TOROS UNIVERSITY
JOURNAL OF FOOD, NUTRITION AND GASTRONOMY

Rsearch Article / Araştırma Makalesi

Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism & Its Potential for Implementation in North Cyprus

Sürdürülebilir Gastronomi Turizmi ve Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta Uygulama Potansiyeli

Mete GİRGEN [1]

1 Rauf Denktaş Üniversitesi, İşletme ve Ekonomi Fakültesi, Turizm Bölümü, Lefkoşa, Kuzey Kıbrıs

Article info

Keywords:

Sustainability, gastronomy, tourism, sustainable gastronomy tourism, implementation potential.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Sürdürülebilirlik, gastronomi, turizm, sürdürülebilir gastronomi turizmi, uygulama potansiyeli.

Received: 25.09.2025

Accepted: 18.12.2025

E-ISSN: 2979-9511

DOI: 10.58625/jfng-3075

Mete Ünal Girgen; Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism & Its Potential for Implementation in North Cyprus

Available online at https://jfng.toros.edu.tr

Corresponding Author(s):

Mete Ünal Girgen;, mete.girgen@rdu.edu.tr

Abstract

Aim: This study explores the untapped potential of sustainable gastronomy tourism in Northern Cyprus as a strategic pathway for cultural preservation, rural development, and diversification of the island's tourism economy. It aims to highlight how culinary tourism can serve as a tool for sustainable destination development and cultural continuity.

Material and Method: The research adopts a conceptual approach literature-driven research design and evaluated by thematic relevance in the end, enriched with observation-informed insights to drawing on global tourism trends, sustainability frameworks, and local heritage assets. By synthesizing secondary data and case examples, it develops a multi-dimensional framework for sustainable gastronomy tourism that integrates cultural, economic, and environmental perspectives.

Results: The study reveals that Northern Cyprus's unique gastronomic identity—shaped by Mediterranean and Anatolian influences and embodied in products such as halloumi and traditional mezes—holds strong potential for experiential and community-based tourism. Key challenges include limited infrastructure, insufficient policy alignment, and environmental pressures. The paper proposes strategic interventions including farm-to-table

initiatives, gastronomy route development, and international branding efforts.

Conclusion: Sustainable gastronomy tourism can position Northern Cyprus as a distinctive and resilient culinary destination within the Eastern Mediterranean. Achieving this vision requires integrated marketing, stakeholder collaboration, and policy innovation to balance economic growth with cultural preservation and environmental sustainability.

Özet

Amaç: Bu çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta sürdürülebilir gastronomi turizminin henüz yeterince değerlendirilmeyen potansiyelini; kültürel mirasın korunması, kırsal kalkınmanın desteklenmesi ve turizm ekonomisinin çeşitlendirilmesi bağlamında stratejik bir araç olarak ele almaktadır. Araştırmanın amacı, gastronomi temelli turizmin sürdürülebilir destinasyon gelişimi ve kültürel süreklilik açısından nasıl bir rol üstlenebileceğini ortaya koymaktır.

Gereç ve Yöntem: Bu araştırma, kavramsal bir çerçeveye dayalı olarak tasarlanmış olup literatür taramasında dayanan nitel bir araştırma yaklaşımı benimsemektedir. Küresel turizm eğilimleri, sürdürülebilirlik yaklaşımları ve yerel kültürel miras unsurları dikkate alınarak gözleme dayalı içgörülerle desteklenmiştir. İkincil veriler ve örnek olay analizleri sentezlenerek, kültürel, ekonomik ve çevresel boyutları bütüncül biçimde ele alan sürdürülebilir gastronomi turizmine yönelik çok boyutlu bir değerlendirme çerçevesi oluşturulmuştur.

Bulgular: Çalışmanın bulguları, Akdeniz ve Anadolu mutfak kültürlerinin sentezini yansıtan Kuzey Kıbrıs mutfağının; hellim peyniri, geleneksel mezeler ve yerel ürünler üzerinden deneyimsel ve topluluk temelli turizm açısından önemli bir potansiyele sahip olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bununla birikte, ulaşım altyapısındaki yetersizlikler, turizm ve tarım politikaları arasındaki uyumsuzluklar ile artan çevresel baskılar, sektörün gelişimini sınırlayan temel sorunlar olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu kapsamda çalışma; "çiftlikten sofraya" yaklaşımına dayalı pilot uygulamalar, tematik gastronomi rotalarının oluşturulması ve uluslararası pazarlara yönelik marka stratejilerinin geliştirilmesi gibi çözüm önerileri sunmaktadır.

