# Problems Faced By Ethnic Restaurant Managers: The Case Of Nevşehir And İzmir Provinces *

*Etnik Restoran Yöneticilerinin Karşılaştıkları Sorunlar: Nevşehir ve İzmir İlleri Örneği*

## ABSTRACT

The food and beverage services sector is constantly developing with the increase in eating out behavior. With the increasing competition, a search for differentiation has emerged, and ethnic restaurants have come to the fore in this context. Ethnic restaurants are businesses that provide service in an authentic atmosphere using unique ingredients and cooking methods belonging to a certain culture. Ethnic restaurants, especially those established by foreign investors, face various difficulties such as bureaucratic obstacles and in obtaining materials and personnel from abroad. The aim of this study is to determine the problems experienced by ethnic restaurant managers and to offer solution suggestions. Within the scope of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 6 ethnic restaurant managers in Nevşehir and 10 in İzmir; the obtained data were evaluated with content and descriptive analysis methods. The aim of the research is to contribute to researchers, current managers and potential entrepreneurs in the field.

**Keywords:** Ethnic restaurant, Restaurant problems, Ethnic restaurant managers.

## ÖZET

Yeme içme hizmetleri sektörü, dışarda yemek yeme eğiliminin artmasıyla birlikte sürekli olarak gelişmektedir. Artan rekabetle birlikte farklılaşma arayışları gündeme gelmiş ve bu bağlamda etnik restoranlar ön plana çıkmıştır. Etnik restoranlar, belirli bir kültüre ait özgün malzemeler ve geleneksel pişirme yöntemleri kullanarak otantik bir atmosferde hizmet sunan işletmelerdir. Ancak, özellikle yabancı yatırımcılar tarafından kurulan etnik restoranlar; bürokratik engellerin yanı sıra yurtdışından malzeme temini ve personel istihdamı konularında çeşitli zorluklarla karşılaşmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, etnik restoran yöneticilerinin karşılaştıkları sorunları tespit etmek ve çözüm önerileri sunmaktır. Bu doğrultuda, Nevşehir'de altı ve İzmir'de on etnik restoran yöneticisi ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, içerik analizi ve betimsel analiz yöntemleriyle değerlendirilmiştir. Araştırma bulgularının, alana ilgi duyan araştırmacılara, mevcut yöneticilere ve potansiyel girişimcilere katkı sağlaması hedeflenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Etnik restoran, Restoran sorunları, Etnik restoran yöneticileri

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## INTRODUCTION

Eating and drinking is one of the basic needs of humans, and has also gained importance as a social and cultural activity today (Yurtseven and Yıldırım 2018:163). With social developments, the behavior of eating out has increased, which has led to an increase in the number of food and beverage businesses and increased competition in the sector (Koçak 2006:2). Emerging as a result of the need for differentiation, ethnic restaurants offer consumers food and experiences from different cultures. Ethnic restaurants are businesses that not only offer original dishes, but also aim to provide a cultural experience with an authentic atmosphere. These businesses offer customers the opportunity to experience other cultures without leaving their own country (Marinkovic, Senic, and Mimovic 2015:1919). However, these restaurants face many challenges in order to continue their activities. These include problems related to material and personnel supply, economic fluctuations, bureaucratic obstacles, marketing activities, production processes and physical conditions.

The definition and development of the first restaurants and ethnic restaurants were conveyed, the main problems encountered in the sector and the domestic and foreign literature on this subject were included. In the second part, the findings obtained through the qualitative research method were presented, and in the conclusion section, solution suggestions and recommendations for future research were shared based on these findings.

