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Evaluation of Çorum Cuisine in Terms of Gastronomy Tourism

Bedriye Çilem Soylu

Independent Researcher; 1700 Çanakkale, Türkiye

Ahmet Can Göksun

Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services
Social Science Vocational School, Hitit University
19030 Çorum, Türkiye

Yusuf Ormankiran

Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services
Social Science Vocational School, Hitit University
19030 Çorum, Türkiye

Aydın Ünal

Department of Recreation Management
Tourism Faculty, Sinop University
57000 Sinop, Türkiye

Emre AYKAÇ

Department of Tourism Management
Tourism Faculty, İskenderun Technical University
31200 İskenderun, Türkiye
emreaykac1@hotmail.com

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Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the potential of Çorum cuisine within the context of gastronomic tourism through a stakeholder-based approach and to develop strategic implications for the effective utilization of this potential. The research is designed within a qualitative framework, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews. The data obtained from interviews conducted with 13 participants from diverse professional backgrounds in the field of gastronomy, selected through purposive sampling, were analyzed using content and thematic analysis methods. In the analysis process, a total of 258 codes were grouped under main themes. The findings indicate that Çorum cuisine possesses a strong gastronomic identity concentrated around specific products such as kuru mantı, Iskilip dolması, and su böreği. However, despite the wide range of gastronomic diversity, certain product groups (particularly soups and side dishes) were found to have low visibility. While participants emphasized that the local cuisine has strong attributes in terms of authenticity, diversity, and taste, they identified inadequate promotion, lack of standardization, and limited business infrastructure as

the main weaknesses. The findings also reveal that gastronomic events are considered an important tool for enhancing destination attractiveness; however, current practices are not sufficiently systematic or sustainable. It was further determined that the use of gastronomic brand identity remains largely limited and that promotional activities should be supported through digital platforms, experience-oriented events, and media tools. In terms of development strategies, infrastructure investments, public-private sector collaborations, digital marketing strategies, and awareness-based educational initiatives have come to the forefront. In conclusion, Çorum's rich culinary heritage holds significant potential for gastronomic tourism; however, transforming this potential into a sustainable destination product requires comprehensive planning, effective promotion, and institutional coordination. This study contributes to the gastronomic tourism literature by providing a local stakeholder perspective and offers practical implications for destination management.

Keywords: Tourism, Gastronomy
Tourism, Çorum Cuisine, Gastronomic Identity, Thematic Analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation in tourism demand indicates that visitors are moving away from standardized mass tourism experiences toward more authentic, local, and experience-oriented alternatives. In this context, gastronomy has become an integral component of the destination experience and has emerged as a key factor directly influencing tourists' travel motivations [1]. Indeed, several studies have demonstrated that gastronomic elements shape tourists' destination experiences and affect their overall satisfaction levels [2].

Gastronomy tourism encompasses not only the consumption of food but also the experience of local culture, production processes, and traditional knowledge systems [3]. From this perspective, local cuisines are considered an important component of the intangible cultural heritage of destinations and serve as a significant element of tourist attraction [4]. Furthermore, the literature emphasizes that gastronomy tourism contributes to supporting local economies, promoting rural development, and integrating small-scale producers into the tourism system [5, 6].

From the perspective of destination competitiveness, gastronomic elements provide a strategic advantage due to their locally embedded nature and their resistance to imitation. The effective use of local cuisines in destination marketing contributes to strengthening destination image and enhancing tourist attractiveness [7]. In this process, geographical indication products are considered important tools that both guarantee product authenticity and support the gastronomic identity of destinations [8]. Therefore, the preservation and promotion of gastronomic values are regarded as critical factors for achieving sustainable competitive advantage in destinations. However, the development of gastronomy tourism depends not only on the diversity of gastronomic products but also on how these products are presented, promoted, and perceived by local stakeholders. The literature highlights that the views of local stakeholders play a decisive role in destination development processes and constitute an important source of data, particularly in gastronomy tourism studies [9]. This underscores the importance of stakeholder-based approaches in evaluating gastronomy tourism potential.

Türkiye possesses significant potential in terms of gastronomy tourism due to its rich culinary heritage and regional diversity. Within this context, Çorum stands out as a destination characterized by its historical background, cultural diversity, and distinctive culinary elements. However, a review of the existing literature reveals that studies on Çorum cuisine have predominantly focused on specific products, while comprehensive analyses—particularly those incorporating stakeholder perspectives—remain limited within the context of gastronomy tourism. This situation necessitates a more holistic evaluation of the destination's gastronomy tourism potential. Accordingly, the aim of this study is to assess the gastronomy tourism potential of Çorum cuisine through a qualitative research approach and to propose recommendations for its development based on the perspectives of local stakeholders. In this regard, data obtained through interviews with various actors operating in the field of gastronomy are analyzed to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the destination.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. GASTRONOMY TOURISM

The tourism sector has undergone a profound paradigm shift as a result of increasing global competition and the transformation of tourist expectations from the traditional “sea-sand-sun” triad toward more authentic, local, and experience-oriented domains [10, 11]. Gastronomy tourism, one of the most dynamic and multidimensional outcomes of this transformation, cannot be reduced merely to the satisfaction of eating and drinking needs [12]; rather, it refers to a multifaceted form of travel that encompasses experiencing the culinary culture unique to a destination, recognizing local products and flavors, acquiring knowledge about the production and preparation processes of these products, and exploring cultural elements related to gastronomy [13, 14].

The academic examination of the relationship between gastronomy and tourism has gained momentum since the 1980s, and food and beverage elements have played a significant role in intercultural interaction [15]. The concept of gastronomy tourism was systematically addressed in the literature for the first time by Lucy M. Long in 1998, where the exploration and experience of different cultures through food were defined as the core element [16]. In the literature, gastronomy tourism is referred to by various terms such as food tourism, culinary tourism, gourmet tourism, or gastro-tourism [17–20]. Today, it has become an important motivational factor influencing travel decisions for many tourists and is considered a significant component of the tourist experience [16, 21, 22]. The conceptual foundation of gastronomy tourism consists of the strategic integration of culture, which provides authenticity and historical depth, and tourism components that coordinate the necessary infrastructure and services [23–26]. Within this framework, the act of eating and drinking goes beyond fulfilling a mere physiological necessity and transforms into a recreational activity that supports cultural interaction and becomes an essential part of the tourist experience [27–29].

The motivations that drive individuals toward gastronomic mobility are classified into four main categories: physical, cultural, social, and prestige/status-oriented motivations [23, 30]. Physical motivation reflects the desire to discover new and exotic tastes; cultural motivation represents the intention to understand a region's identity and history through its

culinary heritage; and social motivation refers to the relationships formed and socialization processes experienced during this journey [2, 31–33]. The group referred to as “gastro-tourists,” who are driven by these motivations, generally consists of intellectual individuals with relatively high levels of education and income, exhibiting an openness to new experiences [34]. For gastro-tourists, food is not merely an object of consumption but a means of exploring the spirit, traditions, and intangible cultural heritage of a destination [16, 28].

From a strategic perspective, gastronomy tourism provides destinations with a unique and inimitable “gastronomic identity,” thereby offering a sustainable competitive advantage in the global tourism market [35, 36]. Playing a key role in overcoming the seasonality effect of tourism and spreading tourism activities throughout all twelve months of the year, this type of tourism promotes rural development, increases local employment, and contributes high added value to the local economy by ensuring the continuity of traditional production [37–40]. The scope of gastronomy tourism is not limited to restaurants; it encompasses a wide range of activities, including food festivals, culinary tours, cooking workshops, local markets, gastronomy museums (such as olive oil, wine, and culinary museums), and visits to food production facilities [41–43]. These elements, which enhance destination attractiveness, enable tourists to establish an emotional connection with the region and contribute to the formation of a loyal visitor base [44–46]. In this context, it can be stated that Çorum, with its rich local culinary culture, has the potential to emerge as a prominent destination in terms of gastronomy tourism [47]. In addition to its historical and cultural richness, the city’s distinctive culinary culture can also be considered an important attraction factor in tourism.

