
ARE ROMANIANS ATTRACTED TO TURKISH BAKERY PRODUCTS? A CONSUMER BASED APPROACH DEVELOPED ON ENTREPRENEURIAL PREMISES

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Abstract

In a context of a very pronounced mobility, individuals are exposed to the products, lifestyles, and behaviours specific to the cultures they interact with. Both immigrants and the citizens of the host country tend to embrace consumption features specific to the other culture.

In this paper we investigate if any changes occurred in the consumption habits of Romanian citizens, under the influence of Turkish immigrants, aiming to emphasize if they may represent a viable market for Turkish entrepreneurs active in the bakery industry.

Based on an interview-based research, we have identified that our sample was composed of Romanians that consume and Romanians that do not consume Turkish bakery products. The reasons that lead to the development of the first category may refer to the existence of persons of Turkish nationality in respondents' family or among their friends, the existence of a special attraction towards the Turkish culture, the existence of a previous contact with Turkey, implicitly with the Turkish cuisine, etc. On the other hand, a high degree of authenticity in consumption, reluctance towards tasting food products specific to other cultures, etc. represent important issues that made respondents not to eat Turkish bakery products.

Turkish entrepreneurs active in the Romanian bakery industry may easily target Romanians as consumers of both Romanian and Turkish bakery products; a good and quite profitable entrepreneurial approach may be to offer on the market an assortment composed of bakery products specific to the Romanian and Turkish cuisines.

Keywords: migration, entrepreneurship, immigrant entrepreneurship, consumer, consumption habits, supply

JEL Classification: F60, J00, M10

Introductory remarks. Focus on a brief theoretical background

Lately, migration has become a phenomenon of unprecedented dimensions, being one of the most important issues debated nowadays and addressed on main policymakers' agenda.

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Also, the scholars' interest in researching specific features of migration has been increasingly growing.

Considering the actual context, the tendency nowadays is to associate migration almost only with its negative consequences both for the sending and the receiving countries. In case of the receiving countries, different socioeconomic problems, especially related to increasing flows of immigrants - such as development of illegal activities, increase in unemployment, tensions on the housing market, ghetto development within cities, differences in behaviour and lifestyle, development of ethnic conflicts, etc. - are becoming quite difficult to manage for authorities and policymakers (van Delft, Gorter and Nijkamp, 2000; Baycan-Levent et al., 2006).

Approached as "any attempt at new business or new venture creation, such as self-employment, a new business organization, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business" (Bosma et al., 2012, p. 9), entrepreneurship may represent quite a good solution for solving part or even all the previously mentioned problems. Immigrant entrepreneurship, among other measures, may bring a contribution to alleviating or even eliminating the negative effects of migration and to enhance the positive ones - such as solving vacancy problems on the labour market, especially through new jobs generation, cultural diversity, increase in and diversification of commodities supply on the market, promoting various management and leadership styles specific to immigrants' culture, diminishing social exclusion, etc. (Grosu, 2015).

In what concerns the terminology aspect, immigrant entrepreneurship faces different approaches in the scientific literature. Commonly "the terms of immigrant entrepreneurship, ethnic entrepreneurship, and minority entrepreneurship are used interchangeably" (Basu, 2006, p 582). However, there are a series of differences between them, as highlighted by the previously mentioned author:

- Immigrant entrepreneurship refers to the entrepreneurial activities developed by immigrants in the country of destination.
- Minority entrepreneurship is specific to minority entrepreneurs. They are the ones that are part of a minority group, implicitly they do not belong to the majority. People that belong to a minority group are not necessary immigrants. Minority groups can be established based on different criteria.
- Ethnic entrepreneurship is the one developed by ethnic entrepreneurs. They belong to an ethnic group with a common culture, history, language, etc. and they usually tend to develop an ethnic economy based on their close interaction and also on their interaction with suppliers and consumers (Miera, 2008). "Thus, an ethnic entrepreneur may or may not be an immigrant but it is likely to belong to a minority community" (Basu, 2006, p. 582).