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## The Concept of Ethnic Restaurants

With the increase in consumer travel and the increased media coverage of international cuisines, the number of restaurants is increasing by adding more different foreign cuisines (King 2004:18). It is predicted that ethnic cuisine is one of the most intense restaurant trends and that this trend will continue to spread rapidly throughout the world (Coeyman 1997:95; Kim and Jang 2019:7; Tomić et al. 2018:350). Ethnic restaurants are food and beverage establishments that are established by transporting the food and beverages of the culinary culture of a society or a region to another region or country, and that use the ingredients, cooking methods and service techniques of their own culinary culture and reflect and represent their own culture by using the music, local clothes, decorations, art and various symbols of the culture they are a part of (Jang, Liu, and Namkung 2011:663; Wood and Munoz 2007:243).

Su (2011:427) defines ethnic restaurants as thematic restaurants that serve dishes that are well known to local people. In addition, Turgeon and Pastinelli (2002:452) define ethnic restaurants as establishments that guarantee to serve national or regional dishes from another country. Tourists and locals alike seek out dishes from different ethnic cuisines and the places where these dishes are served. Such experiences provide individuals with a different dining experience from their daily lives and allow for a better understanding of the food culture and gastronomic identity of a particular country (Kivela and Crotts 2006:354). Hong Min (2016:155) attributes the growing interest in ethnic cuisines to an increase in consumer interest in food, linked to rising income levels and improving living standards. Moreover, ethnic restaurants not only serve food but also create authenticity in the environment where the dining experience takes place. Research shows that diners in ethnic restaurants are particularly looking for an ethnic atmosphere and that the authenticity of the restaurant is an important factor in the satisfaction of such customers (Bell et al. 1994:13; Gaytàn 2008:334). Another important characteristic of ethnic restaurants is that the food they serve is perceived as healthy by consumers (Walls et al. 2012:874). In particular, some Asian cuisines (Korea, Vietnam, Japan), where healthy ingredients such as rice and vegetables and methods such as steaming are common, are considered healthy foods. The main goal of many ethnic restaurateurs is to offer customers attractive and authentic experiences. Spicy flavors and ethnic dishes create positive emotions in consumers (Ignerson and Kim 2016:200). Moreover, a sense of prestige, defined as a feeling of high status or elegance, is an important motivator among individuals seeking exotic dining experiences. In this context, ethnic restaurants play an important role in cultural transmission (Zelinsky 1985:52).

## Authenticity in Ethnic Restaurants

A study conducted by Jang, Ha and Park (2012:1001) reveals that the authenticity of food and ambience in ethnic restaurants has a significant impact on the formation of positive emotions in consumers. In addition, food authenticity is cited as one of the factors that affect authenticity in ethnic restaurants and it is stated that this is one of the most critical components that determine customers' emotions and perceived value. In the context of authenticity, the harmony between the ethnic identity of the employees in ethnic restaurants and the theme of the restaurant is of great importance. Accordingly, there is a positive correlation between the ethnic origin of the staff working in ethnic restaurants and customers' perceptions of authenticity. Customers perceive the dining experience in an ethnic restaurant as more authentic if the products are prepared and served by locals. This suggests that staff play an important role in shaping customers' perceived authenticity of the restaurant (Bich, Jong, and Kimc 2019:13; Lu and Fine 1995:546). Moreover, high ethnicity congruence between the customer and the service provider creates positive emotions in customers, which in turn increase their intention to revisit (Jang et al. 2012:995).

## LİTERATURE REVİEW ON ETHNİC RESTAURANTS

Tekten (2024) examines the meanings of ethnic restaurants and their functions as transnational spaces for migrants in Çankaya, Ankara. The study shows that migrants prefer these places not only for the purpose of eating, but also to fulfill their cultural longings, establish social connections and express their identities. Ethnic restaurants play an important role for migrants as a refuge that reminds them of their homeland, as well as a place to create new social circles and promote their cultural identities. This study emphasizes that these places reinforce migrants' sense of "feeling at home" and offer individuals from different cultures the opportunity to introduce their own culture.

