

Turisztikai és Vidékfejlesztési Tanulmányok
Tourism and Rural Development Studies
10. évfolyam, 3. szám, 2025: 129–148.
doi: 10.15170/TVT.2025.10.03.07



THE INTERACTION BETWEEN GEOGRAPHICALLY INDICATED PRODUCTS AND TOURISM: CONTRIBUTIONS TO LOCAL ECONOMY AND DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

¹Arzan Dilek Bozkurt ✉, ²Aşkim Nurdan Tümbek Tekeoğlu, ³Necla İlter Küçükçolak

¹PhD Candidate, İstanbul Ticaret University, Institute of Social Sciences, Marketing Management Program; arzan.dilek@istanbulticaret.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-7295-5733

²Associate Professor, Lecturer, İstanbul Ticaret University, Faculty of Business Administration, anttekeoglu@ticaret.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-6837-9649

³Associate Professor, Executive Vice President, Turkish Mercantile Exchange; necla.kucukcolak@turib.com.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-7097-5423

ABSTRACT

The study explores the relationship between geographically indicated products (GIPs) and the tourism sector, as well as their impact on local development. In recent years, the integration of these products into tourism destinations has contributed to strengthening local economies and fostering sustainable tourism. The research was conducted in Turkey in 2024, adopting a qualitative approach and utilizing in-depth interviews with key stakeholders, including tourism managers, local producers, gastronomy tourism experts, local government officials, and geographical indication specialists. It investigates how GIPs influence the tourism sector and local development, identifies the opportunities and challenges associated with their use, and examines the role of digital marketing tools in this process. The findings offer valuable insights into how GIPs can be integrated into destination marketing strategies, the benefits they provide to local producers, and their contribution to sustainable tourism. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of digital resources in promoting GIPs and outlines their potential for further development.

Keywords: geographically indicated products (GIPs), local development, place-based marketing, rural tourism, sustainable tourism


Received: 4 June 2025

Accepted: 8 July 2025

Published: 30 September 2025



A FÖLDRAJZI JELZÉSŰ TERMÉKEK ÉS A TURIZMUS KÖZÖTTI KÖLCSÖNHATÁSOK HELYI GAZDASÁGHOZ ÉS DESZTINÁCIÓFEJLESZTÉSHEZ VALÓ HOZZÁJÁRULÁSA

¹Arzan Dilek Bozkurt , ²Aşkim Nurdan Tümbek Tekeoğlu, ³Necla İlter Küçükcolak

¹Doktorjelölt, Isztambuli Kereskedelmi Egyetem, Társadalomtudományi Intézet, Marketing Menedzsment Program; arzan.dilek@istanbulticaret.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-7295-5733

²Egyetemi docens, Isztambuli Kereskedelmi Egyetem, Gazdálkodástudományi Kar;
anttekeoglu@ticaret.edu.tr, ORCID: 0000-0002-6837-9649

³Egyetemi docens, ügyvezető alelnök, Török Árutőzsde; necla.kucukcolak@turib.com.tr,
ORCID: 0000-0002-7097-5423

ABSZTRAKT

A tanulmány a földrajzi jelzésű termékek (FJT) és a turisztikai ágazat közötti kapcsolatot, valamint a helyi fejlődésre gyakorolt hatásukat vizsgálja. Az elmúlt években e termékek turisztikai célpontokba való integrálása hozzájárult a helyi gazdaságok erősítéséhez és a fenntartható turizmus előmozdításához. A kvalitatív módszerrel történt kutatásra 2024-ben Törökországban került sor, mélyinterjúkat készítve kulcsfontosságú szereplőkkel, köztük turisztikai menedzserekkel, helyi termelőkkel, gasztronómiai turisztikai szakértőkkel, helyi önkormányzati tisztviselőkkel és a földrajzi jelzések specialistáival. A vizsgálat célja annak a megállapítása, hogy az FJT-k hogyan befolyásolják a turisztikai ágazatot és a helyi fejlődést, továbbá azonosítani a használatukban rejlő lehetőségeket és kihívásokat, illetve megvizsgálni a digitális marketingeszközök szerepét e folyamatban. Az eredmények értékes betekintést nyújtanak abba, hogy az FJT-k hogyan illeszthetők be a desztinációs marketingstratégiákba, milyen előnyöket nyújtanak a helyi termelőknek, és milyen mértékben járulnak hozzá a fenntartható turizmushoz. Emellett a tanulmány kiemeli a digitális erőforrások fontosságát az FJT-k népszerűsítésében és vázolja a további fejlesztési lehetőségeket.

Kulcsszavak: földrajzi jelzésű termékek, helyi fejlesztés, helyalapú marketing, falusi turizmus, fenntartható turizmus

Benyújtva: 2025. június 4.

Befogadva: 2025. július 8.

Publikálva: 2025. szeptember 30.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a key ingredient in supporting local economies and preserving culture heritage. Tourist demand for experiencing native values and genuine products provides opportunities for destinations to increase tourist volume by promoting their own culture. Products with geographical indications are a robust instrument for acquiring economic return on investment and getting competitive edge in tourist marketing. They place greater emphasis on the geography and culture of an area and influence tourists' destination selection (Akgöz et al., 2023; Ciani et al., 2021; Yıkımsı & Ünal, 2016).

In recent years, tourism has developed beyond traditional destinations and has focused on regional identity and cultural values. Consequently, local product marketing and promotion have become more important. In this sense, GIPs hold notable potential for local development and diversification of the tourism sector.

GIPs stand out due to their geographical, cultural, and traditional elements which ensure quality and authenticity. The labeling of geographical indication not only promotes them but also contributes to local development and the preservation of cultural heritage. However, the incorporation of GIPs into tourism has not been widely researched.

This study aims to examine the interaction between geographically indicated products and the tourism sector and to understand the impact of this interaction on local development. Using a qualitative method, the research explores how GIPs can be used as a tourism destination marketing strategy, how they contribute to sustainable tourism, and how they impact local economies. Both theoretically and empirically, it will identify the interactive relationship between GIPs and tourism and suggest directions for future research.

