

BREAD IN ARMENIAN CULTURE: THE WAYS IT CAN BE PROMOTED
ON SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

by

Vanessa Manvelyan

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Abstract

This capstone project looks at how Armenian bread can be promoted in a way that shows its cultural importance. In Armenia, bread is more than just food. It carries stories, traditions, and emotions passed down through generations. By looking at how French and Italian breads are marketed worldwide, this project also suggests ways Armenian bread can be promoted. It includes interviews with bakers, marketing experts, and hospitality workers who shared practical ideas and experiences. The project also includes a clear promotional strategy, real-life examples, and visuals that show how Armenian bakeries can use storytelling, emotional connection, and cultural pride to reach local and international customers. The aim is to help people see Armenian bread not just as something ordinary but as something meaningful that connects them to Armenian history and identity.

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Introduction

Bread is more than just food. Bread holds a profound and symbolic place in Armenian culture, representing unity and strength. For centuries, breadmaking has been more than a culinary practice; it has been a ritual that brought families together, passed down values through generations, and preserved cultural heritage. The center of these traditions is the tonir, a unique underground clay oven that serves as a tool for baking bread and preparing daily meals. It has also been the heart of Armenian homes, a place where families gathered for warmth and connection. Armenia's bread culture is most commonly associated with lavash, which is recognized as an inseparable cultural heritage by UNESCO. However, other traditional breads, such as matnaqash and hrazdan, are equally significant in Armenian households. Bread's historical and cultural importance extends beyond daily life to the historical hardships that Armenians have gone through. During the Armenian Genocide, bread symbolized survival in the face of the tragedy that Armenians had gone through. Similar struggles occurred during the Soviet era when scarcity made bread a rare and highly valuable item, accessible only to people lucky enough to purchase special tickets. The historical examples show that throughout the years, bread has played a crucial role during moments of hardship, such as the Armenian Genocide, Soviet-era scarcity, and the recent Artsakh blockade. These events showed the survival and hope of the Armenian nation. The nation did not give up but tried to stand up and create everything from scratch. In these historical moments, bread is often seen as a symbol of survival, resilience, and hope, reflecting its profound role in Armenian identity.

Alongside Armenian bread and its culture, it is necessary to mention that Western European countries, including France and Italy, also have a rich bread culture, which makes them famous today. In contrast to Armenia's bread culture, which is deeply rooted in resilience and heritage, France and Italy also highly value their bread. The bread plays a central role in the connection between the generations. The person who bakes bread for the family passes down the recipe through generations with techniques and customs to preserve authenticity.

France is famous for its baguette, and Italy is known for bread like focaccia. They have not only maintained their bread traditions but have also succeeded in promoting them globally. These countries use creative campaigns and eye-catching promotions highlighting bread's cultural significance, showcasing it as an inseparable part of their identity on the global stage. The success of these campaigns gives helpful ideas for promoting Armenian bread culture. Through social media campaigns, France emphasizes the cultural significance of the baguette, and Italy, through collaborations with food influencers and tourism boards, has successfully highlighted its bread traditions. Armenia can adapt these approaches to spotlight lavash, matnaqash, and hrazdan, using modern storytelling to engage a global audience. These efforts show how storytelling can create interest worldwide. This project will suggest simple but effective ways to promote Armenian bread and its culture by examining how effectively other countries promote their bread traditions. It will explore practical methods such as social media storytelling, influencer partnerships, and cultural tourism initiatives to promote Armenian bread culture internationally. The project will focus on feasible strategies suitable for Armenia's resources, ensuring the proposed solutions are realistic and impactful. The strategic promotions will aim to make Armenian bread not just a powerful symbol of the past but also present as an essential part of Armenia's identity in today's world.

Literature Review

Bread has been a fundamental element of Armenian culture throughout history. Bread has deep roots in Armenians' daily life, family traditions, and national identity- from kneading and baking the bread in a tonir (traditional Armenian oven) to gathering in the "bread house". Since then, it has played a central role in uniting families and communities. The historical significance goes back to the significant events that happened to Armenians, from the Armenian Genocide to recent struggles in the Artsakh war and blockade. During these events, it can be seen how bread has stood as a symbol of strength. It led the locals to find ways to

make bread from whatever was available to ensure survival. Today, while traditional bread-making continues, it also adapts to modern tastes. Armenian bread, mostly lavash, is now more or less recognized worldwide. It shares the Armenian culture internationally. However, other breads that have their unique place in Armenian bread-making culture, such as matnaqash and hrazdan bread, remain less well-known.

Petrosian and Underwood's (2006) *Armenian Food: Fact, Fiction & Folklore* provides an in-depth exploration of bread's cultural and symbolic significance in Armenia. It starts with the history of the village of Hahtsik, meaning "Sweet, Dear Bread". The village was named after World War II by returning soldiers to symbolize peace and honor their heritage as bread farmers. This village serves as a metaphor for how bread has represented not only sustenance but also resilience and national identity for Armenians. The book contrasts the admiration for bread during the war years with its devaluation in Soviet Armenia, where bread became a symbol of mass production rather than cultural pride. Following Armenia's independence, traditional bread-making practices, particularly lavash, experienced a huge change. Lavash came to be seen not only as an essential food item but as a cultural artifact that symbolizes Armenian identity, heritage, and community. The authors emphasize the role of women in lavash-making, highlighting their expertise and the importance of this practice in strengthening social ties within Armenian communities.

Additionally, the book explores how lavash plays a significant role in Armenian traditions. It is used in weddings and religious ceremonies and as a symbol of hospitality, representing the warmth and generosity of Armenian culture. The book also discusses how lavash is a part of Armenian art and tourism, which has become an iconic element in showcasing the country's cultural heritage globally. These bread-making processes are passed down through generations, maintaining their cultural significance in contemporary Armenia.

While bread plays an essential symbolic role in Armenia, similar traditions are shared across the region, as seen in Karizaki's exploration of Iranian bread-making practices. Karizaki's (2017) research on Iranian bread traditions offers helpful insights into the variety of bread-making practices in the region. The study looks at over 30 types of Iranian bread, including lavash, which is also an important part of Armenian history and food. Although the study focuses on Iran, it shows how shared history and cultural connections have influenced similar bread traditions in neighboring countries. Karizaki highlights how Iran's many ethnic groups have created various bread styles, reflecting the country's diversity. The study also discusses how different flours, such as wheat, barley, and millet, were historically used to make bread in Iran, showing how local ingredients and regional resources shaped these traditions.

In contrast, Armenian bread culture has focused more on specific traditions, like lavash, which has a deep symbolic meaning. Historically, Armenians also used grains like barley and millet during times of scarcity, highlighting a shared regional adaptation to available resources. This comparison shows how different cultures in the same region approach bread-making uniquely, shaped by their history, resources, and traditions.