Zhang Te et al. (2023) examined the complex relationship between authenticity and customer satisfaction in ethnic-themed restaurants. The study reveals that authenticity is a critical factor that significantly affects customer satisfaction in ethnic restaurants. It also concludes that a well-researched menu that includes traditional and regional cuisines prepared with authentic ingredients is vital to create an authentic dining experience. At the same time, it was found that sourcing high quality and authentic ingredients is essential, and restaurants that compromise on ingredient quality for cost or convenience risk disappointing customers looking for true flavor.

In the study conducted by Akyol (2023), which aims to examine the reasons why consumers prefer ethnic restaurants in Ankara province, the effects of factors such as consumers' demographic characteristics, food preferences, search for cultural experiences and gastronomic curiosity on the choice of ethnic restaurants were examined. According to the results of the study, ethnic restaurants in Ankara are preferred by consumers because they offer authentic flavors, provide different cultural experiences, offer quality service and are influenced by social media. In addition, while the decoration and atmosphere of the restaurants increase customer satisfaction, price and accessibility also significantly affect consumer decisions.

Liu (2019) aimed to provide a culture-specific solution from both Chinese and South African perspectives to bridge the gap between Chinese-South African cross-cultural businesses and employees from different cultures. Liu noted that managing a culturally diverse workforce poses special challenges, and in the case of China-South Africa restaurants, cultural differences can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts. According to the results of the study, effective cross-cultural management and appropriate leadership styles are crucial to foster a harmonious working environment. It is suggested that choosing a leadership style that suits both Chinese and South African employees can enhance workplace harmony and productivity. Establishing a healthy communication system is crucial to bridge cultural gaps and enhance employee cooperation.

Bich et al. (2019), in their study on the effects of the ethnic appearance of employees, the ethnic appearance of other customers and the compatibility between the theme of the ethnic restaurant and customers' knowledge of ethnic cuisine in ethnic restaurants, found that the ethnic appearance of employees affects the perceived authenticity of the cuisine for customers, and the compatibility of employees and the restaurant directly affects customers' behavioral intentions without the mediating effect of perceived authenticity. In addition to the compatibility between the employees and the restaurant , the compatibility between other customers and the restaurant also has an important interaction effect on customers' behavioral intentions, the positive effect of the ethnic appearance of other customers and their compatibility with the restaurant on behavioral intentions is stronger when the level of knowledge is low, and the level of knowledge of the customer coming to the ethnic restaurant affects the perceived authenticity

Khalefa (2015), in his study on Egyptian customers' perceptions of ethnic restaurants, concluded that ethnic restaurant managers should understand and meet customer expectations regarding authenticity and dining experience. Egyptian customers attach great importance to the elements that shape their dining experience, such as sense of place, service quality and food quality. However, factors such as price fairness, employee competencies and marketing communication can negatively affect customer perceptions and satisfaction. Furthermore, the restaurant's ambience and cultural representation significantly enrich the dining experience; a carefully designed environment that reflects the ethnic background of the cuisine has the potential to attract more customers.

In a study conducted by Cevizkaya (2015) to examine the factors affecting consumers' preferences for ethnic restaurants, it was determined that the participants preferred ethnic restaurants mainly based on friend recommendations and previous experiences. Another important factor shaping consumers' preferences is service quality. The main factors that constitute service quality are the attitudes of the employees, their level of helpfulness, their knowledge competence and the complete delivery of the orders as requested. In addition, restaurant characteristics such as atmosphere, compatibility of the decoration with the ethnic theme of the restaurant, ambient temperature, cleanliness, employees wearing ethnic-themed clothing and appropriate ethnic music are also effective in consumers' choice of restaurants. On the other hand, according to the findings of the research, factors such as price and whether the price paid is affordable or not do not play a decisive role in consumers' restaurant preferences.