Outlined below are qualitative interviews with participants from the sector, including managers of tourism activities, local production agents, specialists in gastronomic tourism, and representatives from local authorities. Attempts will be made to uncover the knowledge and expertise of the participants on the matter. The promotion of GIPs through digital technology will also be examined based on observations and technical skills.

2. The interconnection between GIPs and tourism

The linkages between GIPs and tourism are multifaceted, depending on the unique cultural, economic, and environmental features that GIPs bring to a location. As products that derive from specific geographical locations, they have become effective destination branding tools, instruments for sustainable tourism development, and means of enhancing the authenticity of tourist attractions. This section analyzes the multifaceted linkages between GIPs and tourism, underpinned by evidence from scholarly studies.

2.1. Destination branding and cultural identity

GIPs are strong tools for strengthening destination branding and cultural identity. Through products with deep historical and cultural affiliations in an area—such as Champagne,

Darjeeling, or Parmigiano-Reggiano—destinations can establish distinctive identities amidst a sea of competitive tourism (Hall et al., 2009; Bessière, 1998). GIPs resonate with local pride and draw tourists who seek genuine, place-related experiences. As Van Ittersum et al. (2007) note, emotional bonding developed with product-origin stories increases visitor engagement and loyalty. Hall et al. (2009) discuss that GIPs not only play a role in determining destination image but also structure experiential narratives, especially in wine countries where terroir is included in the charm.

2.2. Facilitating sustainable and rural tourism

GIPs facilitate sustainability by building environmentally friendly agriculture and preserving local biodiversity (Yang & Wong, 2012). They also increase social sustainability by supporting rural economies and empowering small producers (Kizos & Vakoufaris, 2011; WTO, 2004). For instance, in China, the marketing of Hami Melon as a GIP not only encouraged tourism development but also enhanced sustainable agricultural systems. Yang and Wong (2012) emphasize that the success of product-based GIPs like Hami Melon is not only economic but also environmental in nature, as it illustrates how product-based tourism can stimulate landscape conservation. Similarly, in Turkey, products like Ezine cheese and Finike orange take on key roles to revitalize rural areas (Tümbek Tekeoğlu et al., 2024).

2.3. Enhancing gastronomic and experiential tourism

GIPs have a significant role to play in gastronomic tourism development, especially when integrated with broader culinary experiences, such as wine trails and local cuisine festivals. The Italian experience of enogastronomic tourism, through more than 800 registered GIPs, is a prime example of the capacity of local food heritage to galvanize visitors' demand (Sonnino, 2004; UNWTO, 2018). GIPs also help construct experiential tourist experiences through taste, story, and place in one product.

2.4. Improving the tourist experience through innovation

Technological tools such as geographic information systems (GIS), interactive maps, and virtual tasting tours expand the coverage and accessibility of GIPs. For example, Spain's Wine Routes and GIS-based tour guides in Georgia offer tourists context-specific and tailored discovery possibilities (UNWTO, 2018). As online engagement becomes a central part of trip planning, the integration of augmented reality and digital storytelling applications is opening new opportunities for destination marketing and tourist engagement (Tom Dieck & Jung, 2018; Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). In line with UNWTO (2018), digital technologies aligned with GIP promotion can more effectively empower local producers, improve traceability, and enrich visitor experience through experiential narratives and interactive technologies.

2.5. Meeting challenges: Governance and quality control

Despite their potential, GIPs face some issues when implemented in tourism. Brand dilution, label fraud, and unreliable quality control can undermine consumers' confidence and adversely impact destination image (Giovannucci et al., 2009). Good management and certification procedures are crucial for ensuring product integrity and the value of GIPs in the tourism sector. Without efficient enforcement mechanisms, symbolic and economic value of the GIPs can be lost (Bowen & Zapata, 2009).

2.6. Future directions and international opportunities

The future of GIP tourism is cross-sector collaboration, expert branding, and global market integration. Regional integration, public-private collaboration, and technological innovation are needed to increase the exposure and market performance of GIPs. Research also reflects that GIPs, besides preserving heritage, must be established as dynamic cultural assets sensitive to international movements such as climate resilience, ethical buying, and regenerative farming (Belletti et al., 2017; Ciani et al., 2021).

3. The role of GIPs in the tourism of Turkey

Turkey, with its deep-rooted culture, rich biodiversity, and traditional production practices, offers immense potential for GIPs. Research on the integration of GIPs in Turkish tourism indicates the potential to drive local development, strengthen destination branding, and improve tourist experience.

3.1. The role of GIPs in destination branding in Turkey

GIPs are the key drivers of gastronomic, rural, and cultural tourism in Turkey. Studies indicate that they are integrated into destination branding, as they highlight the unique cultural and gastronomic identity of regions. City-level geographical indications in Turkey play a crucial role in preserving culinary traditions while also fostering tourism, rural development, and regional economic growth (Tümbek Tekeoğlu et al., 2024). For instance, Gaziantep cuisine, which was recognized by UNESCO as part of the Creative Cities Network in 2015, has strong ties to GIPs such as Antep Baklava, which enriches the city's culinary tourism (UNESCO, 2015). Likewise, Afyonkarahisar's *sucuk* (fermented sausage) and *kaymak* (clotted cream), both GIP-registered, are becoming major attractions for culinary tourism (Türk Patent ve Marka Kurumu, 2021).

3.2. The role of GIPs in the development of rural tourism in Turkey

The role of gastronomy and indigenous products in the development of rural tourism in Turkey is now widely recognized as crucial for fostering local economies and implementing sustainable initiatives. Not only do GIPs attract tourists seeking authentic experiences, but

they also stimulate local engagement and environmental protection. The following key points highlight the most crucial aspects of GIPs' role in rural tourism in Turkey.