Moreover, the way bread has been prepared has undergone many changes throughout the years. Kaplan (2006) discusses the impact of industrialization on traditional bread-making in France by stating how mechanization has changed both production methods and cultural perceptions of bread. Industrialization allowed for mass production, which led to a decline in traditional practices and a shift from community-based baking to factory-made products. This shift caused concern among French people who viewed industrial bread as less authentic and distanced from the symbolic roles that bread once held. In her article, "Our Daily Bread" in Italy: Its Meaning in the Roman Period and Today, Manetta (2016) discusses bread's cultural and historical significance in Italy, from the Roman era to modern times. Manetta mentions similar thoughts about bread in Italy, which has long symbolized cultural identity and reflected

changes in agriculture and industrialization. Manetta also explores how bread-making evolved from traditional skills to industrial production, which increased accessibility but also lowered quality and cultural value. Armenian reality also has this kind of issue. In ancient times, lavash bread was only baked in a tonir. However, today, due to high demand and widespread availability worldwide, it is rarely baked in tonir, but rather in specially constructed electric ovens, which give similar results. That does not mean that the lavash baked in the electric oven is less authentic and has worse quality; it just does not give that unique smell and texture that the lavash baked in a tonir has. That is why bread that is made in traditional ways today has more nostalgic value for people since it has a unique taste. As the author mentioned in the research, French people, over the years, have also been trying to bring back high-quality bread made with better ingredients, reflecting a desire to reconnect with the past. However, sometimes the desires do not match the demand, since if they use only high-quality ingredients without using any harmful ingredients, they may not remain accessible to the people due to the high demand and the price.

In addition to the significance of bread in various cultures, it is interesting to discover how recent studies show important trends in how people choose bread. Research by Sajdakowska et al. (2020) examined 1,013 consumers and found four main groups of bread buyers. Their findings revealed four consumer segments: Enthusiastic (23.8%), Ultra-Involved (26.0%), Involved (19.1%), and Neutral (31.1%). The largest group, called "Enthusiastic," mainly included educated women with good incomes who cared about healthy food and read product labels carefully. These findings of people's behavioral traits are particularly relevant for marketing traditional Armenian bread like lavash and matnaqash. Besides the four groups, the study found three main things people look for when buying bread: price, how long it stays fresh, and what it is called (Sajdakowska et al., 2020). This is useful for selling Armenian breads like lavash and matnaqash to new customers. Lavash, a UNESCO-recognized flatbread,

is known for being natural and easy to use. Matnaqash, with its soft texture and diamond pattern, is rich in whole grains. The research shows that while people want healthy bread, taste is still very important. This suggests that Armenian breads could do well in the market because they offer both good taste and natural, healthy ingredients.

Along with consumer behavior studies, recent research has also emphasized how food can play a key role in international marketing, particularly when it comes to cultural foods. For example, Kapferer et al. (2020) explore how traditional and ethnic foods are marketed globally. They show that cultural foods often represent national identity, using authenticity and nostalgia to connect with consumers in different countries. This is especially important for promoting Armenian breads like lavash and matnaqash, which carry strong cultural meaning. The authors suggest that telling the story behind these foods by highlighting tradition, heritage, and community can make them more appealing to a global audience. This aligns with the digital marketing strategies discussed earlier, which use cultural identity to build emotional connections with consumers and enhance the appeal of traditional foods on the international market (Kapferer et al., 2020).

As consumer preferences evolve, understanding how to market traditional breads effectively becomes crucial. This is where digital marketing strategies come into play, as seen in Rakib's study on Gembong Ratu. By discovering the historical part of bread and its cultural significance, it is also important to determine how efficiently it can be promoted. The study on the digital marketing strategies of Gembong Ratu highlights how small businesses can use technology to grow and stay competitive. The business expanded its customer base by using platforms like Instagram and collaborating with local influencers while maintaining its traditional bread-making practices. The research uses SWOT analysis to outline specific strategies. For example, the Strength-Opportunity (S-O) strategy emphasizes maintaining

customer loyalty through digital marketing and innovation. The Strength-Threat (S-T) strategy focuses on improving product quality to compete with rivals.

Meanwhile, the Weakness-Opportunity (W-O) strategy suggests using strategic locations and expanding digital outreach. The Weakness-Threat (W-T) strategy prioritizes increasing digital presence to stay ahead of competitors (Rakib, 2024). These findings are highly relevant to the Armenian bread market, especially in promoting traditional breads. Armenian small local and international bakeries can adopt similar approaches, such as using social media to tell cultural stories about the bread and bread-making process and highlight its heritage. Introducing consumers to the variations in flavors or formats of traditional breads could address consumer preferences while preserving their traditional essence. Combining digital strategies with cultural storytelling can enhance Armenian bread makers' market size, attract diverse consumers, and share the heritage of the bread with a broader audience outside of the Armenian culture. Adopting this approach will reflect how tradition and innovation can coexist to strengthen market relevance and growth.

The most popular Armenian bread is lavash, which can be found worldwide since similar breads have been popular within different cultures. The fact that lavash has been announced as a cultural heritage by UNESCO (2014) shows its unique role in Armenia and the whole world. Promoting the bread lavash could be done more in a "family format" since the way UNESCO recognizes it as a cultural heritage includes the fact that it involves the whole family. Portraying the bread as a source of unity among family members can help to promote UNESCO's approach.

Talking about UNESCO's recognition of lavash as an intangible heritage, there is a book entitled "LAVASH: The Bread That Launched 1000 Meals plus Salads, stews and Other Recipes from Armenia", published in 2019, also talks about the high value of lavash as a part of the Armenian culture. At first sight, it seems like just a simple recipe book, which in reality

is, but besides the recipes, it also includes a huge part of storytelling about each recipe and connecting it to the Armenian culture. The authors are Ara Zada, a chef of Armenian descent; John Lee, a travel photographer; and Kate Leahy, a food writer. The idea of publishing this book was born from a shared curiosity and deep respect for Armenian food and traditions. Their idea began during a trip to Armenia, where they became captivated by the sights, sounds, and smells of lavash baked in village ovens. The authors explore how lavash is made and shared and why it matters to the Armenian people. The book shows that lavash is not just food but a part of Armenian history, family life, and identity through recipes, stories, and photos. The book strongly emphasizes how lavash is traditionally baked in a clay oven called a tonir, often by women who sing, laugh, and share life while working together. This tradition shows how lavash is more than just a flatbread; it is a part of everyday life that brings people together. The authors also include a separate part about the food of Artsakh and even continue their research and information sharing about the food and the recipes on their blog after 2023. The book includes the recipe for jingyalov hats (flatbread filled with greens) and how they got acquainted with the bread while traveling in Artsakh, which is also very popular all over Armenia. The authors capture the warmth of Armenian hospitality and people's resilience through stunning photographs and touching interviews. While this book is not entirely academic, it remains a valuable source for studying Armenian culture through the representation of Armenian bread. For this capstone project, which focuses on promoting Armenian bread culture, this book can act as a foundation for creating the promotional strategy, since it shows how lavash is more than just something to eat, but it is a type of food that carries emotions, family traditions, and national pride.