Agarwal and Dahm (2015) conducted a study with nine independent ethnic restaurant owners to examine the factors affecting the success of independent ethnic restaurants from the operators' perspective. According to the findings of the study, the participating operators stated that they face similar challenges in terms of financing as other types of restaurants. They also expressed the belief that a comprehensive business plan is more critical for a successful business than a feasibility study. Operators emphasized that quality service delivery and reasonable pricing are more effective in ensuring customer loyalty than the use of new technologies.

Clemes, Gan and Sriwongrat (2013) examined the factors that lead consumers to dine in upscale ethnic restaurants. According to the findings of the study, customers prefer restaurants that offer delicious food prepared with quality and fresh ingredients and presented in a visually appealing way. The study revealed that there are positive relationships between service quality, food quality, overall dining experience and dining behavior in upscale ethnic restaurants. In addition, ethnic restaurants that include healthy alternatives in their menu and offer a wide variety of products are more preferred by consumers.

## METHOD

The purpose of this study is to identify the problems faced by ethnic restaurant owners and managers. The research was conducted in Nevşehir and İzmir provinces and the bureaucratic, environmental, economic and internal problems faced by ethnic restaurant managers were examined. Solutions to these problems and the suggestions of the managers were also included in the research. The study is a qualitative research and an exploratory and phenomenological approach was adopted. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, and content analysis and descriptive analysis methods were used in the analysis. After the interviews, the data were coded and grouped under certain themes. The reliability of the coding process was ensured with a 92% agreement percentage, and the inter-rater agreement was found to be 71% with the Cohen Kappa coefficient. As a result, the problems faced by ethnic restaurant businesses have been revealed in detail and various solutions have been proposed. The findings of the study emphasize the need for further research in this field.

### Challenges Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

In this section, the analysis of the data obtained from the answers to the questions posed to the participants in the interviews with ethnic restaurant managers is discussed. In order to prepare the study in accordance with research ethics, the name of any participant who agreed to participate in the research was not included, and as a result of the analysis, the ethnic restaurant managers participating in the research were coded as 'N' businesses in Nevşehir province and 'I' businesses in İzmir province.

Table 1: Bureaucratic Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Bureaucratic | There is a no problems | N6, İ8, İ9, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ8, İ9, İ10 | 56 |
| | | Getting permission for the opening is hard and fast not | N1, N2, N3, İ1 | 25 |
| | | Problems with the municipality | N4, İ4 | 12 |
| | | Foreign investor Permission procedures for difficult and protracted | N1, N5 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 9 – Code 2: 4 – Code 3: 2 – Code 4: 2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

The data obtained were analyzed by content analysis and descriptive analysis methods and the themes and codes in Table 1 are presented. According to the research findings, the bureaucratic problems encountered in the establishment and operation of ethnic restaurants vary across cities. It is observed that businesses in Nevşehir have more difficulties especially in municipal procedures and permits for foreign investors. This may be due to the approach of the institutions in the region towards foreign investors and the high inspection sensitivity brought about by its touristic structure. On the other hand, enterprises in Izmir had fewer problems in similar bureaucratic processes and were able to complete the process faster and easier. This finding suggests that institutional processes in metropolitan cities may be more established and that investment-friendly policies of local governments are effective.

Table 2: Economic Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%)(*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Economic | Economic problems during the pandemic | N1, N2, N3, N4, N6, İ1, İ2, İ3, İ6, İ7, İ8, İ9, İ10 | 81 |
| | | Economic problems during the establishment phase | N1, İ3, İ6, İ7 | 31 |
| | | There was no economic problem | N5, İ5, İ9 | 19 |
| Total: Code 1: 13 – Code 2: 4 – Code 3: 3 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

According to the data obtained from the question posed to the participants in Table 2, within the scope of economic problems, it was determined that ethnic restaurants in both cities faced similar financial problems. Costs during the establishment phase, the effects of the pandemic process and increased expense items were cited as common problems by managers in both Izmir and Nevşehir. The fact that there is no statistically significant difference between the cities indicates that economic problems are due to general economic fluctuations and the nature of the

sector. The increase in costs and procurement expenses, especially in the post-pandemic period, caused these problems to become more pronounced.