GIPs make significant contributions to rural economies, particularly by creating employment opportunities in rural areas, especially in the food and hospitality sectors (Dursun et al., 2017). Local gastronomy is integrated into tour packages, enhancing the appeal of rural destinations, hence boosting tourist visits and spending (Uçar et al., 2012).

Locals are encouraged to participate in tourism development via the promotion of indigenous products, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. Research indicates that locals are supportive of agro-tourism enterprises because they recognize that they have the capacity to promote economic well-being and improve living standards (Özgürel et al., 2023).

GIPs stimulate sustainable development by promoting local resources utilization and traditional processes, preserving cultural heritage and maintaining diversity (Ozcatalbas et al., 2010). By integrating gastronomy, they become adjoined to the Turkish Tourism Strategy of 2023 with its agenda for improving rural tourism in the domestic economy as well as sustainability and preservation (Dursun et al., 2019).

Although GIPs play a crucial role in the development of rural tourism, infrastructure development and marketing strategies remain key challenges to their full utilization. Thus, those challenges must be addressed to ensure the sustainable development of rural tourism in Turkey.

3.3. Gastronomic tourism–GIP correlation in Turkey

The connection between Turkey's gastronomic tourism and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is highly significant since culinary tourism forms part of what makes the destination attractive to tourists. This connection is supported by various factors, including advertising methods, education systems, and cultural events that enhance the country's gastronomic landscape.

The "Go Türkiye" campaign encourages Turkish food elements by identifying locations such as Gaziantep and Istanbul, which UNESCO has recognized as possessing gastronomic richness (Kaman, 2024). The visual media play a critical role in marketing street food, making Turkish food more appealing to locals and international travelers (NurAksu & Yılmaz, 2023).

Turkey's culinary arts and gastronomy education entail tourism-related courses, with tourism-related subjects dominating much of the curriculum. This suggests a structured mechanism for integrating gastronomy with tourism (Seçuk et al., 2022). It is also a central attraction in the form of festivals of gastronomy, showcasing local agriculture, cultural exchange, regional economic development, and tourism potential (Demir & Dalgıç, 2022).

While gastronomic tourism is in the limelight, some caution that it may overshadow other cultural tourism activities and result in an imbalanced representation of Turkey's rich heritage. This is why a more holistic approach to tourism marketing is needed, one that encompasses all cultural aspects.

3.4. Economic impacts of GIPs on tourism in Turkey

The economic impact of GIPs on Turkish tourism is significant, with tourism being the key driver of economic growth and resilience. Studies show a strong positive correlation between economic growth and tourism receipts, where a 1% growth in tourism revenue translates to a 0.12% increase in economic growth (Sekreter et al., 2025). Moreover, studies indicate a one-way causality, signaling that economic growth is fueled by rising tourism revenues, and a decline leads to economic recession. Long-term economic resilience is enhanced by greater revenues in tourism since they absorb the effects of financial crises and decline (Sekreter et al., 2025). Aside from economic growth, tourism also greatly impacts employment and investment. It generates numerous employment opportunities across various sectors, thus contributing significantly to labor market development (Al-Roubaie, 2019). Besides, higher foreign demand for tourism is expected to raise GDP, household income, and private spending, ultimately stimulating additional investment in business and infrastructure development (Gül, 2015).

In maximizing the economic benefits of tourism, policymakers should introduce diversified market strategies and sustainable tourism practices in a bid to avoid excessive dependency on specific types of tourism (Sekreter et al., 2025). Nevertheless, unbridled dependence on tourism poses an economic threat, especially against global crises or shifting consumer travel patterns. A well-balanced economic strategy is therefore important to mitigate potential risks to long-term economic stability.

4. Methodological approach

The core aim of incorporating in-depth expert interviews in this study is to gather contextualized data from professionals directly involved with the certification, governance, marketing, and tourism integration of geographically indicated products in Turkey. The interviews provide not only first-hand experience-based insight but also allow for an examination of the key institutional, economic, and cultural dynamics that shape today's GIP context.

Purposive sampling was employed to select experts strategically placed in public administration, academia, and destination development to contribute a multilateral view to the research field. Although the selected profiles are key stakeholders who play an important role in policy and practice, the small sample size is not a problem. But since the sample population is small, the findings have to be interpreted with great caution and are not to be extrapolated beyond this study.

Thematic analysis methodology was utilized in a systematic examination of interview data. Transcript-sensitive coding aimed to explore recurring themes, trends, and contradictions regarding the implementation, visibility, and sustainability of GIPs in tourism. Building on theoretical and empirical studies, eight superordinate thematic categories were derived: local development, tourism, consumer behavior, digitalization, legal and political framework, innovation, sustainability, and internationalization.

This taxonomy permitted the incorporation of professional judgment into analytically useful categories such as rural revitalization, destination branding, regulatory concerns, and trust among consumers. To enhance validity and reliability of findings, data triangulation was achieved by cross-verifying findings against national and global reports, policy reports, and relevant scholarly literature.

Although the qualitative results generated by this study are valuable, they would be enriched by supplementing them with more general empirical evidence. Future studies may incorporate cross-country comparisons or quantitative surveys to assess consumer sentiments, institutional procedure, or economic impacts more rigorously. Such studies would enable the generation of more generalizable results and provide practical recommendations on how to utilize GIPs in sustainable tourism policy.

5. Participant profile and selection criteria

Participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling, targeting individuals with established expertise and active engagement in GIPs, sustainable tourism, and rural development. The aim was to include diverse yet relevant voices from the intersecting fields of agri-food systems, tourism, policy, and marketing.

The participant group is composed of professionals representing a broad spectrum of sectors:

- Prof. Dr. Yavuz Tekelioğlu – Academic expert in regional development and the founding president of YÜCİTA (The Geographical Indications Network of Turkey), with over five decades of work on GIP systems and governance
 - Mine Ataman – FAO Millet Ambassador, agricultural journalist, and futurist
 - Ebru Köktürk Koralı – Chairperson of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO) 17th Committee on Restaurants, Food and Beverages
 - Gözdem Çelikkanat Aysu – Founder of EcolicFarm, a sustainability-focused agricultural enterprise.

