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# GOOD GOVERNANCE, ELEMENTS OF GOODNESS AND GASTRODIPLOMACY BROUGHT BY INNOVATIONS: THE EXAMPLE OF TÜRKİYE

Sorumlu Yazar**/ Corresponding Author**: KÖMMECİ, Betül (Doctoral Degree Student), University of Pécs, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Doctoral Degree Programme in International Politics, Pécs, Hungary.
DERİNALP ÇANAKÇI, Seda (Assoc.Prof.Dr.) Erciyes University, Faculty of Tourism, Department of Gastronomy and Culinary Art, Kayseri, Türkiye.

**Abstract**

This article examines how the concepts of good governance and goodness combine innovations and the relationship of this combination to gastrodiplomacy. While good governance includes elements such as transparency, accountability, and participation, goodness refers to actions aimed at social benefit. In addition to this, gastrodiplomacy enables countries to enhance their soft power on the international stage by leveraging their cultural heritage and cuisine. In the case of Türkiye, the analysis examines how local culinary elements and gastronomic riches are introduced at the international level and how elements of good governance and goodness support this process. Moreover, the role of innovations and digitalization in this process is also evaluated. In this context, the potential of Türkiye's gastrodiplomacy strategies and practices to contribute to international cultural engagement and soft power. This study aims to reveal how Türkiye sets an example in the context of cultural diplomacy and soft power by using its richness and innovative approaches in the field of gastronomy.

**Keywords:** Good governance, gastrodiplomacy, local cuisine, elements of goodness, innovation, Türkiye

# İNOVASYONUN GETİRDİĞİ İYİ YÖNETİŞİM, İYİLİK UNSURLARI VE GASTRODİPLOMASİ: TÜRKİYE ÖRNEĞİ

**Öz**

Bu makale, iyi yönetişim ve iyilik kavramlarının yeniliklerle nasıl birleştiğini ve bu birleşimin gastrodiplomasiyle ilişkisini incelemektedir. İyi yönetişim şeffaflık, hesap verebilirlik ve katılım gibi unsurları içerirken, iyilik ise toplumsal faydaya yönelik eylemleri ifade eder. Buna ek olarak, gastrodiplomasi ülkelerin kültürel miraslarından ve mutfak kültürlerinden yararlanarak uluslararası sahnede yumuşak güçlerini artırmalarına imkân tanır. Türkiye örneğinde, yerel mutfak unsurlarının ve gastronomi zenginliklerinin uluslararası düzeyde nasıl tanıtıldığı ve iyi yönetişim ve iyilik unsurlarının bu süreci nasıl desteklediği incelenmektedir. Ayrıca, bu süreçte yeniliklerin ve dijitalleşmenin rolü de değerlendirilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Türkiye'nin gastrodiplomasi stratejilerinin ve uygulamalarının uluslararası kültürel etkileşime ve yumuşak güce katkıda bulunma potansiyeli ele alınmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'nin gastronomi alanındaki zenginliğini ve yenilikçi yaklaşımlarını kullanarak kültürel diplomasi ve yumuşak güç bağlamında nasıl örnek teşkil ettiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İyi yönetişim, gastrodiplomasi, yerel mutfak, iyilik unsurları, inovasyon, Türkiye

**Highlights** | Öne Çıkanlar

- The study examines how the concepts of good governance and goodness combine innovations and the relationship of this combination to gastrodiplomacy.
- Gastrodiplomacy enables countries to enhance their soft power on the international stage by leveraging their cultural heritage and cuisine.
- The potential of Türkiye's gastrodiplomacy strategies and practices to contribute to international cultural engagement and soft power.

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## INTRODUCTION

Good governance, elements of goodness, and gastrodiplomacy brought about by innovations stand out as important and closely related concepts in today's complex world order. Good governance, encompassing principles such as participation, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, and the rule of law, is a fundamental principle for the fair and efficient management of modern societies (Grindle, 2004; Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2009). Good governance encourages the state, private sector, and civil society to come together and participate in decision-making processes and ensures that these processes operate in a democratic and participatory manner. Within this structure, the concept of "goodness" represents the quest to increase the welfare of societies by focusing on core values such as justice, equality, humanitarian aid, and peace (Seligman, 2002; Peterson & Seligman, 2004). In the literature, it is accepted that these elements form the basis of efforts that can create opportunities for the welfare of societies and nations. In addition, these elements lead to innovations, ensuring the development and progress of societies and nations. Innovations can occur in technological, economic, social, and cultural fields, as well as through the application of elements that support goodness.

