategies were employed. *Credibility* was ensured through triangulation, using multiple data sources (focus groups, interviews, observation notes, and document analysis) (Anney, 2014), and by incorporating direct quotations to preserve the participants' voices. A form of member checking was also conducted by sharing preliminary findings with selected participants to validate interpretations and confirm the results accurately reflected their experiences. *Transferability* was ensured by providing a detailed description of the research context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings to other settings, and by purposively selecting participants with diverse yet relevant perspectives on tourism-oriented restaurants. *Dependability* was ensured through independent coding by two researchers, who maintained reflexive awareness throughout the process to mitigate potential researcher bias, and subsequently reconciled their interpretations (Jamieson et al., 2023; Rose & Johnson, 2020). Finally, *confirmability* was ensured by securely storing all collected data, maintaining transparent

methodological documentation, and systematically synthesizing the findings through consensus among the researchers (Decrop, 1999). Taken together, these strategies enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

## FINDINGS

### **Key Dynamics Behind the Emergence of Tourism-Oriented Restaurants in Alanya**

#### *Impact of Mass Tourism Movements and the All-Inclusive System*

The primary factor behind the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya is mass tourism. As one of the first destinations where the Tourism Encouragement Law was applied, mass tourism has deeply impacted Alanya. As Participant P1 recalled, 'In the early days, especially when local tourists could not find a place in hotels and pensions, we used to host them in our own homes; then the number of foreigners increased. The number of hotels and restaurants also increased.' That is, participants associated the growing number of restaurants with increasingly intensive tourism.

Mass tourism has also affected Alanya's hotel services. Since the 2000s, the all-inclusive holiday system has encouraged a distinct type of tourist, less motivated by gastronomic experiences, as Participant 4 explained: 'It [all-inclusive system] affects us very negatively. For example, before this system became widespread, the number of tourists dining out might have remained the same as today. Where were we in the 90s, and where are we now? ... After switching to the all-inclusive system, the number of people dining out decreased by 80%, and now we cater to only 20%.'

Participant 1 also clearly described the tourist typology created by mass tourism movements and the all-inclusive system: 'The kind of tourist who comes here is not that kind (open to culinary exploration) ... You can't expect a tourist who comes with an all-inclusive package to experience our culture and eat our food.' According to Participant 4, 'the main reason [tourists prefer Alanya] is sea, sun, and sand', while Participant 2 attributed it to 'affordability of prices'.

In summary, mass tourism movements and the all-inclusive system attract tourists having little interest in local culture or gastronomy. Instead, they choose Alanya for sea, sun, sand, and affordable vacations. This

reflects the collective tourist gaze that prioritizes standardization over local exploration.

### *Gastronomic Reflections of the Collective Tourist Gaze*

Tourists with little interest in local culture and gastronomy mostly demand the familiar food primarily provided by international restaurant chains operating in Alanya and, increasingly, tourism-oriented restaurants. As Participant 17 put it, 'tourists coming to Alanya prefer restaurants like Burger King, KFC, McDonald's, which they can easily find in their country and know what to expect.'. Regarding tourism-oriented restaurants, Participant 1 noted that 'Most tourists generally want very familiar dishes like meat and pasta. Tourists here are not very focused on flavor; their main goal is just to fill their stomachs.'.

Tourists' insistence on familiar food is also associated with fear of illness while holidaying abroad. Hence, they choose familiar food as supposedly lower risk. According to Participant 1, 'Mass tourists are less gastronomically adventurous, closer to familiar foods, and do not want to take risks.'. Participant 17 added, 'If they are afraid of getting sick, they consume well-known foods like hamburgers and crispy chicken, and this is true for most families with children.'.

Tourists' insistence on familiar foods is also related to predictability. By visiting international chain restaurants, tourists can minimize information asymmetry, thereby avoiding unpleasant surprises: '[It is] because tourists recognize these foods. This is the same for all countries. If you go to Romania, McDonald's is the same; if you come to Istanbul, McDonald's is the same; even in Cairo, McDonald's is the same.' (P9).