Table 3: Ethnic Restaurant Managers' Problems with Neighboring Businesses

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Problems with Environmental Enterprises | No problems experienced | N5, N6, İ1, İ2, İ3, İ5, İ7, İ8, İ9, İ10 | 62 |
| | | Jealousy | N1, N3, N4, İ6 | 31 |
| | | Unfair competition | N2, İ4 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 10 – Code 2: 4 – Code 3: 2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

In Table 3, the codes revealed as a result of the analysis of the answers given by the participants are combined to form the theme of "problems with neighboring enterprises" and it is shown in which code the participants are included. Jealousy and unfair competition stand out among the problems in relations with neighboring enterprises reported by managers. Similar rates of such problems were observed in both cities, and no significant difference was found on a city basis. This suggests that the unique identity and remarkable structure of ethnic restaurants may be perceived as a threat by some neighboring businesses. In addition, misunderstanding of cultural differences or feeling of exclusion may lead to the development of such negative attitudes.

Table 4: Staffing Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Staff Supply | Qualified personnel are hard to find | N4, N6, İ1, İ3, İ6, İ9, İ10 | 44 |
| | | Permission for foreign staff takes a long time and is difficult to obtain | N1, N2, N4, N5, İ3, İ4 | 37 |
| | | Staffing is not a problem | N3, İ8, İ5, İ7, İ8 | 31 |
| | | High cost of foreign personnel | N2, İ4 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 7 – Code 2: 6 – Code 3: 5 – Code 4: 2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 4 shows the codes generated from the answers given by the interviewees to the question and the 'personnel supply' theme created from these codes. Accordingly, while the difficulty of finding qualified personnel is more prominent in Izmir, bureaucratic obstacles related to employing foreign personnel are emphasized more in Nevşehir. In particular, enterprises in Nevşehir stated that they used to work with foreign personnel in the past, but they ended this practice due to visa and permit problems. In Izmir, the shortage of qualified personnel is more prevalent, which may be attributed to lack of training or lack of interest in the working conditions of the sector. In both cities, staff turnover and continuity of employment is a problem.

Table 5: Marketing/Sales Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Marketing/Sales | No problems experienced | N2, N4, N5, N6, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ8, İ9, İ10 | 69 |
| | | Problems during the establishment phase | N1, N3, İ1, İ6, İ7 | 31 |
| Total: Code 1: 11 – Code 2: 5 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 5 shows the theme "Marketing/Sales" created by combining the codes created as a result of the analysis of the data obtained from the question directed to the participants and the answers of the participants. The research findings reveal that businesses generally do not have problems in marketing and sales. It is understood that there is no difficulty in reaching the target audience thanks to the effective use of both traditional advertising tools and digital channels such as social media. However, some managers stated that they had to differentiate their marketing strategies due to prejudices against ethnic cuisine or differences in taste. Nevertheless, the overall picture of marketing/sales seems to be more positive compared to other problems.

Table 6: Establishment Location Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Place of Establishment | On the main street is located in | N2, N4, N5, N6, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ6, İ8 | 56 |
| | | Parking space is not found | N4, İ1, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ6, İ8 | 50 |
| | | Landscaping is not good | N1, İ7, İ7 | 19 |
| | | Away from the main street | N1, İ7, İ10 | 19 |
| | | It's hard to see on the second floor | N4, N5, N6 | 19 |
| | | No disadvantages | N2, N3, İ9 | 19 |
| Total: Code 1: 9 – Code 2: 8 – Code 3: 3 – Code 4: 3 – Code 5: 3 – Code 6: 3 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 6 shows the theme of "Place of Establishment" and the codes of this theme together with the participant responses. In this table, the problems experienced by ethnic restaurant managers regarding the location of the establishment are presented in detail. Being located on the main street, lack of parking, inadequate landscaping and visibility problems are among the most frequently mentioned issues. Differences between Izmir and Nevşehir are particularly noteworthy in terms of parking; while in Izmir, lack of parking is a major problem, in Nevşehir this problem is less pronounced due to the preference of tourists for public transportation. In addition, being located on the second floor has a negative impact on visibility and some managers do not see any disadvantages from the location.