2.2. CULINARY CULTURE OF ÇORUM

Çorum, one of the historically, culturally, and geographically rich cities of Türkiye [47], is located in a transitional zone behind the North Anatolian Mountains, opening onto the plains of the Central Anatolian plateau, and continues to develop along major transportation routes connecting the inland regions of the country to the coastal settlements of the Black Sea [48]. Çorum is bordered by Amasya to the east, Yozgat to the south, Çankırı to the west, Sinop to the north, Samsun to the northeast, and Kırıkkale to the southwest, and is situated at an average altitude of 820 meters above sea level [49].

The history of Çorum dates back to the Chalcolithic Period, around 6000 BCE. As one of the important transition points of Anatolia, the region has been ruled by numerous civilizations throughout history, including the Hatti, Assyrian, Hittite, Phrygian, Median, Roman, and Byzantine civilizations; following the settlement of Turks in Anatolia, it came under the rule of the Seljuks and subsequently the Ottomans [50, 51]. Having hosted many civilizations from ancient times to the present, the city has maintained its strategic importance both as a settlement area and as a route for migration and transit throughout history. The presence of Hattusha, the capital of the Hittite civilization, and Alacahöyük in this region has enabled Çorum to possess a cultural heritage recognized at the international level [47].

The historical accumulation that Çorum has carried from the past to the present constitutes one of the main factors shaping the city’s cultural structure and its significance in tourism. This historical heritage, which bears the traces of various civilizations, combined with the agricultural productivity provided by the Kızılırmak River—the longest river in Türkiye—forms the fundamental dynamics that nourish both the traditional way of life in the region and its rich and distinctive culinary culture [52, 53]. The geographically indicated products of Çorum, which possesses a rich culinary culture, are presented in Table 1.

When the culinary culture of Çorum is examined, it is observed that cereal products occupy a significant place; rice, wheat, cracked wheat (gendime), bulgur, and flour are among the most frequently used ingredients. Among vegetables and greens, madımak, spinach, söbelek mushroom, grape leaves, onion, parsley, tomato, garlic, and lemon stand out. In the dairy group, yogurt, milk, and white cheese are commonly used, while in meat products, sheep, lamb, beef, and poultry are preferred. In terms of fat usage, vegetable oil, butter, and margarine are widely utilized, whereas granulated sugar and molasses are commonly used as sweeteners. Walnut, chickpeas, green lentils, and beans constitute the group of legumes and oilseeds [55].

The dishes known as aş prepared in Çorum are richer in content than soups and have a more liquid consistency compared to pilafs [56]. The soup culture is diverse, consisting of cereal- and flour-based varieties, yogurt- or milk-based soups, and those containing legumes; chickpeas, lentils, barley, flour, wheat, noodles, bulgur, rice, cracked wheat, milk, yogurt, butter, and tarhana are the primary soup ingredients. Main dishes can be classified as vegetable dishes, pastries, and meat dishes, with the general character of the cuisine being predominantly based on pastries and meat. Su böreği, mantı, cızlak, hingel, omac, katmer, fried yufka, poppy seed bun, tatar aş, yanıç, and pezi are the main pastry-based foods. Among meat dishes, lamb tandoor, keşkek, sırık kebabı, helise, and çullama are prominent. İskilip dolması and yırtma aş are distinctive examples combining meat and vegetables. Among offal dishes, mumbar dolması and kelle paça stand out. In desserts, cereal- and flour-based varieties as well as pastry desserts are common [55, 57].

When the national literature on the culinary culture of Çorum is examined, it is seen that Kement and Başar [58], in their study, evaluated the food and beverages belonging to the Hittite culinary culture in Çorum from a gastronomy tourism perspective using the interview technique. Şahin [47] analyzed Çorum’s tourism potential in terms of gastronomy

together with its culinary culture, based on literature and document analysis. In their study, Bilgili and Koçoğlu [59] investigated the extent to which local dishes are included in the menus of tourism enterprises in the Boğazkale district of Çorum. Şahin [60] examined both the geographically indicated products of Çorum cuisine and those with the potential to obtain geographical indication. Duman [61] conducted a product development study using the deconstruction technique on certain culinary culture-specific products in the Alaca district of Çorum. In their study, Çolak and Alagöz [62] examined the geographically indicated products of Çorum by emphasizing the importance of geographical indications. Güler et al. [52], in their study, investigated the effects of Hittite culinary culture—one of the significant centers of which emerged in Çorum—on local cuisines. Ortakçı [63] addressed winter preparations in the folk cuisine of Çorum from a collective perspective. Özata Şahin [64], in her study, examined how geographically indicated products shape consumer perception in the Alaca district of Çorum. Adıyaman and Güneş [65] conducted a study on İskilip Dolması within the scope of the sustainability of geographically indicated dishes belonging to Çorum cuisine. Özata Şahin [53], in another study, addressed the elements forming the culinary culture of the Alaca district of Çorum. Yılmaz [66] investigated the place of Yonuz Plum in the culinary culture of Çorum using a qualitative approach. Nazlı [51] evaluated mantı in Çorum culinary culture together with its place in Turkish cuisine and emphasized its characteristic as a ritual food. Özata Şahin [53] also examined the geographical indication potential of gastronomic elements belonging to the culinary culture of the Alaca district of Çorum.

Table 1. *Geographically Indicated Products of Çorum*

Abbreviation: *PGI: Protected Geographical Indication *PDO: Protected Designation of Origin

Product Name	Registration Date	Type of Registration	Product Group
Alaca Borana Yemeği	2024	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Alaca Camili Kilimi	2024	PGI	Carpets and Kilims
Alaca Cızlağı	2024	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Alaca Hingali	2024	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Alaca Mor Soğanı	2022	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
Alaca Yanık Böreği	2023	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Alaca Yarma Aşı	2023	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Alaca Çılbır Yemeği	2024	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Kargı Tulum Peyniri	2021	PDO	Cheeses
Kışlacık Pırasası	2024	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
Osmancık Ayvalı Yahni	2025	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Osmancık Kapari Turşusu	2024	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
Osmancık Kaypak Yemeği	2025	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Osmancık Malak Tatlısı	2025	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Osmancık Yaprak İçi Yemeği	2025	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Osmancık Yırtmaç Yemeği	2024	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Osmancık Domates Kavurması	2026	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Oğuzlar Cevizi	2020	PDO	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
Çorum Baklavası	2025	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Çorum Kuru Mantısı	2021	PGI	Dishes and Soups
Çorum Leblebisi	2002	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
Çorum Simidi	2026	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Çorum Su Böreği	2026	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
Çorum Şekerlemesi	2025	PGI	Chocolate, Confectionery, and Related Products
Çorum Yırtma Yemeği	2024	PGI	Dishes and Soups
İskilip Baklavası	2025	PGI	Bakery, Dough-Based Products, and Desserts
İskilip Dolması	2010	PGI	Dishes and Soups
İskilip Ramazan Keşkeği	2021	PGI	Dishes and Soups
İskilip Sirke Salatası	2023	PGI	Dishes and Soups
İskilip Turşusu	2010	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
İskilip Çileği	2023	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
İskilip Tokmaklı Kağnı	2023	PGI	Handicraft Products Other Than Carpets, Kilims, and Textiles
İskilip Su Kabağı Yemeği	2026	PGI	Processed-Unprocessed Fruit, Vegetable, and Mushrooms
İskilip Tepsisi	2026	PGI	Processed and Unprocessed Meat Products

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Turkish Patent And Trademark Office [54].

3. METHOD

In this study, which was conducted to evaluate the potential of Çorum cuisine in terms of gastronomy tourism and to develop recommendations for the effective utilization of this potential, a qualitative research method was preferred, and the interview technique was employed through a semi-structured questionnaire as the data collection tool. As a result of the conducted interviews, the study aims to:

- identify the prominent gastronomic products of Çorum,
- determine how attractive Çorum cuisine is for visitors coming from outside,
- reveal the strengths and weaknesses of local dishes in terms of gastronomy tourism,
- evaluate the potential use of Çorum cuisine in terms of promotion and destination brand identity,
- assess the contribution level of events and organizations to this potential and propose event-related recommendations,
- present suggestions for enabling Çorum to become a distinctive gastronomy tourism destination.