Time poverty also encourages tourists to choose more accessible familiar foods. When holiday dates are determined by package tours, it is quite difficult to eat local food or discover the destination's local flavors: 'People who come with weekly, three-day, five-day package tours cannot see local restaurants and street flavors.' (P10). Similarly, Participant 13 noted a lack of contact with local cuisine: 'Tourists might encounter local foods by chance, but I have not really seen it.'.

In short, foreign tourists tend to demand familiar foods and avoid local foods, mainly because of uncertainty about unfamiliar dishes, fear of illness, and insufficient time to explore local culture. In response, Alanya's stakeholders have developed tourism-oriented restaurants.

### *Reflections of Alanya's Gastronomy Strategy on Restaurants*

Tourism is one of Alanya's most important economic resources: 'You live in a tourism-oriented place, meaning our lives depend on tourism' (P2). Other participants described tourists as 'the cornerstone here; indispensable' (P11) and 'the awaited person' (P12).

Restaurants can be easily opened in response to tourist demand because of their 'very low investment costs' (P14) compared to hotels and other tourism businesses, and inadequate regulatory mechanisms, as Participant 1 noted: 'There is no regulation; how do these restaurants open? Anyone can open a restaurant anywhere they want.'. Consequently, as Participant 14 added, 'In Alanya, side streets and main roads—everywhere there is a restaurant.'.

One of the main aims of opening a restaurant in Alanya is 'to earn a lot of money in a short time' (P8) and maximize profits and minimize costs: 'After all, there is a short six-month tourism season. People see that restaurants are packed and have high turnover, so they think, "I should open a restaurant too"' (P1).

Restaurants can also open quickly because of easy integration into Alanya's supply chain: 'Usually, where there are tourists, hotels usually use frozen fries, ready-made products. Many restaurants follow a similar approach ... This also saves time and such products can be easily prepared by everyone; they do not require expertise' (P3). Restaurant operators prefer to integrate into hotel supply chains because they provide 'low-cost, quickly producible' (P1) and 'easily accessible' (P4) products.

A human resources perspective is also relevant: 'It is easy to find staff to work in restaurants in Alanya because the hotel sector is very developed' (P9). Furthermore, 'there is no need to keep the staff fixed' (P12) over the short tourism season, while 'in winter, one chef remains, one waiter remains, and the rest are let go' (P6).

In short, from a supply perspective, restaurant businesses are easy to establish because regulatory mechanisms are weak, restaurants are cheaper to set up than other tourism businesses and tend to yield higher profit margins while experiencing relatively few issues related to supply chains and human resources.

Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants have emerged because of mass tourist demand driven by the dominant tourism approach and the supply developed by destination stakeholders to meet this demand. These

restaurants are clearly established to serve tourists, as Participant 11 noted: 'There are tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya. You know, I have never thought of going there for dinner, and in my twenty-five years here, I have never taken anyone there... Only tourists go there.'. Similarly, Participant 1 added, '[A tourism-oriented restaurant] can serve not only tourists but also locals, but locals don't go there. The operator does not mind if locals do not come, but they also do not make an effort to attract them.'. The following section describes the four main characteristics of these restaurants: location, restaurant name, physical characteristics and atmosphere, and menu and dishes.

## **Characteristics of Tourism-Oriented Restaurants**

### ***Location***

One of the prominent characteristics highlighted in the interviews was the restaurants' concentration in specific locations: 'If you are directly targeting tourists, location is very important' (P5), particularly 'along the main streets' (P6). Participant 4 gave a more detailed account: 'Such businesses are mostly established around hotels and in historical areas. For example, there are many [tourism-oriented] restaurants in Alanya Castle. They can also be found in natural areas such as the Dim River.'.

### ***Restaurant Name***

Strikingly, the analyzed restaurants mostly have non-Turkish names, such as 'La Luna' or 'Memo's,' which Participant 7 explained as follows: 'Tourists find places with foreign names easier to choose.'. Participant 12 explained this in terms of branding: 'The brand [of these restaurants] is not important; next year they will change the signboard and become a new restaurant.'.