Table 7: Material Procurement Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase and in the periods following the opening of | Menu Specific Ingredient Procurement | We bring materials from abroad because they are not available in Turkey | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, İ1, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ8 | 75 |
| | | Materials imported from abroad are costly due to exchange rate | N1, N2, N4, N5, İ1, İ3 | 37 |
| | | Materials brought from abroad are costly due to customs duties | N2, N4, N5, İ1, İ3, İ4 | 37 |
| | | Materials are constantly increasing, but we can't increase them all the time | N4, N5, İ3, İ9, İ10 | 31 |
| | | No problem with material supply | İ2, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ8 | 31 |
| | | Materials brought from abroad are costly due to intermediaries | N1, N5, İ1 | 19 |
| | | Materials are spoiled as a result of bulk ordering to reduce tax and transfer costs | N1, N2, N6 | 19 |
| | | Materials are expensive at home due to high taxes and exchange rates | N3, N4, İ9 | 19 |
| | | Materials brought from abroad are costly due to long-distance transfer | N2, N6 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 12-Code 2: 6-Code 3: 6-Code 4: 5-Code 5: 5-Code 6: 3-Code 7: 3-Code 8: 3-Code 9:2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 7 shows the theme named "Procurement of Menu Specific Materials", which was revealed by coding the answers given by the participants and combining these codes, and which codes the participants agreed with. Problems in procuring ingredients is one of the most important problems. Procurement of special ingredients that are not available in Turkey from abroad leads to increased costs due to exchange rates, customs duties and intermediaries. Restaurant managers in Nevşehir have more problems in this regard, while in Izmir they work with substitutes, some of which are available in Turkey. In addition, the constant increase in material prices but the inability to raise prices at the same rate makes business sustainability difficult.

Table 8: Problems Faced by Ethnic Restaurant Managers in Production

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Problems experienced during and after the establishment phase | Production | We have no with production | N4, N6, İ1, İ2, İ4, İ5, İ8, İ10 | 50 |
| | | Customer groups arriving without reservation | N1, N2, N3, N5 | 25 |
| | | Our production area limited | İ6, İ7, İ9 | 25 |
| | | We have enough space for production | N2, N3, N6 | 18 |
| | | Deterioration of materials during periods of low sales | N1, N4 | 12 |
| | | Lack of qualified personnel | N5, İ3 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 8 – Code 2: 4 – Code 3: 4 – Code 4: 3 – Code 5: 3 – Code 6: 2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

In Table 8, the answers given by the participants are coded and these codes are combined to form the "Production" theme and participants codes are shown. Regarding production, some enterprises mentioned the limited production space and lack of qualified personnel. In Nevşehir, the mass arrival of touristic customer groups without reservation creates difficulties in production planning. In Izmir, small kitchen size and lack of space are at the forefront. However, some participants stated that they did not have problems with production.

Table 9: Nationality of Employees in Ethnic Restaurants

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The staff you employ in your businessespecially your cooks Are they people from the country/culture whose products you offer? | Local and Foreigner | Our cooks and our waiters are local | N3, İ1, İ3, İ5, İ5, İ6, İ9, İ10 | 50 |
| | | Foreign staff in the past and local staff now | N4, N5, İ2, İ4 | 25 |
| | | Both local and foreign staff | N2, N6, İ8 | 19 |
| | | Our cooks and waiters foreign | N1 | 6 |
| Total: Code 1: 8 – Code 2: 4 – Code 3: 3 – Code 4: 1 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 9 shows the theme of "Local and Foreign" and the codes to which the participants belonged, which were created as a result of coding the answers to the question about the nationality of the staff they work with and combining these codes. In terms of staff nationality, it is seen that restaurants in Izmir mainly employ local staff. In Nevşehir, on the other hand, foreign staff was employed for a period of time, but nowadays they have mostly returned to local staff. This can be attributed to the fact that the employment of foreign staff creates difficulties in terms of management and adaptation.