Within this framework, good governance, goodness, and innovations connect the domestic and international dimensions of gastrodiplomacy. At the domestic level, gastronomic initiatives may support the preservation of culinary heritage, the participation of local stakeholders, the visibility of local producers, and the transmission of cultural knowledge. At the international level, the same initiatives may create opportunities for intercultural dialogue and cultural exchange by presenting food as an accessible form of cultural communication. The relationship can therefore be conceptualized as follows: good governance provides the institutional and participatory framework; goodness represents the orientation toward social benefit and inclusive cultural value; innovation provides new organizational, technological, and communicative means of implementing these principles; and gastrodiplomacy transfers culinary and cultural resources into the international sphere.

In this context, gastrodiplomacy refers to the use of soft power in international relations by using a country's cultural heritage and gastronomic richness (Rockower, 2012; Chapple-Sokol, 2012). This situation shapes its international image. Promoting culinary culture is a factor that facilitates the establishment of friendly relations and increased cultural exchange between countries. Türkiye has great potential in this field, thanks to its deep historical roots and rich culinary culture. Also, Türkiye is a country that continues its efforts to promote the principles of good governance and goodness as a regional power (Aras & Gorener, 2010; Özkan & Akgün, 2010). Indeed, Türkiye actively utilizes this potential by integrating good governance principles and humanitarian values into its public diplomacy activities through institutions such as YTB (The Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities), TIKA (Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency), and the Yunus Emre Institute (Turkish cultural center). Therefore, while good governance forms the foundation of a stable social structure, gastrodiplomacy makes the cultural richness of this structure visible on a global scale in a way that serves international cooperation and peace.

The current literature on gastrodiplomacy has largely examined cuisine as a tool of public diplomacy, nation-branding, and soft power. Recent reviews also point to the increasing importance of sub-state actors and more diverse methodological approaches. However, less attention has been paid to governance capacity, socially oriented outcomes, and how innovation interacts in shaping gastrodiplomacy at the local-national interface. This study addresses this gap by examining Türkiye, and more specifically Kayseri, as a case study of a sub-state actor.

This article aims to examine in depth the roles of good governance, goodness, and gastrodiplomacy in international relations, using Türkiye as an example. The study will analyze how

these concepts are implemented by civil society organizations and public institutions in Türkiye and the contributions of these implementations to Türkiye's international image. The key point here is to consider that these dimensions do not automatically mean that every gastronomic initiative produces positive social outcomes; rather, it is important to examine how and to what extent these outcomes are incorporated into the management and gastrodiplomacy practices examined in the Turkish context.

In addition to examining institutional and local practices, the study also considers selected international indicators to contextualize Türkiye's governance performance, soft power position, and gastronomy visibility. The Chandler Good Governance Index (CGGI), Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index, and TasteAtlas's international culinary rankings are used as complementary contextual indicators. These indicators are treated as resources that help place the Turkish case within broader contexts of governance, soft power, and gastronomy visibility.

Moreover, this study adopts a qualitative research design, which will include methods such as content analysis, document analysis, and visual analysis (Leavy, 2017:18) to examine the relationship between good governance, goodness, innovation, and gastrodiplomacy in Türkiye. Also, the research design, data sources, case selection, and analytical procedures are explained in detail in the Methodology section.

## 1. Methodology

### 1.1. Research Design and Approach

As mentioned in the introduction, this study uses a qualitative research design to explore the relationship between good governance, goodness, innovation, and gastrodiplomacy in Türkiye. The research looks at how these ideas appear in institutional practices, cultural projects, digital communication, and local gastronomy activities. Following a qualitative approach, the study uses content analysis, document analysis, visual analysis, and case analysis. These methods help examine both the institutional side of governance and the cultural and communication aspects of gastrodiplomacy.

### 1.2. Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The study uses both academic and institutional sources. Academic literature helped build the conceptual framework for good governance, goodness, soft power, innovation, and gastrodiplomacy. Institutional and documentary sources were used to look at Türkiye's governance and gastrodiplomacy practices. These include reports and materials from international and national institutions, official government and municipal websites, tourism and public diplomacy platforms, and related social media accounts. When reviewing documents, websites, and social media pages like GoTürkiye and GastroKayseri, the content was considered as a whole, not limited to a specific time. The Chandler Good Governance Index was used as a background resource to understand Türkiye's governance performance, not as direct proof of a link between governance and gastrodiplomacy. Also, the Global Soft Power Index and TasteAtlas's rankings are used as complementary contextual indicators.