### ***Physical Properties and Atmosphere***

Notably, tourism-oriented restaurants have multifunctional descriptive signs: 'Most ... definitely have signs saying "restaurant, café, bar"' (P7). Participant 5 suggested this was because 'these types of restaurants do not have a specific concept.' That is, they can provide tourists with any such service throughout the day.

These restaurants are also decorated with flags from different countries or tour operators. According to Participant 1, 'flags are used to make people feel at home.'. The restaurants also place their menus near the

entrance and display three-dimensional models of certain dishes. According to Participant 16, the menu location is 'intended to relieve [tourists'] uneasiness. At least the customer can see the price and variety in this place and decide whether to choose this restaurant.'. Participant 13 described the models as 'appetite-enhancing and curiosity-inducing' visuals.

The restaurants' bright lighting is also striking: 'These restaurants are very sparkling' (P1); 'they have big chandeliers' (P18); 'lighting is very important in gastronomy' (P15).

Finally, the restaurants use foreign music and broadcast football matches during the season to attract customers: 'If it's a restaurant frequented by Norwegians, then their music is played in that restaurant' (P1). These restaurants also have 'large tables and large chairs to make guests comfortable' (P18).

### *Menu and Dishes*

According to Participant 8, the menus are determined by tourist preferences: 'Most business owners or restaurant operators don't aim to highlight our national cuisine or create our own style to elevate Alanya's culinary scene in the future. Instead, they shape their menus based on the preferences of the tourists who come here.'.

Accordingly, the menus are strikingly similar across all restaurants analyzed, such that 'Even the tourists are joking about the similarity of the restaurant menus: "If I choose a dish from the first restaurant here and then go to the restaurant at the end of the street and ask for dish number 10, I can say I'll get the same meal"' (P1). As Participant P3 put it, 'What they offer are stereotypical menus. Tenderloin, steak, chicken skewer, spaghetti, omelet, so everyone is a chain copy of each other.'. In short, although Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants offer almost 100 different dishes, 'All of these [dishes on the menu] are shaped according to the demands of tourists, depending on their nationality and culture' (P8). Furthermore, the majority of dishes are globally recognized items like pizza and hamburgers, as echoed disparagingly in one TripAdvisor review: 'The menu here has boring dishes that you can find all over the world, in every country.' (C177).

While about one fifth of the dishes served in the analyzed restaurants are Turkish dishes reflecting the national cuisine, there are almost no local Alanya dishes. The Turkish dishes are mostly kebabs and pita bread, found anywhere in Turkey. Notably, Alanya's restaurants adjust these dishes to

suit tourists' tastes: 'For example, tourists do not eat a lot of garlic, so we reduce the garlic in the meze [starters], and since they do not eat lamb, we make the kebab with beef.' (P1).

In addition to altering Turkish dishes to match tourists' tastes, these restaurants tend to prepare them sloppily: 'Quality doesn't matter in these restaurants because you don't expect the same tourist to come again. The following year, there will be other tourists. Therefore, I do not need to retain staff or provide a consistent flavor' (P1). Similarly, each Turkish dish can be quickly converted into another dish if needed: 'I have often seen meatballs turned into kebab' (P6).

Consequently, restaurants may serve dishes presented as Turkish cuisine on the menu yet not belonging to any cuisine. For example, most of the restaurant menus listed a dish called the Osmanish Kebab. However, as Participant 7 pointed out, 'There is no dish called Osmanish in Turkish cuisine. There is sautéed meat, shepherd's roast, diced lamb fried on iron plate, but there is no Osmanish ... There is no such thing in [Turkish] cuisine. Indeed, this dish belongs neither to Turkish nor to any other cuisine.'

Similarly, some restaurants serve Plank Steak, claiming that it is an international dish. However, Participant 7, who describes it as 'grilled rib-eye [steak] served with sautéed vegetables, mashed potatoes, and demi-glace sauce on a wooden plank' claims it is 'a touristic dish invented by tourism-oriented restaurants.'. As Participant 3 comments, 'They call it international cuisine, but it is not international; they call it traditional cuisine, but you cannot find anything from it. In other words, they are always hybrid products.'

