The Role of Geographical Signs in Gastronomy Tourism: A Case Study of Erzurum Cag Kebab

Prof. Dr. Serhat ZAMAN
Ataturk University, Department of Geography Education, Erzurum, Turkey
E-mail: serhatz@atauni.edu.tr

Assist. Prof. Dr. Alperen KAYSERILI
Agri Ibrahim Cecen University, Department of Geography, Agri, Turkey
E-mail: akayserili@agri.edu.tr
* Corresponding author

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Abstract

Turkey is a country with a strong cultural past and variety due to its rich geographical characteristics. Cultural wealth helps to construct a country with a vast variety of products. Differences can be seen between regions in terms of cultural products; and sometimes we see different products in different districts of the same province.

This richness and variety of Turkey was taken under protection with the Statutory Decree on the protection of Geographical Signs No. 555 and the Regulation on the Execution of Statutory Decree on the protection of Geographical Signs No. 555, which were effectuated in 1995.

Civil cheese and kadayıf dolması were the two products for which the applications in Erzurum were made within the scope of this decree and they were both approved; whereas Tortum and Oltu districts have made separate applications for Cag Kebab. As a result of this, the application of Oltu Chamber of Industry and Commerce was accepted in 2007 for Cag Kebab and it was registered as Oltu Cag Kebab.

Gastronomy tourism has been improving very fast in the world and Cag Kebab has started to become almost the most important gastronomy tourism product in Erzurum today. This study tries to evaluate the importance of Cag Kebab in terms of gastronomy tourism, a SWOT analysis was conducted in order to reveal the positive and negative sides and some suggestions were made in order make it stronger within the tourism activities.

Keywords: Geographical sign, Gastronomy tourism, Cag kebab, Food culture.

Introduction

Approaches for protecting the local values in the globalized world and providing their sustainability are very popular. Turkey supports the local development attempts through regional
and rural development policies. By implementing the rural development policies, Turkey aims to increase the wealth in rural areas which is considered as the prioritized regions for development and to provide the social and economic balance between the urban and rural areas. Turkey develops development strategies in order to achieve this and local products are considered as one of the most important dynamics of local development. In the SWOT analysis (Strong and Weak Sides, Opportunities and Threats) of National Rural Development Strategy Document; the existing status of rural areas of Turkey was revealed and local richness, their utilization and rural tourism were considered among those opportunities (URL 1).

The local richness is an important potential in Turkey and the EU harmonization process has provided the opportunity for the adaptation and improvement of the concept of geographical signs. These products were taken under protection with the Statutory Decree on the protection of Geographical Signs No. 555 and the Regulation on the Execution of Statutory Decree on the protection of Geographical Signs No. 555 in 1995 (URL 2). The Draft of Law on Geographical Signs which was submitted to the Parliament in 2007 had the following goals; “Determining the rules and conditions for the preservation of geographical sign or traditional product name of all the products which are compatible with the definitions and conditions set in the Law and which appear in the fields of agriculture, mining, handcraft and similar areas; to increase the market value of the products with local and traditional characteristics through encouragement and diversification of production and to make contribution to the strengthening of regional and rural economies; by providing a guarantee of production method and source, making it easier for the consumers to reach high quality products and to provide fair trade” (URL 3).

Geographical Signs are used for the promotion of preserving and utilization of products with different characteristics (Filippi and Triboulet, 2004: 70). Geographical signs appear in two forms: origin (PDO) and source (PGI). The types of products that constitute the origin and source signs differ in each country. In EU countries, agriculture and food products are preserved as geographical signs; in Turkey, there are non-food products (carpet, rug, rag doll etc.) which are protected under geographical sign. The registration of geographical signs is implemented by Turkish Patent Institute; and if a product is required to be registered for preservation in other countries as well, the product should be separately registered in the country where it is supposed to be preserved. As Turkey is not a member of European Union, for any product Turkey requests to be registered, an application for geographical sign registration must also be made. Therefore, the geographical sign registration implemented in a country is meaningful only if it is used within that country. Thus, geographical sign will only be meaningful if the products with an export value and a geographical sign are preserved in international area (Kan, 2011: 285).