Kayseri was chosen as the case study from the outset. This selection was influenced by the contributions of both the municipality and universities, the private sector, and other institutions and organizations to gastronomy activities. Additionally, Kayseri's membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network was another selection criterion. Upon closer examination, Kayseri's strong and renowned gastronomic heritage, including over thirty geographically indicated products such as "Mantı, Develi Cıvıklısı, Özvatan Çiçek Balı, Pastırma, and Sucuk", along with the gastronomy festivals organized by the municipality, the existence of gastronomy education in the city, university-municipality collaborations, organized gastronomy days, the presence of the GastroKayseri social media account, and the institutionalization of local gastronomy, are all factors that influenced the selection of Kayseri as a case study.

In summary, Kayseri was chosen as an exemplary sub-national case because it combines

its unique culinary heritage with institutionalized gastronomy activities involving local government, educational institutions, cultural actors, and digital communication platforms. Therefore, the case offers an opportunity to examine how gastronomic heritage is integrated into practices related to local government, cultural promotion, innovation, and gastrodiplomacy. The selection of Kayseri does not mean that the city represents all gastrodiplomacy practices in Türkiye; rather, it is used to provide a concrete sub-national example of the broader relationships examined in the study.

### 1.3. Data Analysis Process

The analysis was conducted in four interconnected stages. First, relevant academic literature was reviewed to identify the core concepts and analytical dimensions of good governance, goodness, innovation, soft power, and gastrodiplomacy. Second, official documents and institutional materials such as the UNDP report, UNESCO documents and reports, and reports from the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency were examined to identify concrete governance and gastrodiplomacy practices in Türkiye. Third, digital and visual materials, including gastronomy-related websites and social media content, were examined to identify patterns of cultural representation, participation, promotion, and international communication. Fourth, the Kayseri example was analyzed by bringing together documentary, institutional, and visual evidence to examine how gastronomic heritage is linked to local governance, innovation, cultural preservation, participation, and international cultural promotion. This analysis is interpretive rather than statistical. The aim is not to establish a direct causal relationship between good governance and gastrodiplomacy, but to identify patterns and relationships among the selected sources. Accordingly, findings from different sources were compared and interpreted within the conceptual framework developed in this study.

## 2. Topic Discussion

### 2.1. The Relationship Between Good Governance, Goodness, Soft Power and Gastrodiplomacy

Good governance is the adoption and implementation of basic principles such as effectiveness, transparency, accountability, participation, the rule of law, fairness, and efficiency in public administration and policy-making processes. This concept plays a critical role in ensuring social and economic development in both developed and developing countries (UNDP, 1997; World Bank, 1992). Also, good governance plays an important role in increasing social well-being and ensuring sustainable development (Fukuyama, 2013). Adopting and implementing good governance principles contributes to increasing the quality of public services, reducing corruption, and strengthening social trust

(Rothstein, 2011). In addition, it contributes to economic growth and social welfare (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2012).

From an international relations perspective, good governance is among the key determinants of a country's soft power. According to Joseph Nye, a country's culture, political values, and foreign policies are elements that determine its influence (Nye, 2020). Therefore, an effective governance structure not only has the potential to contribute to the domestic welfare of a country but also improves its nation brand and global attractiveness.

The term gastrodiplomacy first appeared in an article titled “Food as Ambassador” published in The Economist magazine in 2002, which described Thailand's public diplomacy campaign to introduce food and culinary arts to the world (Zhang, 2015). Kul considers gastrodiplomacy as a concept that aims to establish a more emotional connection through cultural diplomacy by using food as a tool for cultural participation (Kul, 2019). Moreover, food has the power of attraction, and food can be desired by others; therefore, it can increase the attractiveness and prestige of the state (Kul, 2019). This is where the concept of soft power comes into play. Nye defined soft power as a country's power to influence and attract others through its policies, culture, values, and other attractive features (Nye, 2020). Gastrodiplomacy is also used by states as a source of soft power to increase the attractiveness and desirability of the country. Thus, gastrodiplomacy not only promotes food culture

but also serves as an important tool for ensuring international peace, understanding, and cooperation.