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to reveal the dynamics underlying the emergence of tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya, a major tourist destination in Türkiye, characterized by intensive tourism activities. It also aimed to identify the defining features of tourism-oriented restaurants created by these dynamics. The findings have theoretical and practical implications.

### Theoretical Implications

The study identified three main factors contributing to the emergence of these restaurants in Alanya: the dominant tourism approach, gastronomic

reflections of the collective tourist gaze, and effects on restaurants of the destination's gastronomy tourism strategy (Figure 2).

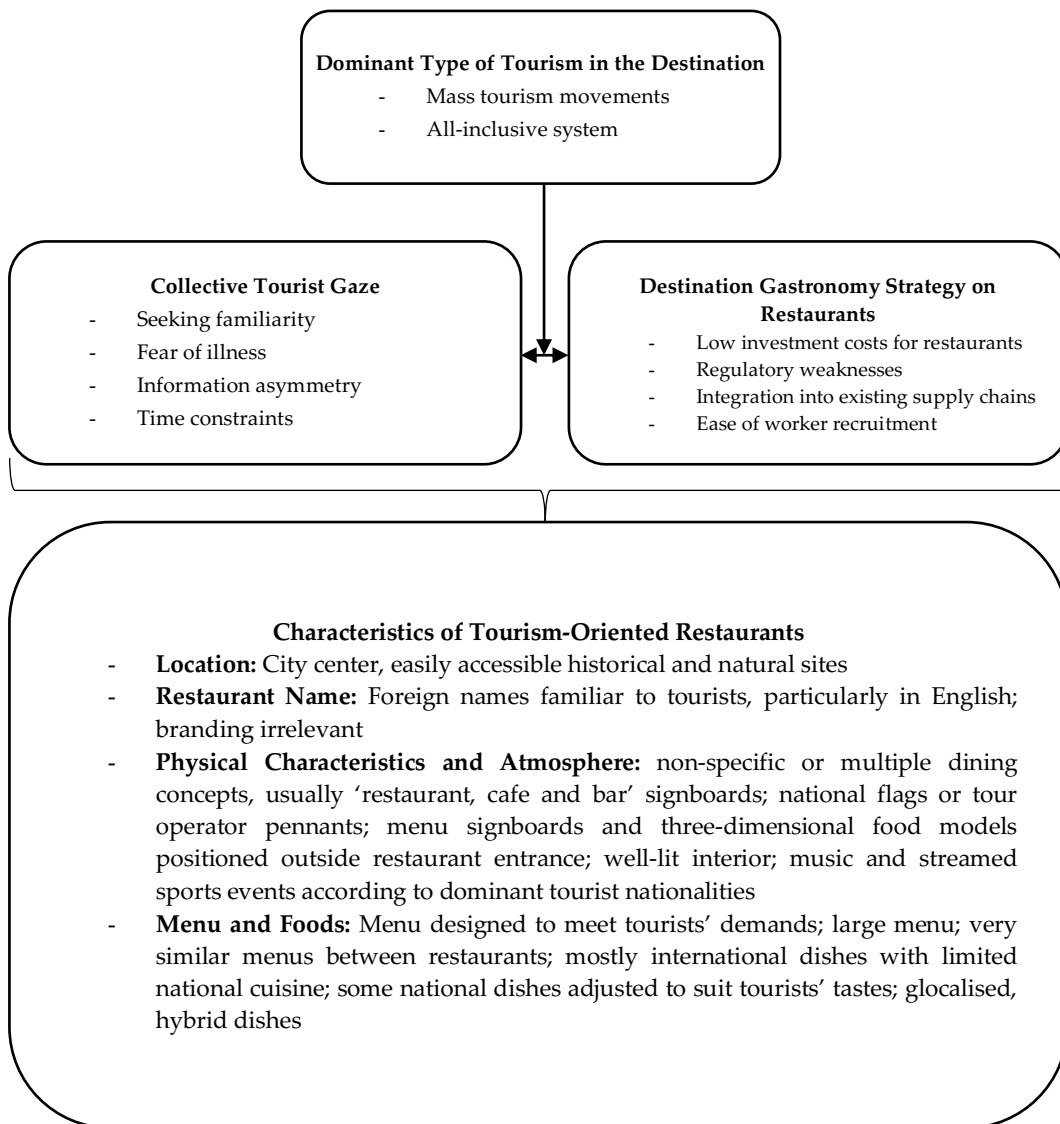


Figure 2. *Key Dynamics Behind the Emergence of Tourism-Oriented Restaurants and Their Characteristics*

By supporting mass tourism, including all-inclusive package holidays, Alanya's dominant tourism approach tends to attract tourists with little interest in gastronomy and having the characteristics of convenience-oriented or recreational tourists in Hjalager's (2004) tourist classification. Because they are not primarily motivated by gastronomy, they are conservative about their food choices and prefer familiar dishes. For most mass tourists, food is a secondary activity and extension of their home routine (Quan & Wang, 2004). Thus, they had little intention of experiencing the local cuisine (Rozanis et al., 2024).

These tourists are also neophobic, wishing to avoid illnesses during their holidays by avoiding unfamiliar foods. This is similar to Cohen and Avieli's (2004) finding. However, Alanya's tourists are not affected by hygiene and table manners, but rather by time constraints and destination characteristics.

Tourists may also avoid local cuisine because of asymmetric information. That is, insufficient knowledge about a destination's local dishes, makes tourists unlikely to choose them (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Indeed, mass tourists with little gastronomic interest do not even seek information about local cuisines (Hjalager, 2004).

Another important factor for mass tourists is time. As their activities are almost all pre-planned, they aim to experience what they want with using minimal time and effort (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Hence, mass tourists visiting Alanya are not particularly interested in local cuisine because it requires significant effort.