The qualitative research method allows for an in-depth understanding of individuals' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives [67], and the interpretive paradigm on which the study is based enables a better comprehension of how participants construct meaning and interact [68, 69]. In this context, the interview technique used is considered a powerful data collection method based on verbal communication and is frequently preferred in social sciences [70]. In this research, considering accessibility, time, and financial constraints, a non-probability purposive sampling technique was preferred. Purposive sampling is an approach that allows the researcher to select participants deemed appropriate in line with the objectives of the study based on specific criteria [71, 72]. Accordingly, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 13 individuals who possess knowledge and experience in the field and constitute the study group and sample among competent individuals in gastronomy in Çorum. When similar expressions begin to recur during interviews and the obtained information reaches a sufficient level for the research, there is no need to increase the number of participants [73]. For this reason, the sample was limited to a total of 13 participants, including academics, business operators, chefs, authorized personnel from the governor's office and municipality, a tourist guide, a social media manager, a gourmet, and a restaurant manager, and the interviews were conducted between 10.02.2026 and 30.03.2026.

The questions in the interview form were created by forming a pool of ten questions based on the literature review and the studies of Sabur & Güneş [74], Akkil et al. [75], and Şener [76]. The interview questions prepared in line with the study were re-examined by two researchers, and this draft form was presented to four different academics for their opinions; following their recommendations, revisions were made, and the number of questions was reduced to six, with necessary corrections applied. Within the scope of the research, the participants were informed accordingly, and their responses were recorded using an audio recording device and subsequently transcribed into written documents through the transcription technique. The data collected in the study were analyzed using both content analysis and thematic analysis methods with the MAXQDA24 software. In the first stage, through content analysis, the data were coded and categorized into meaningful groups, and the distribution and frequencies of the codes were examined; this enabled the identification of the overall structure of the data and the prominent themes. In the second stage, thematic analysis was applied, and patterns, conceptual relationships, and meaningful themes in the texts were examined in depth based on the codes and categories obtained from the content analysis. Thematic analysis is a flexible qualitative method that allows the identification of recurring meaningful patterns in a dataset and the formation of meaningful themes based on these patterns [77]. Content analysis, on the other hand, enables the systematic examination of the data collected within the scope of the research and facilitates the detailed identification of themes, patterns, and meaning structures in the texts [78]. The MAXQDA software allows qualitative research data to be organized and processed together with codes. Following the coding process, analyses can be conducted through descriptive information about participants, tables showing the distribution of codes, and models revealing relationships among codes. MAXQDA can be used across a wide range of data types, including interview records, reports, tables, online surveys, focus group discussions, videos, audio files, and visual materials [79].

The findings obtained in the study should accurately reflect the participants' views and demonstrate consistency between the themes and categories formed based on data collected from different sources [80]. In this context, the obtained data were read and examined by the researchers on different days, thereby ensuring analytical comprehension. To increase the validity of the qualitative research, the data obtained by the researchers were coded in the MAXQDA program using the "intercoder agreement" technique, and different code maps were created. During the coding process, the development of coding schemes among researchers and conducting discussions to determine categories are among the methods that strengthen validity [81]. Ultimately, categories and themes based on codes were generated in line with the interview questions, the responses to these questions (data obtained from interviews), and the information obtained from the literature; additionally, opinions were collected and evaluated from two independent researchers external to the study. The findings obtained in the study were visually presented with the help of code matrices and thematic maps provided by the MAXQDA software.

4. FINDINGS

This study aims to examine the potential of Çorum cuisine for gastronomy tourism and to present recommendations for the more effective utilization of this potential. In line with this objective, in order to collect data, a total of 13 participants

from different professional groups, who are competent in the field of gastronomy in Çorum, were reached, and face-to-face interviews were conducted between 10.02.2026 and 30.03.2026. The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Demographic Information of the Participants*

Participant	Gender	Age	Field of Work / Occupation
P1	Female	55	Chef
P2	Male	45	Business Owner
P3	Male	52	Academic
P4	Female	65	Business Owner
P5	Male	40	Tourist Guide
P6	Male	29	Restaurant Manager
P7	Male	43	Business Owner/Chef
P8	Female	61	Gourmet /Influencer
P9	Male	37	Chef
P10	Male	55	Public Employee
P11	Male	19	Chef/Influencer
P12	Male	41	Public Employee
P13	Male	45	Academic

Within the scope of the study, the demographic characteristics of a total of 13 participants were examined. When the gender distribution of the participants is evaluated, it is observed that the sample largely consists of males (n=10), while the number of female participants remains limited (n=3). The age distribution ranges between 19 and 65, indicating that the sample includes individuals representing different stages of life.

When the occupational distribution is examined, it is noteworthy that a significant portion of the participants is directly related to the gastronomy and food and beverage sector. In addition to practice-based professions such as chefs, business owners, restaurant managers, and tourist guides, it has been determined that participants with different professional backgrounds, including academics, public employees, and gourmet/influencers, are also included in the sample. This diversity allows the study to incorporate both the experiences of sector practitioners and the evaluations of individuals representing different perspectives. In particular, the predominance of participants actively engaged in the field of gastronomy supports the contextual relevance of the research and the domain-specific depth of the findings.

The data obtained from the interviews conducted with the participants were analyzed in detail, and the prominent points associated with the questions were coded. These codes were brought together to form various categories. Based on the obtained codes and categories, six themes were identified, as presented in Table 3. Drawing on the literature, expert opinions, research questions, and the data obtained from the conducted interviews, the themes and their corresponding code ratios, which were established through the consensus of the researchers, are presented below.

Table 3. *Themes and Sub-Code Distributions*

Themes	Sub-Codes (f)	Percentage (%)
Featured Gastronomic Products	65	25,19
The Impact of Gastronomy Events on Tourism Development	43	16,67
Recommendations for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Çorum	41	15,89
The Role of Traditional Dishes in Gastronomy Tourism	40	15,50
The Use and Promotion of Gastronomic Brand Identity	38	14,73
The Appeal of Çorum Cuisine	31	12,02
Total	258	100,00

When the findings related to the table are examined, it is observed that a total of 258 codes are grouped under six themes. When the distribution of the codes according to themes is analyzed, it is determined that the highest frequency belongs to the theme of “Key Gastronomic Products” (f=65; 25.19%). This is followed respectively by the themes of “The Impact of Gastronomy Events on Tourism Development” (f=43; 16.67%), “Recommendations for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Çorum” (f=41; 15.89%), “The Role of Local Dishes in Gastronomy Tourism” (f=40; 15.50%), “The Use and Promotion of Gastronomic Brand Identity” (f=38; 14.73%), and “Attractiveness of Çorum Cuisine” (f=31; 12.02%). The findings indicate that participant statements are distributed across the specified themes with varying levels of intensity.

4.1. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE THEME OF FEATURED GASTRONOMIC PRODUCTS

When the findings related to the theme of “Featured Gastronomic Products” are examined, it is observed that a total of 65 codes are grouped under four main categories. These categories are identified as dishes (f = 38), desserts (f = 15), soups (f = 6), and other food items (f = 6).

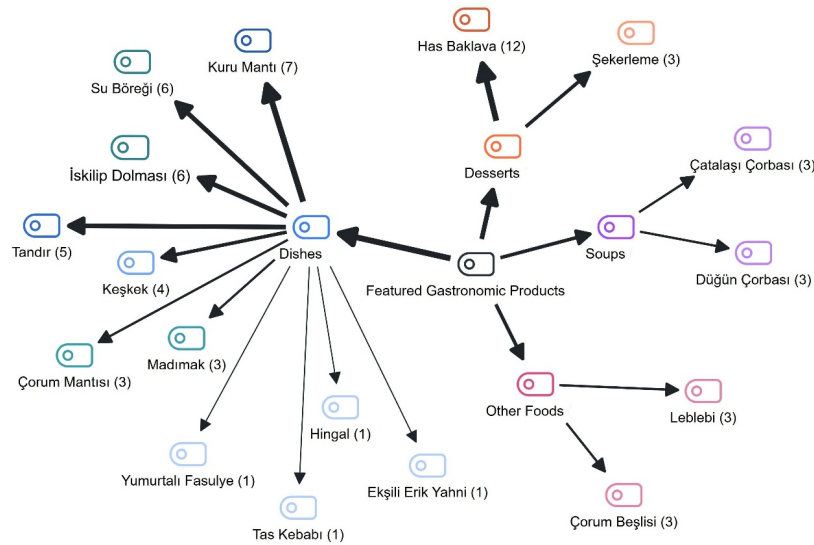


Figure 1. Hierarchical Code-Subcode Representation of the “Featured Gastronomic Products” Theme

The “Meals” category emerged as the most prominent within the theme, exhibiting the highest frequency among all categories. Within this category, the most frequently coded items were *kuru mantı* (f = 7), *su böreği* (f = 6), and *İskilip dolması* (f = 6). These were followed by *tandır* (f = 5) and *keşkek* (f = 4). Other items mentioned with lower frequencies included *Çorum mantısı* (f = 3), *madımak* (f = 3), *hingal* (f = 1), *eğşili erik yahnisi* (f = 1), *tas kebabı* (f = 1), and *yumurtalı fasulye* (f = 1). Participants’ views on this issue are presented below:

“... There’s also a dish we have in Çorum, known as a ‘victory meal’; *İskilip dolması*. . .” (P2)

“... There’s *keşkek*, there’s *Çorum mantısı*, uh, people were coming even from Ankara just for these. . .” (P1)

The “Desserts” category comprised a total of 15 codes, with *has baklava* (f = 12) identified as the item with the highest frequency within this category. In contrast, confectionery products (f = 3) were mentioned with a comparatively lower frequency.