Türkiye's rich and diverse gastronomy culture has become an important tool for promotion in the international arena. The Turkish government aims to create a positive image in the international arena through gastronomy and develops various strategies in this context. In addition, gastronomy events may also contribute to emphasizing Türkiye's cultural richness and hospitality. As mentioned before, one of the successful examples of gastrodiplomacy is the Turkish government's participation in international festivals and the promotion of Turkish cuisine in these festivals. Such events help Türkiye's cultural and gastronomic values to be recognized worldwide.

If local culinary development activities in Türkiye are examined, it is seen that good governance encourages the participation of local governments and communities by adopting a decentralized approach. While developing local cuisine has the potential to contribute to local economic development, it also serves to preserve cultural heritage. Within the framework of good governance principles, the aim is to manage these processes more effectively by ensuring the participation of local governments and non-governmental organizations, transparency, and accountability (Yılmaz, 2019).

Additionally, partnerships and horizontal networks play a major role in ensuring good governance in Türkiye. Cooperation models developed among the public, private, and non-governmental sectors encourage participatory management and consider the opinions of diverse stakeholders in decision-making processes. These cooperation models are implemented in a wide range of areas, from local governments to the central government, and aim to maximize social benefit. For example, Local Government and Civil Society Cooperation Projects implemented in many cities of Türkiye ensure the active participation of various segments of society in local government processes. The best examples of issues such as good governance, partnership, stakeholder involvement and participation, and the business world through gastronomy can be found in the activities of the Directorate of Communications of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye, the activities of the Yunus Emre Institute, and the Innovative Cities Program.

The concept of goodness has been defined in various ways in different disciplines. In politics, goodness is generally associated with social welfare, justice, and equality, while in sociology, elements such as social solidarity, empathy, and social responsibility come to the fore. Justice, morality, equality, solidarity, empathy, social responsibility, virtue ethics, and ethical values are considered the basic elements of goodness (Congleton, 2020). These elements can create opportunities for the overall well-being of individuals and society, strengthen social ties, and ensure social harmony.

But in this study, the concept of “goodness” occupies a unique position. While good governance primarily refers to the principles and institutional processes by which public affairs are managed, here, goodness is used to define the social and normative orientation of these processes toward human well-being, inclusivity, solidarity, and broader social benefit. In this sense, goodness expresses the extent to which governance practices and cultural initiatives are geared toward producing socially beneficial outcomes and creating value for different groups within society.

The relationship between governance and social benefit is already established in the broader literature on good governance. For example, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1997) associates governance with participation, equity, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and responsiveness, while emphasizing human development and the reduction of inequalities in well-being and opportunity. From this perspective, governance is not limited to administrative efficiency; it also concerns how institutional processes respond to social needs and contribute to the well-being of citizens. Similarly, contemporary discussions on the concept of good governance highlight the relationship between public action, social impact, and human well-being (Wilcox, 2025). Therefore, in the present study, good governance is conceptualized not as a separate institutional

mechanism, but as a socially oriented dimension of governance.

This distinction is particularly important for understanding the relationship between good governance and gastronomy. Gastronomy heritage is not merely a resource for economic or promotional purposes; it can also function as a carrier of collective memory, cultural identity, social interaction, and local knowledge. When culinary heritage is incorporated into governance and public diplomacy initiatives, the relevant question is not only whether a country succeeds in promoting its cuisine internationally, but also whether these initiatives create opportunities for participation, cultural preservation, local value creation, and interaction among different social groups. In this context, the good governance dimension draws attention to the social outcomes and public value of gastronomic initiatives.

Furthermore, when a state integrates principles such as inclusivity and social responsibility into its administrative identity, it creates a normative appeal that promotes its global image. When viewed strategically through gastrodiplomacy and cultural diplomacy, this normative appeal becomes a distinctive feature: in contrast to traditional power politics, Turkish gastrodiplomacy uses the country's culinary heritage to promote empathy and cultural solidarity on a global scale. Also, Turkish cuisine is promoted worldwide, fostering cultural interaction and tourism. International events and festivals organized for Turkish cuisine offer opportunities to share Türkiye's cultural richness and hospitality with the world. Therefore, strategic initiatives such as “Turkish Cuisine Week” go beyond simple promotion, representing a participatory governance model that utilizes cultural assets.