In summary, because tourists visiting Alanya tend to prefer mass tourism and the all-inclusive system, they are not gastronomic tourists. Rather, they prefer familiar foods because of neophobia, insufficient knowledge about the destination's local cuisine, and time constraints. In short, tourists visiting Alanya possess what Urry and Larsen (2011) describes as the 'collective tourist gaze' and tend to demand standardized experiences associated with the destination.

Destination stakeholders cannot remain indifferent to tourists' demand, while many investors prefer tourism-oriented restaurants because of low start-up costs, inadequate inspection mechanisms, making a lot of money rapidly, easy integration into the supply chain, and easy access to human resources.

Despite arguments that destinations should engage in a collective gastro-discourse to promote local flavors (Fox, 2007), Alanya still lacks sufficient regulatory mechanisms regarding gastronomy. Although Alanya has tried to integrate its local products with tourism through initiatives like the Culinary Heritage Program, such efforts are insufficient given the spread of tourism-oriented restaurants. Different cultural cuisines become more likely in destinations with a weak culinary identity (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Accordingly, Alanya remains in the second stage of Hjalager's (2002) four-stage classification gastronomy and tourism development (Nebioğlu, 2017). Furthermore, because Alanya's dominant approach focuses on sea, sun, and sand tourism., gastronomic activities are

clearly deprioritized. That is, gastronomy is considered a complementary tool in Seyitoğlu and Ivanov's (2020) classification. The emergence of Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants is consistent with Aydın's (2019) findings on the formation of gastronomy tourism strategies. Rather than resulting from deliberate planning, they emerge from the prevailing tourism model, the behavior of mass tourists, and the tendency of destination stakeholders not to perceive gastronomy as a primary value.

Alanya's restaurants aim to maximize profits during the short tourism season, particularly through tourism-oriented approaches with lower start-up costs and rapid returns (Nebioğlu, 2021). The supply chain is also important to integrating tourism and gastronomy. To promote local food production, restaurants should establish close ties with local suppliers (Smith & Xiao, 2008). However, because Alanya's restaurants use the supply system established by hotels within all-inclusive systems, they become tourism oriented, likewise regarding human resources.

