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### Ethnocentrism and Gastroracism on Consumer Preferences

Beyza Uyanık\*  
Semra Akar Sahingoz\*\*

#### ABSTRACT

Every individual in the world is part of a culture. People believing in common values assume a common cultural identity. Every psychological, social, economic and cultural phenomenon is a part of the identity. Culinary culture also has a significant role in the formation of the identity of the communities. During their dietary activities, individuals keep interacting with each other and making various exchanges. The possibility of encountering a conflict may seem less likely at a table set around common values. However, interactions between different culinary cultures may lead to certain disagreements. This study tackles the cultural aspect of racism which is commonly discussed on the basis of biological factors. It examines the notion known as gastroracism in gastronomy terminology. The findings will be a reference for food industry from the point of food production, consumption and marketing. It is thought that the suggestions will contribute to the food production and food marketing process. In this regard, the ethnicity aspect is discussed. The data was collected through face-to-face interviews ( $n=390$ ). The statistical analysis yielded significant results in terms of age and sex ( $p<0.05$ ). A significant difference was found between the young and middle age groups in their interest in culinary cultures and their perception thereof ( $p<0.05$ ). While the approach towards cultural differences showed significant difference by education level, a significant difference was observed between the sexes in the use of different ingredients while cooking ( $p<0.05$ ).

**Key words:** Gastroracism, Cultural Identity, Culinary Culture, Ethnicity.

\*Anadolu University, Tourism Faculty Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Eskisehir/Turkey, ORCID: 0000-0003-2550-3440, [beyzauyanik@anadolu.edu.tr](mailto:beyzauyanik@anadolu.edu.tr)

\*\*Ankara Haci Bayram Veli University, Tourism Faculty Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Arts, Ankara/Turkey, ORCID: 0000-0001-6727-5277, [semra.sahingoz@hbv.edu.tr](mailto:semra.sahingoz@hbv.edu.tr)



## 1. Introduction

In a world where billions of people are living, it is expected to encounter equally diverse ideas, views and experiences. The coexistence of differences has its advantages and disadvantages. Every now and then, diversity may pose certain challenges. Although physical characteristics seem to be the most obvious way to emphasize differences, culture can also come into play at this point. Cultural elements, which have a unifying role within the society they belong to, can be seen as inconvenience or divergence in different cultures. Culture has many components. Among these, culinary culture has an important place. The relentless pursuit of food going on since the beginning of human existence has lead to the creation of a culture. Becoming a part of the social life, food now sits at the center of the tables where cultural exchanges are strongly present.

In today's globalized world, every society tries to preserve itself. In social life, each individual becomes the bearer of his/her own culture. As a result of the increase in the search for cultural identity, societies now feel the need to recognize and promote their own characteristics. For instance, Fusté Forné (2020) discusses the importance of creating food identity through Gouda cheese. It reveals noteworthy relationships between destinations, food and even food names. The societies that seek to live by and preserve what they own give prominence to their cultural values. In this quest for cultural identity, culinary culture has become more important than ever. This is where cultural nationalism emerges. As in the quote, "Food is a symbolic and physical tool for building and conveying the sense of self" (Bingor, 2016; Lake and Oh, 2007), there are previous studies that remark the effect of food in identity formation and the desire to promote cultural identity. However, in some instances, the search for national identity may be fostered through an oppressive and discriminative approach towards different cultures. In this study, racism is tackled in more particular terms under the notion of *gastroracism*. This term referring to the gastronomic aspect of racism is used to define the idea that is attempted to be justified by promoting the local foods.

## 2. Relationship Between the Ethnocentrism and Gastroracism Notions with Consumer Preferences

Cultural values that individuals embrace reflect the identity of a society. Culinary culture is an important part of this identity. Any food activity is an opportunity for individuals to display their culture. At the interactions between societies and individuals, the instances of ethnocentrism may be seen. Ethnocentrism can be defined as "judging a different culture by one's own cultural standards" (Öksüz, 2015). In a sense, ethnocentrism is how we see the world. Citing Morse's experiences, Shaules (2015) observes that Japanese people grate from bottom-to-top not top-to-bottom like them and interprets this as a cultural contrast. This is related to one's expectations in a foreign environment. Many questions may come to mind such as what is the reason of that behavior, is this behavior rude, does it contradict with what I do. These questions indicate that there is cultural learning in play. Our perspective towards a culture is determined by how we perceive such cultural learnings.

Racism is basically defined as "the belief that divide social groups and determine their status and relationships on the basis of their genetically inherited physical traits" (Hıdır, 2017; Canatan, 1999). This



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division somewhat explains the selfish-gene point of view (Öksüz, 2016). The notion of race can be used interchangeably with cultural race or biological race. Nowadays, however, the term "race" is mostly used in genetic sense and ethnicity is commonly used to refer to the concept of cultural race (Öksüz, 2016). Ethnicity is also associated with some consumption patterns (White and Kokotsaki, 2004). This approach that tends to compare one's culture with other cultures is an indication of disdain that is almost comforting (Beşirli, 2017; Freedman, 2008). Surely, some have argued, from time to time, that the notion of nationalism cannot have a place in the globalized world. However, it seems that instead of the idea that a common culture and social understanding can prevail over racism, the concept of nationalism continue to exist despite the globalization (Öksüz, 2016). The constant endeavor to distinguish oneself from others through foods is also considered as one of society's ways to protect itself (Beşirli, 2017). The form of racism targeting cultural traits besides the physical ones is referred to as modern racism or cultural racism. Such practices favor approaches that are not based on genetic-ethnic traits of an individual or a group but on the cultural-religious belongings as well as the norms-values and social practices adopted in relation to those (Hıdır, 2017; Thomas and Meertens, 1995).