“... I mean, our dishes are actually very good; take our *has baklava*, which is baked for eight hours—it tends to attract more attention. . .” (P11)

The “Soups” category consisted of a total of six codes, within which *çatalaşı* soup (f = 3) and wedding soup (f = 3) were represented with equal frequencies.

“... *Çatalaşı* soup is served with some dishes, for example. Well, you have *çatalaşı* first, and then a meat dish afterwards, and so on. This is, uh, a type of dish with quite an old origin. . .” (P2)

The “Other Food Items” category comprised a total of six codes, within which *leblebi* (f = 3) and the *Çorum quintet* (f = 3) were expressed at equal frequencies.

“... For example, I have a food page. About 40% of my followers are from Istanbul. I also have followers from Bursa. For instance, they say, ‘When we come to Çorum, we definitely want to try what you call the *Çorum quintet*’...” (P8)

When these findings are considered collectively, it becomes evident that participants’ statements regarding the theme of “Featured Gastronomic Products” are predominantly concentrated within the Meals category, whereas the other categories display a more limited yet relatively balanced distribution. In particular, the higher frequencies associated with items such as *kuru mantı*, *su böreği*, and *İskilip dolması* indicate that certain gastronomic elements are more visible and memorable for participants. Direct quotations derived from participants’ views further demonstrate that these products are articulated not merely as food items but as elements closely associated with cultural and local identity. The marked prominence of has

baklava within the Desserts category, alongside the more limited and balanced representation of items in the Soups and Other Food Items categories, reveals a differentiated distribution across categories. Within this framework, the findings suggest that participants express gastronomic elements across distinct categories and at varying levels of intensity, with certain products being emphasized more frequently than others.

4.2. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE THEME OF APPEAL OF ÇORUM CUISINE

An examination of the findings related to the theme of “Appeal of Çorum Cuisine” reveals that participant statements are clustered into two main categories: factors contributing to its appeal ($f = 12$) and areas requiring improvement ($f = 19$).

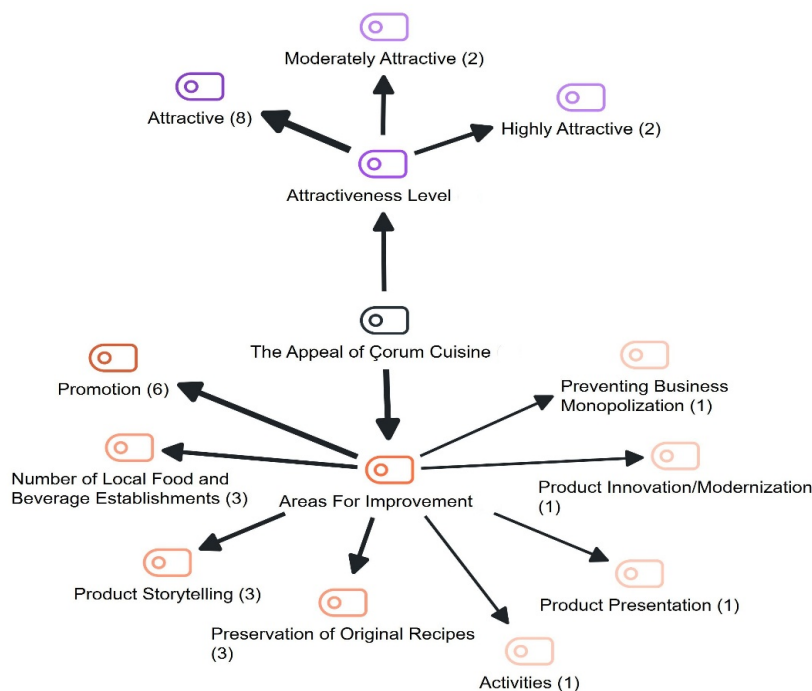


Figure 2. Hierarchical Code–Subcode Representation of the “Appeal of Çorum Cuisine” Theme

Within the category of appeal, participant responses are largely concentrated around the perception that the cuisine is appealing ($f = 8$). However, some participants evaluated the cuisine as very appealing ($f = 2$) and moderately appealing ($f = 2$). These findings indicate that the codes within this category are distributed across varying levels of appeal. Participants’ views on this issue are presented below:

“... For example, our food is quite subjective. Five people sit at the same table. Four of them finish their plates, one does not. That person might say, ‘It didn’t appeal to me.’ So, we also encounter situations like this...” (P7)

“... I think it’s quite appealing. I mean, our dishes are actually very good...” (P11)

“... Of course, it’s appealing. For instance, people who try it even once—especially in passing—tend to come back and eat it again...” (P8)

“... Of course, it’s really appealing. For example, people who eat baklava often say they can’t forget it and that it’s a very special taste. So it clearly has an appealing side...” (P4)

The category of areas requiring improvement represents the highest frequency within the theme, indicating that a range of development needs were articulated under this category. The highest frequency is associated with promotion ($f = 6$), followed by the number of local food and beverage establishments ($f = 3$), the storytelling of products ($f = 3$), and the preservation of original recipes ($f = 3$). Other aspects mentioned with lower frequencies include product presentation ($f = 1$), activities ($f = 1$), innovation/modernization in products ($f = 1$), and the prevention of business monopolization ($f = 1$).

“... Within Çorum, things exist, but efforts targeting outside audiences are very weak. When people come to Çorum and search online, they are of course directed to certain things, but in terms of promotion, it does not have a well-known presence outside...” (P2)

“... It needs to be prepared in accordance with its original form. When we prepare these dishes of Çorum in some restaurants or eateries, if they are not made in their authentic way and we present them to customers, that becomes a serious problem...” (P10)

“... The strengths I have observed over the last five years are as follows: every dish should have a story; it needs to be turned into a narrative. Honestly, I think months would not be enough—it would really take years. But this is what needs to be improved. . . ” (P9)

When these findings are considered collectively, it is evident that participant statements regarding the theme of “Appeal of Çorum Cuisine” are distributed across varying levels of intensity under the categories of appeal and areas requiring improvement. Within the appeal category, the higher frequency of the expression “appealing” indicates that participants’ evaluations of the cuisine are largely framed in a positive manner. Direct quotations from participants further reveal that this appeal is primarily articulated through elements such as taste, experience, and the tendency for repeat preference. However, the relatively lower frequencies of the expressions “very appealing” and “moderately appealing” suggest that these evaluations exhibit variation across different levels of intensity. On the other hand, within the category of areas requiring improvement, the prominence of promotion as the most frequently mentioned factor indicates that participants place particular emphasis on this issue. The similar frequencies observed for factors such as the number of local food and beverage establishments, the storytelling of products, and the preservation of original recipes suggest that development needs are addressed across multiple dimensions. Participant quotations demonstrate that these aspects are primarily evaluated in relation to insufficient promotion, the preservation of authenticity, and cultural transmission. In addition, elements expressed with lower frequencies—such as product presentation, activities, and innovation—indicate that areas requiring improvement are considered under more limited yet diverse headings. In this respect, the findings suggest that participants evaluate the appeal of Çorum cuisine both in terms of its current state and its areas for improvement, across different categories and varying levels of intensity.

