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DOES GASTRONOMY BRAND IMAGE AFFECT THE PERCEIVED EMOTIONAL VALUE AND TOUR SATISFACTION?

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ABSTRACT

Gastro-cultural tours, which are prevalent as part of today's experience-based travel, generate memorable gastronomy encounters for tourists. Gastronomically designed cultural tours also shed light on the past's heritage and cultural identity through the local tastes of the regions by promising distinct stories and experiences to travelers. Regions with gastronomic affluence arouse gastro tourists' interest with their cultural and tourist attractions. One of the critical factors contributing to the awareness of visitors towards a particular destination is the creation of a gastronomy brand image in their minds. A region with a gastronomy brand can also affect the emotional value tourists attribute to the region. From different perspectives, this cuisine-based brand image appears to have the potential to influence tourists' satisfaction with the tour. The Southeastern Anatolia Region, one of Turkey's most prominent culinary centers, is a diverse

region with both indigenous gastronomic value and deep-rooted cultural history. From this point of view, the effects of gastronomy brand image on perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction of tourists taking part in gastro-cultural tours were examined in this study. According to the data obtained from the participants, gastronomy brand image has a significant effect on tour satisfaction and the perceived emotional value of the tourists.

KEYWORDS

Gastronomy; Gastro-cultural tours; Gastronomy Brand Image; Perceived Emotional Value; Tour Satisfaction; South-Eastern Anatolia Region.

ECONLITE KEYS

L83; Z30; Z33

1. INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy is one of the elements that is included within the scope of cultural heritage or culture tourism concepts, the popularity of which has increased in recent years, has a relaxing effect on people about the pressures such as intense working life and stress and demanded by the ones who desire to acquire an experience of quality by protecting the environment (Gajić, 2015). Tourists, in our day, demand the products and foods bearing the heritage and culture of a region and help protection of traditional agricultural methods and cultural heritage. As a tourism resource, gastronomy is an element that combines leisure time, local food and beverages, and culture that make tourists gain an unforgettable tourism experience with travel (Smith & Xiao, 2008; Okumus et al., 2013). Starting from this point of view, gastronomy is defined as: “*Travels to discover food and beverage of the destinations, to enjoy these and experience recallable and original gastronomy practices*” (Kyriakaki, Zagkotsi & Trihas, 2013, p. 2). As for gastro-cultural tours, these can be described as tours providing knowledge on the history and cultural values of the destination, experiencing local cuisine culture, discovering the preparation, presentation, and foodways of local food.

South-Eastern Anatolia Region (GAP) has become a residential area without any interruption in Anatolia since the Neolithic period and hosted various civilizations and different cultures. The region is unique geography where the basis of agriculture and livestock are founded and sedentary life was adopted in Anatolian geography. Furthermore, Göbeklitepe, which is located in the region, is a belief center that changed the history of humanity with its 12.000 years history and was inscribed in UNESCO World Heritage List in 2018. Göbeklitepe is the oldest and biggest worshipping center known in the world. Accepted as proof of religious belief in transition to sedentary life,

Göbeklitepe increases the significance of this geography in a historical and cultural sense as it is located in this area.

GAP region became an important center of trade throughout history and provided the formation of an enriching cultural structure in the region as a result of the fact that Arabs, Kurds, Armenians and Turkmens lived there together during the period of the Ottoman Empire. This cultural variety also showed itself in local cuisine and formed a rich cuisine culture. Moreover, the city of Gaziantep located in the region proved its rich cuisine culture to the whole world (Koçoğlu, 2019). Gaziantep cuisine was included in the “Creative Cities Network” program by UNESCO in 2015 under the theme of “Gastronomy City”.

GAP region is a propellant power for tourists seeking local flavors and experiences with its long history and local food. The region hosts gastro-cultural tours with the purpose of introducing cultural identity. Prepared as package tours, gastronomy tours are formed by presenting the products reflecting the local cuisine of destinations close physically to one another as a tourist product (Kızılırmak, Ofluflu & Şişik, 2016). Gastronomy tours are the tours that directly introduce gastronomic values to tourists, reflect experiences specific to local cuisine culture and applications of tourist areas, make them acquire knowledge and experiences, and indirectly contribute to the introduction of the destination, sustainability of the local culture and the economy (Başoda et al., 2018).