Lifestyle is a concept that allows individuals to live their life according to an order and system and give meaning to their social lives (Yiğit, 2018; Chaney, 1999). Besides the tangible symbols such as flag, money and monuments, cultural elements also represent a nation. The commonly consumed foods unify cultures and societies (Ichijo & Ranta, 2018). The foods and consumption habits may have different social or symbolic meanings, such as race, gender and class (Cherry, Ellis and DeSoucey, 2011). Individuals within a food system have a sense of social belonging. All stages from the production to the consumption of a product are shaped by cultural norms, traditions and customs. Also national identity is shaped by the foods shared through the society and the meanings associated with these foods (Blue, 2015). Anthropologists explain the cultural context of the eating habits as follows (Diken, 2018; Doğdubay and Giritlioğlu, 2008):

- Culture is the main factor that determines what a nation can eat.
- Culture is achieved at young ages; therefore, difficult to change.
- Eating-drinking activities are integral parts of a culture.

Food preferences of individuals may alter depending on the situational factors (Diken, 2018; Köster, 2009). The fact that the opinions regarding a product are shaped according to the beliefs and attitudes affects the image of that product (Çubukçu, 1999). Consumers attitudes and demographic factors are also considered as important factors affecting purchasing behavior (Costa-Font, Gil and Traill, 2008, p. 109).

Cultural factors also influence consumer behaviors considerably. Social classes constitute an important part of these factors (Yiğit, 2018). Regional and ethnic differences become a part of national identity and united under culture (Edensor, 2002; qtd. Ichijo and Ranta, 2018). Beliefs and attitudes adopted by people affect their buying behaviors. These beliefs also shape the opinions regarding a product (Çubukçu, 1999). Food systems consider about the attitudes, values, beliefs and demographics of individuals and societies to predict consumer behavior and recognize their target market. In this way, the consumers are classified and those factors are used on marketing (Asp, 1999, p. 290).



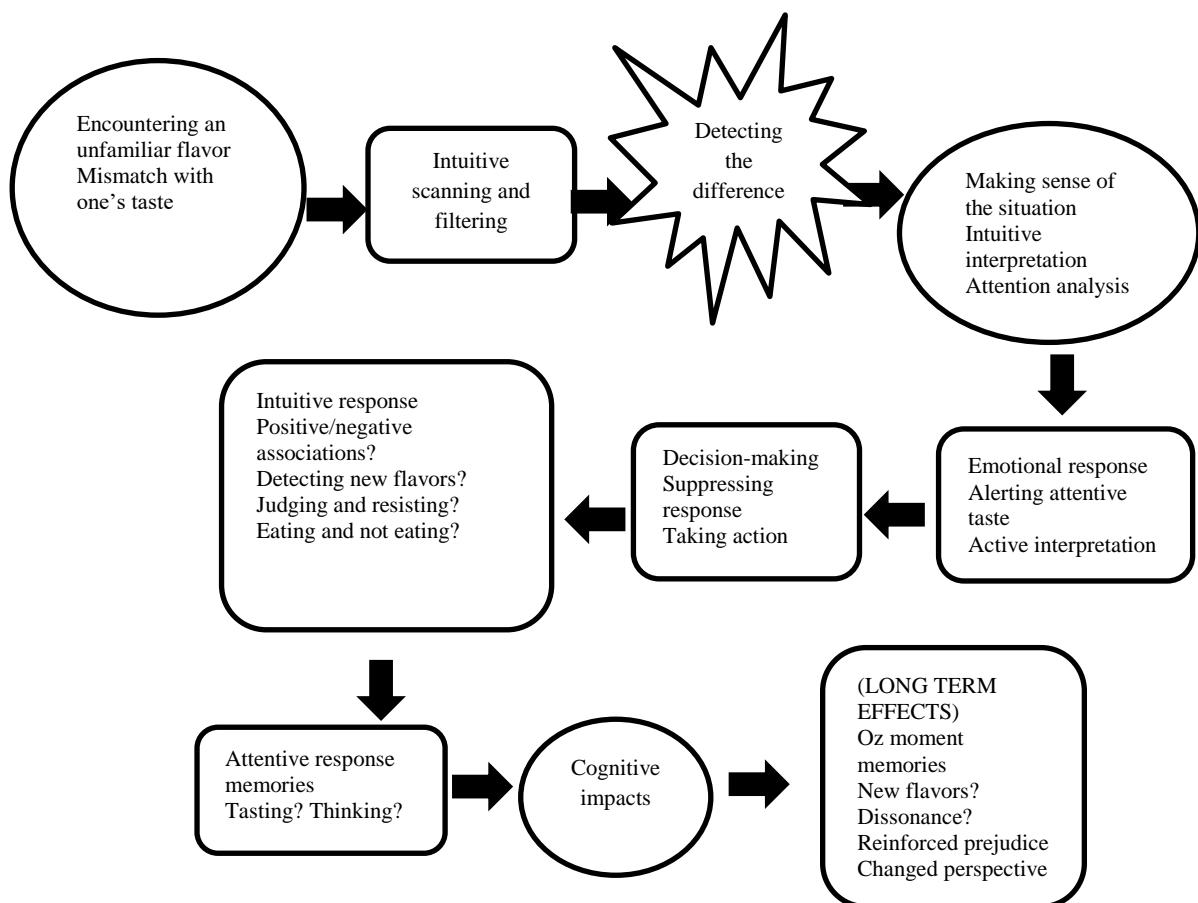
The dietary preferences of consumers begin to actualize when the decision to buy is taken (Altunışık and Çallı, 2004; qtd. Yiğit, 2018, p. 8). Routine or habitual buying refers to the acts of buying repeated by the consumer out of habit without any attempt for a change (Koç, 2017; qtd. Yiğit, 2018). Food products are becoming more and more diverse and go beyond the conventional definition of food. Individuals may be cautious towards the unfamiliar flavors. The idea that an unfamiliar product may be harmful create a sense of defense in individuals. This is called food neophobia (Nyberg, Olsson & Wendum, 2021). Foods and drinks are recognized and accepted only to their extent of compatibility with the culture that they are introduced into (Beşirli, 2017). People feel anxious about the indigenous and exotic food they encounter in a foreign place. This causes a cognitive fatigue. That's why, people look for familiar flavors even in an unfamiliar environment and feel happy when they do find them. However, it is known that challenging new experiences contribute to the cognitive improvement (Shaules, 2015). This defensive behavior towards the unfamiliar products may create a sense that that product is unwanted or marginalized (Rizaoglu, Ayazlar and Gecer, 2013; Rizaoglu, 2012). The tendency to choose familiar products is not a new phenomenon (Akman, 1998). The factors determining one's decision towards the mentioned differences can be listed as follows:

- Disgust sensitivity
- Beliefs about the risks of consuming an unfamiliar product
- Beliefs about the advantages of consuming an unfamiliar product
- Willingness to have a new and stimulating experience
- Risk tolerance and fear of new foods
- Sex (Jansson and Berggren, 2015).

This process can also be analyzed through the Oz moment anatomy adapted from Shaules. A similar process is seen for the concepts such as ethnicity, cultural racism and hegemony (Figure 1). At the basis of these concepts, there lies interactions such as differences, reactions, passing judgements, adaptability. Since food culture is a constant experience, it may seem mundane to the individuals living in that society. Awareness, on the other hand, arises when one travels abroad or enters into unfamiliar environments. (Ichijo and Ranta, 2018). Gastroracism or culinary nationalism can be simply seen as a result of a nation's attempt to gain its place in the world through food. According to gastro-nationalism that is the gastronomic extension of nationalist idea, anything that poses a threat to the national food practices is seen an assault against the cultural heritage and thus entails a reaction (DeSoucey, 2010). Food is directly related to the physical, political and cultural geography. National cuisines are built on these elements (Onaran, 2015). Food, which is simply a nutritional substance, can become a tool of power, politics and identity. As a matter of fact, a study by Armağan and Gürsoy (2011) has revealed that in Turkey, there is a more positive perception towards the domestic products. Another study discussing the consumer ethnocentrism has reported that the origin of the products has an impact on the perception of consumers (Chryssochoidis, Krystallis and Perreas, 2007, p. 1517). According to the results of a research conducted in 2013, the highest level of consumer ethnocentrism has seen among the participants who define themselves as nationalist (Asil and Kaya, 2013, p. 121). The factors influencing the food preferences and gastronomic experiences of consumers are of importance for the development of gastronomy and food cultures (Şen & Nazan Aktaş, 2017). A healthy development and improvement depends on the



interactions between the cultures. Cultural lifestyles are the driving force behind the gastronomic experiences. Consumer's choices are also affected by psychological factors, lifestyle, food trends (H. Asp, 1999), culture, race and ethnicity which are complexly related with individuals' social identities (Reddy & van Dam, 2020). In the circumstance, ethnicity can be considered as an important notion that forms individual's life and consequently food preferences.



**Figure 1.** An Adaption of Anatomy of an Oz Moment<sup>1</sup> (Shaules, 2015: 44).

Food culture is not immune to change; it may change in time depending on the circumstances. Production and consumption conditions, people's curiosity and desire for exploration may alter cultures (Ichijo & Ranta, 2018). It is believed that differences in eating behaviors cannot be eliminated simply by acceptance or rejection. While a food is seen edible or even curative by a culture, another culture may consider the same food poisonous. For example, one of the hierarchical indicators in India is cleanliness. This can also be seen their food culture. A brahma does not want to eat food cooked by a pariah; if it happens, a purification must be performed. In past, Greeks used to describe those outside their food culture as savages; similarly Romans saw them as barbarian (Montanari, 2018). In the ancient times, those who considered cooking food as a civilized act saw those not following their traditions as savages or barbarians (Beşirli, 2017). Labelling people eating with their hands as uncivilized is just another form of resistance to difference (Shaules, 2015). Consumption of dog

<sup>1</sup> Oz Moment: A feeling of disorientation or surprise when encountering novel surroundings or hard-to-interpret phenomena. (For the original figure see: Joseph Shaules, *The Intercultural Mind*, p. 44)



meat is another topic of hot debate that draws attention from time to time. In past, Korean people believed that dog meat had healing effects. Therefore, dog meat has become a food preferred not only for its nutritional purpose but also for its philosophical background as well as health reasons. In Korean culture, dog meat was used to be called Confucius meat. This strategy has also improved the image of their food culture. Examples of the conflicts between the cultures adopting a food and opposing to the adoption of that food can be found today as well as in past (Ichijo and Ranta, 2016). *Pita riots* in Egypt and *Tortilla riots* in Mexico were not simply social uprising, they rather represent how food culture is perceived by people and how they see their national identities. Mexican people chanting "*Tortillas si, Pan no!*" (Yes to Tortillas, no to bread!) were trying to integrate themselves into a national culture (Ichijo & Ranta, 2018). In a study examining the effects of social and political identities on dietary preferences, it was stated with the opinions of the participants that consuming or not consuming certain foods can be an agent to reveal their own identity (Chuck, Fernandes and Hyers, 2015). Similarly, it is thought that organic food consumption may have different motivations and consumers can tend to this diet under a certain identity. In this case, it can be inferred that people's thoughts and orientations also affect their diet (Hansen, Ingerslev Sørensen and Eriksen, 2018). *Kimchi wars*, on the other hand, began when Korean people accused China and Japan of producing kimchi by not using the traditional kimchi recipe. Koreans were upset because they thought kimchi, which they claimed as their own cultural dish, was appropriated by another cuisine. "Hummus wars" where Israel and Lebanon disputed over the ownership of hummus affected the food sector in different ways. Saying "Lebanese people can claim what they want but hummus is our, it belongs to Israelis. In any case, our hummus is better", the restaurant owners in Israel strongly opposed to the association of hummus, which they saw as a part of their national identity, with another culture. Instead of making food a national marketing tool, such events cause tension and conflicts in competition environment (Ichijo & Ranta, 2018). According to another example, an immigrant's description of the Mexican bean as disgusting was used by media outlets to justify negative treatment against immigrants (Olivas, 2019). People may, intentionally or unintentionally, make over-generalizations based on their experiences. This may cause us to judge or accuse others (Shaules, 2015).