As a key instrument of Türkiye's public diplomacy, the Yunus Emre Institute implements good governance by coordinating cultural exchange programs that emphasize hospitality and cultural heritage. Thus, the Yunus Emre Institute is one of the institutions at the heart of this institutional effort. By organizing international gastronomy seminars and workshops, the institute transforms Türkiye's local cultural richness into a globally accessible soft power asset. In conclusion, Türkiye's gastrodiplomacy acts as a bridge between institutional efficiency and normative values, reinforcing the country's position as a leading regional power.

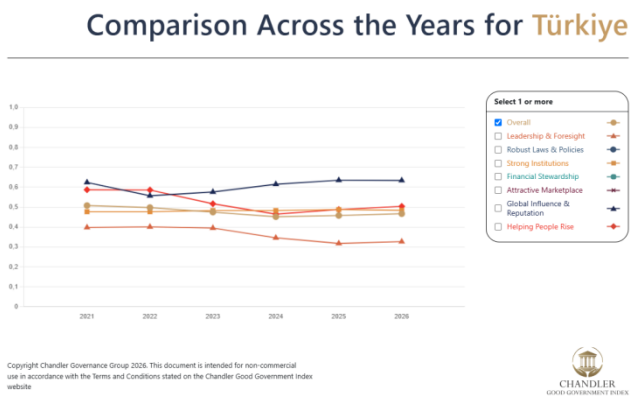
### 2.2. Türkiye's Good Governance Performance, Soft Power Position, and Gastronomic Visibility with Contextual Indicators

The governance performance, international position, and cultural visibility of countries can be addressed in various dimensions through different international indices and evaluation systems. In this study, the Chandler Good Government Index (CGGI), the Brand Finance Global Soft Power Index, and TasteAtlas's international culinary rankings are evaluated as complementary contextual indicators regarding Türkiye's governance capacity, soft power position, and gastronomic visibility. Therefore, these indicators are not used to establish a direct causal relationship between good governance and gastrodiplomacy, but rather to reveal the Turkish context examined in this study in its various dimensions.

#### 2.2.1. An Analysis of Türkiye's Good Governance Performance Through the Chandler Good Government Index

Since countries' global competitiveness can be measured through various indices, good governance principles are not merely theoretical concepts. The Chandler Good Government Index, which measures countries' governance performance under different headings according to international standards, is therefore of critical importance. For example, examining the index provides concrete data to answer the question of how Türkiye can reflect these principles in its institutional structure. In this study, the headings “Global Influence & Reputation,” “Strong Institutions,” “Leadership & Foresight,” and “Helping People Rise” are specifically considered as contextual indicators to discuss the relationship between good governance, soft power, and the social orientation conceptualized as “goodness” in this study.

**Image 1:** Comparison Across the Years, Türkiye




**Source:** Chandler Good Government Index, 2026

According to CGGI 2026 data, Türkiye ranks 37th in "Global Influence & Reputation," 61st in "Strong Institutions," 99th in "Leadership & Foresight," and 100th in "Helping People Rise." In the "Innovation" indicator, Türkiye ranks 116th. These data show that Türkiye's governance performance is not at the same level across different dimensions and that governance capacity should not be evaluated as a one-dimensional construct.

The position in the "Global Influence & Reputation" indicator provides a specific context regarding Türkiye's international visibility and reputation. However, this result does not necessarily mean that this visibility stems from gastrodiplomacy activities. Similarly, while the "Strong Institutions" indicator offers a general assessment of institutional capacity, it cannot be argued that this indicator directly measures the effectiveness of gastronomy or cultural diplomacy practices in Türkiye. As detailed in section 1.3, the methodological limitations of these indicators mean that this data provides only a contextual framework, not a direct cause-and-effect relationship.

The "Leadership & Foresight" and "Innovation" indicators should be considered in conjunction with the innovation dimension of the study. In particular, the re-presentation of gastronomic heritage through digital communication, new media, education, events, and local governance practices demonstrates that innovation has potential application in gastrodiplomacy. However, it should also be noted that the innovation ranking in the CGGI is not a direct measure of innovative practices in the field of gastronomy.