Just as lavash has become a symbol of Armenian culture globally, French bread traditions, specifically promoted by PAUL, have been carefully adapted to international tastes. While talking about the bread culture, it is also important to remember how bread is perceived

in French culture by having its essential place in it. PAUL, a French company with many franchised restaurants in more than 40 countries, promotes its prominent culture by serving its food by combining the taste of France and its rich history. Maxime Holder, the President of PAUL, highlights the role of bread in their restaurants and how they are being baked and prepared (2023). It shows how significant bread is for the culture and how the French properly promote it. The role of bread in Armenia is similar to France's approach since their bread-making traditions and the ingredients remain irreplaceable. However, PAUL's approach to making their bread more accessible and suitable for the taste buds in every culture is to make some modifications, which keep all the French traditions but add a little part of the culture in which the restaurant is located. One of the most interesting approaches that PAUL is using for keeping the high quality of their bread and offering the same taste all around the world is that they are delivering the most important ingredient in bread making- the same flour to all of their bakeries, which ensures the high-quality and traditional approach of their bread.

Bread is significant in Armenian culture, symbolizing resilience, heritage, and community. From its importance in uniting families during difficult times to its evolving production methods, bread reflects broader cultural and societal changes. The comparison with other breads representing their cultures gives insight into their traditions and highlights shared practices. That also helps to find a way to promote Armenian bread to different target audiences outside of Armenia. Modern consumer trends and digital marketing strategies could offer opportunities to promote Armenian bread, like lavash and matnaqash, globally, which will show the powerful symbol of identity and tradition.

Research Question

This research aims to explore how Armenia can effectively promote its bread culture, particularly lavash and matnaqash, on digital platforms, to increase the recognition of the overall Armenian culture. The study will focus on blending historical narratives with modern

marketing techniques to position Armenian bread not only as a symbol of cultural heritage but also as a modern, desirable product. Here are the three central questions that should be addressed during the strategy creation and when finding the corresponding information.

- How can Armenian bakeries use modern marketing strategies to showcase their bread culture and internationally highlight their importance in Armenian heritage?
- What can Armenian bakery owners learn from the promotional campaigns of countries like France and Italy in sharing their bread cultures globally?
- How can Armenian bread be promoted on social media to be perceived as luxurious and healthy, similar to the positioning of breads from Western Europe?

By addressing these questions, this research will discover new insights and opportunities for integrating the cultural and historical significance of Armenian bread into effective promotional strategies, which can be a good example for the Armenian bakery owners, outside of Armenia, for using the right content for promoting their production to a broader audience.

Methodology

This project explores how Armenia can effectively promote its bread culture on digital platforms, especially lavash and matnaqash. To do this, I will use a combination of surveys and interviews with people from different backgrounds to understand how they perceive bread, what influences their buying decisions, and how Armenian bread can be promoted globally using modern marketing strategies based on the analysis of the findings.

1. Survey and Interviews of Consumers

A survey will be conducted among local consumers in Armenia and international tourists who have experienced Armenian bread. The survey will focus on understanding consumer preferences and behaviors toward bread consumption, specifically lavash, and

matnaqash. It will include both closed and open-ended questions to capture quantitative and qualitative data on the following aspects:

Bread Consumption Patterns: Questions will ask about the frequency of bread consumption, the types of bread the person most commonly consumes, and the factors that influence bread choice, for example, taste, price, health benefits, and cultural significance.

Cultural Perception: Respondents will be asked about their awareness of Armenian bread's cultural significance, including its symbolism and history, as well as about the examples of how Armenian bread has been promoted. The answers will help to understand how familiar the survey responders are with the cultural story behind Armenian bread.

Marketing Preferences: Participants will be asked how they perceive bread marketing, including which types of promotional campaigns (e.g., social media, influencer marketing, storytelling) resonate most with them. This data will help to identify the most effective strategies for promoting Armenian bread on digital platforms.

Sample questions that may be asked during the interviews with the bread consumers:

1. How often do you buy bread?
2. What type of bread do you mostly consume?
3. What do you value the most in bread?
4. While purchasing bread, what are the things you consider?
5. Would you rather buy Armenian or French bread from the bakery?
6. In your opinion, what are the main differences between Eastern European breads and Armenian breads?

2. Interviews with industry experts and bread producers

In-depth interviews will be conducted with local bread producers, particularly with people involved in traditional bread-making processes and experts in the digital marketing field. The interviews will give a chance to examine the cultural and historical significance of

Armenian bread, specifically lavash, and matnaqash, by contacting local and foreign producers and experts. This will include exploring the challenges these producers face in preserving traditional methods and industrialization. The interviews with marketing experts will also help explore how digital marketing strategies, such as social media, influencer collaborations, and storytelling, can effectively promote Armenian bread.

Alongside the interviews with the local bread producers and marketing experts in Armenia, this research will include reviewing the Armenian bakeries abroad in countries such as the USA, Russia, France, and Lebanon, places where statistically a lot of diasporan Armenians are known to live. These bakeries will serve as case studies to explore the following:

- How the Armenian bread, particularly lavash and matnaqash, is marketed to international audiences.
- Challenges faced in promoting Armenian bread to the non-Armenian audience.
- Strategies used to maintain cultural authenticity while adapting to local consumer preferences.

3. Comparative Analysis of International Case Studies

The research will include a comparative analysis of the promotional strategies used by countries like France and Italy to promote their bread cultures globally. This analysis will review the social media accounts of Western European bakeries such as PAUL (France) and various Italian bread brands to identify successful campaigns, focusing on historical narratives, cultural storytelling, and modern marketing techniques. The exploitation will not only focus on the social media platforms of the European-based bread-producing companies and restaurants, but also, in the case of PAUL, the social media pages of different countries, including the Armenian page, will be analyzed. This study will help to explore best practices and identify the key elements of successful bread marketing campaigns from these countries

that could be adapted to promote Armenian bread. This will examine how cultural significance is communicated and how brands position their bread as a luxurious and healthy product.