The inclusion criteria emphasized extensive field experience, decision-making or advisory roles in their respective sectors, and direct involvement in initiatives related to GIP governance, promotion, or integration with tourism development strategies.

6. Thematic structure analysis

Interview focus: Geographical indications, local development, tourism, and sustainability.

The interviews conducted in this study primarily focused on understanding the role of geographical indications (GIs) in supporting local development, enhancing tourism potential, and promoting sustainability. By engaging experts with hands-on experience in certification, policy-making, destination branding, and rural development, the study sought to explore how GIs function not only as legal and economic instruments but also as vehicles for cultural continuity and regional competitiveness. The interview questions were structured around themes such as the economic contribution of GIPs to rural areas, their

integration into tourism strategies, consumer perceptions, digital marketing practices, institutional governance, and the alignment of GIs with environmental and social sustainability goals.

6.1. Local economy and regional development

- GIs generate a multi-layered economic value: they increase supply and demand, create added value, and are regionally precious.
- GIs promote local employment, prevent migration, and increase the competitiveness of small producers.
- They foster cooperative development and protect traditional production patterns.
- GIs contribute to agricultural sustainability and enhance regional visibility.

Quotations from Prof. Dr. Yavuz Tekelioğlu: "GIs play a vital role in local development. They create added value, generate employment, and develop their regions. In the value chain of Italy's Parmesan cheese, 50 000 people are employed. Roquefort is produced in a village with only 500 residents, yet its value chain employs 10 000 people."

Quotation from Gözdem Çelikkanat Aysu: "Integrating geographical indications into tourism by aligning them with the region's natural and cultural assets can enhance destination branding and regional development."

Theoretical link: Local economic development (LED), rural development, value-added economy, cooperative models.

6.2. Tourism and destination strategies

- GIs are a strategic tool for destination branding.
- Experience-based events (e.g., fish festivals, harvest celebrations) enhance tourism appeal.
- GIs hold a leading role in gastronomy tourism by offering authentic, localized experiences.
- Although many products are registered, only high-quality and unique ones may drive tourism.

Köktürk Koralı's quotation: "You can find baklava and kebab everywhere, but it never tastes the same as in Gaziantep or Adana. This uniqueness adds value to the city's brand and creates a compelling reason to travel. Seasonal festivals like the Bosphorus Bluefish Festival can turn GI products into memorable tourism experiences."

Tekelioğlu's quotation: "Gastronomy and GIs are two sides of the same coin. Gastronomy cannot exist without GIs. Roquefort is a cornerstone of French gastronomy. Peru attracts 500 000 tourists annually through its gastronomy festival and earns \$1 billion. Gaziantep is competing with San Sebastián."

Theoretical link: Destination marketing, gastronomy tourism, cultural economy.

6.3. Consumer behavior and perception management

- For tourists, authenticity and quality are key priorities; price is secondary.
- Experiencing the product on-site increases perceived value.
- Tourists are unlikely to purchase unknown products online; familiarity drives follow-up purchases.
- Ethical and place-based consumption provides emotional satisfaction to tourists.

Quotation from Gözdem Çelikkanat Aysu: “Authenticity and quality are the most important factors. For an original and high-quality product, price is the last consideration for tourists. Strategic communication and reputation management experts are essential for positioning GI products in premium segments.”

Tekelioğlu’s quotation: “Certified products do not deceive consumers. Today’s consumers want to know the story, history, and origin of what they consume. Until 2018, 400 000 tons of Finike oranges were falsely sold in Istanbul despite only 150 000 tons being produced. Logos stopped this fraud.”

Theoretical link: Country/place-of-origin effect, symbolic value, consumer trust and quality assurance.

6.4. Role of digitalization and e-commerce

- GIs should be promoted via dedicated e-commerce platforms rather than generic marketplaces.
- Stories, traditions, and production details should be shared through social media and influencer collaborations.
- Online channels are more relevant for distant consumers than for tourists.
- Digital marketing should be professionally managed like an engineering process.

Tekelioğlu’s quotation: “According to the EU’s 2016 report, GI infringement through online channels cost the EU €4.6 billion in losses. France alone lost €1.5 billion.”

According to Mine Ataman, the potential of geographically indicated products in tourism lies not only in their heritage value but also in their capacity to respond to global food trends, climate adaptation, and future consumer expectations. She argues that GIPs should not merely be protected relics of the past, but dynamic agricultural narratives that can engage with sustainability, digital visibility, and food innovation.

Quotation from Gözdem Çelikkanat Aysu; “Tourists are more likely to buy GI products during on-site visits than online. The local experience is a stronger motivator. For young entrepreneurs, support should go beyond mentoring — having experts on the board of directors is crucial for survival in the early stages.”

Köktürk Koralı’s quotation: “From the start, GI products must be supported with professional marketing strategies — including branding, packaging, and digital storytelling. Otherwise, their market penetration remains weak.”

Theoretical link: Targeted digital marketing, content strategy, platform-based brand management.

6.5. Political and legal framework

- Turkey's GI system is heavily registration-focused, lacking governance and enforcement.
- Young entrepreneurs need not only mentorship but board-level managerial support.
- GIs can support city branding, yet municipal integration is often weak.
- Strategic public support is crucial for scaling success.

Tekelioğlu's quotation: "We produce the car's body, but there's no engine — only registration, no governance, no monitoring. Roquefort Confederation has lawyers worldwide to protect the name. In Turkey, registration owners don't even know their responsibilities. In 2019, even the President announced legal reform was coming. Still nothing has been done."

Theoretical link: Multi-stakeholder governance, regulatory gaps, public policy analysis.