Purchasing decision of consumers is directly associated with their perception concerning product or service (Hung, 2004). Therefore, tourists reflect their emotional preferences in their purchasing decisions. Within this scope, the attitude of tourist is a process including some sets of behaviors during before and after purchase and before and after purchase perceptions can vary depending on the experiences. When the perceived value is compared with other alternatives, it can be referred to as potential guest evaluation (Swaddling & Miller, 2002) for all costs which tourists accept for the product and service and all benefits that they get from a tourist product and/or service. Together with the fact that perceived value is formed with the effect of environmental and individual factors, it can influence the behaviors of tourists in various perspectives. Sanchez et al. (2006) stated that perceived value covers the process of purchasing services in the field of tourism. The reason for that is tourism products and services cover the whole process from the production of products and services to tourists' going back home. In this respect, gastronomy brand image (GBI) can be effective on the

emotional value and tour satisfaction that tourists perceive before and after tour program decisions. From this point of view, the target of the study is to investigate the effects of gastronomy brand image (GBI) on perceived emotional value (PEV) and tour satisfaction (TS) on gastro-cultural tours organized to the GAP region. As the satisfaction of the individuals who participated in gastro-cultural tours in the region after the tour will contribute to the gastronomy brand image of the region positively, this will provide customer sustainability and economic contributions to the region. Hence, it is considered that the study will contribute both to the improvement of the gastronomy brand image of the area and to researchers making investigations on the region.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1) GASTRONOMY BRAND IMAGE

Brand image can be defined as the total information that consumers acquire about that brand (from experiences, things they heard, advertisements, packaging, services, etc.) changed by selective perception, previous beliefs, social norms, and forgetting (Randall, 2005). It can be connoted that brand image is formed in the mind of consumers as a result of perception and comments of people and marketing activities about the brand. Based on the associations in their minds related to a brand, consumers have a distinct image of a brand. Therefore, brand image can vary from one individual to another because every person may have a different association with a certain brand (Hung, 2005).

Brand image is not only limited to products and services but also covers countries, cities, destinations and tour programs. Brands are the anticipation of what they can expect from the country or the destination (Tavares, Tran & Pennington-Gray, 2020). In our day, tourist areas and the values that the area possesses are evaluated as a product and marketed to target groups and branding studies are conducted compared to competitor areas. The first condition for a tourist area to become a gastronomic brand is to arouse interest in the minds of the target group. Furthermore, raising gastronomic awareness about a region, improving attraction centers related to gastronomy for the branding of the region, forming positive associations with the region by becoming different from other regions in gastronomic respect are required. Besides

this, it is also essential that a region shall have an image with its specifications and distinctions that can be distinguished from others.

Branding can be possible with efficient use of resources of a tourist region and advertising the region very well. For that reason, tourist areas utilize their local products and food with the purpose of differentiating their region (Kercher, Okumuş & Okumuş, 2008). Similarly, the concept of food, being a fundamental need for human life, has a critical significance for the tourism sector. As well as meeting the eating needs of tourists during their travels, occasionally it is accepted as a tasteful sensory experience that attracts people to a destination (Kivela & Crofts, 2006). According to Lai, Khoo-Lattimore & Wang (2018), food image research has been examined from two viewpoints in the tourism literature. The first viewpoint is that of tourists' perceptions of food image, which reflects their perceptions of and inclination for the destination. The second one is the food image planned by tourism providers and destination marketers. In this study, the food image will be examined predominantly from the first point of view.

Gastronomy has now begun to be considered exclusively as an element of attraction. In this respect, it has become a component that has the power to influence the image of the destination on its own (Choe & Kim, 2018). Gastronomic tourism on the other hand, has now been considered a distinct industry, and tourism shareholders and regional economies have begun to incorporate it into their offerings (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020). Rather than being a supportive experience for destinations, this case can be qualified as the most important source of motivation for travel (Quan & Wang, 2004). Moreover, sophisticated travelers such as chefs pursuing to learn new culinary skills by virtue of their travels have given rise to a remarkable encounter between tourism and gastronomy (Mora et al., 2021). This phenomenon can also be regarded as an essential contributor to the development of destinations where gastronomic tourism takes place. Using local cuisine culture in the formation of the gastronomy brand image of a tourist region and carrying out studies within this direction contribute to the area in a number of ways. Advertising gastronomic elements of the region, increasing the competitive capacity of the region, increasing the number of tourists coming to the region, and increasing the economic welfare level of the region can be given as examples of these contributions.