4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data from the consumer survey will be analyzed using statistical methods to identify consumer behavior and preference trends. Qualitative data from the surveys, interviews, and case study analysis will be analyzed thematically to identify key themes related to the cultural significance of bread, consumer attitudes toward marketing strategies, and potential promotional tactics for Armenian bread. The findings will help to find people's real-time attitudes and help design effective ways of promoting Armenian bread on digital platforms.

Research Findings

To begin with, I really wanted to find out how Armenian bread is well-known among the other well-known French and Italian breads. That would help me plan further actions and consider how bread can be effectively promoted to the global market. The central aspect of the survey was to create it so that the answers given by the participants would also give me indirect insights about their opinions and views about the bread. The survey included both open-ended and multiple-choice questions. The first part of the survey was initiated to determine the participants' demographics by asking where they are from and whether they are of Armenian descent, which is important for the future promotional strategy.

I spread the survey on Reddit, Telegram, and Facebook groups, where the members were mainly tourists from Armenia or diasporans from different countries. The survey included questions about French and Italian bread to determine whether the responder is getting acquainted with such content, and if so, what their response to the content is that they view on social media accounts.

It was surprising for me that, besides answering the survey questions, some people also wrote huge comments about their opinion about the bread and what kind of warm emotions the Armenian bread evokes in them. I also translated the whole survey into Russian since many Russians relocated to Armenia, and finding out their opinion about the bread was also valuable. Another reason I translated into Russian was that they are a culture that loves eating bread, and in a new culture, after being relocated, I assumed that they would also try the Armenian traditional bread, and I was not wrong. As well as, since many Armenians live in Russia, big supermarkets can find many Armenian products imported directly from Armenia. The products also include Armenian lavash, which is quite well-known among Russians and quite popular in terms of choosing bread.

Most of the answers I got were from the Reddit community, where not only from the actual survey, but also wrote some comments, which showed the real pattern in their regions. The first comment that I got was from the r/AskCaucasus community.

Lavash with La vache qui rit was unbeatable during my childhood. Lavash is popular in a wide region. I did not know that it was specifically an Armenian thing.

↑ 2 ↓ ◯ Reply ↗ Share ...

Figure 1: Comment under the Reddit Post The person wrote that they were truly surprised to discover that lavash originates from Armenia, which is quite popular in various regions. They did not know where it originated from. It was touching to read how lavash played a significant role in their childhood, and it felt like the memories created in childhood always reminded the responder of something sincere and heartwarming.



Figure 2: Short Conversation under the Reddit Post The real comments under the Reddit

post of the survey were made by the community members who tried the products of some lavash bakeries and shared their experiences. The comments helped me to confirm the bakery's reputation for quality and authenticity, not only by the online reviews posted under the bakery's website, but also from real people who have experienced the taste in real life. Many described the lavash as fresh, comforting, and deeply connected to cultural memory, which gave me a much more personal and reliable sense of its popularity than just numbers or ratings alone. Here, I have shared an example of a short conversation that I saw under the survey post on Reddit., This conversation gave me an understanding of how people value bread, and which bakery is their favorite in the place where they live.

Bread and Culture

The survey once again confirmed that bread is not just a food in Armenian cuisine but a powerful cultural symbol passed through generations. People who participated in the survey strongly associated bread with home, tradition, and identity. Words like "grandmother," "village," and "hospitality" were frequently used. Many respondents emphasized that baking

bread (especially lavash) is still a sacred family ritual, with the establishment of strong emotional connections. For generations, Armenians have made thin and soft bread like lavash in the traditional tonir, and even today, families speak of the process as something pure, holy, and ancient. During the survey, participants often described bread with deeply emotional words: "home, grandmother, village," or simply "soft." It represents safety, history, and warmth. Some even remembered growing up with the usual sandwiches made with fresh bread bought from the nearby family-owned bakery.

The associations with Armenian bread show that in today's world, when there are many different types of bread representing different cultural backgrounds, none of them compares to their own. This deep-rooted relationship with bread makes Armenian traditions unique and gives space for delivering the message globally by putting the message of culture and unity in place. The survey answers also showed that more than 90% of responders believed Armenian bread is an important part of their cultural identity. 60 18-24-year-old responders also mentioned that they are aware that the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes lavash. This increased their pride and likelihood of choosing it over other options like French or Italian bread.

As for how well-known Armenian bread is on the international market level and how much people “care” about the existence of bread, I have come across an interesting UK TV show, “Pointless.” Basically, the idea behind the TV show is to answer as many general knowledge questions as possible as a pair, earn points, and then fight for the cash. The fewer correct answers a question gets, the more points the pair who answered correctly gets. In one



Laash Image, shown during the TV show

of the series, the question was about bread. There were five images of bread, the most well-known of which was lavash. The TV show showed that, among other internationally well-known breads, Armenian lavash also

has its special place in terms of

cultural representation. Lavash got the least correct answers, which can give a space for assuming that lavash is not that well-known among UK people. However, an issue I saw was that, while other breads had their corresponding images, the image of lavash did not match how it looks in a usual setting if a person bought it from a bakery. That is an issue since a simple search of lavash does not bring up that kind of image. The image they put in their TV show looked more like pita bread with sesame seeds, which does not include the traditional lavash bread. The image selection could also be why some people did not correctly name the lavash bread by looking at the image.

The last part, when the host comments on the bread, hints at the cultural significance of lavash in Armenian culture since he mentions that the Armenian bride has it on her shoulder. Sadly, it did not lead to any further discussions since the participants and the host started to discuss the sesame seeds on the bread, but still, mentioning lavash in a way that also signifies its culture is deep and emotional. Still, it would have been much better if the image had been chosen correctly.

Analysis

Armenian Bread in the International Market: Awareness Levels

When I asked how well Armenian bread is known internationally, most respondents said it was "somewhat known" or "not known at all"; just a small portion of the responders mentioned that Armenian bread is "well known" in the global market. The answers showed me one more time that there is a lack of good promotional strategy in the global market, which is why fewer people know about Armenian bread and its cultural significance in Armenia. As well as, I cannot miss the opportunity to include that some of the responders also mentioned that they saw lavash abroad without cultural context, meaning it was just labeled as a generic flatbread. This points to a branding gap, which means that people miss the opportunity to promote the bread (in this case, lavash) as a part of a big culture and prefer to keep the packaging simple and accessible to a broader range of people. The survey participants also stated the lack of promotion, where around 70% of them indicated that they had never seen Armenian bread promoted on social media. Still, at the same time, they could name really well-structured campaigns for French and Italian breads.

The people who saw the campaign were mainly from the US, living in Glendale, where many Armenians live and own businesses. The survey participant mentioned one well-known bakery brand: "Naghash Lavash". Besides selling bread, they are also good at storytelling and promoting their products. Their messaging focuses not just on taste and quality but also on tradition and identity, which appeals strongly to the Armenian diaspora and food-conscious consumers. Their strategy reminded me of how the "Lavash" book was written: combining the recipes and the storytelling part to feel more integrated into the things they were sharing.