4.3. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE ROLE OF TRADITIONAL DISHES IN GASTRONOMY TOURISM

An examination of the findings related to the theme of “The Role of Traditional Dishes in Gastronomy Tourism” indicates that participant statements are grouped under two main categories. These categories are identified as strengths (f = 23) and weaknesses (f = 17).

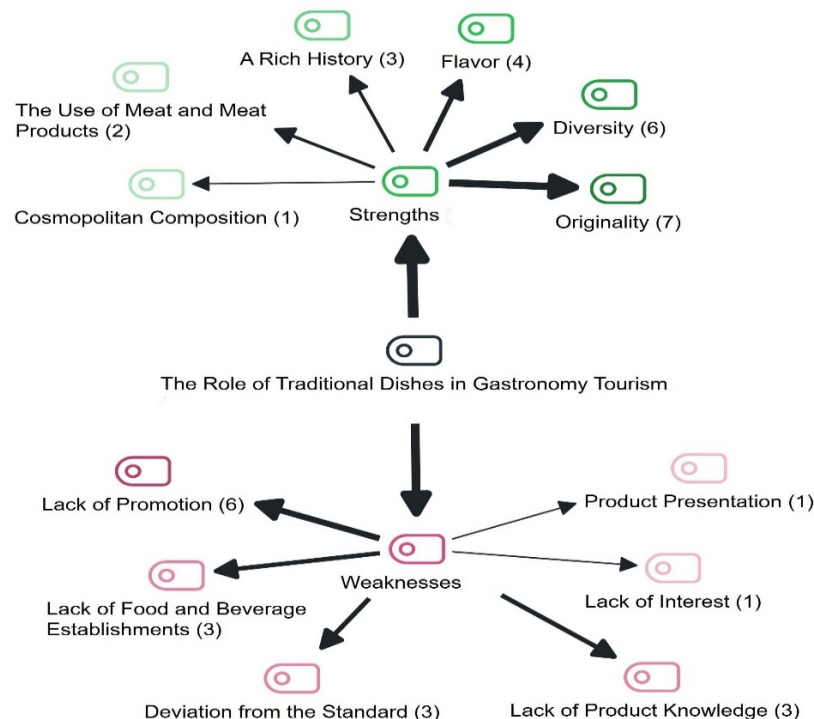


Figure 3. Hierarchical Code-Subcode Representation of the “Role of Traditional Dishes in Gastronomy Tourism” Theme

An examination of the weaknesses category indicates that the highest frequency is associated with inadequate promotion (f = 6). This is followed by lack of awareness of the products (f = 3), insufficiency of food and beverage establishments (f = 3), and deterioration of standards (f = 3). Other aspects expressed with lower frequencies include lack of interest (f = 1) and product presentation (f = 1). Participants’ views on this issue are presented below:

“... If we can promote these dishes well and, um, make incoming guests feel more comfortable in terms of both food and beverages, then with a strong promotional approach, I think we can handle this. . . ” (P5)

“... In addition, when we go to Çorum, the chance of finding local menus in restaurants or hotels is quite limited. Moreover, the infrastructure that would facilitate tourists’ access to this cuisine is also insufficient. . . ” (P13)

“... Now, many of our dishes are not even known by people in Çorum. There are people who live in Çorum but still don’t know them. This lack of awareness is a drawback. . . ” (P8)

“... Çorum dishes are indeed of a high standard, but for example, even for mantı, there are different versions—everyone makes it differently, so no standard can really be established. This confuses people about which one is authentic, and I think that is a shortcoming. . . ” (P7)

Within the strengths category, the code with the highest frequency is originality ($f = 7$), followed by diversity ($f = 6$) and taste ($f = 4$). Other aspects expressed with lower frequencies include a deep-rooted heritage ($f = 3$), the use of meat and its derivatives ($f = 2$), and a cosmopolitan structure ($f = 1$). These findings indicate that the codes within this category are distributed across different levels of frequency.

“... Um, I think its strongest aspect is that, using similar ingredients, people are able to create very different and even unexpected dishes. Even though the ingredients may seem simple, there is actually a wide variety. . . ” (P3)

“... As a primary strength, I can say that Çorum’s local cuisine is distinctive and unique. . . ” (P13)

“... Its strengths, as I mentioned before, are that our cuisine is very strong in terms of pastries and vegetables from a gastronomic perspective. We do of course have meat dishes as well, but it is particularly strong in these two aspects, and it is filling and tasty. . . ” (P12)

“... Well, as I said earlier, we generally use meat in our dishes. Even in something like beans with eggs, minced meat is sometimes used. As I mentioned, since meat has a very important place in Turkish culture, we don’t really face difficulties. The presence of meat in dishes generally makes our cuisine strong. . . ” (P6)

When these findings are considered collectively, it becomes evident that participant statements regarding the theme of “The Role of Traditional Dishes in Gastronomy Tourism” are distributed across varying levels of intensity under both strengths and weaknesses categories. Within the strengths category, the higher frequencies associated with elements such as originality, diversity, and taste indicate that participants conceptualize local cuisine around a set of core attributes. Direct quotations further reveal that these elements are primarily evaluated in relation to the distinctive nature of the cuisine, the diversity of ingredients, and sensory appeal. However, the relatively lower frequencies of aspects such as deep-rooted heritage, the use of meat and its derivatives, and a cosmopolitan structure suggest that strengths are addressed across multiple dimensions. On the other hand, within the weaknesses category, the prominence of inadequate promotion as the most frequently expressed issue indicates that this factor occupies a central place in participant narratives. The similar frequencies observed for lack of awareness of products, insufficiency of food and beverage establishments, and deterioration of standards suggest that weaknesses are distributed across multiple dimensions. Participant quotations demonstrate that these issues are mainly discussed in relation to insufficient promotion, accessibility constraints, and the lack of standardization. Additionally, elements expressed with lower frequencies—such as lack of interest and product presentation—indicate that weaknesses are considered within more limited yet diverse dimensions. In this respect, the findings suggest that participants evaluate the role of traditional dishes in gastronomy tourism in terms of both strengths and weaknesses, across different categories and varying levels of intensity.

4.4. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE USE AND PROMOTION OF GASTRONOMIC BRAND IDENTITY

An examination of the findings related to the theme of “Use and Promotion of Gastronomic Brand Identity” indicates that participant statements are grouped under two main categories. These categories are identified as the current state ($f = 12$) and promotional channels ($f = 26$).

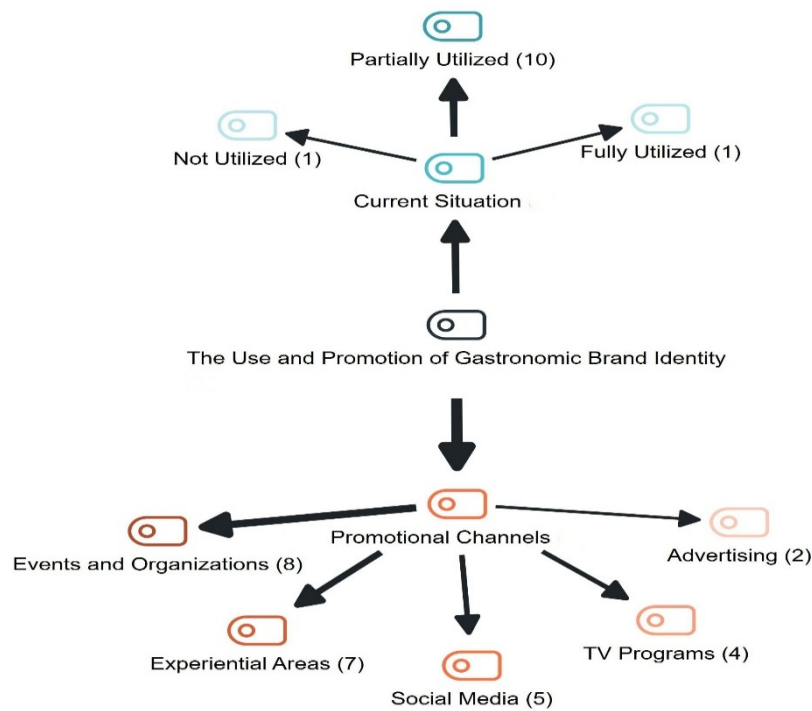


Figure 4. Hierarchical Code–Subcode Representation of the “Use and Promotion of Gastronomic Brand Identity” Theme

Within the current state category, participant responses are largely concentrated around the view that gastronomic brand identity is partially utilized ($f = 10$). However, a limited number of participants stated that it is either fully utilized ($f = 1$) or not utilized at all ($f = 1$). These findings indicate that the codes within this category are distributed across different levels. Participants’ views on this issue are presented below:

“... It’s used at around 60–70%. For example, there are tours based on the Hittites or other activities where people come specifically to visit those places. But when we talk about gastronomy tourism, it ends up being just tourism, and gastronomy becomes separated. . .” (P9)

“... I think Çorum cuisine can be used as a tool; however, when we look at the current situation, we see that this cuisine, which has great potential, is used insufficiently. One of the areas where it is underutilized is promotion and marketing. . .” (P13)

“... I mean, it can definitely be used. Everyone already says that. But when it comes to how much it is actually used, it’s not used much. In fact, we could even say it is not used at all. . .” (P10)

The promotional channels category represents the highest frequency within the theme, indicating that a variety of promotional tools are articulated under this category. The highest frequency is associated with events and organizations ($f = 8$), followed by experiential settings ($f = 7$) and social media ($f = 5$). Other elements expressed with lower frequencies include television programs ($f = 4$) and advertising ($f = 2$).