**Table 1:** Pillar and Indicator Ranks (1-133), Türkiye 2026

| **Global Influence & Reputation** | **37th** |
|---|---|
| International Trade | 37th |
| International Diplomacy | 8th |
| Nation Brand | 21st |
| Passport Strength | 68th |
| **Strong Institutions** | **61st** |
| Coordination | 74th |
| Data Capability | 49th |
| Implementation | 62nd |
| Quality Bureaucracy | 74th |
| **Leadership & Foresight** | **99th** |
| Ethical Leadership | 86th |
| Long-term Vision | 90th |
| Adaptability | 64th |
| Strategic Prioritisation | 67th |
| Innovation | 116th |
| **Helping People Rise** | **100th** |
| Education | 57th |
| Health | 61st |
| Satisfaction with Public Services | 97th |
| Personal Safety | 81st |
| Environmental Performance | 67th |
| Income Distribution | 94th |
| Employment | 57th |
| Gender Gap | 103rd |
| Non-Discrimination | 120th |
| Price Stability | 129th |

**Source:** Chandler Good Government Index, 2026.

The "Helping People Rise" indicator should be considered in relation to the concept of "goodness" in the study. This indicator provides a context suggesting that governance should be evaluated not only through institutional capacity and international visibility, but also through social dimensions such as community well-being and access to opportunities. Türkiye's ranking in the CGGI in this area does not directly measure the capacity of gastronomy projects to generate social benefits. However, the ability of local gastronomy initiatives to be linked to local producers, employment, cultural heritage

preservation, and local economic activities is important for discussing the concrete application areas of the “goodness” dimension defined in the study. Therefore, CGGI's "Helping People Rise" indicator has been evaluated not as empirical evidence of the social impact of gastrodiplomacy, but as a contextual indicator supporting the discussion of social benefit and public value.

### 2.2.2. An Analysis of Türkiye's Soft Power Capacity Through the Global Soft Power Index

In addition to governance indicators, indices related to Türkiye's international soft power position also broaden the contextual framework of the study. According to the Global Soft Power Index 2026 published by Brand Finance, Türkiye ranks 25th out of 193 countries. Türkiye also ranks 12th in the “Culture & Heritage” category, which includes the “food the world loves” heading. Brand Finance compiles this index based on the opinions of more than 150,000 participants from over 100 countries with 54 languages.

**Table 2:** Nation View (Rank of Türkiye)

| | **2026** | **2025** |
|---|---|---|
| **Global Soft Power Index** | 25 | 26 |
| **Familiarity** | 20 | 22 |
| **Reputation** | 34 | 35 |
| **Influence** | 16 | 14 |
| **Culture & Heritage**<br>-Influential in arts and entertainment<br>-Food the world loves<br>-Great place to visit<br>-Leader in sports<br>-Appealing lifestyle<br>-Rich heritage | 12 | 11 |
| **Net Positive/Negative Impact** | 43 | 49 |

**Source:** Global Soft Power Index, 2026

These data show that Türkiye's cultural elements hold a significant position within the country's overall soft power profile. The “food the world loves” indicator, in particular, is important for discussing the place of gastronomy in Türkiye's international cultural perception. However, it should not be overlooked that Brand Finance data provides a general assessment of Türkiye's perceived soft power capacity; it does not measure the causal impact of gastrodiplomacy activities.Therefore, Brand Finance data, when considered together with the CGGI, provides context at two different levels. While the CGGI primarily provides information on governance capacity and organizational structure, the Global Soft Power Index offers a broader perspective on Türkiye's perceived international attractiveness and influence. Therefore, the relationship between the two indicators should not be considered a causal link, but rather as complementary indicators that help understand the different dimensions of the concepts of good governance, innovation, and soft power, which are included in the theoretical framework of this study.

### 2.2.3. Analysis of Türkiye's International Gastronomic Visibility Through TasteAtlas

A separate contextual indicator of Türkiye's gastronomic visibility is seen in TasteAtlas's international cuisine ranking. According to the TasteAtlas Awards 2025/26 results, Turkish cuisine ranks 7th among 100 cuisines, receiving a score of 4.49. The ranking is based on 590,228 valid user reviews of 18,912 foods in the TasteAtlas database. (TasteAtlas, 2026).

The TasteAtlas ranking provides an indicator of the visibility of Türkiye's culinary culture in the context of international user reviews. In this respect, it can be considered alongside Brand Finance's “food the world loves” indicator, suggesting that Türkiye's gastronomic heritage holds a visible position in terms of international perception and cultural appeal. However, it should be noted that the methodologies of the two indicators differ. For example, Brand Finance data evaluates international perception of the country brand within a broader soft power framework, while TasteAtlas relies primarily on user reviews of specific foods and cuisines. Therefore, instead of considering the results obtained from these two sources as direct confirmation of each other, it would be more appropriate to treat them as complementary data showing different dimensions.