Public engagement is done by offering accessibility through nationwide delivery, visual marketing of sharing photos and videos of their bread in use, and community partnerships, such as collaborating with local restaurants and brand chefs. By combining cultural pride with

modern marketing techniques, Naghash Lavash plays a key role in reintroducing Armenian bread traditions to a broader audience. One example is their website, where, by entering, the first thing that pops up is a really short video that tells a short story about the lavash-making culture and shows the texture of the freshly baked lavash. It directly sets the mood of the person who wants to purchase bread from them. The video itself does not have anything superficial, but it has a meaning hidden in their traditional bread recipe, passed down through the centuries to them. Naghash Lavash also has a blog section on its website, which serves as a platform to engage with its audience and share insights into Armenian culinary traditions. I found out that the blog includes articles that go deep into the history and cultural significance of lavash, offering readers a better understanding of Armenian traditional bread. Also, the blog provides recipes by partnering with an Armenian chef and suggests to customers how they can creatively incorporate lavash into their meals. By sharing these stories and tips, Naghash Lavash not only promotes their products but also establishes a sense of community among those who are interested in Armenian cuisine. This storytelling approach turns lavash from a simple food product into a symbol of identity and tradition. This is an excellent tool for engaging a wider audience and aiming to position Naghash Lavash not just as a bakery but as a cultural ambassador, using digital media to preserve and promote the tradition of Armenian bread.

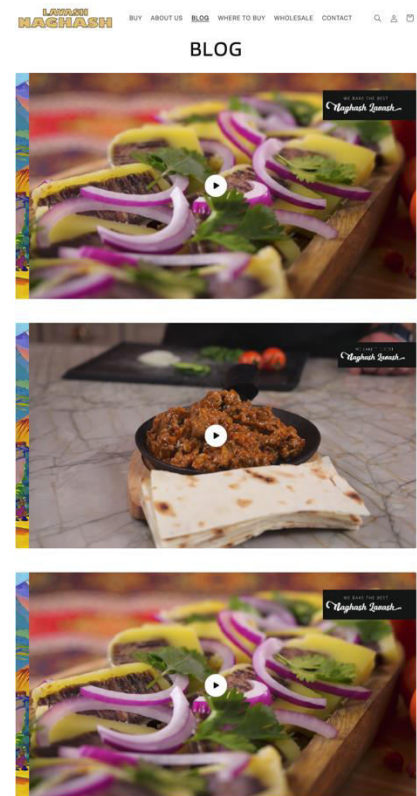


Figure 3: Naghash Lavash's Blog Page

Naghash Lavash has quite a colorful packaging. It uses the wheat spike illustrations to



Figure 4: Naghash Lavash's packaging

emphasize the freshness and naturalness of the product they offer their consumers. The simple design reminds the consumer of homemade food. “Naghash” in Armenian means painter, which is why the packaging is done artistically. The illustrations remind me of the bright and sunny colors of Saryan’s paintings. The name “Naghash” is easy to see and gives the feeling of a trusted brand. The design often uses warm colors and may include a clear part where you can see the lavash inside.

Another well-known spot shared by the locals of Glendale is K'arsi Lavash. The bakery was opened recently in 2024, and the main difference between K'arsi Lavash and Naghash Lavash is that K'arsi Lavash also makes traditional Armenian lavash, as well as Armenian puffy breads and sweets passed through generations, such as mikado cake, eclairs, and gata.

Though the bakery does not yet have a sizeable digital marketing campaign like Naghash Lavash, it still gains strong engagement from the public in a different but equally powerful way, such as through physical presence, word of mouth, and consistent quality. Their bakery is known for having long lines of customers waiting for their freshly baked lavash, which is often served in a warm, soft, and simple texture. K'arsi Lavash also has an active presence on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, where they share updates

and engage with the community. They frequently share images from the inside of their production to show the people who are working for the good taste of their output. They also share short videos that are filmed with their bakers. Since then, it has become increasingly popular with the content made by the employees (EGC- Employee Generated Content), and they are incorporating that kind of content into their feed. This digital engagement complements their in-store experience by promoting a strong



Figure 5: K'arsi Lavash's UGC Post and Caption

connection with local consumers and the broader Armenian diaspora. Yet, another thing that I discovered on their Instagram page is that maybe their primary target for now and in the future is only Armenians, since the majority of the posts posted on their social media platforms have Naghash Lavash and K'arsi Lavash are not strictly positioned as upmarket or premium like some French or Italian artisan bread brands. Instead, they focus more on cultural authenticity and storytelling than exclusivity or luxury. Naghash Lavash, for example, uses high-quality branding and strong visual storytelling in the form of videos, blog content, and heritage-based messaging, which gives their bread a deeper value, not necessarily a "premium" price point, but rather a premium way of cultural significance promotion. Their emphasis is on tradition, identity, and community, which appeals especially to diaspora Armenians and food-conscious consumers who care about where their food comes from and what it represents.

They do share food photography and videos similar to upmarket brands (e.g., behind-the-scenes baking, texture close-ups, storytelling through packaging). Still, instead of focusing on

visual and sensory appeal, they root it in emotional connection and heritage. Their blog, collaborations with chefs, and aesthetic packaging prove this kind of brand positioning. Similarly to Naghash Lavash's strategy, K'arsi Lavash relies more on authenticity, freshness, and a strong in-person experience than branding itself as a high-end product. The images shared by the consumers and the brand itself show that the long lines and popularity are based on quality and tradition, not their offered exclusivity. Their social media content, especially employee-generated content, adds a personal, relatable touch rather than a luxurious one. However, using only Armenian-language captions may limit accessibility to a broader, non-Armenian audience, keeping their market more focused.

In contrast to French or Italian bread branding, which often emphasizes premium status through refined packaging, upscale pricing, and global culinary recognition, these Armenian bakeries promote culture over class. If anything, they are working to raise awareness and pride around Armenian bread, not elevate it to a gourmet status. That said, as interest in traditional and artisanal food grows globally, this cultural storytelling could naturally lead to greater value perception, even without aiming for a premium price tag. It is not strictly positioned as upmarket or premium like some French or Italian artisan bread brands. Instead, they focus more on cultural authenticity and storytelling than on exclusivity or luxury.