This research attempts to tackle these notions mentioned in the literature and discussed herein within the context of the topic of this study and how the ideas fostered by these notions turn into concrete expressions. It aims to determine the level of impact that the opinions of individuals towards culinary cultures may have on their experiences and consumer preferences. While presenting the demographics and opinions of the participants on the subject matter, ethnicity aspect of the subject is discussed.

### **3. Materials and methods**

#### **3.1 Research objectives and participants**

A cross-sectional study was carried out to determine the impacts that the views of the individuals regarding different culinary cultures may have on their experiences and preferences.

Research sample consists of 390 people living in Cankaya, Ankara. The size of the sample was determined via Table for Determining Sample Size by Population. In the Table for Determining Sample Size by Population, the sample size for a population of 10000 or above is given as 384 (Ural and Kilic, 2018). All participants were



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between the ages of 18–64. A pilot study was conducted with 30 participants at the beginning of the research. After the pilot study, minor changes were made on the questionnaire. The participants were informed that their information would be kept confidential and used only for scientific purposes. All procedures complied with the Turkish National Research Committee, and the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and subsequent revisions there of, or comparable ethical standards.

### **3.2. Data collection tool**

As the data collection tool, the questionnaire form was employed. The questionnaire form contained 35 statements of a five-point Likert scale aimed at determining the attitudes and perceptions of the individuals towards the notion of gastroracism. The statements were rated on the scale ranging from 1=Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Not Sure, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree. The Cronbach's alpha value was measured as 0.83. The statements included positive or negative sentences.

### **3.3. Data collection**

The research data was collected through face-to-face interviews conducted with the participants between October 2019 and December 2019 and the interviews lasted for approximately 15 min. In total, 403 were interviewed; however, due to missing answers, only 390 questionnaire form were evaluated.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The data obtained was analyzed via statistical package software (SPSS 21). In data analysis, t test was used to determine whether the attitudes of the individuals differ depending on their sex or their overseas experiences. To establish whether there is a difference between the groups by sex or education level, ANOVA test was utilized. For the statements showed statistically significant differences as a result of the ANOVA test, Turkey test was performed to identify among which groups differences were present

### **3.5. Hypotheses of the research**

H1: Individuals' willingness to learn about and experience different culinary cultures varies according to sex.

H2: Individuals' perception of gastroracism varies according to demographic characteristics.

H3: Individuals' willingness to learn about and experience different culinary cultures varies according to overseas experiences

## **4. Results**

Findings of the data analysis are presented below.



		n	%
<b>Sex</b>	Female	217	55.6
	Male	173	44.4
<b>Age</b>	18-27	114	29.2
	28-38	88	22.6
	39-49	116	29.7
	50 or older	72	18.5
<b>Education Level</b>	Primary	21	5.3
	Secondary	19	4.9
	High School	131	33.7
	Undergraduate or Postgraduate	218	56.0
<b>Overseas Experience</b>	Yes	170	43.6
	No	220	56.4

**Table 1.** Demographics of the Participants (n=390).

55.6% of the participants were female, 44.4% were male and 29.7% of the participants were between the ages of 39-49. It was determined that half of the participants (56.0%) received education at undergraduate and postgraduate level. It was observed that 43.6% of the individuals had overseas experience; while 56.4% of them did not go abroad (Table 1).

Statements	M±SD
I am interested in world cuisines.	3.52±1.16
I like trying different foods.	3.80±1.10
I am an open-minded person.	3.87±1.01
I find the culinary habits of different cultures interesting.	3.70±1.00
I am a picky eater.	3.37±1.26
When I eat outside, I prefer the restaurants that I've been to before.	3.58±1.05
I think the restaurants serving the foods of different cultures in Turkey are unnecessary.	2.24±1.19
The foods of other countries do not appeal to my taste.	2.88±1.15
I am against eating foods consumed in different regions such as insects etc.	3.67±1.39
I do not prefer using a different eating utensil (chopsticks etc.)	3.32±1.43