Sonuç: Sürdürülebilir gastronomi turizmi, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın Doğu Akdeniz'de özgün, rekabetçi ve dirençli bir gastronomi destinasyonu olarak konumlandırılmasına katkı sağlayabilecek önemli bir araçtır. Bu hedefe ulaşılabilmesi; ekonomik büyüme, kültürel mirasın korunması ve çevresel sürdürülebilirlik arasında dengeli bir yapının kurulmasını, kamu-özel sektör ve yerel paydaşlar arasında iş birliğini ve yenilikçi politika yaklaşımlarının hayata geçirilmesini gerektirmektedir.

Introduction

Northern Cyprus, with its rich historical and cultural heritage, diverse natural landscapes, and distinctive culinary traditions, offers significant untapped potential for the development of sustainable tourism models (5, 8, 20, 24). Among emerging trends in global tourism, food tourism and gastronomy tourism has gained prominence not only as a means of culinary satisfaction but also as a multidimensional instrument of cultural exchange, heritage preservation, and socio-economic empowerment (13, 14, 28). In this evolving context, the establishment of a sustainable gastronomy tourism framework in Northern Cyprus emerges as a strategic and culturally grounded approach to revitalizing and diversifying the island's tourism economy. The contemporary tourist increasingly seeks experiential and authentic travel, with food culture playing a central role in destination selection and experience quality (22). Culinary tourism has thus evolved into a powerful narrative of place identity, allowing destinations to showcase their intangible cultural assets through food-related experiences (14, 22). Northern Cyprus stands out as a fertile ground for this transformation, given its deeply rooted Mediterranean gastronomy enriched by Anatolian influences and a multi-layered colonial history involving Venetian, Genoese, Arab, Italian, British, and Greek cultural elements (2). These historical intersections have shaped a unique Cypriot culinary mosaic, making the island's cuisine not only a sensory attraction but also a living archive of its past. By embracing sustainability principles—such as supporting local producers, preserving culinary traditions, promoting environmental stewardship, and ensuring community participation—gastronomy tourism in Northern Cyprus could address multiple development

goals. These include rural regeneration, youth employment, local entrepreneurship, and cultural continuity, all while reducing the socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities typically associated with mass tourism (7).

The integration of sustainable gastronomy into tourism strategies could therefore serve as a resilient, inclusive, and culturally sensitive pathway forward for Northern Cyprus. For instance, Molohiya, of Arab origin, has been adapted into a dish that reflects Cypriot traditions through its preparation and presentation. Likewise, halloumi cheese, a staple of daily Cypriot life, has attained international recognition. Its registration as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) product by the European Union has elevated halloumi into a symbolic ambassador for Cypriot gastronomy in the global arena (15).

The Rising Importance of Gastronomy Tourism

Every country in the world possesses its own set of cultural values, and one of the most tangible and universally appreciated expressions of these values is cuisine. Culinary practices are not merely about nourishment—they serve as living archives of a society's heritage and collective memory. In the context of Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism & Its Potential for Implementation in North Cyprus, preserving and transmitting these culinary traditions across generations becomes vital to ensuring both cultural continuity and tourism sustainability. This is precisely where gastronomy functions as a cultural bridge, linking the past with the future, and the local with the global. While formal education systems—such as culinary schools and gastronomy programs—play a role in this process, it would be reductive to see them as the sole bearers of culinary knowledge. True culinary custodianship often resides in informal educators: the grandmothers in rural villages who prepare hand-crafted pastries, traditional dolma, and desserts; the grandfathers slow-cooking kleftiko (oven-baked lamb), making meze, or fermenting pickles using methods handed down over centuries; and the local artisans who continue to produce gastronomic treasures like halloumi cheese, which has recently been recognized and protected by the European Union through its Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) status (15).

These individuals serve as repositories of intangible cultural heritage, and their involvement is essential for authentic, community-based gastronomy tourism models. UNESCO emphasizes that safeguarding such intangible heritage—particularly traditional food knowledge—requires active participation from local communities and intergenerational transmission (27).