French Bread Promotional Campaign

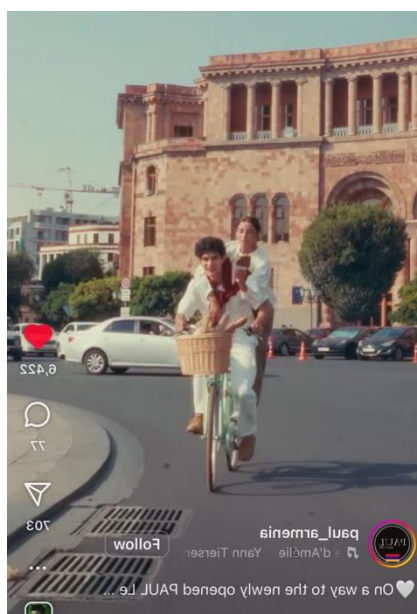
When looking for inspiration for marketing Armenian bread, I explored how French and Italian breads are represented globally on social media. One standout example is PAUL, an international French bakery chain known for its artisanal presentation, traditional recipes, and elegant branding. PAUL, being an international French bakery chain, has succeeded in positioning its production through well-established media communication as a premium cultural product. The French bakery chain is known for its artisanal presentation, traditional

recipes, and elegant branding, through which PAUL plays a significant role in shaping public perceptions of bread. It creates the message that bread bought from PAUL is not just a daily necessity, but also a symbol of cultural heritage and quality. The company blends French baking traditions with a modern, upscale retail experience, offering customers not just bread but a well-presented encounter with French food culture. This strategy has successfully turned a simple product into something desirable and refined. Another factor that played a huge role is PAUL's international expansion, which made French bread and its culture globally recognizable and respectable, through the cultural representation and marketing adaptation based on the country's market entrance. By looking at the visuals they create for Armenian PAUL, it is visible how they try to connect their bread with Armenian heritage. PAUL's flagship restaurant is located in the heart of Yerevan, in a cultural building that is quite significant for the architectural portrayal of the city. Many Instagram posts are made in a way that incorporates the Armenian cultural sense with the French bread-making culture. The creation of a connection between the Armenian cultural heritage and the traditional French breads creates the sense of the Parisian lifestyle that each person, even in Armenia, can experience a real, sophisticated French lifestyle, without actually getting there.

Yerevan's architecture can be identified by the colors, which are being incorporated within the promotional campaigns of PAUL Armenia, which is offering the combination of the colors of Yerevan and the freshly baked bread and pastry from PAUL. Another interesting thing that I found out, while going through an internship in this company, is that annually, there are procedures done by the headquarters in France, which means that a hidden expert is coming to their store, about which they do not know, and does a quality check. The factor that the expert pays the most attention to is their traditional baguette, which means the bakers should use only the qualified ingredients, such as flour directly delivered from France, do everything in the right proportions, and the size of the baguette should match the regulated sizing. If something

goes wrong and the expert is not satisfied, it can cause huge trouble for the company's officials. This shows how important the taste of the bread is for PAUL, that even the ingredients are being brought directly from France, and each step is being checked by the headquarters' professionals. This shows how valued the bread and its representation in the highest class are for PAUL.

Here, I also want to include some images from the social media pages of PAUL to visually show the posts that I was talking about. The first two images (figures 6,7) are screenshots from a reel posted in October 2024. The short video is meant to promote the new



location that PAUL was going to open. As I mentioned, the balance of Frenchness and Armenianness is kept in the video, since it connects the French lifestyle with Armenian architecture. In this case

Figure 6,7: PAUL's reel screenshots

is riding a bicycle to go from

one point, starting from one of the best-known and quite symbolic locations for many Armenians- the Republic Square. The baguettes in front of the bicycle and the croissant feature the two most important parts of the French food culture. The edited colors make the buildings more pinkish and give more warmth to the viewer. It is a quite good way of incorporating the idea of two cultures and food. Another example is a series of photos taken in the National Gallery of Armenia, the location of which is near the Republic Square, which means that the architecture is also going to be similar to that featured in the video.

Here, the main idea is to connect the brand with the art, since no specific product types of foods

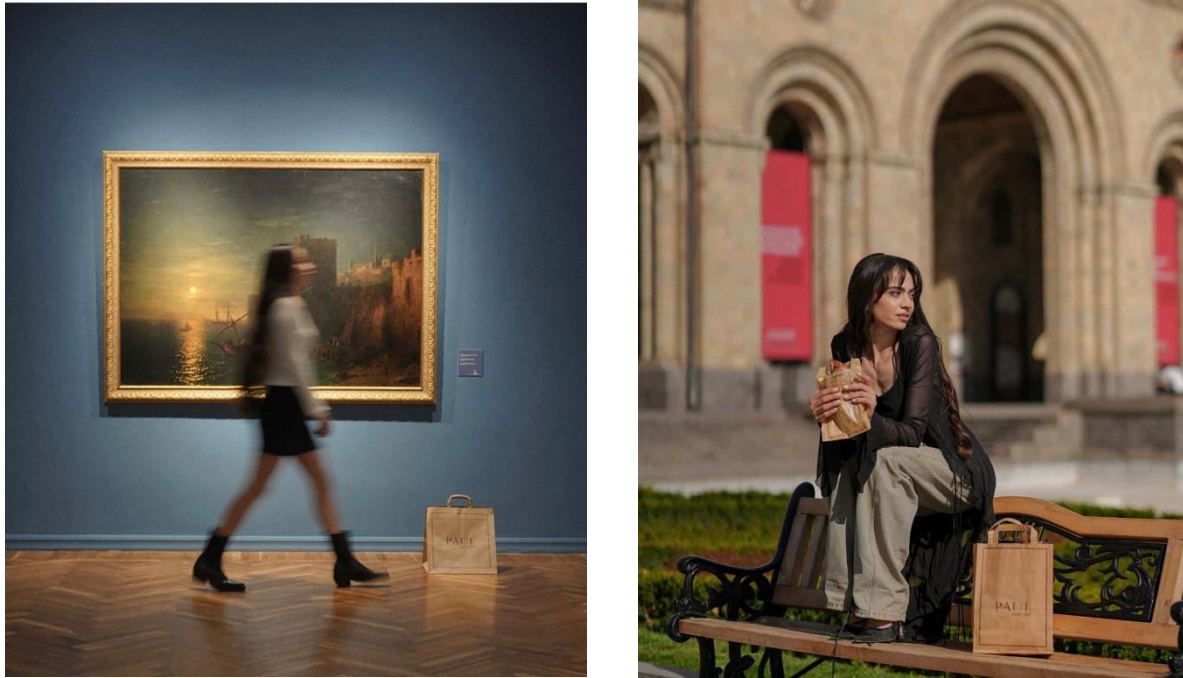


Figure 8,9: PAUL's Photos from the National Gallery

are shown in the video, but the images of the packaging are featured. This series of images creates a strong connection and association with something artsy, highly valued, and let's say natural. Both the images and the videos have high-quality visuals and a great way of connecting, at first sight, two completely different things with each other.