6.6. Innovation and new business models

- GI-based experience design and storytelling must target premium segments.
- Strategic content and partnership with branding experts are essential.
- Producers need training in marketing, e-commerce, packaging, and product development.

Tekelioğlu's quotation: "Have you ever seen an ad for Ezine cheese or Antep baklava by its registration holder? No. GI products should be branded, story-driven, and positioned in the premium segment."

Although all participants underlined the role of GIs in local development, Ataman and Koralı approached the issue from a marketing-oriented perspective, whereas Tekelioğlu focused on governance-related aspects.

Ataman notes: "GIs must be seen not just as defensive tools for preserving the past, but as offensive instruments to shape the future of food. In an era of climate anxiety and digital consumerism, GIPs need to evolve into storytelling experiences – rooted in soil but reaching global markets. We need Instagrammable orchards, traceable honey, VR harvest tours – this is how you turn a fig or cheese into a destination." .

Theoretical link: Entrepreneurship, experience marketing, brand architecture.

6.7. Sustainability and environmental impact

- Traditional production associated with GIs limits chemical usage and supports local biodiversity.
- Eco-tourism and GI integration is a developing opportunity.
- Environmental monitoring and sustainable production principles must be formalized.

Köktürk Koralı's quotation: "Traditional GI production avoids chemical inputs; promoting natural fertilizers and preserving heirloom seeds should be prioritized."

Tekelioğlu's quotation: "GI products are inherently sustainable due to traditional production. Look at Korkuteli pear – it vanished when its system broke."

Theoretical link: Agroecology, traditional ecological knowledge, sustainability governance.

6.8. Internationalization and global market integration

- Product-specific analysis is needed to decide which GIs should go global.
- GIs must carry their logos on packaging to be recognizable in international markets.
- Restaurants abroad can act as first exposure points to GI products.

Köktürk Koralı's quotation: "Just like we first encountered Italian cheeses in pizzerias and then looked for them in markets, GI-labeled products should be introduced through restaurant menus. There should be a regional GI pavilion at global food and tourism fairs, not just isolated food stands."

Tekelioğlu's quotation: "Getting EU GI registration and not using the EU logo is like winning a marathon and not wearing the medal. Antep baklava is protected across 27 EU countries but not even protected in Antep."

Theoretical link: International branding, symbolic capital, strategic trade positioning.

7. Findings and discussion

The findings from the four in-depth interviews paint a nuanced and layered picture of how GIs are understood in Turkey. All participants see GIs not merely as labels for products, but as vehicles for economic development, cultural preservation, consumer trust, and sustainability. With the addition of Tekelioğlu's rich commentary, the analysis gains further weight, exposing the deeper institutional and regulatory shortcomings in the national GI ecosystem.

7.1. GIs as catalysts for local economic development

Across the interviews, GIs were consistently framed as powerful tools for revitalizing rural economies. Participants emphasized their potential to create value-added production, support local employment, and prevent rural-to-urban migration. Tekelioğlu reinforced these claims by highlighting international success stories, such as Italy's Parmesan and France's Roquefort that sustain entire regional economies through well-regulated GI systems. There is a strong belief that small producers and cooperatives could thrive under a more functional GI framework that links tradition with sustainability.

7.2. Tourism and destination identity through GIs

GIs' contribution to destination identity reinforcement became prominent. GIs were described by participants as essential in building authentic tourist experiences, especially in the food and beverage context. Harvest festivals or themed tasting tours with reference

to the area were recognized as successful products to promote the product and the place. Tekelioğlu reaffirmed these views, pointing to overseas models such as Peru's food festivals and France's strong association of GIs with culinary tourism. Belletti et al. (2017) also point out that if GIs are associated with local stories and consumer engagement, they significantly contribute towards place branding and economic reactivation. In essence, GIs were not just products shown – these are carriers of place stories and symbols.

7.3. Consumer trust, authenticity, and place attachment

Trust and authenticity were highlighted as the emotional drivers behind GI-related consumption. Tourists, especially, often form attachments through first-hand experiences with local food, which can later translate into repeat purchases or word-of-mouth advocacy. That said, Tekelioğlu and other interviewees acknowledged that public awareness remains low, even in Europe, making communication strategies essential. The perceived authenticity of GIs can foster place attachment and ethical consumer behavior, but only if visibility and trust are established. These arguments are in parallel with international studies such as those by Van Ittersum et al. (2007).

7.4. Digital visibility and strategic e-commerce

While digital platforms were seen as promising, their power is currently underutilized. Participants suggested that general e-commerce channels do not adequately support the distinctiveness of GIs. Instead, they recommended the development of targeted GI-specific platforms that tell compelling stories, work with influencers, and speak directly to niche audiences. Tekelioğlu offered a cautionary note, referencing significant financial losses in the EU due to GI infringement online, underscoring the need for robust digital governance. Likewise, Tregear et al. (2007) argue that regional foods require a well-defined product qualification strategy to achieve rural development goals through digital platforms.

7.5. Governance and legal framework deficiencies

A major theme that cut across all interviews was the inadequacy of the legal and administrative infrastructure supporting GIs in Turkey. Participants agreed that too much emphasis is placed on securing the GI registration (tescil), with little to no follow-up on governance or enforcement. Tekelioğlu was especially critical, pointing out that without the metaphorical engine of governance, the vehicle of GIs cannot move forward. He also noted that even high-level political promises around legal reform have yet to materialize. These observations are in line with the international literature. For instance, Bowen and Zapata (2009) demonstrated that the success of tequila as a GI product in Mexico was not only due to its registration but also to a strong governance system and the involvement of producer organizations. Likewise, Belletti et al. (2017) emphasize the importance of public policies in ensuring that GIs function effectively as tools for sustainable development.

7.6. Innovation, branding, and entrepreneurial models

There was strong consensus on the need to position GI products within premium markets. Interviewees noted a widespread lack of branding skills, marketing strategies, and packaging design among producers. Tekelioğlu underscored this issue, lamenting the near-total absence of promotional efforts by GI holders. Across the board, participants called for professional support structures, including mentoring, business incubation, and public–private partnerships to support GI-based entrepreneurship. Renting et al. (2003) also suggest that short food supply chains and alternative food networks can offer innovative pathways for GI-linked rural branding.