These indicators are also important in terms of the conceptualization of gastrodiplomacy in this study. Gastrodiplomacy does not only mean promoting a country's cuisine; it also includes the use of cultural values, local heritage, and gastronomic resources in international communication and interaction processes. Therefore, international gastronomic visibility can be discussed as one of the possible outcome areas of gastrodiplomacy activities; however, it alone does not prove the effectiveness of gastrodiplomacy activities.

### 2.3. Digital Governance and the Mediatization of Gastrodiplomacy

Recent technological innovations and the diversification of media have contributed to the digital transformation of governance. This transformation has redefined public diplomacy, shifting it from one-way broadcasting to interactive participation. In this context, technological innovations and digital media serve as critical channels for transparency and participation, the two fundamental pillars of good governance. With the development and increasing prevalence of new media, social media is being used effectively in Türkiye, especially in the fields of gastronomy and culture. At the same time, social media influencers and digital campaigns play a significant role in promoting Turkish cuisine. One of the best examples is the “gotürkiye” social media accounts belonging to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Turkish Tourism Promotion and Development Agency (TGA). Influencers from all over the world occasionally create content on these accounts. These posts frequently feature Türkiye's food culture. Similarly, there are social media accounts created for cities, such as “go_kayseri, go_bolu, go_ardahan, go_giresun, go_ankara,” which share information about the food culture of the city. Such promotions provide channels through which Türkiye's culinary culture is presented as an attractive destination for gastronomic tourism.

The Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye's Communications Directorate, which plays an active role in promoting Turkish cuisine, is conducting studies in coordination with all relevant institutions to determine Türkiye's gastronomic diplomacy strategy. In this context, the Presidency of Communications organized the 1st Gastrodiplomacy Committee Meeting on October 8, 2020, with the participation of all relevant institutions. This is an example of inter-institutional coordination in the development of Türkiye’s gastrodiplomacy strategy. Furthermore, this can be interpreted as an integrated administrative approach that provides culinary promotion aligned with national brand objectives.

The Presidency of Communications also implemented a project where 12 of the most famous chefs from Mediterranean countries brought Turkish cuisine to their global audience online (T.C. Cumhurbaşkanlığı İletişim Başkanlığı, 2020). Such digital initiatives can be considered an effort to enhance the soft power of social media management. Moreover, this digital reach creates channels for Türkiye's global influence and reputation, while also providing that the state's cultural policies are accessible, accountable, and innovative in the eyes of the international community.

### 2.4. Institutional Innovation in Gastrodiplomacy: Case Studies from Kayseri

The relationship between good governance and innovation is most evident in the strategic management of cultural assets. Beyond managerial efficiency, governance practices can provide an environment in which traditional heritage is transformed into innovative soft power tools.

Among case studies on the contribution of good governance to innovation and innovation processes, the “Innovative Cities Program” implemented in Türkiye stands out. Launched in many different areas to encourage innovation in local governments, this program has successful applications in many cities across Türkiye. Looking specifically at the gastronomy sector, a range of gastronomy-related initiatives can be observed. For example, Kayseri is a city known for its rich culinary culture, particularly its delicacies such as “mantı” (dumplings), “pastırma” (cured meat), and “sucuk” (sausage). Kayseri Metropolitan Municipality is carrying out various projects to promote and ensure the sustainability of these traditional flavors. For

example, events such as the “Kayseri Mantı Festivali” and the “Pastırma Festivali” are organized to promote the city's gastronomic culture at national and international levels. These festivals encourage local participation and include workshops on preparing traditional dishes (Kayseri Büyükşehir Belediyesi, 2021).

Furthermore, Kayseri is taking significant steps in gastronomy education and research. The Gastronomy and Culinary Arts Departments of Erciyes University and Kayseri University provide education in gastronomy and are involved in gastronomy-related projects. Universities also collaborate with local governments in activities related to gastronomy tourism and local culinary culture. Kayseri's inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (2021) provides an important context for reflecting on strong institutions working in coordination with local stakeholders. Institutional initiatives such as the “Kayseri Gastronomy Days” provide opportunities for local producers to participate in gastronomy-related promotion and also branding activities.