The most important elements for the sustainability of geographical sign are reaching the production standards mentioned in the sign, special characteristics of the product and the quality standard reached (Kan et. al, 2010: 17). Geographical signs, different from other industrial copyrights, do not only preserve a single producer, but all the individuals who produce under certain conditions. Because geographical sign has a regional, local or national generality; it is anonymous and the right it provides cannot be given to a specific person only (Kezer, 2013: 9). One of the goals of preservation is to prevent the deceiving of public. Because, it is seen that some companies have been using signs very close to “geographical signs” in order to emphasize the quality of their products (Marangoz and Akyıldız, 2006: 287). As brands have the right of intellectual property, geographical signs are the rights open for the utilization of many people upon the condition to abide by the conditions of registry and manufacturing (Ertan, 2010: 163).

The aspects that should be considered in Turkey for providing Geographical Signs are:

- There must be a region with geographical borders,
- There must be a product fed from natural and humane elements from this region,
• If all the stages of product’s processing, manufacturing and all other transactions occur in this region an Origin name is provided (e.g. Izmit fairy floss); if at least one of them is implemented in this region, then the Source name is provided (e.g. Oltu Cag Kebab) (Orhan, 2010: 246).

**Aim and Method of the Study**

This study aims to examine the concept of “Geographical Sign” which had been on use in Turkey since 1995, and to define the conditions to be met for a product to obtain the Geographical Sign; and to reveal the place of products with geographical signs within the touristic product array with the case of Oltu Cag Kebab and its contributions to the tourism potential of Erzurum.

When considered with its general features, this is a scientific article with descriptive features where qualitative research method is applied by obtaining and evaluating data. First, a literature review is conducted; and after the evaluation of the resources, field studies were conducted in order to obtain data. Finally, SWOT analysis is done with the aim of concluding the study.

**Cag Kebab as a Gastronomic Value**

The etymological root of the word gastronomy is based on a poem named Gastronomie, written by a French lawyer, Joseph Borheux in 1801 (Solomon, 2003: 102). The history of gastronomy is defined as making suggestions and providing guidance about drinking and eating things at a specific place, on a specific time, in what ways and with which compounds; depending on historical and environmental conditions (Santich, 2004: 18). It is also defined as “art of fine eating” and “the traditions and styles of cuisine in a certain region.”

In its broader meaning, gastronomy is the comprehensive accumulation of knowledge about the issues related with human wealth and food. The aim of gastronomy is to protect the individual through the best nutrition possible and help him enjoy the life. Subjects of study for gastronomy are preparation of all edible substances in a healthy environment and make them edible aiming the taste and visual satisfaction. In other words; it is the balanced combination of trial and error, historical knowledge, culture, habits, skills, work and care in accordance with our likes with the aim of pleasures such as taste and appetite (Hatipoğlu et. al., 2009: 9).

Gastronomy and cuisine tourism is a special type of tourism (Shunali and Arora, 2014: 70). Gastronomy tourism helps the healthy establishment of the relation between food/beverage and tourism. By this, it also contributes to the strengthening of local identity and culture along with economy; and supports local development (Bucak and Ateş, 2014: 325). Gastronomy tourism can be defined as a type of tourism that created travel motivation and motivation of travel behavior to live a new food and beverage experience and it states a type of gastronomic mobility. Gastronomy tourism reflects the cultural identity and heritage of a specific region by providing the unique food of that place; and it is an effective tool to provide competitive advantage for local destinations (Gökdeniz et. al., 2015:15). Gastronomic values are considered as an important element of attraction for travel (Küçükaltan, 2009: 6).

Local food in touristic destinations turns those destinations into different places when compared with the competitors; and they also create a nation brand for that specific destination (e.g. Chinese, French, Italian, Turkish Cuisines etc.) Food that constitute the brand of a nation are originated with the traditional ways of preparation, serving and production with destination-specific food production techniques. From the perspective of a tourist, the production of the traditional food with traditional methods is as important as tasting those (Aslan, 2010: 42). Local tastes make great contribution to experience the uniqueness and to increase the satisfaction level.
of visitors. Also, it might have a supportive task for the recognition of destination fields and improving a positive image (Zaman and Uzun, 2012: 909).

Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture and Tourism has started to conduct the work by providing a Special Facility Tourism Management Certificate to the businesses which are known at national or international levels, a public-known brand for a long time, providing high quality services unique to Turkish cuisine; in order to preserve, transfer and encourage the traditional food and beverage products and services. This study contains issuing a Special Facility Tourism Management Certificate to the businesses which are known at national or international levels, a public-known brand for a long time, providing high quality services unique to Turkish cuisine in order to preserve, transfer and encourage the traditional food and beverage products and services; upon the request of the mentioned businesses and the guiding of these businesses by the Ministry in terms of furnishing, decoration, equipment, quality of business and services etc. (URL 4).

Cag Kebab is a type of kebab, and it traditionally belongs to Erzurum. But it is known that Cag Kebab is specifically cooked in the settlements at Coruh Basin (Oltu, Tortum, Uzundere, Narman, Olur, Senkaya, Yusufeli etc.) and it is consumed in Erzurum City for the last 20-30 years period. Tortum and Oltu districts have made separate applications for Cag Kebab. As a result of this, the application of Oltu was accepted in 2007 for Cag Kebab and it was registered as Oltu Cag Kebab by Turkish Patent Institute (Kayserili, 2014: 287).

With the application no. 2007/004 made by Oltu Chamber of Trade and Industry on 15.05.2007 to Turkish Patent Institute; a Geographical Sign Registry Certificate was requested. After the evaluation of Turkish Patent Institute, Oltu Cag Kebab name was given on 03.09.2007 with source sign numbered 127, registered and issued (URL 5-6). Also, it is seen that Cag Kebab is defined as Oltu Kebab in the Turkish Dictionary published by Turkish Linguistic Association in 1945.

Cag Kebab started to appear in the restaurant sector of Erzurum in 1980s. Cag Kebab restaurants were launched at Congress Avenue, which was named after the place where Erzurum Congress Building is located, and its surroundings; and today they can be seen in many parts of the city, which is a clear indicator that consumption has increased. The most important reason of launching the Cag Kebab restaurants in Congress Avenue and its surroundings is the settlement of people from Coruh Basin around the Congress Avenue and its surroundings. But, when we consider the distribution of Cag Kebab restaurants today; we see that Congress Avenue is the main area of intensity; and that we also see intensity around Gürcükapi, Terminal Neighborhoods and Istasyon Avenue.

According to the information provided by Chamber of Restaurant Owners, Erzurum Chamber of Merchants and Craftsmen; it is seen that the number of Cag Kebab restaurants in Erzurum is 23. 10 of them are big scale and modern saloons; whereas the rest of them are small scaled saloons in the form of tradesmen restaurants.

All of the Cag Kebab restaurants in Erzurum are not registered with Chamber of Restaurant Owners. There are other places in countryman associations, small saloons, or businesses which only make Cag Kebab on a specific day of the week (usually Saturday) with more reasonable prices compared with the market. It is remarkable that the countryman associations are mainly focused around Congress Avenue and its surroundings where people who have migrated from Coruh Basin are majority (Oltu, Tortum, Narman, Şenkaya, Şenyurt, Aksu Village, Yusufeli etc.)

Cag Kebab has become a product with a special spot in recent years. Kebab furnaces are built in the gardens of detached houses and Cag Kebab parties are being organized. Also, restaurants in the form of Cag Kebab saloon are established in the gas stations around the city and the roads around.
National and international tourists participating in tourism activities are directed to certain places in Erzurum. Because of these reasons mentioned; almost all of the tourists visiting Erzurum are directed to Cag Kebab saloons by the tour companies or the organization committees of several scientific and cultural activities; and the activity of gastronomy tourism is being implemented.

Photo 1: An international group visiting Erzurum for a scientific meeting at Cag Kebab saloon.

Cag Kebab saloons also serve season salads, pate types, slices onion or onion salads, yogurt and side dishes prepared with yogurt. Cag Kebab is served one by one and the service continues by the waiters until the guest says stop. The meat of served Cag Kebab is held by the local crispy thin pita like bread (Acem bread, Ecem bread), peeled off from Cag and it is consumed as wrapped. After the end of Cag Kebab serving; some local sweets, such as Kadayıf Dolması are served with tea.

One of the most important advantages of Cag Kebab saloons is the proximity between the Palandöken Ski Center, which is visited by national and international tourists for winter tourism, and the city. The distance between the city center and Palandöken Ski Center is only 4 kilometers.