Sustainable gastronomy tourism has been widely discussed in the literature as a development approach that links local food systems, cultural identity, and destination sustainability. Early studies emphasize the role of local food in strengthening rural economies and fostering environmentally responsible tourism practices, highlighting gastronomy as a tool for community-based development rather than mere consumption (24). Similarly, Everett and Aitchison (2008) conceptualize food tourism as a medium through which place identity and cultural narratives are communicated, reinforcing the symbolic and experiential value of gastronomy within destination branding. Building on this perspective, Richards (2012) frames gastronomy tourism within the experience economy, arguing that food-based experiences enhance tourist engagement and contribute to destination differentiation. More recent research further integrates sustainability concerns, demonstrating how gastronomic experiences can support ethical consumption, local resilience, and sustainable tourism transitions when embedded within destination governance frameworks (13).

Sustainable tourism frameworks that incorporate local food knowledge and storytelling have been shown to enrich tourist experiences, strengthen destination identity, and promote rural economic resilience (6, 24). Thus, for Northern Cyprus to fully realize its potential in sustainable

gastronomy tourism, it must not only preserve its unique culinary assets but also empower and involve traditional knowledge holders—from kitchens to farms—as active educators and ambassadors of its gastronomic heritage.

Cypriot Cuisine

The cuisine of Cyprus represents a dynamic cultural mosaic, shaped over centuries by historical transformations, population migrations, and diverse colonial influences. This unique gastronomic identity is deeply intertwined with the island's social fabric, reflecting the customs, values, and communal life of its people. Particularly in Northern Cyprus, the culinary landscape exhibits characteristics of both Mediterranean and Turkish food cultures, creating a distinctive fusion that sets it apart from neighboring regions.

Northern Cyprus possesses the hallmark attributes of a typical Mediterranean destination—an appealing climate, fertile agricultural land, rich biodiversity, and a long coastline that supports 3S Tourism (Sea, Sand, Sun). These shared geographic and climatic features are commonly found across Mediterranean countries and naturally influence the regional diet, known for its health-promoting properties and emphasis on fresh, local ingredients (26). However, what distinguishes Cypriot cuisine is the deep imprint left by centuries of conflict, trade, and cultural exchange, particularly with Anatolia. This has resulted in a culinary evolution that features unique adaptations of regional dishes and preparation techniques (2).

Cypriot meze culture is a defining element of this culinary tradition. Dishes such as cacık (yogurt with cucumber and herbs), commonly served alongside Turkish rakı or Greek ouzo, exemplify the shared yet locally distinct flavors of the region. The taverns (meyhane) and fish restaurants of Northern Cyprus bear strong resemblance to those in both the Greek Cypriot south and coastal regions of Turkey, serving as both gastronomic and social spaces. Signature dishes further illustrate the depth and diversity of the island's food culture. Magarına Bulli, a pasta dish served with stewed chicken and grated halloumi, is a well-known Cypriot specialty. The surrounding seas offer a variety of popular seafood dishes such as Barbun (red mullet), Sibya (cuttlefish), sea bass, rock bass, milekop (grouper), Lagos, calamari, and shrimps, often presented as part of elaborate meze spreads. Game dishes from hunted birds, such as Lalangı (prepared with rabbit), grilled quail, partridge, and even pickled quail eggs, reflect traditional food preservation methods and hunting practices deeply rooted in rural Cypriot life. Plant-based dishes, another cornerstone of sustainable gastronomy, also feature prominently. Wild herbs, Cappari (caper) pickles, and legumes such as Luvana (split peas) and Gömeç (a type of edible wild plant) enrich the Cypriot table, offering not only culinary diversity but also seasonality and ecological sensitivity in food production. Zivaniya, a traditional local alcoholic beverage, and iconic dishes like Şeftali kebabı (grilled minced meat in lamb caul fat) further showcase the island's deeply rooted gastronomic identity.

These elements of Cypriot cuisine serve as cultural and economic assets within the framework of sustainable gastronomy tourism. By promoting local, seasonal, and traditional food systems, Northern Cyprus can not only enhance tourist experiences but also protect biodiversity, sustain rural livelihoods, and preserve intangible cultural heritage (6; 24). Through strategic investment in its culinary heritage, the region holds the potential to position itself as a vibrant and authentic gastronomy tourism destination within the Eastern Mediterranean.

Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism Development Strategies in Northern Cyprus

Northern Cyprus, with its high tourism potential and rich cultural landscape, offers promising opportunities for the development of sustainable tourism models. However, current tourism policies require significant revision to align with the core pillars of environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability. A particular area

of untapped potential lies in sustainable gastronomy tourism, which not only promotes local food culture but also contributes to broader goals such as environmental conservation, social inclusion, and destination competitiveness (28; 24). Despite its culinary richness and cultural depth, North Cyprus faces challenges in institutional planning and policy coordination for sustainable tourism. Studies reveal low awareness of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) among tourism stakeholders and limited collaboration across sectors (21). Gastronomic traditions, such as meyhane culture and carob- or halloumi-based cuisine, are underutilized in tourism narratives (3).

To implement an effective sustainable tourism strategy, four key elements—transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, and entertainment—must be addressed in an integrated manner. Among these, transportation plays a foundational role in determining tourist accessibility, environmental impact, and overall satisfaction. Currently, transportation infrastructure in Northern Cyprus remains inadequate. Public transport is limited and fragmented, making it difficult for tourists—especially international visitors unfamiliar with local traffic norms—to navigate the island efficiently. Car rentals involve challenges such as driving on the left-hand side of the road and inconsistent pricing, while the lack of regulated taxi systems and unconventional route structures negatively affect visitor experiences. These shortcomings hinder the development of tourism that is both sustainable and inclusive (18).

The lack of direct international flights, combined with high ticket prices and monopolistic airline practices, further reduces Northern Cyprus's competitiveness as a sustainable tourism destination. This barrier is particularly problematic for the development of gastronomy tourism, which thrives on regional mobility, rural access, and local exploration. Without accessible and environmentally responsible transport systems, tourists are limited in their ability to engage with rural producers, village-based culinary experiences, and authentic local food systems, which are essential components of a sustainable gastronomy tourism model (25).

Moreover, the hospitality sector—particularly accommodation and food service providers—must adopt practices that align with sustainability goals. Hotels and restaurants should be incentivized to source local ingredients, minimize food waste, implement eco-friendly operations, and actively promote Cypriot culinary heritage. Staff training in sustainable food handling, cultural storytelling, and environmentally conscious hospitality is critical. This approach not only enhances the quality of the visitor experience but also contributes to local economic development and cultural preservation (7).

As tourism in Northern Cyprus is still heavily dependent on mass tourism, a strategic shift is required toward alternative tourism models such as gastro-tourism and cultural tourism. These models emphasize depth of experience over volume of visitors and offer mechanisms for engaging tourists in local traditions, biodiversity, and culinary craftsmanship. For instance, supporting village-based culinary experiences, such as traditional cheese-making, meze preparation, and wild herb foraging, can simultaneously protect the environment and empower local communities. Initiatives like promoting some platforms, those can be find in instagram with hastags (#), such as 'Go to Kyrenia' (gotokyrenia.com), 'AdaKıbrıs' (adakibrisim.com), 'VisitNCY' (visitncy.com), or developing media platforms for cultural storytelling can serve to increase visibility of regional food heritage and attract niche markets that value authenticity and sustainability.

The environmental and ethical dimensions of tourism must also be addressed (9). Incidents such as the attack to donkeys in the Karpaz region is negative for environmental degradation threaten the island's image as a responsible destination. These concerns are especially significant in gastronomy tourism, where rural landscapes, animal welfare, and natural beauty are part of the tourism product. Therefore, enforcement mechanisms—such as installing security cameras in protected areas,

empowering municipal inspection units, and establishing tourism police—are essential for creating a safe, transparent, and sustainable tourism environment. Finally, a successful strategy for sustainable gastronomy tourism must prioritize intersectoral collaboration—involving stakeholders from agriculture, environment, culture, and tourism. Policies should not only seek economic growth but also ensure the preservation of Cypriot identity, traditional foodways, and the island's fragile ecosystems. With well-planned investment and regulation, gastronomy can move beyond being a supporting element of tourism to becoming a core driver of sustainable regional development in Northern Cyprus.

Promotion and Marketing Strategies

The success of sustainable tourism, particularly in emerging destinations such as Northern Cyprus, depends not only on strategic infrastructure and policy frameworks but also on effective promotion and marketing. Within this context, the role of targeted marketing strategies becomes especially critical in elevating sustainable gastronomy tourism as a competitive and culturally rich tourism model. As global tourism becomes increasingly experience-driven and niche-focused, destinations must go beyond traditional models of promotion and embrace digital transformation, authentic storytelling, and inclusive outreach (29).