I do not think it is hygienic to eat food with hand.	3.58±1.34
I think it is odd to use insects, frogs and so on as ingredients in dishes.	3.97±1.29
I avoid trying foods outside my own culture.	2.84±1.21
I do not find the dishes cooked by a person from a different culture tasty.	2.75±1.13
I think Turkish cuisine is the richest cuisine in the world.	4.09±1.07
I think the tastes of people in some cultures do not fit Turkish cuisine.	3.63±1.03
I prefer Turkish restaurants when I travel abroad.	3.15±1.16
I do not spend too much money on food during my domestic or international travels.	2.86±1.01
I think the foods in the ethnic restaurants* are expensive.	3.62±1.05
When I traveling back home, I buy and try the local food products in the region.	3.66±1.02
I like using different ingredients while cooking.	3.66±1.04
I feel hesitant and anxious when tasting an unfamiliar product.	3.54±1.04
I think food culture is a distinctive trait for a society.	4.07±0.95
The cuisine of a society I do not live in is insignificant to me.	2.19±1.19
I find the foods consumed by people in other geographies unbeneficial.	2.27±1.25
I do not think being biased against Turkish cuisine is ethical.	4.03±1.19
I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines.	3.26±1.43
I think Turkish cuisine has unique properties.	4.23±1.02
I think other cuisines lack the table manners in Turkish cuisine.	3.58±1.24
I am particularly sympathetic towards the culinary cultures resembling Turkish cuisine.	3.73±0.98
I think that the interactions between culinary cultures causes the assimilation of our culture.	3.12±1.14
I do not think it is right to marginalize different cultures.	4.13±0.92
I think people should respect the culinary cultures.	4.24±0.89
I think I would benefit a lot from learning about and knowing the world cuisines.	3.84±1.02
I think cultural diversity is a must in a society.	4.16±0.95

\*Ethnic restaurant: A type of restaurants where foods of different cuisines are served.

**Table 2.** Analysis of the Statements on Gastroracism.

It is seen that the statement "The cuisine of a society I do not live in is insignificant to me" has the lowest score of 2.19. On the other hand, the statement "I think people should respect the culinary cultures" scored highest with 4.24. While the rate of statement "I buy and try local food products in the region when I return home" was determined as  $3.66 \pm 1.02$ , the rate of statement "I do not think it is correct to marginalize different cultures" was determined as  $4.13 \pm 0.92$ .



	Females $M \pm SD$	Males $M \pm SD$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
I am interested in world cuisines.	3.68±1.14	3.32±1.15	3.01	0.03*
I like trying different foods.	3.99±1.04	3.56±1.14	3.80	0.00*
I am an open-minded person.	3.95±0.99	3.77±1.03	1.74	0.82
I find the culinary habits of different cultures interesting.	3.83±0.93	3.53±1.07	2.87	0.04*
I am a picky eater.	3.37±1.21	3.36±1.33	0.07	0.94
I avoid trying foods outside my own culture.	2.69±1.21	3.03±1.19	-2.75	0.06
I do not find the dishes cooked by a person from a different culture tasty.	2.63±1.08	2.90±1.17	-2.26	0.24
I prefer Turkish restaurants when I travel abroad.	3.04±1.18	3.80±1.12	-1.99	0.47
When I eat outside, I prefer the restaurants that I've been to before.	3.55±1.06	3.61±1.04	-0.59	0.55
I am particularly sympathetic towards the culinary cultures resembling Turkish cuisine.	3.75±1.02	3.71±0.93	0.42	0.66
When I traveling back home, I buy and try the local food products in the region.	3.77±1.00	3.52±1.03	2.34	0.20
I do not spend too much money on food during my domestic or international travels.	2.79±1.00	2.96±1.03	-1.59	1.12
I think the foods in the ethnic restaurants* are expensive.	3.54±1.09	3.71±0.99	-1.58	1.14
I like using different ingredients while cooking.	3.83±1.01	3.46±1.05	3.53	0.00*
I feel hesitant and anxious when tasting an unfamiliar product.	3.53±1.05	3.55±1.03	-0.22	0.82
The foods of other countries do not appeal to my taste.	2.71±1.19	3.09±1.07	-3.21	0.01*
I am against eating foods consumed in different regions such as insects etc.	3.63±1.44	3.71±1.33	-0.53	0.59
I do not prefer using a different eating utensil (chopsticks etc.)	3.6±1.47	3.51±1.35	-2.43	0.15
I do not think it is hygienic to eat food with hand.	3.64±1.32	3.50±1.36	1.06	0.28
I think it is odd to use insects, frogs and so on as ingredients in dishes.	3.91±1.35	4.05±1.20	-1.03	0.30
I think food culture is a distinctive trait for a society.	4.15±0.96	3.98±0.94	1.80	0.07
The cuisine of a society I do not live in is insignificant to me.	2.05±1.13	2.36±1.24	-2.60	0.01*
I find the foods consumed by people in other geographies unbeneficial.	2.23±1.24	2.33±1.28	-0.72	0.47
I think the restaurants serving the foods of different cultures in Turkey are unnecessary.	2.13±0.17	2.38±1.20	-2.04	0.04*
I think Turkish cuisine is the richest cuisine in the world.	4.06±1.12	4.13±1.00	-0.61	0.53
I think the tastes of people in some cultures do not fit Turkish cuisine.	3.67±1.03	3.58±1.04	0.82	0.41
I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines.	3.12±1.44	3.45±1.40	-2.30	0.02*
I think Turkish cuisine has unique properties.	4.25±1.04	4.21±1.00	0.34	0.72



I think other cuisines lack the table manners in Turkish cuisine.	3.50±1.30	3.68±1.15	-1.42	0.15
I do not think being biased against Turkish cuisine is ethical.	3.97±1.21	4.10±1.17	-1.07	0.28
I think that the interactions between culinary cultures causes the assimilation of our culture.	2.98±1.16	328±1.09	-2.62	0.00*
I do not think it is right to marginalize different cultures.	4.21±0.89	4.03±0.94	1.89	0.05
I think people should respect the culinary cultures.	4.34±0.81	4.12±0.97	2.44	0.01*
I think I would benefit a lot from learning about and knowing the world cuisines.	4.04±0.95	3.58±1.06	4.42	0.00*
I think cultural diversity is a must in a society.	4.25±0.88	4.06±1.02	1.92	0.05

**Table 3.** Distribution of the Individual Attitudes toward Gastroracism by Sex.

It is seen that the responses to some of the statements are influenced by the sex of the participants. There is significant difference by sex in responses to the statements of "I am interested in world cuisines", "I like trying different foods" and "I find the culinary habits of different cultures interesting". In the statement "I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines", the male participants have higher score and a significant difference by sex has been found ( $p<0.05$ ). The results of the analysis suggest that  $H_1$  hypothesis is acceptable. The individuals' overseas experiences, willingness to learn about and experience culinary cultures do not display a significant difference by sex ( $p>0.05$ ); therefore,  $H_3$  hypothesis has been rejected (Table 3).