As over the last years entrepreneurship among immigrants, ethnic groups, and racial minority groups especially raised scholars' interest (Fairchild, 2009), the literature in the area of immigrant entrepreneurship is very complex; some of the main approached direction in the literature refer to policy implications and recommendations, business orientation, profile of the immigrant entrepreneur, differences between countries, immigrant entrepreneurs' needs, motivations and potential, comparisons with local entrepreneurs, evaluation of immigrant ventures, entrepreneurial and management styles

and strategies, factors with impact on the development of immigrant entrepreneurship, first and second generations of immigrant entrepreneurs, etc. (van Delft, Gorter and Nijkamp, 2000; Kloosterman, 2003; Arjona, 2004; Kitching, Smallbone and Athayde, 2009; Gonzalez-Gonzales et al., 2011; Ilhan-Nas, Sahin and Cilingir, 2011; Baycan, Sahin and Nijkamp, 2012; Neville et al., 2014 cited in Grosu, 2015).

In what concerns the business orientation, generally, immigrant entrepreneurs tend to aim ethnic markets for business start-up (Dinu, Grosu and Saseanu, 2015), being oriented towards the "sale of ethnic products, retail, construction, intensive agriculture, high intensity personal services, and hospitality and food" (Arjona, 2004 cited in Săseanu, Petrescu and Zgură, 2011). For example, according to Kitching, Smallbone and Athayde (2009, pp 692-693), "in the United Kingdom, the businesses are concentrated in competitive, low-value-added ethnic niche sectors, such as catering, food retailing, and textiles. However, in more recent times new trends in targeted niches arose such as business and professional services, music, the arts, and software".

On the other hand, in case of immigrant entrepreneurs belonging to not very well represented communities - from numerical perspective - addressing only to their community may not be a profitable aspect (Grosu and Saseanu, 2014). This is the case of Turkish immigrants in Romania.

In this context, through the research we have developed, implicitly through the present paper we aimed to investigate whether Romanian consumers are attracted to Turkish commodities - focus on bakery products - in order to identify if they represent a viable market for Turkish entrepreneurs. This way, Turkish entrepreneurs may better structure their supply of bakery products, focusing on consumers' demand.

Stating from the idea according to which in a context of a very pronounced mobility, individuals are exposed to "the products, lifestyles and behaviour patterns of consumers belonging to another culture" (Douglas and Craig, 1997, p. 380), to the fact that food consumption habits are one of the most exposed to change and to the fact that also the host culture changes under the influence of immigrant groups (Gentry, Jun and Tansuhaj, 1995; Jamal, 1996; Cleveland et al., 2009), in this paper we investigate if any changes occurred in the consumption habits of Romanian citizens, under the influence of Turkish immigrants, aiming to emphasize if they may represent a viable market for Turkish entrepreneurs active in the bakery industry. In this sense, the paper is structured into two main parts: the first one briefly outlines a series of methodological aspects and the second one, the main findings of the research. The paper ends up with a series of final considerations.

1. Brief methodological aspects

Based on the premises of a research carried out in 2012 (Petrescu, 2012), in 2015 we have developed an interview based qualitative research among Romanians living in Bucharest with the main aim to investigate whether they are attracted to Turkish bakery products in order to identify if they represent a viable market for Turkish entrepreneurs. The focus of the research was on identifying if there are any changes in their consumption habits of bakery products, as a result of the influence manifested by Turkish immigrants.

The researched community was composed of 42 Romanians, deliberately chosen based on contrast and variety criteria, in order to get as much as we can a complex and

comprehensive image of the investigated phenomenon. The main methods we have used for establishing the sample and selecting the interviewees were the snowball and the auto-selection techniques. Considering the qualitative character of the research, results generalization is not our aim; results are more specific to the interviewed community.

The method we have used for gathering the information was the semi-structured interview. This was formal and based on an interview guide. Generally, interviews lasted, in average, for 32 minutes and they were face to face and one-to-one type. They were carried out in different dining outlets with Turkish cuisine, our role being of interviewers.

Further on, in the following section of the paper, based on the notes we took during the interviews and using the inductive approach, the main research results are outlined.

2. Main research results and discussions

The interviewed community included males and females aged between 20 and 60 years, most of them graduates of higher education institutions, holders of a bachelor degree, or even master degree.