The price tag of the bread at PAUL starts from 500 AMD, whereas for the same amount of money, people can buy more than one similar bread from a supermarket. However, the higher price is justified not just by the product itself but by the entire experience a person gets while buying bread from PAUL, such as authentic ingredients imported directly from France, traditional baking methods, and the sense of luxury and cultural connection that comes with it. These elements are supported by effective storytelling on social media platforms and well-crafted messaging. As a result, when people need to choose between buying more expensive bread and getting a unique French experience or getting just regular bread from any supermarket, many will choose the experience.

Also, Armenian bakeries can take a similar approach and present lavash to the non-Armenian audience as a luxury product, for those who value tradition, quality, and cultural meaning. Through strong branding and storytelling, lavash can be marketed as something more than bread: a way to connect with Armenian history, enjoy fresh local ingredients, and experience recipes that have been passed down through generations. The implementation of this kind of strategized storytelling and promotion, lavash can gain a new identity among new people and stand out as a premium product, not necessarily through high pricing, but through the way people perceive its cultural and emotional value.

Promotional Strategy

By looking at well-known bread promotional strategies, such as the example of French and Italian bread, as well as by having interviews with industry experts, I discovered that the bread promotion itself should include the aspects of the uniqueness that people can get only from buying the Armenian bread, the emotions, and the experience that the bread can give them. That is why, to develop a strategy for efficient bread promotion with the representation of Armenian culture, I decided to have some interviews with people from the field of marketing and promotion, as well as the people who prepare and bake bread every day.

My first interview was with a professional marketing specialist in an importing/distributing company. That person and his team develop creative ideas for food promotion in different cultures. They have well-known companies that they represent and deliver to the local supermarkets. Since my project was based on food promotion, I decided to find an expert in the field who has an idea of the inner and international markets.

During our meeting, I presented the ideas behind the capstone project and the purpose of promoting the bread. The discussions lead to the determination of the primary market, the people the promotional campaigns can work for, and the ways in which the target market can reach the campaigns. We also discussed the Italian and French bread culture, how they got to

the point of world recognition, and what kind of classes can be taken from their examples for using for the Armenian bread promotion and integration in the strategy for the overall usage of the bakery owners, who want to make their business more visible and accessible to the people in the other countries and from different cultural background.

An Idea that I got from the interview was correctly identifying which countries the bakery owners can promote Armenian bread since, as the professional mentioned, "Armenian people in different countries have the urge to buy Armenian bread and everything of Armenian origin to fill the gap of their longing towards their country. In contrast, French and Italian bakeries offer more than bread, which means when you get into a bakery, the croissants and other handmade baked goodies make you go back again and again and purchase new things, which Armenian bakeries, most of the time, lack.

Another interview that I had was very insightful. I conducted it with a local baker who shared a powerful legend about the origins of lavash. He began by saying, "Lavash is not just bread. It is a symbol of who we are." Then, he shared the legend passed down to him through generations. The story goes back to ancient Armenia, where King Aram, captured by the Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar, survived ten days of starvation by secretly receiving thin sheets of lavash hidden in shields brought by his soldiers. This act of cleverness and cultural pride not only helped him survive and win an archery contest but also led to lavash being declared the national bread of Armenia. As the baker told me this story, I realized how deeply lavash ties to Armenian identity, survival, and resilience. Closer to the end of our talk, the baker told me a heartwarming sentence: "We still make lavash today not just because it tastes good, but because it carries something spiritual, passed down through centuries." The overall interview included very emotional parts, which once again show how people who bake fresh bread each pass down their emotions to the person purchasing from them.

From a strategic perspective, stories like this offer much more than folklore. They are tools for emotional marketing. This particular legend could easily be adapted into short video content, printed on the packaging, or integrated into social media campaigns by bakeries like K'arsi Lavash or Naghash Lavash. Storytelling has the power to differentiate a product from others in a crowded food market. In this case, lavash becomes more than just bread. It becomes a symbol of strength, wisdom, and heritage. As the interviewee, the baker also emphasized how sharing this story with their customers helps them to connect to the tradition and feel a sense of pride, especially among the Armenian diaspora in places where a lot of Armenians have established a community.

Incorporating these stories into promotional strategies builds authenticity and can create emotional engagement. It can be delivered through a QR code that leads to a short animation, or the bakeries could include a small part on their website or social media accounts entitled "Legend of Lavash" and tell the short legend. By spreading the story out a lot, it can inspire a wider audience and elevate the bread from a simple food product to a narrative-driven cultural part. This approach can be especially effective in regions with a high Armenian population, but it also resonates with consumers interested in handmade food representing cultural heritage. It is not just about selling lavash, but it is about offering a piece of history in every bite.

Recently, I had another interview with the general manager of the Luxury Collection Alexander Hotel in Yerevan, who told me how the culture of Marriott hotels is being integrated into Armenian culture. Since it is a franchise, brought from a world-known company, and has many requirements for opening and maintaining a hotel. The general manager mentioned that besides the requirements, it was also necessary for the hotel to integrate the sense of Armenian culture, which would lead people staying in the hotel to feel the culture in every sense. They choose a specific dish each year and serve it to their guests for better cultural integration. After

the Artsakh conflict, the hotel management decided to complimentary serve Armenian traditional pakhlava and jingyalov hats, made by the displaced Artsakh women, using the family traditions and recipes exceptionally. Each guest is served these treats, and they are told the story behind each dish. Since the zhengyalov hats (bread with traditional greens) are made with more than 12 types of greens and herbs, each type is carefully selected by professionals and freshly served to the people. Here, it is also another example of how the Armenian culture is being served to tourists by the history and the background of the Armenian bread. It shows from a real-life example how compelling good storytelling combined with bread and people can serve its purpose and deliver the message to people from different cultural backgrounds.

All these interviews showed from different perspectives how efficiently Armenian bread, in these cases, lavash, matnaqash, and jingyalov hats, can be effectively promoted by connecting with the target audience's specific needs and interests. From the information gained during the interviews, I can say that successful promotion depends on each bakery's ability to clearly define its audience, understand their cultural or emotional connection to the product, and communicate what makes their bread unique. By using this tactic, bakeries can build strong, authentic promotional strategies that would not only attract customers but also preserve Armenian culinary heritage.

Visual Representation

To promote Armenian bread on Instagram with a focus on culture and history, I am planning to use each image as an individual post that tells a short story or highlights one meaningful aspect of Armenian bread.

I chose image 1 because it captures the heart of Armenian bread-making traditions. The presence of women working together reflects how bread making is more than preparing something ordinary; it's a communal and intergenerational act of care. This photo shows that lavash is made not just with skill, but with deep cultural meaning rooted in family and community. The caption for this image is "Thin, crispy, and full of history; lavash is more than just bread; it's a symbol of Armenian heritage."