“... There could be a special day to promote Çorum cuisine. Everyone could participate. People could join with different dishes and a kind of showcase could be organized. . .” (P1)

“... I think the most important step could be a local event held every year. It is possible to attend events in different places, both nationally and internationally, but that would not be something unique to us. In such events, everyone brings and markets their own products, like at fairs. But if something is organized locally, it would be more effective. . .” (P10)

“... Well, in terms of what we call social media, more emphasis needs to be placed on it. . .” (P2)

“... Especially when the term ‘has baklava’ was mentioned on social media and television, it attracted attention and started to be used in competitions. . .” (P12)

“... I mean, everyone who comes to a place wants to taste something that belongs to that region. Whether they like it or not is another issue, but they definitely want to try it. And in Çorum cuisine, there are actually many dishes that could appeal to people. These can be presented to people without compromising their authenticity. . .” (P3)

“... For example, people could be invited once or twice a year to local Çorum days, or events could be organized in an open space. People can experience it. When it comes to local food, people think, ‘Will I eat it, will I like it, will it be worth the money?’ If they taste it at such events and get familiar with it, places offering these local dishes would be more successful... ” (P8)

When these findings are considered collectively, it becomes evident that participant statements regarding the theme of “Use and Promotion of Gastronomic Brand Identity” are predominantly concentrated within the category of promotional channels, whereas views on the current state appear more limited yet display a discernible distribution. Within the current state category, the predominance of the expression “partially utilized” indicates that participants’ evaluations of the use of gastronomic brand identity are largely concentrated at a moderate level. Direct quotations further reveal that this usage is primarily interpreted in relation to the gap between existing potential and current practices. In the promotional channels category, the higher frequencies associated with events and organizations, as well as experiential settings, suggest that participants emphasize experience-based and participatory approaches in promoting gastronomic brand identity. At the same time, the presence of elements such as social media, television programs, and advertising at varying frequency levels indicates the diversity of promotional tools. Participant quotations demonstrate that these channels are mainly considered in terms of enhancing visibility, creating experiential engagement, and promoting local products. In this respect, the findings indicate that participants articulate the use and promotion of gastronomic brand identity across different categories and varying levels of intensity, with certain promotional tools being emphasized more frequently than others.

4.5. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON THE IMPACT OF GASTRONOMY EVENTS ON TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

An examination of the findings related to the theme of “Impact of Gastronomy Events on Tourism Development” indicates that a total of 43 codes are grouped under two main categories. These categories are identified as perceived effectiveness (f = 11) and event suggestions (f = 32).

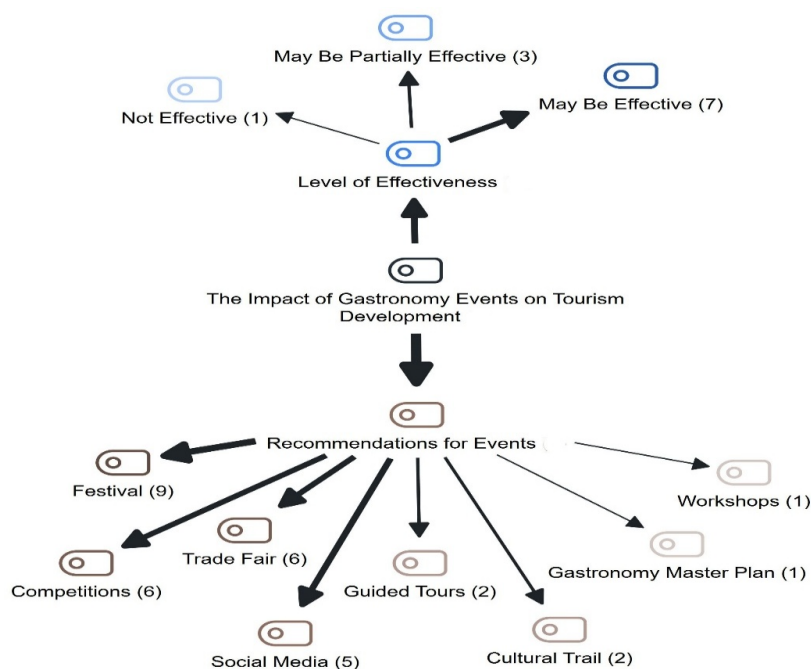


Figure 5. Hierarchical Code-Subcode Representation of the “Impact of Gastronomy Events on Tourism Development” Theme

Within the perceived effectiveness category, participant responses are largely concentrated around the view that gastronomy events can be effective (f = 7). However, some participants indicated that such events may be partially effective (f = 3), while a limited number of participants stated that they would not be effective (f = 1). These findings suggest that the codes within this category are distributed across different levels. Participants’ views on this issue are presented below:

“... Of course it would be effective. I mean, think about it this way: we are located in the Central Anatolia region. Those traveling to the Black Sea region have to pass through Çorum. With such events, people could be attracted to come... ” (P2)

“... Gastronomy-focused events might be effective in increasing tourism potential; honestly, we cannot know without trying... ” (P13)

“It may indeed be effective. Frankly, rather than individuals acting independently, I believe that initiatives carried out through institutional collaboration are more likely to generate greater impact and visibility.” (P10)

The event suggestions category represents the highest frequency within the theme, indicating that a variety of event types are articulated under this category. The highest frequency is associated with festivals ($f = 9$), followed by fairs ($f = 6$) and competitions ($f = 6$). Other codes expressed with relatively lower frequencies include social media ($f = 5$), tour itineraries ($f = 2$), and cultural routes ($f = 2$). In addition, workshops ($f = 1$) and a gastronomy master plan ($f = 1$) are identified as the least frequently mentioned suggestions.

“... Taking part in international festivals and organizing fairs is the best form of promotion. When I first started my profession, I attended a festival and saw how important local dishes are for a city and for its promotion. . . ” (P12)

“... In general, fairs can be organized; I mean, we see that people promote their well-known dishes and their products. . . ” (P6) *“... You know, dishes could first move from districts and villages to the city center, and then, at the city level, large-scale festivals could be organized regionally. . . ” (P6)*

“Activities to be carried out in relation to social media are highly important. Influential figures, such as influencers, have a significant impact within the social media context. Moreover, the visit of prominent chefs would play a crucial role in promoting the city.” (P10)

When the findings are considered as a whole, it is evident that participant statements regarding the theme of “Impact of Gastronomy Events on Tourism Development” are predominantly concentrated within the category of event suggestions, whereas views on their effectiveness are more limited but distributed across different levels. In particular, the higher frequency of expressions indicating that such events “can be effective” suggests that participants perceive gastronomy events as a potential contributor to tourism development. Direct quotations further reveal that these events are primarily evaluated in terms of accessibility, promotion, and the creation of experiential value. Within the event suggestions category, the higher frequencies associated with festivals, fairs, and competitions indicate that certain types of events are more prominently emphasized than others. Meanwhile, elements expressed with lower frequencies—such as social media, tour itineraries, cultural routes, and workshops—point to the diversity of suggested approaches. In this respect, the findings demonstrate that participants evaluate gastronomy events both in terms of their level of effectiveness and the types of practices proposed, with varying levels of intensity, and that certain event types are emphasized more frequently than others.