Generally, the respondents show a higher interest in the Romanian bakery products, hence they consume them more than the Turkish ones. Some of the main reasons that lead to this situation refer to the low number of places of distribution of Turkish bakery products, and to the low prices of the Romanian bakery products.

"I do not have from where to buy traditional Turkish bread. I am not living close to a factory that produces such products, or close to a store that sells such products. Therefore, I rarely consume them, about once a week or every two weeks, when I am going to a particular factory." (Male, 30 years old)

However, within the interviewed community there are also exceptions. Accordingly, there are people who do not consume Turkish bakery products and people who consume more Turkish bakery products than Romanian bakery products. The latter case is more specific to interviewees that have in their families Turkish people, or to interviewees that exhibit a special attraction to the Turkish culture. Within the first category are included interviewees showing a high degree of authenticity in the consumption of bakery products, in particular, and in the food area, in general. There are also situations when respondents do not consume Turkish bakery products because they dislike them or, in other cases, because they don't know about their existence, showing a certain openness towards the consumption of such products. At the same time, they expressed their desire for a better promotion of the Turkish bakery products and for a better information of the potential consumers about their existence.

"I am consuming only Romanian bakery products. Generally, I am not eating bread, but when I want to do this, I always choose the Romanian bread. My husband is trying all sorts of bread, but I don't prefer them. I'm pretty conservative. I am eating only dishes that I am familiar with, and I am not really open to new experiences." (Female, 60 years old)

"I tried once the Turkish bakery products. I don't like them ... not my taste." (Male, 40 years old)

"I am consuming Turkish bread on a daily basis. I don't remember the last time when I bought Romanian bread. I am married to a Turk and generally in my family are more Turkish people than Romanians. My sister is also married to a Turk. The first time I ate Turkish bakery products, especially bread, it seemed strange to me. It was a little salty for me. Then I got used to it. Anyway, we are living both in Romania and Turkey; more in Turkey. What I can tell you is that the Turkish bakery in Turkey is slightly different from the Turkish bakery in Romania. They have a true culture and tradition in terms of bread and bakery products in general." (Female, 45 years old)

"I'm attracted to the Turkish culture. I would have loved to be a Turk. In fact, I am feeling like a Turk. I am eating almost exclusively Turkish products, I am usually using Turkish products (creams, solutions for hair, etc.), I am even wearing clothes on their style. Not to mention about Turkish language ... I have learned it some years ago. Even my friends, in general, are Turks." (Female, 30 years old)

Overall, the consumption of Turkish bakery products is due to the relatively high degree of openness to other cultures and acceptance of other cultures shown by the interviewees. In general, they are open towards trying Turkish foods. One of the explanatory factors of this situation - especially in the case of older respondents - may be represented by the communist period in which the Romanians had no contact with other cultures or goods specific to other cultures. After the fall of the communist regime, the commodity supply on the Romanian market was in a constant change and diversification; generally, older consumers are willing to try everything that was not available during the communism period. However, the existence of Turks among their friends and the previous contact with Turkey and the Turkish culture - generally as tourists - has determined part of the interviewees to consume Turkish bakery products. On the other hand, their special quality is contributing to the increase in consumption, implicitly in demand.

"I have been travelling a lot around the world ... So I also came into contact with the Turkish civilization. Then I interacted with the Turkish civilization in Romania. I have friends that are Turks. Anyway, when I tasted my first Turkish bakery product I liked it very much. I remember it know ... it was 14 years ago when I eat my first simit[†]. It was hot and it melted into my mouth. The sesame gave it a special taste. [...] I am open to any type of cuisine, specific to every culture. Close to the Turkish bakery products, I am consuming many other Turkish type of foods. For example, ayran[‡]." (Male, 40 years old)

"When I was young I didn't really have anything (during the communist regime, our access to different food products was limited). Now I like to try everything that is new. So, I am trying any food product of any origin. I have also tried the Turkish bakery products. To see how they are. And I liked them very much. I am buying them whenever I have the opportunity. An I also love going to Turkish restaurants. I love lentil soup." (Male, 60 years old)

"I love to try different dishes specific to cuisines around the world. I am open towards trying almost any food, specific to almost any culture. Turkish products have a special story. Unlike other food products that I have tried as a tourist within their specific country, the Turkish products are also the ones that I buy in my country and that are somehow part

[†]Simit is a Turkish bakery product similar to pretzel.