Table 10: Problems Experienced and Types of Enterprises

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Are your problems specific to the cuisine of the country whose products you serve, ora re similar to those in other food businesses? | Specific and General Problems | Problems similar to those experienced in all ethnic restaurants | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ8 | 62 |
| | | Problems similar to those experienced in all restaurants | İ1, İ3, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ9, İ10 | 44 |
| | | Our own culture special problems restaurants products | N1, N2, N4 | 19 |
| Total: Code 1: 10 – Code 2: 7 – Code 3: 3 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 10 shows the codes of the answers received from the question asked to the participants to determine whether the problems they experienced were specific to the cuisine of the culture in which they serve their products or whether they were problems that were also experienced in other food establishments, and the theme formed from these codes and the codes in which the participants' answers were included. While there was a preponderance of opinions that the problems experienced were similar to those experienced by non-ethnic restaurants in general, some businesses in Nevşehir stated that they experienced unique, culture-specific problems. In Izmir, ethnic restaurant managers stated that general restaurant problems were more prevalent.

Table 11: Customer Portfolio of Interviewed Ethnic Restaurants

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The customers who come to your business only the country/culture whose products you offer or are they general customers? | Local and Foreign Customers | Customers from different countries | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6, İ1, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ8 | 87 |
| | | More local customers | İ1, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ8, İ9, İ10 | 62 |
| | | More people from the country whose products we offer | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6 | 31 |
| | | There are also local customers | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6 | 31 |
| Total: Code 1: 14 – Code 2: 10 – Code 3: 5 – Code 4: 5 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 11 shows the answers received in response to the question posed to the interviewees in order to determine the customer portfolio coming to their businesses and the codes created from these answers as a result of the analysis and the theme created by combining the codes. There are significant differences between the two cities in terms of customer profile. While the customers of restaurants in Izmir are mainly locals and local tourists, the majority of customers in Nevşehir are foreign tourists. This is directly related to the touristic attraction of Nevşehir.

Table 12: Customer Type of Interviewed Ethnic Restaurants (Loyal/Continuous Customers)

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| You have loyal customers? Do they come to your restaurant on a trial basis? | Loyal and Experimental | We have loyal customers | İ1, İ2, İ3, İ4, İ5, İ6, İ7, İ9, İ10 | 56 |
| | | Since it is a touristic area, customers who come mostly for trial purposes | N1, N2, N3, N4, N5, N6 | 38 |
| | | We have no loyal customers | N3, N6, İ6 | 19 |
| Total: Code 1: 9 – Code 2: 6 – Code 3: 3 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

Table 12 shows the codes of the answers received from the question directed to the interviewed ethnic restaurant managers to determine whether the customers coming to the business are loyal customers or trial customers, the theme created from the codes and the codes that the participants are included in. In Izmir, the rate of loyal customers is higher because the customer base consists mostly of local and regional people. In Nevşehir, most of the customers come for touristic purposes and the rate of loyal customers is lower. This shows that businesses need to differentiate their customer loyalty strategies.

Table 13: Ethnic Restaurant Managers' Suggestions for Solving the Problems They Face

| Category | Theme | Codes | Participants | Frequency (%) (*) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What can be done to solve the problems experienced, what are your suggestions? | Bureaucratic procedures should be easy and materials should be cheap | Facilitate the procurement of materials from abroad and make them cheaper | N1, N3, N4, N5, N6, İ1, İ2, İ4 | 50 |
| | | Provide facilities to employ foreign personnel | N1, N2, N4, İ3, İ4 | 31 |
| | | Materials brought from abroad can be imported to the country It should be produced in | N2, N5, İ3, İ4, İ5 | 31 |
| | | Material prices should be monitored and should be cheaper | N3, İ6, İ7, İ9, İ10 | 31 |
| | | Provide facilities for foreign investors | N1, N5 | 12 |
| Total: Code 1: 8 – Code 2: 5 – Code 3: 5 – Code 4: 5 – Code 5: 2 | | | | |

(*) The interviewed participants stated more than one problem.