	Education			Age		
	M ± SD	F	P	M ± SD	F	P
I am interested in world cuisines.	3.52±1.16	4.19	0.002*	3.52±1.16	5.99	0.000*
I like trying different foods.	3.80±1.10	2.02	0.900	3.80±1.10	8.37	0.000*
I am an open-minded person.	3.87±1.01	2.50	0.420	3.87±1.01	8.92	0.000*
I find the culinary habits of different cultures interesting.	3.70±1.00	1.60	0.730	3.70±1.00	3.60	0.007
I am a picky eater.	337±1.27	0.21	0.920	3.37±1.26	1.37	0.242
I avoid trying foods outside my own culture.	2.84±1.21	4.27	0.002*	2.84±1.21	1.49	0.000*
I do not find the dishes cooked by a person from a different culture tasty.	2.75±1.12	2.12	0.077	2.75±1.13	13.5	0.000*
I prefer Turkish restaurants when I travel abroad.	3.15±1.16	1.54	0.188	3.15±1.16	4.76	0.001*
When I eat outside, I prefer the restaurants that I've been to before.	3.58±1.05	0.43	0.784	3.58±1.05	0.47	0.754
I am particularly sympathetic towards the culinary cultures resembling Turkish cuisine.	3.73±0.98	2.04	0.087	3.73±0.98	2.31	0.057
When I traveling back home, I buy and try the local food products in the region.	3.66±1.02	0.30	0.872	3.66±1.02	5.63	0.000*
I do not spend too much money on food during my domestic or international travels.	2.86±1.02	1.15	0.330	2.86±1.01	6.35	0.000*
I think the foods in the ethnic restaurants* are expensive.	3.62±1.05	1.97	0.098	3.62±1.05	1.47	0.209

**Table 4.** A Comparison of Attitudes towards New Experiences by Education Level and Age.



Table 4 shows that there is a significant difference in two statements according to the education level of the individuals. It has been found that the statement "I avoid trying foods outside my own culture" differed significantly according to both education and age factors. The responses to the statement "I do not find the dishes cooked by a person from a different culture tasty" differ according to age. A significant difference has been observed between individuals aged 18-27 and 50 or older in their perception of the taste of food cooked by people from different cultures.

	Education			Age		
	M ± SD	F	P	M ± SD	F	P
I like using different ingredients while cooking.	3.67±1.04	1.76	0.136	3.66±1.04	5.64	0.000*
I feel hesitant and anxious when tasting an unfamiliar product.	3.53±1.04	2.43	0.047	3.54±1.04	1.79	0.130
The foods of other countries do not appeal to my taste.	2.88±1.15	3.78	0.005*	2.88±1.15	9.16	0.000*
I am against eating foods consumed in different regions such as insects etc.	3.66±1.39	1.19	0.315	3.67±1.39	3.93	0.004*
I do not prefer using a different eating utensil (chopsticks etc.)	3.31±1.43	2.79	0.026	3.32±1.43	6.19	0.000*
I do not think it is hygienic to eat food with hand.	3.57±1.34	2.19	0.069	3.58±1.34	2.78	0.026
I think it is odd to use insects, frogs and so on as ingredients in dishes.	3.97±1.29	3.03	0.017	3.97±1.29	2.13	0.075
I think food culture is a distinctive trait for a society.	4.08±0.95	2.00	0.093	4.07±0.95	7.12	0.000*
The cuisine of a society I do not live in is insignificant to me.	2.19±1.19	2.81	0.025	2.19±1.19	16.3	0.000*
I find the foods consumed by people in other geographies unbeneficial.	2.27±1.25	3.20	0.013	2.27±1.25	13.4	0.000*

**Table 5.** A comparison of attitudes towards the habits of culinary cultures by education level and age.

Table 5 presents the findings on the individuals' cooking experiences and ingredient preferences. As a result of the analysis, one statement shows significant difference by education level, while seven statements differ significantly by age. The statement "The foods of other countries do not appeal to my taste" is found to be significant according to both variables ( $p<0.05$ ). Another statement that shows significant difference according to age is related to the benefits of foods consumed in different geographies. According to the results, while the 18-27 age group has a negative opinion on the matter, people aged 50 or older hold different opinions on the subject. Similarly, it has been observed that people with relatively lower education levels have a more rigid attitude towards the statement "The food of other countries do not appeal to my taste". Another study



conducted in 2011 reports that there is a relationship between the age, the education level, the professional as well as the political views of consumers and their ethnocentrism levels (Armağan and Gürsoy, 2011).