7.7. Sustainability as a foundational principle

Sustainability emerged as both a characteristic and promise of GIs. Interviewees highlighted how traditional methods naturally align with environmentally friendly practices, reducing reliance on chemicals and preserving biodiversity. Yet they also noted that sustainability remains more aspirational than actualized without proper monitoring systems in place. Tekelioğlu warned that many heritage varieties are disappearing due to the lack of institutional protection, calling for urgent action to embed sustainability within regulatory systems.

7.8. Global integration and strategic positioning

Respondents recognized the need to venture overseas but called for the action to be taken cautiously. Product-by-product assessment to pilot international viability was suggested by them. Tekelioğlu regretted that even EU-registered Turkish GIs are not commonly observed using official EU stamps on packaging, lowering their worldwide reputation. He and the rest of the respondents emphasized that to succeed overseas requires all-around approaches – cultural diplomacy, restaurant collaborations, and direct participation in foreign food festivals.

7.9. Synthesis

Overall, the interviews convey a cautious optimism about the transformative role that geographical indications might play. At the same time, they underscore a central concern: without effective governance, coherent communication strategies, and adequate institutional support, much of this potential will remain underutilized. Tekelioğlu's analyses emphasize the need for structural reforms, while other contributors highlight more practical, forward-looking proposals that could strengthen the economic, cultural, and environmental value of GIs in Turkey.

8. Conclusion and future perspectives

Turkey enjoys a large GIP capacity and is poised to derive advantage from these products in the development of the tourist sector. GIP has played a significant role in place branding, stimulating food and countryside tourism and integrating overall tourism experience. For instance, UNESCO's declaration of a "Creative City of Gastronomy" for Gaziantep and its GIP-protected goods like Antep Baklava has played an important role in marketing the city as a gastronomy tourism destination (UNESCO, 2015). Similarly, Afyonkarahisar's *sucuk* (smoked meat) and *kaymak* (clotted cream), which are protected under the GIP, are significant attractions for gastronomy tourism (Turkish Patent and Trademark Office, 2021).

GIP also play an enormous role in rural tourism by stimulating local economies and giving tourists genuine experiences. Products like Safranbolu Saffron not only boost agro-tourism but also sustainable development in terms of conservation of traditional customs and local heritage (Dursun et. al, 2019). Ezine Cheese, one of the geographically indicated products of Çanakkale, represents an important element of gastronomy tourism, while the local delicacy *Köftür* from Cappadocia stands out as a remarkable example of the sustainability of regional gastronomic culture (Keskin, 2024).

Economically, GI products contribute to regional development through rural economic strengthening, adding value to tourism through increased visibility and tourist demand (Nazikgöl & Ödemiş, 2024; Ceylan & Samirkaş Komşu, 2020). However, for GI products to realize their full potential in tourism, optimal challenges such as marketing of products, efficient marketing strategies, and establishment of quality standards must be addressed (Nazikgöl & Ödemiş, 2024; Şat, 2024). In this way, GIP can serve as a sustainable competitive advantage for Turkey's tourism sector, ensuring long-term growth and cultural heritage preservation.

Turkish GIs represent a rich and complex potential that goes beyond product category borders. GIs are associated with territorial identity, economic resilience, and cultural continuity. Although geographical indications have been praised by experts and stakeholders as tools for local development, practice reveals a significant gap between formal registration and effective implementation. The current system in Turkey tends to emphasize legal registration rather than inclusive governance or integration into broader regional strategies. Findings from the interviews highlight several interconnected shortcomings: weak institutional accountability, limited marketing infrastructure, low consumer awareness levels, and insufficiently coordinated international branding efforts. As Tekelioğlu has emphasized, these deficiencies limit the potential of GIs to act as genuine drivers of development.

Another recurring issue is the lack of cooperation among producers, policymakers, and tourism stakeholders, which prevents the formation of integrated strategies. Nevertheless, the interviews also point to opportunities. These include establishing public-private partnerships, creating specialized services for brand management, and linking GIs more systematically with tourism and sustainability planning. Training and educational

initiatives, especially for young entrepreneurs and cooperatives, are necessary to ensure that GIs function not only as protected designations but also as active market instruments. International experience shows that GIs can succeed when supported by solid legal frameworks and multi-stakeholder governance. Turkey's cultural and biological diversity offers a strong foundation for such an approach, provided that institutional commitment and strategic prioritization are secured. In this way, GI policy could align more closely with global trends in ethical consumption, territorial narratives, and experiential tourism, thereby generating authentic value.

GIs should not be designed as symbolic markers but as operative tools of inclusive growth. Their fate depends on a shift from passive registration to proactive, continuous interaction with all actors within the value chain. If this can be achieved, Turkish GIs can be at the crossroads between tradition and innovation, resulting in a vision of place-based development that can speak locally and globally.

This study is limited to the context of Turkey and focuses primarily on stakeholder perspectives within a specific national framework. Therefore, the findings may not be directly generalizable to other regions with different administrative, cultural, or legal structures. However, the insights obtained – particularly regarding governance gaps, destination branding, and the economic potential of GIPs – can inform similar efforts in countries with comparable agricultural traditions and tourism dynamics. Future comparative studies across different national contexts are recommended. Specifically, mixed-method approaches – such as large-scale surveys of consumers, GIS-based spatial analysis of GIP-tourism patterns, or comparative studies across regions and countries – would help triangulate and test the themes identified here. Moreover, quantitative evaluations of the economic, environmental, and social impacts of GIPs in tourism would provide policymakers with more actionable evidence. Expanding the research to include longitudinal data could also reveal how GIP-related initiatives evolve, offering critical insights for designing sustainable tourism frameworks.