These factors can all help explain the establishment of tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya, which almost all specifically aim to serve tourists. In Urry and Larsen's (2011) terms, their success critically depends on the collective tourist gaze; that is, the presence of other tourists. Hence, they disregard Alanya's local population, acknowledging that they depend on tourists for survival.

Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants closely match the second opening pattern defined by Cohen and Avieli (2004), as seen in the sudden growth of tourism-oriented restaurants in Venice (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019). Thus, although Italy's gastronomy strategies aim to preserve local cuisine, mass tourism movements can rapidly increase the number of tourism-oriented restaurants.

In addition to location and name, Alanya's restaurants reflect their physical characteristics, atmosphere, menus, and dishes, mass tourists' desire to continue their home routine, neophobic tendencies, asymmetric information, and time constraints. Tourism-oriented restaurants tend to emerge when these factors are combined with a simplistic management approach, insufficient regulatory mechanisms, integration into the existing supply chain, employment of experienced tourism workers, and an understanding that de-emphasizes gastronomy in tourism.

These characteristics can be more clearly explained by comparing them with global fast food and destination restaurants. Tourism-oriented restaurants are located at central points that tourists can easily reach, such

as near hotels or in a destination's historical center (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Some tourism-oriented restaurants in Alanya are also located close to natural features, such as the Dim River, which can still attract tourists on day tours, despite being far from Alanya's city center. A central location is also associated with tourism activities and rising property prices, which create tourist hotspots where only a limited range of businesses operate, making the area less attractive for local business clusters. Alanya's tourism-orientated restaurants share a preference with global fast-food restaurants for central locations. However, although this centrality allows both locals and tourists to easily access global fast-food restaurants, tourism-oriented restaurants are limited to central areas with heavy tourism activity. In contrast, destination restaurants representing local culture, and better known by locals, are often located far from city centers or in backstreets (Mohamed et al., 2022; Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015).

Our findings suggest that restaurant names are unimportant for tourism-oriented restaurants, possibly because of their seasonal operation, whereas they are critical for global fast-food chains (Ritzer, 2011), as they are for destination restaurants highlighting local culture and identity (Huang et al., 2022).

Tourism-oriented restaurants also differ in not strictly adhering to a particular concept in contrast to fast-food restaurants (Ottenbacher & Harrington, 2009), while destination restaurants emphasize culture and image (Mohamed et al., 2022). Tourism-oriented restaurants primarily aim to ensure that tourists can continue their home-country dining habits by simultaneously providing restaurant, café, and bar services, independent of any specific concept. This non-prioritization of concepts and branding may reflect their short seasonal tourism operations.

Regarding their physical characteristics and atmosphere, tourism-oriented restaurants need greater visibility than destination restaurants because the latter are known to their customers, usually locals or conscious gastronomy tourists (Huang et al., 2022). Visibility is much easier for international fast-food restaurants (Ritzer, 2011) because they are familiar to many tourists through prior exposure (Mak et al., 2012). In contrast, tourism-oriented restaurants try to stand out through lighting, decoration with tour operators' or tourists' home country flags, playing music familiar to tourists, and presenting three-dimensional food models. Tour operators also agree with specific restaurants to direct tourists to them. To reduce tourists' uncertainties regarding quality, restaurants also display their

menu boards at the entrance, indicating that price is an important indicator of quality and a reason for preference (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015).

The tourism-oriented restaurants examined in Alanya serve very similar foods, which can be explained by Mak et al.'s (2012a) concept of uniformity. More specifically, the dishes mostly served by these restaurants reflect the predominance of global culture and consciousness in Alanya. Other Turkish-origin dishes are adjusted and simplified to suit tourists' tastes, for example, by reducing garlic in some recipes or preferring beef over lamb. Restaurants may even ignore the original recipes, such as by using minced meat prepared as meatballs to serve kebabs. While this is easily done, given most tourists' ignorance about Turkish cuisine, it is inappropriate from a gastronomic perspective because it vulgarizes the dishes (Avieli, 2013).