Image 1

Baked in a tonir and passed from generation to generation, each layer tells a story of culture, warmth, and family. Would you love to taste history in every bite? The caption is quite

engaging and leaves a spot for further discussions in the comments. Next, I chose this picture (Close-Up of Lavash), the surface of the lavash. I picked it because it helps people see the little details, like the bubbles and brown spots. It shows how unique and handmade each piece is. The caption for posting this picture on social media platforms can be "Soft, crisp, and light as air, this bread has been a significant part of



Image 2

Armenian families for centuries. It's a staple at celebrations, a must at family tables, and an art form all on its own." Here, the caption delves into the texture of the bread and describes both visually and aesthetically, lavash bread.

The other picture (Hands Kneading Dough) shows someone shaping the dough. I like it because it brings attention to the person behind the bread. It's a reminder that making bread takes time, patience, and skill. It also shows that it's a very hands-on process, something passed down from parents to children. The caption for this image that I found to be most suitable is "Making lavash is more than baking- it's a way of passing down history. When prepared with love, the simple mix of flour, water, and salt turns into something special."



Image 3



Image 4

In image four, there is a scene from an Armenian wedding. Armenian weddings are full of traditions that describe the culture of the people. One of the traditions includes lavash, which is why I decided to include this image to show another cultural perspective of the bread. Traditionally, when the groom brings the bride to their home, the groom's mother, as a welcoming gesture, puts lavash on their shoulders and gives them a spoonful of honey as a sign. It may be asked why lavash is particularly used in these ceremonies, and the answer is that lavash represents prosperity, unity, and the foundation of family life. Its presence in weddings signifies the couple's hope for wealth and strength in their marriage. Its placement over the bride's shoulders is a blessing for fertility and good fortune in their new home. The honey symbolizes sweetness and happiness, wishing the couple a joyful and loving marriage. That is why the caption suggested for this image is the short description of the tradition: "In Armenian weddings, lavash symbolizes prosperity, while honey represents a

sweet life together. ... Placed over the shoulders of the newlyweds, this tradition wishes them happiness, strength, and unity. A taste of love, history, and culture in every bite.”



Image 5

Image 5 shows a close-up of the lavash. This detailed close-up of lavash highlights its signature texture: soft, airy, and slightly toasted, taken directly from the traditional tonir oven. More than just bread, lavash is a symbol of Armenian cultural identity and hospitality. Its presence at everyday meals and essential rituals reflects its deep-rooted role in Armenian heritage, where each fold carries the memory of generations and

the warmth of communal life. The purpose of this image is to show people who view the image a sense of the structure of the bread and create the right association. I thought to keep the caption of this image short to the point: “Feel the texture of freshly baked lavash- soft, warm, and lightly toasted from the tonir. Each golden bubble tells a story of tradition, care, and centuries-old craftsmanship.”

In image 6, it features an example of how the bread can be consumed with cheese and fresh herbs, which is why the caption is “Simply put a slice of fresh cheese and greens in a slice of



Image 6

bread, and you are ready to enjoy the easiest, yet most authentic sandwich.

What’s your favorite way to enjoy Armenian bread?” It includes short, to-the-point suggestions for bread consumption in an Armenian way, and the question that is asked is intentionally, in order to have active

comments under the post, which can lead to further discussions and the discovery of new ways the bread can be consumed.

The complete visual board should look like this, which incorporates bright colors and textures.



Limitations

Every research project has its limitations; the main limitation that I faced during this project was establishing contact with the right people. I wanted to do a more in-depth analysis of the bakeries located outside of Armenia because some of them had really beautiful visuals and promotional strategies, such as Naghash Lavash. There were also some bakeries that were really popular among Armenians living outside of Armenia, which I discovered while talking to my relatives living abroad, though they did not have any contact numbers, email, or phone numbers.

If I had a chance to talk to them, I would have the opportunity to include more in-depth information provided directly by the representatives of the bakeries, rather than the analysis that I did on my own, sometimes based on assumptions or the way that I saw everything personally. The stories taken directly from the owner or the representative of the bakery have a more emotional and insightful way of storytelling, rather than the short to the to-the-point

information posted on their social media accounts or websites, which seems usual and mostly do not evoke any emotions while reading.

This limitation not only impacted the depth of insight I could gather about branding and customer engagement but also prevented me from understanding the emotional or cultural motivations behind their work. Many of these bakeries likely have personal stories, migration stories, or connections to the heritage that shape their choices in how they present lavash to the world. Alternatively, if they have the idea on their mind why they decided to open a bakery rather than any other food-related place, which could have been more popular among non-Armenian audiences as well. That is why, without that first-hand narrative, it was difficult to represent these aspects fully or accurately and directly taken from the source.

In the future, if I did a project like this again, I would establish connections earlier and create more direct lines of communication. If I knew I was going to do this kind of project, I would at least collect contacts all around the world where I saw Armenian bakeries while traveling to contact them in the future. If I had more time, I could contact the bakeries outside of Armenia through in-person visits and in-person contact. By using these tactics, I could overcome these barriers and enrich the research with more in-person experiences and authentic voices through emotional storytelling from the Armenian diaspora.

Avenues for Further Research

While working on this project, I opened up many ideas that could be explored more deeply in the future. One of the first ideas that comes to mind is a more focused study on Armenian bakeries outside Armenia based on their chosen country, location, and primary target market. During this research, I found out that many bakeries located outside of Armenia have much potential to represent Armenian culture abroad from the point of view of a sacred food, in this case, bread. The future research could include interviews with the bakery owners, staff, or even customers to learn more about their motivations, challenges, and the meaning of bread

in their lives. Since I was only able to observe their work through online platforms and publications, having the opportunity to hear their personal stories could add a deeper emotional and cultural foundation to the topic.

Another possible direction is to compare more deeply how different cultures started to present and promote their traditional bread internationally, since the idea initially came from the French and Italian cultural representation of bread. For example, it would be interesting to look at how countries like France or Italy have promoted baguettes or ciabatta as iconic cultural symbols and what strategies were used to do so successfully. This could offer valuable ideas and inspiration for how Armenian lavash can be promoted similarly powerfully.

In addition, more research could focus on how modern technologies and digital platforms like Instagram, TikTok, or YouTube are having their influence on the promotion of the nation's traditional foods, how they are being shared on social media platforms and eventually reimagined based on the trends, target market and the specifications of the culture the product is being promoted to. A future study could examine the visual storytelling techniques used by bakers, sharing their journey on social media platforms or influencers, and how they help keep Armenian bread relevant for younger generations both in Armenia and abroad by creating the correct perception.

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