Statements	Education			Age		
	M±SD	F	P	M ±SD	F	P
I think the restaurants serving foods of different cultures in Turkey are unnecessary	2.23±1.19	3.26	0.012	2.24±1.19	10.0	0.000*
I think Turkish Cuisine is the richest cuisine in the world	4.09±1.07	1.93	0.104	4.09±1.07	0.52	0.721
I think the tastes of people in some cultures do not fit Turkish cuisine.	3.63±1.04	4.39	0.002	3.63±1.03	2.23	0.064
I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines.	3.26±1.43	5.29	0.000*	3.83±1.26	6.02	0.000*
I think Turkish cuisine has unique properties.	4.23±1.02	3.44	0.009	4.23±1.02	0.32	0.860
I think other cuisines lack the table manners in Turkish cuisine.	3.58±1.24	1.80	0.127	3.58±1.24	2.85	0.024
I do not think being biased against Turkish cuisine is ethical.	4.02±1.19	3.38	0.010	4.03±1.19	0.76	0.552
I think that the interactions between culinary cultures causes the assimilation of our culture.	3.11±1.14	6.57	0.000*	3.12±1.14	5.75	0.000*
I do not think it is right to marginalize different cultures.	4.13±0.92	0.77	0.544	4.13±0.92	2.65	0.033
I think people should respect the culinary cultures.	4.25±0.89	1.08	0.362	4.24±0.89	4.69	0.001*
I think I would benefit a lot from learning about and knowing the world cuisines.	3.84±1.02	3.81	0.124	3.84±1.02	5.07	0.001*
I think cultural diversity is a must in a society.	4.17±0.95	1.59	0.194	4.16±0.95	3.63	0.006

**Table 6.** A Comparison of Individual Attitudes towards Turkish Cuisine by Education Level and Age.

A statistically significant difference by education level has been found for the statements "I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines" and "I think the interactions between culinary cultures causes the assimilation of our culture" ( $p<0.05$ ). The statements in this table are, in general, related to Turkish Cuisine and aimed at determining the perceptions regarding Turkish Cuisine. The statements were directed to the participants to assess whether the gastro-racist perception is a result of the sympathy that individuals have for their own culture or there is a positive discrimination (Table 6).

As a result of the Post-Hoc tests, it has been observed that people aged 18-49 have relatively moderate opinions on the restaurants in Turkey that serve foods of different cultures. On the other hand, people aged 50



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or older display a higher tendency to respond positively to this statement with an average score of 3.50. Certain significant differences have been found according to the education level. In the statement "I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines", there is a significant difference between the responses of people with lower education level and people with higher education level. The participants with lower education level display a more rigid attitude on this matter. The responses to the statement related to the perception on learning about world cuisines, on the other hand, do not differ significantly among the groups ( $p>0.05$ ).

## 5. Discussion

Our findings suggest that the fear people have about the potentially corrosive and destructive effects that globalization may have on their culture leads them to displaying nationalist ideas. However, cultural health of a society greatly depends upon the coexistence of different cultures in an environment of respect and tolerance. Having knowledge about the background and reasons of different dietary habits in a different region may be helpful in understanding that culture. Understanding consumer behavior provides practical inputs to marketing strategies such as market segmentation, targeting and positioning. The preferable the behavior of individuals and therefore consumers can be analyzed, the more accurately the marketing will be made.

The findings of this study reveal that perceptions of the individuals vary predominantly according to their sex, age and education level. For instance; the statement "The cuisine of a society I do not live in is insignificant to me" displays significant difference according to the age factor. Another study has reported that incompatibility levels of the individuals tend to increase as they get older. The individuals aged 26-35 in the sample group have been found to be less biased (Chryssochoidis, et al., 2007, p. 1541). In a study conducted in 2019, on the other hand, the participants aged between 61-70 are more inclined to buy domestic products than the people in other age groups (Mete, Ali and Wahbi, 2019, p. 51). Klein et al. (2005) have observed no relationship between foreign product purchase behaviors and ethnocentric views of the non-student participants in the Chinese sample group. Given that the studies in question were carried out in different societies, it is possible to say that similar perceptions are likely to be found in different societies as well. Further these elements are effective in creating of a standard, homogeneous culinary culture being carried out by politicians in the form of state policies and in carrying out activities in order to appreciate these national values in international markets. When the sectoral character of local cuisines comes to light with globalization, the market struggle embellished with nationalist discourses rise to occasion. The expanding consumer behavior aspect emphasizes all consumption processes including matters affecting the consumer before, during and after purchasing.

This paper was written with the need to understand better the effects of ethnicity on culinary cultures in a changing social structure. It has been established that the education factor has an effect on the formation of perception of culinary cultures. Interestingly, the education level of the individuals not only influences their opinions and attitudes but also their taste perceptions (Table 4). Previous studies have denoted the impact that the ethnocentric views regarding the foods have on the perceived quality and taste of the products. The fact that people exhibiting unbiased behavior towards the products find them more delicious and tasty further demonstrates the impact of consumer perception on taste (Chryssochoidis et al., 2007). It is



thought that the perception of taste may also reflect some suppressed feelings and thoughts (Olivas, 2019). In consequences of the emotions, thoughts and actions of individual consumers and society are constantly changing it can be said consumer behavior is an issue that dynamic and necessary to analyze continuously. It has been observed that the sense of belonging the individuals hold towards their own culture may lead them to exhibit so-called gastro-nationalist or gastro-racist behaviors. In fact, this has also influenced the sensitivity of the individuals about the promotion of Turkish Culinary Culture. The responses to the statement "I react to the use and promotion of our products in other cuisines" have reflected significant difference according to the education level (Table 6). Chryssochoidis et al. (2007) noted that ethnocentric consumers prefer products from places similar to their culture and their country. According to the results of a study conducted in Turkey, the ethnocentric consumers believe that Turkish brands have higher quality products compared to those produced by the foreign brands (Armagan and Gürsoy, 2011, p. 75). Defining food as a powerful agent Blue (2015), remarked that the dominant foods in a culture are determined through historical, social and cultural dynamics. Likewise, another study shows that people with relatively lower education level tend to be more hesitant towards the different or foreign products (Chryssochoidis et al., 2007). This further confirms that people with lower education level have more reserved approaches on this matter and there may be a correlation between the gastronomic attitudes and education levels. Similarly, Kilders et al. (2020) who looked at Nigerian consumers, show that consumer ethnocentrism be impressed by different factors such as country image, food safety, income and education. They also find that relation between ethnocentrism and purchase frequency of imported products.