Alanya's tourism-oriented restaurants also serve fake local dishes, particularly Osmanish Kebab, a kind of sautéed meat dish that emerged with purely touristic motives to offer foreign diners a safe, staged authenticity. Similarly, Plank Steak was created to be easy for tourists to consume. Beardsworth and Keil (2002) describe dishes belonging to no specific region as delocalized. Such changes are easier to introduce in mass tourism destinations. Erkuş-Öztürk and Terhorst (2016), for example, found that such innovations are more likely in restaurants serving tourists, although they did not determine the origins and direction of this innovation. While such innovations can sometimes reflect a destination's gastronomic identity and culture, they may also degenerate and vulgarize the destination's culinary culture.

Tourism-oriented restaurants are clearly distinct from global fast-food and destination restaurants. While located in central, high-tourism areas (Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015), unlike destination restaurants, they do not prioritize naming or cultural concepts because of their seasonal nature (Huang et al., 2022; Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Regarding physical elements and atmosphere, tourism-oriented restaurants aim to make tourists feel comfortable, thereby differing from both fast-food restaurants, chosen mainly for physiological reasons, or destination restaurants, which offer unique cultural experiences. Such restaurants also represent the local culture in a controlled manner, namely as staged authenticity (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Tourism-oriented restaurant menus are eclectic and represent many cultures.

The findings also indicate that tourism-oriented restaurants can gain significant advantages over authentic local establishments by clustering in

central tourist areas, simplifying menus, and prioritizing short-term profitability. These dynamics can create tensions, as authentic local restaurants emphasize tradition and cultural identity (Huang et al., 2024; Levitt et al., 2024), whereas tourism-oriented ones focus on adaptation, standardization, and commercial appeal. The result is conflict in terms of both culinary authenticity and economic competitiveness: tourism-oriented restaurants benefit from established supply chains and high visibility, whereas authentic local venues often operate in peripheral areas with limited resources (Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Terhorst & Erkuş-Öztürk, 2015). Yet these conflicts also underscore the paradoxical role of tourism-oriented restaurants as both a threat to, and a potential vehicle for, the representation of local gastronomy within mass tourism contexts.

Tourism-oriented restaurants prioritize making mass tourists feel comfortable through predictable, standardized services akin to Amsterdam's craft restaurants. These establishments, shaped by the collective gaze of mass tourism, aim to offer an acceptable service within tourists' cultural norms, which enables them to thrive. The final section discusses the implications for practitioners.

### **Practical Implications**

The findings suggest several practical recommendations. First, restaurant owners, managers, and chefs should avoid replicating each other's menus. While providing familiar services to tourists may seem advantageous, simple imitation diminishes originality and quality. Instead, restaurants should recognize tourists as potential repeat customers and focus on raising and maintaining quality standards.

Second, the analysis revealed an extensive variety of menu options across tourism-oriented restaurants; therefore, streamlining menus is essential to ensure consistency and improve quality. Third, given that culinary change accelerates in destinations where tourism exerts strong influence, it is critical to understand the origins of recipe modifications. Such awareness can enable the creation of well-informed 'glocal' fusion dishes while avoiding poorly adapted versions misrepresented as 'local.'

Finally, at the destination level, managers and local authorities can play a strategic role by implementing regulatory frameworks that encourage tourism-oriented restaurants to feature authentic local dishes. These dishes can gradually become embedded within the collective tourist experience, supported by both popularity and familiarity.

## Limitations and Future Research

This study, conducted in Alanya, primarily reflects the impact of European tourists' dining habits on tourism-oriented restaurants. Future research should broaden the scope by investigating how the food preferences of non-European tourists shape similar restaurants, particularly in destinations with more diverse visitor profiles. Moreover, since the present study focused on a single destination, comparative studies across multiple destinations would provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which tourism-oriented restaurants are influenced by cultural diversity, globalization, and local culinary identity.

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