9. Recommendations for public and private stakeholders

To ensure that GIs realize their full socio-economic and cultural potential, the role of the state must evolve from registrar to enabler and guarantor of value creation. This includes the development of a comprehensive governance framework that defines the responsibilities of GI holders beyond initial registration. Public authorities should mandate the prominent labeling of national and EU logos on packs to boost consumer confidence, but design special incentives and funding programs to help local producers invest in marketing, certification, and export readiness. In addition, stronger collaboration across ministries is required to integrate geographical indications more effectively into rural development, tourism, and cultural policy frameworks. Private sector engagement also needs to be intensified, particularly through investment in branding strategies and the establishment of direct-to-consumer channels that highlight the distinctiveness of origin-based products. Capacity-building initiatives, including training in digital storytelling,

packaging design, and experiential marketing, could enhance producers' ability to position GIs competitively in both domestic and international markets. Strategic partnerships with chefs, opinion leaders, and tourism professionals may further contribute to embedding GIs within cultural experiences. At the same time, collective action among producers remains essential for maintaining quality and authenticity throughout the value chain, supported by investment in traceability systems and independent certification mechanisms.

Both sectors have a shared responsibility in transforming Turkey's GI system into a globally respected model that supports local economies, preserves cultural heritage, and satisfies the growing demand for authenticity in global markets.

10. Recommendations for academic research

Academic researchers play a crucial role in unpacking the multi-layered nature of GIs and translating their complex impacts into meaningful insights for policy and practice. One pressing need is to move beyond descriptive analyses and engage with critical and interdisciplinary approaches that consider GIs not only as legal instruments but also as socio-economic, cultural, and political constructs. There is ample room for theory-building that bridges development studies, cultural geography, rural sociology, and marketing.

Future studies must assess the actual economic and social impacts of GIs at the local level. While the value-added and employment potential of flagship products is often cited, systematic and comparative impact assessments are lacking. Academics should engage in longitudinal and regionally diverse fieldwork to understand which factors enable some GI products to drive development, while others remain symbolically relevant but economically marginal.

Furthermore, there is a growing need to explore the governance dynamics surrounding GIs, particularly the roles and interactions of public institutions, producer associations, cooperatives, and private stakeholders. Questions of inclusion, equity, and power relations within GI systems deserve deeper inquiry, especially in contexts where resource asymmetries affect how benefits are distributed. Participatory research methods could offer valuable insights into how local actors perceive and negotiate GI-related processes.

Another under-explored dimension involves the communication and branding strategies linked to GIs. Researchers could contribute significantly by analyzing the effectiveness of GI storytelling, packaging, digital marketing, and export positioning. Given the increasing demand for authenticity in consumer behavior, studies examining the affective and symbolic dimensions of GI-related narratives could open new conceptual ground within marketing and consumer studies.

Finally, there is an urgent need to evaluate the role of GIs in advancing sustainability agendas. Academics should explore the ecological footprints of GI products, the resilience of traditional production systems under climate change, and the integration of GIs into agrobiodiversity and regenerative agriculture frameworks. Interdisciplinary collaborations

between agricultural sciences, environmental studies, and rural development research will be essential to fully understand and support the transformative potential of GIs.

References

- Akgöz, E., Varol, F. & Öksüz, M. (2023). The role of geographically indicated products in the determination of gastronomy routes in Konya. *Journal of Yasar University*, 18 (72): 547–568. DOI: 10.19168/jyasar.1313808
- Al-Roubaie, A. (2019). Tourism in Turkey: A socio-economic assessment. *Tourism Hospitality Management*, 7 (3): 89–100. DOI: 10.17265/2328-2169/2019.03.001
- Belletti, G., Marescotti, A. & Touzard, J. M. (2017). Geographical indications, public goods, and sustainable development: The roles of actors' strategies and public policies. *World Development*, 98: 45–57. DOI: 10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.05.004
- Bessière, J. (1998). Local development and heritage: Traditional food and cuisine as tourist attractions in rural areas. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 38 (1): 21–34. DOI: 10.1111/1467-9523.00061
- Bowen, S. & Zapata, A. V. (2009). Geographical indications, terroir, and socioeconomic and ecological sustainability: The case of tequila. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 25 (1): 108–119. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2008.06.003
- Ceylan, Y., & Samirkaş Komşu, M. (2020). Coğrafi işaretli ürünlerin bölgesel turizmin gelişimi açısından değerlendirilmesi: Siirt ili örneği. *Journal of Humanities and Tourism Research*, 5: 59-75. DOI: 10.14230/johut921
- Ciani, S., Mason, M. C. & Moretti, A. (2021). Geographical indications and tourism destinations. In: S. K. Dixit (Ed.), *The Routledge handbook of gastronomic tourism*. Abingdon – New York: Routledge, pp. 63–74.
- Demir, M. & Dalgıç, A. C. (2022). Examining gastronomy festivals as the attractiveness factor for tourism destinations: The case of Turkey. *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, 23 (5): 412–434. DOI: 10.1080/15470148.2022.2089797
- Dursun, C., Demiral, M., Zengin, B. & Batman, O. (2019). 2023 Türkiye Turizm Stratejisi Kapsamında Kırsal Turizmin Değerlendirilmesi. *Uluslararası Kırsal Turizm ve Kalkınma Dergisi (IRTAD)*, 1 (1): 1–5. (IRTAD) E-ISSN: 2602-4462, 1(1), 1–5. Retrieved from <https://turizmvekalkinma.org/index.php/irtadjournal/article/view/29>
- Giovannucci, D., Josling, T. E., Kerr, W., O'Connor, B. & Yeung, M. T. (2009). *Guide to geographical indications: Linking products and their origins*. Geneva: International Trade Centre. <http://mpira.ub.uni-muenchen.de/27955/>
- Gül, H. (2015). Effects of foreign demand increase in the tourism industry: A CGE approach to Turkey. *Anatolia*, 26 (4): 598–611. DOI: 10.1080/13032917.2015.1044016
- Hall, C. M., Johnson, G., Cambourne, B., Macionis, N., Mitchell, R. & Sharples, L. (2009). Wine tourism: An introduction. In: M. C. Hall et al. (Eds.), *Wine tourism around the world*. Abingdon – New York: Routledge.
- Kaman, G. S. (2024). Turizm tanıtım faaliyetlerinde Türk mutfak kültürüne ait unsurların incelenmesi. *Business and Management Studies: An International Journal*, 12 (4): 780–793. DOI: 10.15295/bmij.v12i4.2437