It is also necessary to mention social media platforms, which have become a significant part of people's lives today. Kayseri Municipality's “gastrokayseri” Instagram account has approximately seven thousand followers. This social media account features posts from the “Kayseri Gastronomy Days,” as well as posts with chefs and gastronomy influencers.

Furthermore, the Kayseri Culinary Academy workshops are a noteworthy element. The workshop and training categories on the Academy's page are fully booked. Kayseri Municipality has also published the book “Kayseri Gastronomy from History to Culture”. The book's content is quite rich and includes topics such as Kayseri's History and Geography, Turkish Culinary Culture, Kayseri's Geographically Indicated Products, Events and Projects in the Field of Gastronomy in Kayseri, and Kayseri's UNESCO Creative Cities Network Process. Additionally, Kayseri Municipality's “Culinary Arts Center, Erguvan, Emirgan Köftecisi, Mimarsinan Pidecisi, Kaytur, and Glutensiz Kafe” are among the establishments serving local Kayseri cuisine.

## CONCLUSION

This study finds that good governance, goodness, and innovation can be considered complementary dimensions in the development of gastrodiplomacy. Good governance offers an institutional and participatory framework within which gastronomy and cultural initiatives can be organized, while goodness provides a social and normative orientation focused on public value, inclusivity, cultural preservation, and social benefit. Innovation, in turn, offers organizational, digital, and communicational mechanisms through which these values and practices can be developed and transmitted. In this context, gastrodiplomacy serves as a channel for presenting Türkiye's culinary heritage and cultural resources to international audiences and for engaging with these audiences. Findings from the Kayseri example show how these dimensions can be integrated at the local level through institutional cooperation, gastronomy-related initiatives, cultural promotion, and digital communication.

Furthermore, the contextual indicators evaluated in this study (CGGI, Global Soft Power Index, TasteAtlas), as explained in the methodology, reflect Türkiye's visibility and governance capacity in the field of gastronomy in various dimensions, rather than indicating a direct causal relationship. For instance, while CGGI data provides a general context regarding Türkiye's governance and institutional capacity, Global Soft Power Index data reveals the country's perceived soft power and cultural attractiveness position internationally. The TasteAtlas ranking, on the other hand, provides a separate indicator regarding the international gastronomic visibility of Turkish cuisine. Although these indicators do not establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship, they allow for the joint evaluation of different dimensions of Türkiye's governance capacity, soft power position, and gastronomic visibility.

The Kayseri example demonstrates how the relationship between good governance, goodness, innovation, and gastrodiplomacy can be observed at the local level. The case shows the coexistence of different actors and practices, including municipal activities, gastronomy education at universities,

promotion of cultural heritage, gastronomic events, digital communication, and studies on local gastronomic products. These practices provide findings on how gastronomic heritage is incorporated into local cultural and promotional activities and how it can be linked to broader gastrodiplomacy objectives.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the gastrodiplomacy literature by addressing the concepts of good governance, goodness, and innovation within a common conceptual framework. While existing gastrodiplomacy studies primarily focus on soft power, public diplomacy, national image, and gastronomic promotion, this study also considers the institutional and societal aspects underlying these practices. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that gastrodiplomacy initiatives can benefit from coordination among public institutions, municipalities, universities, cultural organizations, and other relevant stakeholders, particularly when cultural heritage preservation, participation, social benefits, and digital innovation are considered together.

When evaluating this study, some limitations must be considered. First, the study focuses on Türkiye and treats Kayseri as a single sub-national case; therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to all gastrodiplomacy practices in Türkiye or to different national contexts. Second, the research relies heavily on documents, institutional sources, and visual materials; it does not directly measure the perceptions of international target audiences, tourists, or other relevant groups. The contextual indicators used in the study regarding governance, soft power, and gastronomy rankings also do not reveal the direct causal effects of gastrodiplomacy. Therefore, future research involving comparative studies of different cities in Türkiye or different countries, conducting target audience and stakeholder interviews, utilizing surveys, analyzing social media and digital content, and monitoring changes in international perceptions and interactions through in-depth research will enrich the study. Furthermore, since the data for the "food the world loves" heading in the "Culture and Heritage" section of the Global Soft Power Index is available for a fee, it has been evaluated in this study from a general perspective within the "Culture and Heritage" context without its ranking.

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