4.6. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GASTRONOMY TOURISM IN ÇORUM

An examination of the findings related to the theme of “Recommendations for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Çorum” indicates that participant statements are grouped under three main categories. These categories are identified as local government ($f = 19$), marketing ($f = 14$), and education ($f = 8$).

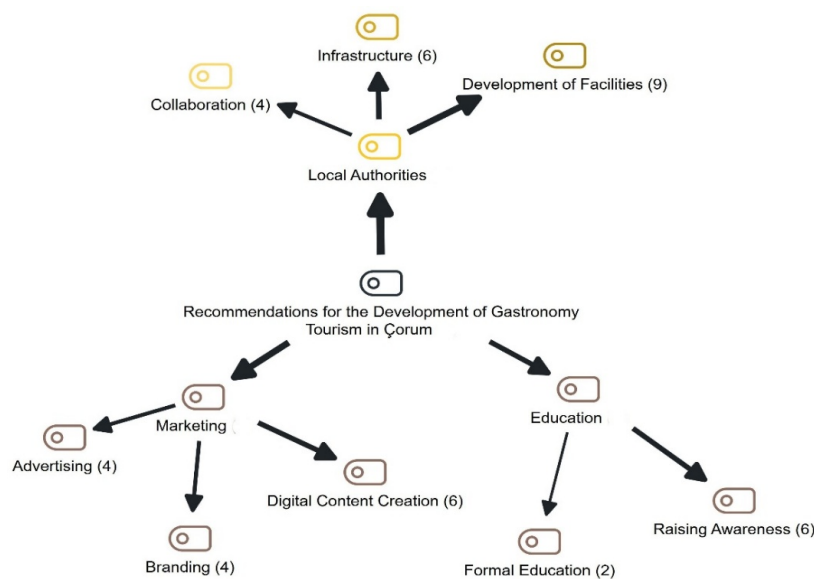


Figure 6. Hierarchical Code-Subcode Representation of the “Recommendations for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Çorum” Theme

The local government category represents the highest frequency within the theme, with infrastructure development in terms of facilities ($f = 9$) emerging as the most frequently coded element. This is followed by infrastructure ($f = 6$) and collaboration ($f = 4$). This distribution indicates that various aspects at the local government level are articulated by participants and expressed at different frequency levels. Participants' views on this issue are presented below:

"... First, the needs of the region should be addressed. If you have a guest, where would you host them? Where would you take them in Çorum?... " (P3)

"... One of my short-term suggestions is that when we visit Çorum, we see that there are very few places offering dishes specific to Çorum. The number of such places should definitely be increased. . . " (P13)

"... Of course, it is very important for Çorum to be preferred as a destination or a route on its own. However, it is quite clear that this will either not happen or will remain very limited. If we act in solidarity and cooperation with the surrounding cities rather than competing with them, both they and we will benefit. . . " (P5)

Within the marketing category, digital content production ($f = 6$) emerges as the most frequently coded element, while branding ($f = 4$) and advertising ($f = 4$) are expressed with equal frequencies. The relatively similar frequency values of the codes within this category indicate that statements related to marketing exhibit a balanced distribution.

"... It could be promoted through programs such as competitions, or, for example, if there were a well-produced program on a digital platform where Çorum is discussed and broadcast across Türkiye, it could be done in that way. . . " (P7)

"... Many TV channels have come, and these are also watched in Europe. When they come, they often say, 'We saw you on television, that's why we came.' They say there is that '40-layer baklava' here and come to buy it. As they always say, advertising is very important—that's really how it is. . . " (P1)

Within the education category, awareness-raising ($f = 6$) emerges as the more frequently expressed code, whereas formal education ($f = 2$) is mentioned to a more limited extent. This indicates that the elements within the education category are reflected in participant statements at varying levels of intensity.

"... It is also important to point this out: although promotion is a key component of this process, it needs to be embraced by society. Public support is essential. In order to develop this in the region, people's perspectives need to change. People need to be shown that their cultural values can actually be turned into products, marketed, and generate income. . . " (P5)

An examination of the findings indicates that participant statements regarding the theme of "Recommendations for the Development of Gastronomy Tourism in Çorum" are predominantly concentrated within the local government and marketing categories, whereas views related to the education category display a more limited distribution. In particular, the higher frequencies associated with elements such as facility development and infrastructure suggest that participants primarily frame their recommendations for the development of gastronomy tourism in terms of physical and structural improvements. Direct quotations further reveal that these elements are evaluated in relation to the destination's existing capacity, service provision, and regional collaboration. Within the marketing category, the similar frequencies of elements such as digital content production, branding, and advertising indicate that promotional activities are addressed through a variety of tools. In the education category, the higher frequency of emphasis on awareness-raising compared to formal education suggests that participant perspectives in this area are more strongly oriented toward societal awareness. In this respect, the findings demonstrate that participants express their recommendations for the development of gastronomy tourism across different categories and varying levels of intensity, with certain areas being emphasized more frequently than others.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals the potential of Çorum cuisine within the context of gastronomic tourism from a multidimensional perspective and presents structural, managerial, and marketing-based implications for the effective utilization of this potential. In their studies, Sarıışık and Özbay [15] and Santich [82] state that gastronomy is not merely a biological act but should also be regarded as a "life art" reflecting societies' lifestyles and cultural identities. Within this framework, it is understood that Çorum cuisine possesses a strong gastronomic heritage; however, there are various structural and strategic deficiencies in the process of transforming this heritage into a tourism product.

When examining the findings related to gastronomic products highlighted in the study, it is observed that Çorum cuisine has a recognition concentrated around certain products. The high frequency of expressions such as kuru mantı, İskilip dolması, and su böreği reveals that these dishes carry a symbolic value in terms of destination identity. In their studies,

Kivela and Crotts [83] and Du Rand and Heath [5] demonstrate that a region's culinary heritage plays a key role in shaping destination image and in gaining a loyal customer base.

However, despite a wide product diversity, limited visibility is observed in some categories (especially soups and other foods). This indicates that gastronomic diversity is not presented in a sufficiently systematic manner and that the destination narrative carries the risk of being reduced to a limited number of products. In their studies, Aydın [84] and Gülen [85] state that a similar situation is observed in the case of Afyonkarahisar, where despite a broad culinary culture, promotional activities are concentrated on specific products (sucuk, lokum, kaymak), resulting in an incomplete reflection of the holistic structure of gastronomic culture.

Among the structural barriers encountered in evaluating the tourism potential of Çorum cuisine, the labor-intensive and costly nature of traditional food preparation is prominent. The limited visibility of soups and side products in the study may stem from the perception among businesses that these products are risky or low-profit to prepare. In their study, Zengin and Gürkan [42] determine that in the case of Afyonkarahisar, local dishes are considered risky by businesses due to their expertise requirements and time-consuming preparation processes, leading to their insufficient inclusion in menus. In this context, Deveci et al. [86] emphasize the necessity of systematically collecting authentic recipes and ensuring sustainable production processes in order to preserve and integrate the gastronomic diversity of Çorum cuisine into tourism.

Integrating gastronomic tourism with Çorum's existing cultural and historical heritage (especially cultural and faith tourism centers such as Hattuşa) will increase the destination's competitiveness. In their studies, Türk [87] and Ongun et al. [88] emphasize that integrating different types of tourism is inevitable for enhancing destination attractiveness. In this framework, Sevimli et al. [89] state that, as in the case of Göbeklitepe, integrating faith, history, and gastronomic tourism may generate a multiplier effect on destination promotion and economic development.

Furthermore, the use of geographical indications plays a critical role in the branding process of Çorum cuisine. Studies by Harrington [90] and Hazarhun and Tepeci [91] emphasize that geographically indicated products constitute one of the most powerful elements in shaping a region's gastronomic identity while simultaneously preventing imitation. In this regard, Onur [92] demonstrates that the success of Hatay province in obtaining geographical indication registrations has facilitated the integration of such products into gastronomy tourism routes and enhanced destination recognition. In a similar vein, Hacıoğlu et al. [93] argue that, for Çorum as well, the registration of local products is essential for maintaining quality standards and establishing a consistent production framework.