[‡]Ayran is a traditional Turkish drink obtained from yogurt and water and different other added spices.

of my diet. Having a lot of Turkish friends I was very tempted to try the Turkish bakery products. And I liked them very much. Now, I eat them as often as I can along with other types of food specific to the Turkish cuisine." (Male, 27 years old)

Interviewees that consume Turkish bakery products, generally, perceived them as being tasty, of a high quality, attractive and safe; the general view on the Turkish bakery products is positive. In the same line, the Romanian bakery products are perceived as being very tasty, qualitative, attractive and safe, the general opinion of interviewees - both those who consume Turkish bakery products, and those who do not consume such products - being positive. Unlike the Turkish bakery products, Romanian ones are more affordable, making them easy to be identified because of their high degree of availability and because they are cheaper. Buying Romanian bakery products is much easier because of the price and availability, compared to the purchase of the Turkish bakery products; implicitly the consumption of the Romanian bakery products is higher compared to the Turkish bakery products. However, in general, the respondents associate the smell of fresh bread and the consumption of the Romanian bakery products with their childhood, generating a higher degree of satisfaction compared to the consumption of Turkish bakery products.

"Turkish bakery products have a special taste. They use sesame and sometimes, the dough is mixed with yogurt. The Turks have very good and qualitative bakery products." (Female, 38 years old)

*"The Turkish bakery products are extraordinary. There is nothing better. For example, I really like the pide[§], especially mixed with the kebab^{**}." (Male, 37 years old)*

"The Turkish bakery products have their special charm and I consider them very tasty. But nothing compares to the smell of fresh Romanian bread that wakes me up every morning (living next to a Romanian bakery). I get up every morning to buy my fresh bread. And I really love it ... and I am eating a piece of bread until I get home. I've been doing this since I was little and my mother used to send me to buy bread." (Male, 32 years old)

"I like both Romanian and Turkish bread. Both are qualitative and are very tasty. You can trust them." (Male, 28 years old)

Conclusions

Following the increased migratory flows, not only immigrants are subject to change, but also the citizens of the host country. Due to the cross-cultural interaction, many personal characteristics of both immigrants and citizens of the host country change; the consumption behaviour is one of them.

In case of the interviewed Romanian citizens there were both situations of Romanians that consume Turkish bakery products and of ones who do not consume them. The ones that consume Turkish bakery products have in their family or among their friends, persons of Turkish nationality, manifest a special attraction towards the Turkish culture and a high

[§]Pide is a Turkish bakery specialty. It is a type of bread that can be as a pita or may take the form of a flattened rugby ball. In the latter case, sometimes it can be served with various ingredients, such as kasharla (Turkish cheese), sujuklu (spicy Turkish sausages) etc.

^{**}Kebab is a traditional Turkish dish mainly made out of pieces of grilled or roasted lamb.

degree of openness towards and acceptance of other cultures, and had a previous contact with Turkey, implicitly with the Turkish cuisine. The interviewees that do not consume Turkish bakery products manifest a high degree of authenticity in consumption and quite a reluctance towards tasting other food products specific to other cultures, or they tried Turkish bakery products and did not like them, or simply do not know about their existence.

Both Turkish and Romanian bakery products are perceived by the interviewees as tasty, of good quality, attractive, and safe for consumption. However, different from the Turkish bakery products, the Romanian ones are more accessible and cheaper. Also, the degree of satisfaction is higher when Romanian bakery products are consumed; symbol of the Romanian culture, bread is associated by the interviewees with the special moments from childhood.

As a final conclusion, it can be assessed that Turkish entrepreneurs active in the Romanian bakery industry may easily target Romanian consumers as a viable market. They can be approached in their quality of consumers of both Romanian and Turkish bakery products. In this context, a good and quite profitable entrepreneurial approach from Turkish entrepreneurs' perspective is to address to Romanian consumers with a supply of bakery products composed of foods specific both to the Romanian and Turkish cuisines.

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