- Keskin, A. (2024). Köftür (Cappadocian jelly beans) as a sustainable regional delicacy. *Journal of Tourism and Gastronomy Studies*, 12 (3): 2080-2089. DOI: 10.21325/jotags.2024.1477
- Kizos, T. & Vakoufari, H. (2011). Alternative agri-food geographies? Geographic indications in Greece. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 102 (2): 220–235. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9663.2010.00612.x
- Nazıkgül, M., & Ödemiş, M. (2024). Coğrafi işaretli ürünlerin gastronomi turizmi açısından incelenmesi: Bayburt örneği. *Safran Kültür ve Turizm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 7 (1): 151–177. Retrieved from <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/download/article-file/3709999>
- NurAksu, R. N. & Yılmaz, G. (2023). Street food in visual media in Turkey: Food mediatization in tourism. *Journal of Gastronomy and Tourism*, 7 (3): 165–183. DOI: 10.3727/216929722x16354101932393
- Ozcatalbas, O., Mansuroğlu, S., Ceylan, I. C., Akcaoz, H. & Kutlar, I. (2010). The evaluation of the importance of rural tourism extension for community development and Turkey. *Journal of Food Agriculture & Environment*, 88 (3–4): 973–975.
- Özgürel, G., Atış, E. & Çelik Uğuz, S. (2023). Eko-Agro Turizm ile Kırsal Yeşil Ekonomiye Geçiş Sağlamak: Kızıklı Aromatik Köy Örneği (Türkiye). *Journal of the Human and Social Science Researches (Itobiad)*, 12 (2): 796–818. DOI: 10.15869/itobiad.1254129
- Renting, H., Marsden, T. K. & Banks, J. (2003). Understanding alternative food networks: Exploring the role of short food supply chains in rural development. *Environment and Planning A*, 35 (3): 393–411. DOI: 10.1068/a3510
- Şat, R. (2024). Coğrafi işaretli yöresel ürün ve yemeklerin Manisa'nın gastronomi turizminin gelişimine katkısı. *Premium e-Journal of Social Sciences (PEJOSS)*, 2 (1), 371–389. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14266464>
- Sekreter, M. S., Mert, M. & Çetin, M. K. (2025). The impact of tourism on the resilience of the Turkish economy: An asymmetric approach. *Sustainability*, 17 (2): 591. DOI: 10.3390/su17020591
- Seçuk, B., Sormaz, Ü. & Seçim, Y. (2022). Gastronomi ve mutfak sanatları bölüm müfredatlarının gastronomi ve turizm ilişkisi bağlamında değerlendirilmesi. *Türkiye Mesleki ve Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 9: 26–37. DOI: 10.46236/jovoss.1150175
- Sonnino, R. (2004). For a 'piece of bread'? Interpreting sustainable development through agritourism in Southern Tuscany. *Sociologia Ruralis*, 44 (3): 285–300. DOI: 10.1111/j.1467-9523.2004.00276.x
- Tom Dieck, M. C., & Jung, T. (2018). A theoretical model of mobile augmented reality acceptance in urban heritage tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21 (2): 154–174. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1070801>
- Tregear, A., Arfini, F., Belletti, G. & Marescotti, A. (2007). Regional foods and rural development: The role of product qualification. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 23 (1): 12–22. DOI: 10.1016/j.jrurstud.2006.09.010
- Tümbek Tekeoğlu, A. N., Yıldırım, F. & Küçükçolak, N. İ. (2024). *The art of predicting the future trends*. Istanbul: Scala Publishing, pp 59–80.

- Türk Patent ve Marka Kurumu (2021). List of registered geographical indications in Turkey. Retrieved from <https://www.turkpatent.gov.tr>
- Uçar, M., Uçar, H., Kurnaz, A. & Kurnaz, H. A. (2012). Kırsal Turizmin Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapıya Etkisi ve Fethiye Örneği. *KMÜ Sosyal ve Ekonomik Araştırmalar Dergisi*, 14 (22): 75-82. DOI: 10.18493/KMUSEKAD.21863
- UNESCO (2015). Gaziantep joins the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Gastronomy. Retrieved from <https://en.unesco.org/creative-cities/gaziantep>
- UNWTO (2018). *Tourism and the sustainable development goals – Journey to 2030*. Madrid: World Tourism Organization. https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNWTO_UNDP_Tourism%20and%20the%20SDGs.pdf
- Van Ittersum, K., Meulenbergh, M. T. & Van Trijp, H. C. (2007). Consumers' appreciation of regional certification labels: A Pan-European study. *Journal of Agricultural Economics*, 58 (1): 1–23. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1547947
- WTO (2004). *Tourism and sustainable development: The global importance of tourism*. World Trade Organization. ISBN 92-844-0726-5
- Yang, Y. & Wong, K. K. (2012). A spatial econometric approach to model spillover effects in tourism flows. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51 (6): 768–778. DOI: 10.1177/004728751243785
- Yıkımlı, S. & Ünal, A. (2016). The importance of geographical indication in gastronomy tourism: Turkey. *International Journal of Agricultural and Life Sciences*, 2 (4): 73–79. DOI: 10.22573/spg.ijals.016.s12200069
- Yung, R., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2019). New realities: a systematic literature review on virtual reality and augmented reality in tourism research. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22 (17): 2056–2081. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1417359>