International tourism fairs such as EMITT - East Mediterranean International Tourism and Travel Exhibition and ITB Berlin serve as powerful platforms for visibility, networking, and destination branding. These should be seen as strategic arenas where the island can showcase its culinary heritage, ecotourism potential, and cultural diversity to a global audience. Benchmarking against successful destination promotion models from these fairs can inform localized and competitive marketing strategies (17).

In today's digital age, online visibility is fundamental. Strategic use of social media marketing and digital storytelling—especially via Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok—can significantly amplify the reach of gastronomic experiences in Northern Cyprus. Collaborations with globally recognized food and travel influencers, such as Kyrenian, can play a pivotal role in shaping the image of Northern Cyprus as an authentic and sustainable gastronomy destination. Such digital campaigns can highlight local dishes, traditional cooking techniques, village-based culinary workshops, and sustainable food production processes, thereby creating a strong emotional and cultural connection with potential tourists (23).

Marketing efforts should also focus on attracting high-quality, active tourists—visitors who not only spend but also engage with local experiences, support small businesses, and show interest in authentic cultural immersion. This demographic is particularly relevant for gastronomy tourism, where interest often centers on artisanal food, seasonal products, and traditional preparation methods. To attract this segment, governments and tourism boards must support innovation through the development of alternative accommodation models, including training programs for small business owners on Airbnb compliance, Booking.com listings, and other digital accommodation platforms. These models allow tourists to stay closer to local communities and experience regional gastronomy firsthand—thereby enhancing both economic inclusion and cultural exchange (28, 14).

In parallel, local tour operators and travel agencies must be empowered to offer culinary tourism packages that combine food experiences with other sustainable practices—such as nature trails, farm visits, or artisan workshops. The Ministry of Tourism (http://turizm.gov.ct.tr/), in collaboration with other sectoral stakeholders, should create incentive programs to support small-scale food producers, culinary guides, and agritourism enterprises. These funds can serve as catalysts for the development of a vibrant local gastronomic economy that is both environmentally sustainable and culturally grounded (7, 24). By linking promotion, digital innovation, and small business support to

gastronomy, Northern Cyprus can differentiate itself in the competitive Mediterranean tourism market. These strategies can diversify the local economy, enhance culinary heritage preservation, and create immersive experiences that align with the core principles of sustainable tourism development. In doing so, the island can move toward a future where gastronomy is not just consumed—but understood, celebrated, and protected.

Strategic Axes for the Development of a Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism Model

To effectively develop Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism in Northern Cyprus, a holistic and multi-dimensional framework is required—one that integrates local food systems, cultural heritage, hospitality sustainability, and experiential tourism design. The following strategic axes outline a comprehensive model that aligns with both international sustainability standards and the local context of Northern Cyprus.

Local Production and Short Supply Chains

A foundational element of sustainable gastronomy tourism is the support of local agricultural systems and artisanal food production. This includes the promotion of village-based enterprises, such as olive oil and citrus farming, small-scale fishing, and traditional dairy production, particularly of halloumi cheese, which has been recognized under the EU's Protected Designation of Origin (PDO) scheme. To minimize environmental impact and maximize economic benefit, short supply chains should be prioritized. Hotels, restaurants, and catering establishments must be encouraged—through policy incentives or certifications—to source directly from local producers in a farm-to-table model. Such direct procurement supports local livelihoods, enhances product freshness and quality, and significantly reduces the carbon footprint associated with food logistics (13, 28).

Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Culinary Education

Culinary heritage is one of Northern Cyprus's most valuable intangible assets. To preserve and pass on this knowledge, traditional knowledge bearers—including village bakers, artisans, and cheese-makers—should be formally integrated into educational and tourism programming. Universities and vocational schools must establish apprenticeship-based learning models—reflecting a master-apprentice pedagogy—through community workshops, fairs, and gastronomy events. In parallel, institutions such as universities have gastronomy programs could develop consumer-focused educational programs targeting chefs, food entrepreneurs, and hospitality students. These programs would serve to enhance gastronomic literacy, promote cultural continuity, and build capacity for a sustainable culinary workforce.

