

# The Importance of Cultural and Gastronomic Tourism in Local Economic Development: Zile Sample

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**Abstract:** *More rational source distribution in Turkey recently has brought forward the principles of optimality in investment planning. Therefore, many rural areas have been negatively affected from this state. Accordingly, alternative tourism provides important opportunities for rural regions. People living in these regions have become to give importance to local tangible and intangible cultural assets, which are present around their environment and gastronomic products consisting of regional tastes. As a branch of tourism consisting of local foods and beverages distinctive to each region, gastronomy positively contributes to local development. Foods with authentic geographical origins strengthen the image of region and enable branding and the development of rural tourism.*

*Zile District, Tokat Province, could not receive sufficient share from state investments due to its location and therefore could not complete its economic development. Recently, cultural tourism practices in Zile District have accelerated; in this frame, old Zile houses have been restored and opened as boutique hotels and the number of businesses making and selling local foods has increased. In addition, cultural activities have started to be planned as a tool for economic development in Zile District. These activities include Zile Cherry Festival, Ramadan Activities, The Celebrations of Ahi-Order Week, Centuries-Old Fair of Zile, The Activities of Muharram Month, Asırlık Kırk Hatim (A centuries-old tradition to read the whole of Koran in forty days), and the festivals conducted in villages. This study expresses the elements regarding cultural and gastronomic tourism in Zile District and their contributions to regional economic development and indicates what should be done to get more effective benefits and to increase its positive contributions.*

**Keywords:** *Local development, gastronomy, cultural tourism.*