Destinations' presenting the gastronomic products specific to them to tourism markets as a tourist product gives rise to an increase in the demand by gastro tourists for these products and gastronomy tourism activities contribute to the branding of the

cities. In this respect, for instance, while Barcelona is seen by many people as the gastronomy capital of Europe, Lyon won a name for itself as the capital of world gastronomy (Göynüşen, 2011). Italy-Toscana Region, Napa Valley in United States of America-California, some regions in South Africa, Australia and Chile, Champagne Burgundy Region of France can be given as examples of the regions with intense gastronomy tourism throughout the world. Activities carried out within the scope of gastronomy tours are participation in cheesemaking processes, vineyards and vine-harvest festivals, wine tasting, food-beverage festivals, countryside mushrooming, cooking courses from well-known chefs, visiting local bazaars, visits to olive oil producers and olive oil tasting, chocolate, tea and coffee tours, etc. (Sarı Gök, 2020). Gastronomy tour routes in Turkey are dense in the GAP region (Gaziantep, Şanlıurfa, etc.), east of the Mediterranean Region (Adana, Hatay, and Kahramanmaraş etc.), Aegean Region (olive oil route) and North Aegean (healthy nutrition, vine-harvest and wine routes).

2.2) PERCEIVED VALUE AND PERCEIVED EMOTIONAL VALUE

The concept of value was developed by Aristotle in ancient Greece and based on the theory of pragmatism of J. Bentham in the modern age (Taşkıran, 2019). From this point of view of the concept of value, the theoretical history of the concept of perceived value was based on the 1970s. Although the concept of perceived value is of notable importance in marketing, it is observed that it is not sufficiently studied in the literature. Yet, it is seen that the reason for that is the difficulties of explanations related to the conceptualization of perceived value (Al-Sabbahy et.al. 2004).

Together with the fact that the perceived value is a concept that is difficult to be defined and measured, it is generally defined in the literature as a “general assessment of the customer about the benefit of a product or service based on the perception of the things received and given” (Zeithaml, 1988, pp. 12-13). Spreng et al. (1993) defined perceived value as the expectations in association with the anticipated benefits and devotions to be suffered during the purchase of products and services and usage of these. Sweeney and Soutar (2001) included pre-sale and process and after-sale satisfaction to this definition. Perceived value is expressed as general benefit evaluation about a product or service based on the perception of the things received in return for a product or service compared to the things given (Zeithaml, 1988). Within

the direction of all these expressions, perceived value can be defined as a wide range of assessment of the customer by paying regard to price-quality balance before the purchase, during purchase and after purchase of the product and coming to a positive or negative conclusion. As a negative outcome means low perceived value, it will decrease customer satisfaction and loyalty and the reverse will increase satisfaction and loyalty (Özbek, 2016).

There are two main approaches in the literature concerning making perceived value functional. The first approach is to analyze the perceived value as a unidimensional structure. According to this line of vision, perceived value is a general concept that evaluates the perception of the value of consumers and in which the situations specified by consumers can be measured. Studies that deal with perceived value as one-dimensional (Dodds et al. 1991; Patterson & Spreng, 1997; Grewal et al. 1998; Cronin et al. 2000; Chen & Dubinsky, 2003; Gallarza & Saura, 2006) can be given as examples. The second approach is to address the perceived value as a multidimensional structure representing a total aspect of a complex structure and comprising of several specifications or dimensions associated with one another (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). However, studies approaching perceived value as a multidimensional structure (Sheth et al., 1991; Katamneni & Coulson, 1996; Sin et al., 2001; Sweeney & Soutar, 2001; Petrick, 2002; Sánchez et al., 2006) are also available in the literature. In multidimensional studies, perceived value is measured by using the benefit brought (economic, social and relational) and the devotions suffered in return for these (price, time, effort, risk and harmony) dimensions (Lin et al., 2005; Sánchez et al., 2006).

In the PERVAL scale developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), the researchers analyzed the dimensions of perceived value as social value, emotional value, quality value and price-performance (monetary) value (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). The social value dimension of perceived value is its being in harmony with the rules of the social environment to which a product or service belongs or in which is taken as reference and it's providing this outlook to the customer who purchases it (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Money/monetary value is the benefit that comes out as a result of comparing the things the customer paid while buying a product or a service in return for the things bought. Quality/performance value is the benefit acquired from the performance expected from a product or a service bought and which exists in the event that the service or product meets all the functions committed (Whittaker et al., 2007).