Sustainable Hospitality (Accommodation and Food & Beverage)

The hospitality sector plays a pivotal role in realizing sustainable tourism goals. Hotels, resorts, and restaurants in Northern Cyprus shoul*d be encouraged—or required—to adopt eco-friendly operational practices, including; energy-efficient infrastructure; water conservation and reuse systems; organic waste separation and food waste tracking and reduction mechanisms. To facilitate adoption, support programs offering technical consultancy, grants, and subsidies should be developed for enterprises aiming to obtain national or international sustainability certifications (e.g., Green Key, Travelife). These certifications not only improve environmental performance but also serve as market differentiators in attracting sustainability-conscious tourists (19).*

Experience Design: Routes, Activities, and Gastronomic Festivals

Immersive experiences are critical in engaging tourists with local food culture and values. Northern Cyprus need to invest in designing thematic gastronomy routes, seasonal festivals, and hands-on culinary activities that showcase

the region's biodiversity, food heritage, and hospitality traditions. Many countries with specific destinations have their own gastronomy routes like Italy which handled by Corigliano (10) with the title of 'The route to quality: Italian gastronomy networks in operation' and Spain (11).

The Kyrenia Gastronomy Route like Akgoz et al. (1) have mentioned in their research could be expanded to include local markets, traditional olive oil presses, seaside taverns, artisan bakeries, and cooking workshops with village chefs. Similarly, initiatives like the Karpaz Nature & Gastronomy Day or Meze Festivals can combine gastronomy with cultural and ecological tourism. Lessons from Turkey and other Mediterranean destinations highlight the importance of integrating local food systems, renewable energy, and community participation intotourism strategies (4, 12, 5).

Fusion concepts—blending traditional Cypriot dishes with contemporary presentations—can also be incorporated to appeal to international palates, especially within chef-led events, tavern nights, and culinary career days hosted by universities and professional guilds (16). These experiences foster deeper engagement, encourage repeat visitation, and provide platforms for local producers to reach new markets. Table 1 below, prepared by the author, shows the development and different studies on the subject over the years.

Methodological Framework

This study employs a conceptual and literature-driven research design to develop an integrated Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism Model specific to Northern Cyprus. Grounded in an interpretive research tradition, the study synthesizes theoretical frameworks, policy-oriented documents, and experience-based insights rather than relying on primary empirical data (30, 31). This approach is particularly appropriate for destinations characterized by cultural specificity, institutional constraints, and fragmented tourism knowledge (20, 30, 31).

Existing research on Northern Cyprus largely addresses gastronomy, sustainability, or rural tourism as isolated themes, lacking a system-based and integrative analytical perspective (8, 16). To address this limitation, the study proposes a multi-axial conceptual model that connects gastronomy, tourism development, cultural heritage, and sustainability within a unified framework. The literature was evaluated using four criteria—thematic relevance, conceptual contribution, contextual applicability, and scholarly rigor—and enriched with observation-informed insights to enhance contextual validity and practical relevance (30, 31).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Northern Cyprus has significant potential to promote its cultural identity through its rich culinary heritage, ranging from PDO-certified halloumi and diverse meze traditions to seafood-based taverns and rural village kitchens. By implementing well-structured strategies, gastronomy tourism can evolve from being a supplementary attraction to becoming a core pillar of sustainable development, fostering local empowerment, cultural preservation, and environmental responsibility. Positioning sustainable gastronomy tourism at the heart of tourism policy and academic discourse would allow the island to diversify beyond its reliance on "sun, sea, and sand" tourism and establish itself as a distinctive gastronomy destination in the Mediterranean.

This vision requires stronger investment in digital promotion platforms, which can effectively showcase culinary heritage to international audiences. At the same time, greater emphasis on education and professional training—from school-level culinary competitions to advanced programs in hospitality—will ensure the transmission of traditional cooking methods and presentation styles to new generations. Although often overlooked, gastronomy represents a vital form of cultural, social, and economic heritage. Protecting and integrating this heritage into tourism strategies is therefore both a responsibility and an opportunity, enabling Northern Cyprus to secure a tourism model that balances economic growth, cultural continuity, and environmental sustainability for future generations.

Table 1. Evolution of Gastronomy Tourism and Sustainability Studies and Analytical Gaps