Eating awakens interest and great curiosity in people. It is assumed that this interest and curiosity may result in two different ways: either as attaching negative labels on the different dietary habits or as gaining new perspectives and experiences by showing respect to different cultures. While people who are open to new flavors act more moderately, people having strict norms display more negative approaches. The views on ethnic cuisines evolve in this direction (Shaules, 2015). Gaining insight on the different food and culinary cultures in the world is an essential part of intercultural interactions. In this respect, all individuals in a society as well all stakeholders in food sector have pivotal roles in developing healthy interactions between the culinary cultures. To ensure the sustainability of culinary cultures in the world and also contribute to the sustainability of production, it is of importance to preserve the general perception of one's own culture while preventing the extinction and exclusion of other cultures. The fact that the culinary cultures in the past emerged and developed their identities as a result of the mutual interplays may be regarded as an element of awareness. It is worth considering the possibility that a seemingly different culture today may have been a part of our cuisine in the past.

Another important topic of consideration with respect to this study is the fact that the data obtained during the research were collected before the Covid-19 pandemic. It has been speculated that the origin of the outbreak may be traced back to the consumption of certain species in different parts of the world. While the researches on this subject still continue, World Health Organization have reported that bats may be responsible for the spread of the disease (WHO, 2020). The fact that bats are consumed as food in some regions apparently put pressure on the people consuming the species about the outbreak and spread of the disease.



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Given that, the findings of the research may significantly vary before and after the pandemic. Based on this assumption, it can be asserted that food, culinary and, in more broad sense, gastronomic cultures of the societies have a larger field of influence. Dietary habits or products of a culture can influence not only that culture but also the opinions and lives of other societies. Our views on the notion of gastroracism may differ accordingly.

In this study, the topic of research has been discussed through the individuals included in the sample. Further studies on the subject may yield different results if the questionnaires are used in larger and more heterogeneous sample sizes. Conducting similar studies that compare groups with different demographics may be crucial to better understand the effect of gastroracism on both of individuals and consumers. A comparison of the results of this study with the findings of previous and future studies may allow the evaluation of the gastroracism as well as its impact on production processes to be concept over longer time span. Considering that culinary culture is a dynamic element that is constantly changing and evolving, valuable gastronomic insights may be gained as a result of the application of the data obtained in different societies or in different time periods. For instance, a similar study was conducted in 2019 focusing on the consumers in Iraq (Mete, Ali and Wahbi, 2019). The findings of another study, on the other hand, provide insight into the opinions of individuals on the different culinary cultures in Germany and the ethnocentric approaches of people living there towards Turkish Cuisine (Değişgel, 2018). The data obtained shows that food preferences may be shaped by the culture one lives in. In such as case, it is believed that people working in food sector also play a critical role in intercultural interactions and may shape the perceptions in this respect. These findings will be a reference to the food industry and its stakeholders in the way of evaluating consumer's preferences effectively and productively. Consumer's approaches to the issue may clarify some problems in production, marketing and consumption processes. At the point of give more attention to the preferences and attitudes of consumers in the planning of these processes, it is thought that the food sector and the tourism sector, which is also associated with food consumption within this scope, will improve. Likewise, the gastronomic experiences of people living in Turkey may become more refined and flexible if their perspective change. This may produce positive outcomes also in terms of understanding different cultures and contributing to the social order. Also, researching the approaches of different ethnic groups on this matter may allow an analysis of the culinary cultures of the societies. Therefore, it can be considered as a suggestion for future studies to focus on the regions that build their identity predominantly upon the culinary culture. Results showed that the approach towards cultural differences showed significant difference by education level, a significant difference was observed between the sexes. The informational impacts were different among consumers with different demographic variables. A deeper look into the attitude differences between the consumer's behavior, attitudes may change depend on ethnicity and culinary culture. These findings implied that the general consumption and consumer preferences effected from culture and identity.

Findings in this study implied that the studies were carried out in different societies, it is possible to say that that similar perceptions are likely to be found in different societies as well. The expanding consumer behavior aspect emphasizes all consumption processes including matters affecting the consumer before, during



and after purchasing. These results suggested that the food sector and the tourism sector, which is also associated with food consumption within this scope, should consider consumer attitudes and the cultural differences. It can be claimed that consumer behavior is important for production planning and marketing processes. In this way, the mentioned sectors might be improving. Wanga et al. (2019) also stated that understanding of consumer choices play a significant role in the development of regulatory policies and marketing strategies. It is possible to thought that that implementing and maintaining are important for stakeholders with this aspect. The place and importance of stakeholders in evaluating consumer preferences effectively and efficiently has been emphasized before. Thus stakeholders may be adapted more easily to process improvement with the help of regulatory policies.

## **6. Limitations**

The findings obtained in this study on gastroracism are limited by the region, age ranges, education levels and sample size. According to the findings, it has been determined that the notion of gastroracism can also impact the formation of certain ideas and approaches in Turkish society where the research data was collected. Since the research parameters may vary according to many factors including regions, individuals, culinary cultures and age ranges, the results of the study cannot be generalized to the entire society despite the high reliability coefficient measured. Different results may be obtained in the studies with larger and differently structured samples.

## **7. Conflict of Interest**

The author declares that they have no conflict of interest.

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## **10. Ethical statement**

The participants were informed that their information would be kept confidential and used only for scientific purposes. All procedures complied with the Turkish National Research Committee, and the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and subsequent revisions thereof, or comparable ethical standards.

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