In Table 13, the interviewees were asked what can be done to solve the problems they experience and the codes created from the answers received, the theme created by combining the codes and the codes in which the participants are included are shown. Managers suggest reducing bureaucratic obstacles and reducing costs, especially in the procurement of materials from abroad, to solve the problems. In addition, facilitating the employment of foreign personnel, increasing domestic production opportunities and controlling material prices are important issues. There are no significant differences between cities in these suggestions, and the general expectations regarding the solution of problems are similar.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the problems faced by ethnic restaurants, which are increasingly opened and preferred by consumers, from the establishment stage. In the qualitative research design, the data obtained from ethnic restaurant managers through semi-structured interviews were analyzed.

One of the most common problems encountered during the interviews was the procurement of ingredients. The desire of ethnic restaurants to stick to original recipes leads to the necessity of importing ingredients from abroad, which creates high costs due to exchange rates, customs duties, transportation costs and brokerage commissions. In addition, the high prices of domestically sourced materials are also an important problem. As a solution to the problems, it has been suggested that customs duties should be reduced, costs should be reduced through joint orders, some materials should be produced domestically and inspections of intermediary companies should be increased.

There are also significant difficulties in recruiting personnel. Bureaucratic obstacles in obtaining the necessary permits for foreign cooks and employees, the prolonged process and salary demands in foreign currency put restaurants in a difficult situation. The insufficiency of local staff, especially the lack of service personnel who speak foreign languages, is an additional problem. Improvements in wages and working conditions have been suggested, and the creation of a new structure to speed up the procedures for foreign staff has been put on the agenda.

In economic terms, apart from the negative effects of the pandemic, the difficulty in accessing financing during the establishment period of restaurants is noteworthy. It was stated that there are collateral problems for bank loans; therefore, the importance of a good feasibility study was emphasized.

Among the bureaucratic problems, communication problems with local administrations, difficulties in obtaining documents and the lack of foreign language-speaking personnel stand out. In this context, it was suggested that foreign language speaking staff should be employed in institutions and a special association for ethnic restaurants should be established.

The choice of location also causes some problems. In particular, issues such as lack of parking, the restaurant being located on the second floor and inadequate landscaping were highlighted. Regarding production, problems such as instantaneous overcrowding due to customers arriving without reservations and insufficient kitchen space were mentioned.

Finally, some managers mentioned unfair competition with neighboring businesses, inadequate marketing activities and differences in customer portfolios. While Nevşehir has a predominantly tourist clientele, it was observed that more local customers prefer restaurants in Izmir. This creates differences between cities in terms of creating loyal customers.

As a result of the study, it was emphasized that the problems faced by ethnic restaurants are not unique to these restaurants, and similar problems can be experienced in other types of restaurants.

In order to investigate the problems faced by ethnic restaurant managers, the data obtained through in-depth interviews with 6 ethnic restaurant managers in Nevşehir and 10 ethnic restaurant managers in İzmir were analyzed with qualitative data analysis methods and all the conclusions and recommendations are given in this section. A number of significant differences were found between the two cities. These differences may be attributed to the population, local governments and institutions, the number of tourists, and transportation networks.

This study has some implications for future research. Under this topic, the problems faced by ethnic restaurant managers in different cities or tourist destinations can be investigated. In addition, this study can be conducted with different methods. Again, comparisons can be made by investigating the problems of different types of restaurant businesses such as ethnic restaurants and themed restaurants.

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