In conclusion, in order for Çorum to become a "taste route," it is recommended that the public sector, private sector, and local community develop a strategic marketing plan in cooperation. In their studies, Onur [92] and Çavuşoğlu and Çavuşoğlu [40] emphasize the necessity of developing detailed food maps and guidebooks, organizing gastronomic tours, and conducting effective digital promotion activities, as observed in the cases of Hatay and Gökçeada.

Findings on the impact of gastronomic events on tourism development reveal that participants regard these events as a potential development tool for destination identity formation and economic development. In their study, Sevimli et al. [89] state that the prominence of festivals, fairs, and competitions reflects the local adoption of experience-oriented tourism and tourists' tendency to experience local culture in situ. However, in their study, Barkat and Vermignon [94] indicate that differences in perceptions regarding the effectiveness of such events highlight the necessity for them not to remain solely at the local level, but to be addressed within a strategic framework in terms of planning, sustainability, and target audience alignment.

Recommendations for the development of Çorum gastronomic tourism are largely concentrated on local governance and marketing dimensions. Emphasis on infrastructure and facility deficiencies indicates that the destination's tourist carrying capacity is not yet sufficient and that this situation directly affects tourist satisfaction [85]. In addition, the prominence of digital content production, branding, and advertising activities reflects an awareness that visuality and technology orientation are indispensable in contemporary tourism marketing.

In the educational dimension, the emphasis on awareness indicates that gastronomic values should be embraced not only by business operators but also by the local community. In their study, Küçükkömürlü et al. [33] state that gastronomic tourism should be considered not only as an economic source but also as a socio-cultural process that preserves cultural heritage and transmits it to future generations.

Findings regarding the role of local dishes in gastronomic tourism simultaneously reveal the strengths and weaknesses of Çorum cuisine. While authenticity, diversity, and taste constitute its core competitive advantages, lack of promotion, standardization deficiencies, and accessibility problems emerge as major barriers. The issue of standardization is particularly critical in ensuring consistent quality in the gastronomic experience and in gaining tourist trust. In their study, Hazarhun and Tepeci [91] state that collecting authentic recipes, establishing quality standards, and protecting products through geographical indications are essential.

The theme of gastronomic brand identity usage and promotion indicates that Çorum cuisine has not yet been fully transformed into a brand value. The fact that most participants converge on the expression "partially used" clearly reveals the gap between potential and current status. In their studies, Harrington [90] and Küçükkömürlü et al. [33] define

gastronomic identity as a value formed by the combination of geography, history, ethnic diversity, and unique recipes, which is difficult to imitate. In this context, Okumuş et al. [7] and Gülen [85] state that although Çorum possesses this unique gastronomic capital, its lag in branding reflects a broader problem of promotional and strategic planning deficiencies observed across many destinations in Türkiye.

Findings regarding the attractiveness of Çorum cuisine indicate a generally positive perception; however, significant improvements are required for this attractiveness to translate into sustainable tourism demand. In their studies, Gheorghe et al. [95] demonstrate that modern gastronomic tourists travel not only to consume food but also to learn about its history, legends, and cultural context. In this regard, Hjalager [96] and Sevimli et al. [89] state that storytelling of gastronomic products enhances tourists' cognitive and emotional satisfaction and functions as a strategic tool that increases destination competitiveness. Furthermore, Hazarhun and Tepeci [91] and Akbaba and Kendirci [32] emphasize that registration of authentic recipes and their protection through geographical indications are critical for sustainability and quality standardization.

In conclusion, although Çorum cuisine possesses strong cultural and gastronomic capital, this potential has not yet been effectively structured within the tourism context. The development of gastronomic tourism requires a holistic strategy that includes infrastructure investments, collaboration among local stakeholders, digital marketing, and experience-oriented product development rather than focusing solely on food and beverage activities. In this process, integrating Çorum's cultural and historical heritage with gastronomic elements will create a multiplier effect that enhances destination attractiveness. Furthermore, ensuring active participation of local communities and preserving gastronomic heritage for future generations is considered indispensable for socio-cultural sustainability. Within this framework, the study provides both conceptual and practical implications for the development of gastronomic tourism based on findings specific to Çorum and offers a strategic roadmap that may guide similar destinations.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to effectively evaluate the gastronomic tourism potential of Çorum, a holistic and multi-stakeholder destination management approach should be adopted. In this context, an institutionalized cooperation mechanism should be established among local governments, tourism enterprises, non-governmental organizations, and local communities. Developing gastronomic tourism within a planned and coordinated strategic framework rather than fragmented and individual initiatives will enhance destination competitiveness.

Eliminating infrastructure and facility deficiencies emerges as a priority intervention area. Increasing the number of qualified restaurants serving local dishes and encouraging existing businesses to include more local products in their menus are necessary. In this process, it is important for local governments to develop incentive mechanisms and support programs for gastronomy-oriented enterprises. Additionally, an experience ecosystem should be established that extends beyond restaurants to include street food, production workshops, and local markets.

Standardization and quality control mechanisms are critical for the sustainability of Çorum cuisine. Authentic recipes of local dishes should be compiled, documented, and preserved within defined standards. Accelerating geographical indication registration processes will both protect product authenticity and strengthen the destination's gastronomic brand value. At the same time, ensuring the auditability of these standards is essential for consistency in tourist experience.

Promotion and marketing activities should be restructured within a digitalization framework. Original and engaging content should be produced using social media, video platforms, and digital storytelling techniques. Presenting gastronomic products not only visually but also with their historical and cultural context will enhance destination perception. Professional content creators, gastronomy writers, and influencer collaborations may be considered strategic tools in this regard.

In the planning of gastronomic events, continuity and scaling strategies should be adopted. Expanding local festivals, fairs, and competitions to national and international levels will increase destination visibility. However, these events should not remain periodic activities but should be supported by a year-round event calendar. Thematic structuring of events (e.g., focusing on specific products or dishes) will strengthen engagement with target audiences.

Integration of gastronomic tourism with cultural and historical tourism is of great importance. Combining gastronomic experiences with cultural heritage sites such as Hattuşa will enrich visitor experience and increase destination preference. In this context, gastronomic routes should be developed and integrated with cultural and historical stops.

Active participation of local communities should be considered fundamental for sustainability. Education and awareness programs should be organized, encouraging local communities to perceive gastronomic values as economic opportunities. Supporting women's entrepreneurship and local producers will contribute to economic development and strengthen cultural heritage preservation.

Finally, gastronomic products should be developed through storytelling and experience-based presentation. The historical origin, production process, and cultural meaning of each dish should be communicated to visitors, thereby creating a more meaningful consumption experience. This approach aligns with the expectations of modern tourist profiles and enhances destination competitiveness.

Future research is recommended to conduct comparative analyses of different stakeholder groups (tourists, local communities, business owners, and public administrators). Such multidimensional analyses will provide a more comprehensive understanding of gastronomic tourism dynamics. Additionally, examining variables such as tourist experience, satisfaction levels, and revisit intention within a gastronomic context will contribute significantly to the literature.

Comparative studies between Çorum and other destinations are also an important research area. By comparing successful gastronomic tourism destinations with the current situation of Çorum, best practice models can be identified, enabling the development of more concrete policy recommendations.

In-depth studies on gastronomic brand identity and storytelling processes are recommended. Investigating how gastronomy is positioned within the experience economy and how tourists' cognitive and emotional responses are shaped will fill existing gaps in the literature.

Furthermore, interdisciplinary studies examining the economic, cultural, and touristic impacts of geographical indications should be increased. Research at the intersection of gastronomy, tourism, sociology, and economics will contribute to a more holistic understanding.

Finally, studies focusing on digitalization, social media influence, and new-generation marketing strategies in gastronomic tourism should be expanded. The impact of digital platforms on tourist behavior, data analytics, and big data applications represent significant research opportunities for the future.

Overall, this study provides a multidimensional framework for both practitioners and academics; the recommendations developed for Çorum cuisine contribute to the establishment of a sustainable and competitive gastronomic tourism structure.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY

No original dataset was generated or analyzed for this conceptual and doctrinal study. The legal and scholarly sources used are identified in the references.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation and revision of this manuscript, the authors used ChatGPT to assist with language editing, structural organization, and the drafting of revisions. The authors reviewed and edited the resulting text, checked the cited legal and scholarly sources, and accept full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, interpretation, and integrity of the final manuscript.

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