Period / Year	Key Study (Author, Year)	Main Focus	Methodological Approach	Key Contribution	Identified Gap
1998	Crotty	Epistemology in social research	Conceptual / interpretive	Established interpretive and constructivist	No sector-specific application
2003	Tranfield, Denyer and Smart	Systematic literature review	Methodological framework	Introduced structured literature synthesis in management studies	Limited application to tourism and gastronomy fields
2008	Tribe	Tourism knowledge and epistemology	Conceptual	Positioned tourism as a fragmented but critical field	Did not propose applied destination models
2009	Jabareen	Conceptual framework building	Qualitative conceptual synthesis	Provided a clear procedure for developing conceptual models	Lacked sectoral focus on gastronomy tourism
2013	Nunkoo et al.	Tourism governance and residents' attitudes	Empirical (survey-based)	Highlighted stakeholder importance in sustainable tourism	Did not integrate gastronomy as a development driver
2014	Baggio and Del Chiappa	Tourism digital ecosystems	Conceptual & network-based	Emphasized system-based destination management	Gastronomy treated as a peripheral element
2017	UNESCO	Intangible cultural heritage	Policy-oriented framework	Recognized food traditions as intangible heritage	Limited operationalization in tourism planning
2019	UNWTO	Gastronomy tourism	Thematic policy report	Positioned gastronomy as a tourism product	Lacked integrated sustainability framework
2019	Berno & Fusté-Forné	Food, place identity, and tourism	Qualitative / interpretive	Linked gastronomy to sense of place	Did not address governance or policy integration
2020–2023	Various Mediterranean studies (Italy, Spain, Turkey)	Gastronomy routes & festivals	Case study-based	Demonstrated experiential value of gastronomy tourism	Fragmented, destination-specific, weak theoretical integration
Present Study (2025)	Author (Girgen)	Sustainable Gastronomy Tourism Model (Northern Cyprus)	Conceptual & integrative	Multi-axial system linking gastronomy, sustainability, culture, and governance	Addresses lack of holistic, context-specific conceptual frameworks

This study examines sustainable gastronomic tourism in Northern Cyprus within a conceptual, governance-based, and temporal (short-medium-long-term) roadmap framework. It proposes a holistic model demonstrating how gastronomy, within the context of Mediterranean islands, can be positioned not merely as a complementary tourism product but as a strategic development pillar. Thus, it goes beyond the predominantly descriptive and case-focused studies in the existing literature, providing a unique theoretical and practical contribution to policy-making, local actor integration, and the simultaneous consideration of sustainability dimensions.

The development of sustainable gastronomy tourism in Northern Cyprus requires a coordinated, multi-stakeholder approach that brings together municipalities, tourism ministries and committees, universities, producer associations, and non-governmental organizations. The following roadmap outlines short-, medium-, and long-term strategies that can guide effective implementation:

Short-Term (0–12 months)

- Create a Local Gastronomy Map to identify and promote restaurants, small producers, culinary routes, and unique gastronomic features of Northern Cyprus.
- Pilot a "Farm-to-Table" Program by establishing supply agreements between at least five hotels and ten small-scale producers, ensuring shorter supply chains and local economic benefits.
- Strengthen Enforcement and Protection Mechanisms for animal rights and biodiversity by enhancing monitoring systems and emergency response measures in sensitive regions such as the Karpaz Peninsula.

Medium-Term (1–3 years)

- Launch In-Service Training Programs for chefs, service staff, and hospitality professionals to improve skills in sustainable gastronomy, food handling, and cultural storytelling.
- Establish Gastronomy Routes and an Annual Festival Calendar (e.g., Kyrenia Gastronomy Route, Karpaz Nature & Gastronomy Day) while initiating digital marketing campaigns targeting priority markets such as the United Kingdom, Turkey, and Germany.
- Provide PDO/Geographical Indication Consultancy to local producers, building on the halloumi success story and extending protection and recognition to other traditional products.

Long-Term (3–7 years)

- Develop Regional Gastronomy Centers featuring farm kitchens, artisan training workshops, and community-led tourism initiatives that form the basis of a sustainable local food economy.
- Implement Certification Systems for Sustainable Tourism and Gastronomy, such as green labels and performance-based incentives, to encourage environmentally responsible hospitality and food production.
- Apply for Membership in International Gastronomy Networks, including UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy, to enhance global visibility and recognition of Northern Cyprus's culinary heritage.

By following these strategies in long-term, Northern Cyprus can institutionalize sustainable gastronomy tourism as a strategic pillar of its tourism development. These measures will strengthen local food systems, enhance cultural preservation, improve international competitiveness, and create a tourism model that balances economic prosperity with social inclusion and environmental stewardship.

Author Contribution

Since this study was conducted by a single author, all tasks including Conceptualization; Data curation; Formal analysis; Funding acquisition; Investigation; Methodology; Resources; Software; Supervision; Validation; Writing – original draft; and Writing – review & editing were carried out by MÜG.

Financial Support

No financial support was received for this study.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this article to be published in the journal. *The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.*

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