We should also mention some traditional habits. It is known that people who consume a lot of Cag Kebabs are competing each other and these contests are followed with interest by the employees of Cag Kebab saloons and by other customers. The person who eats most Cag Kebab wins the contest; and his/her bill is paid either by the person who lost the competition or by the people who brought them in there to watch the contest. Sometimes it is also seen that the owner of Cag Kebab saloon does not account the bill of the winner, but the other party. At the end of these contests, the owners of Cag Kebab saloon take photos with the winners of such contests by holding the empty Cags in their hands; thereby immortalizing the contests and letting other guests to see. It is understood that there are people who eat almost 40 cags in such competitions.
Table 1: SWOT Analysis of Cag Kebab as a Touristic Artifact.

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<tr>
<th><strong>(Strengths)</strong></th>
<th><strong>(Weaknesses)</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Rapid development of winter tourism in Erzurum.</td>
<td>• Employees at Cag Kebab saloons cannot speak foreign languages.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Implementation of congress tourism via universities.</td>
<td>• Lack of professional services in some Cag Kebab saloons.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cag Kebab’s increasing commercial importance.</td>
<td>• Price differences among the Cag Kebab saloons.</td>
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<td>• Cag Kebab promotions in visual media and social media.</td>
<td>• High prices in some Cag Kebab saloons.</td>
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<td>• Increase of the recognition at national level.</td>
<td>• In case of any vegetarian or vegan customers; no variety of products in the saloons.</td>
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<td>• TV programs conducted by famous national gourmets about Cag Kebab.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Shorter serving period of Cag Kebab to the customers, when compared with other kebab types.</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>(Opportunities)</strong></th>
<th><strong>(Threats)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>• Cag Kebab is liked and it is advised to those who do not know it.</td>
<td>• Problems in procurement of small cattle in the region.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The national and international organizations in the city are increasing.</td>
<td>• Procurement of small cattle from different regions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cag Kebab is always promoted in the promotion days, fairs and organizations in major cities.</td>
<td>• Due to high prices in some Cag Kebab saloons, no repetitive visits to those saloons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It will become the promotional products for the Erzurum city.</td>
<td>• Lack of confidence to the low-priced restaurants due to price differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Historical and cultural characteristics of the city are rich and this potential is newly recognized by local governments.</td>
<td>• Making of Cag Kebab with bovine animals by some malevolent managers.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Lack of standards for the brand image of the product in some businesses.</td>
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</table>

Conclusion and Discussion

Concept of geographical images is being newly developed in Turkey. Due to the problems of not using the geographical sign in a proper way and not to implement the required controls after obtaining the sign; it is not used as a lever for development as witnessed in EU countries, but it remains limited only with the preservation of the name. In fact, geographical signs need to establish an approach for development, connecting it with the environment instead of treating it as a normal trademark.

It is obviously seen that Cag Kebab saloons are not controlled in Erzurum and its surroundings within the limits of geographical sign certificate. It is understood that there are
differences in the way it is defined in the certificate and the way it is prepared in Cag kebab saloons. Therefore, it is considered that as the control mechanism is activated; the quality of Cag Kebab will eventually reach at a certain standard.

Gastronomy tourism is a rapidly developing concept in the world and witnessing its effects in Erzurum is a good development; but various precautions are needed in order to increase that effect. Precautions such as presenting products with a better quality, applying more reasonable prices, focusing more on hygiene, presenting more local products by Cag Kebab, having posters and information books about Cag Kebab in the saloon, having waiters or headwaiters who speak English, and having various alternatives for the customers who do not consume meat would definitely cause the attractiveness of Cag Kebab saloons.

In conclusion, considering the fact that local tastes are valid reasons for travel, we believe that Cag Kebab has such an attraction. It is known that there are some gastro tourists who come to Erzurum by plane from Istanbul on daily tours to eat Cag Kebab, even though it is not intense enough. Even though there are Cag Kebab saloons in different parts of Turkey, the interest and curiosity about the origin of a product has always been more intense in terms of cultural tourism. Therefore, Cag Kebab and Erzurum identified with each other. This city is already a brand in certain tourism branches (winter tourism, nature and historical tourism etc.). Cag Kebab is an element of this city with a high attraction within the array of products.

References


**Internet Resources**