Emotional value is defined as the benefits related to emotions such as comfort, tranquillity, happiness and liking acquired after the purchase of a product or service (Sunthorncheewin et al., 2013). In other words, emotional value is relevant with negative emotional situations like fear, anxiety and anger, together with positive emotional situations like happiness, confidence and excitement, and focuses on what consumers feel (Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). Positive and negative emotional reactions depend on experience and satisfaction related to the product/service (Chang, 2008). Emotional value is one of the issues focused on in this research, as it is an element influenced by the gastronomy brand image of tourist regions.

The dimension of perceived emotional value in the context of tourism articulates the elements that create various emotional values when consumed, such as fun, enjoyment and pleasure. As an analogy, the pleasure of tasting a delicious food or drink is expounded by the emotional dimension. For this reason, actions such as traveling and partaking in tourism activities are associated with the emotional value in the literature (Ha & Jang, 2010; Lai, 2015; Choe & Kim, 2018). Similarly, according to Sipe (2018), customers of food and beverage and hotel products perceive emotional value as a key constituent of their own experience. In addition, emotional value also affects consumers' evaluations of tourism products (Ha & Jang, 2010; Lee et al., 2011; Hyun et al., 2011).

2.3) TOUR SATISFACTION

The concept of satisfaction is defined as the: *“Assessment of outcome obtained with the experience of purchase and/or consumption of a product”* (Sivri, 2001). If the customer satisfaction is positive, it gives rise to customer loyalty and customer complaint if it is negative. The elements affecting satisfaction are the quality of the product, expectations, and performance. The thing desired by the customer is quality. For that reason, the higher the quality of product and service is, the more it will be advantageous against competitors. Customers have some expectations about the product before using a service or product. If their expectations and the things they acquired overlap when they use these products and services, satisfaction occurs (Çakır, 2009).

When it is considered in terms of tourism, there may be various elements that influence whether tourists will leave the place they have visited in a satisfied or dissatisfied manner. Quality of transportation, accommodation and food-beverage services, entertainment opportunities, attitudes and behaviors of the local people and shopkeepers as well as pricing in the region visited and, as such, several reasons may play a vital role in the assessment of tourists (Kozak, 2003). Besides the content of the products and services presented in tourist destinations, the satisfaction of the customers in the presentation of these services to customers is also quite important. The reason for that is tourists visiting a region have some expectations on the product and services they purchased and benefitted (Hong-Bumm, 1998).

Satisfaction of visitors is affected both by the preference of the visitor themselves and by the preference of the others. The people who are satisfied with the visit are willing to visit that place again and suggest the destination to friends or immediate surroundings (Lee & Beeler, 2009; Kim & Brown, 2012). For that reason, providing visitors' coming back to the destination is directly proportional to their satisfaction. Visitor satisfaction may generate positive consequences for companies in the tourism sector in charge of promoting and tourism policies as they create a positive image of the destination when they share their experiences with their environment (Ruiz, González & Zamora, 2018).

In a research conducted by Cömert and Sökmen (2017) gastronomic habits of foreign and domestic tourists and the level of their satisfaction in Turkey were handled in a general sense. It was concluded that there is a meaningful relationship between demographic specifications and the level of tendency for Turkish food and cuisine and gastronomic experiences in Turkey.

According to the results of the research carried out by Kesici and Çakır (2020), original and well-known gastronomic attractions have a positive influence on destination satisfaction. Kütük (2021) on the other hand, stated that gastro tourists are satisfied with the restaurants respectively of taste, quality of service, diversity of food, quality of food, ambiance, price, hygiene and size of serving in Urla.

It was determined in the research conducted by López-Guzmán et al. (2017) that there is a positive relationship between satisfaction and a positive attitude towards gastronomy. The findings of the research by Lin, Marine-Roig and Llonch-Molina (2022) express the increase in online customer comments before COVID-19 pandemics, high satisfaction of participants with the activities reviewed, and the

differences in activity, category and popularity and attractions as per the area. As a result of the researches in the literature, it can be inferred that there is a positive relationship between the motivation of gastro tourists and cuisine experience and satisfaction and the experience of gastro tourists is both related to tourist satisfaction and loyalty positively (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1) AIM, IMPORTANCE AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Nowadays, gastronomic values have a critical place in terms of creating a positive image for destinations and ensuring customer satisfaction in the context of destination marketing. In the tourism market, where tourists tend to have various tendencies, gastro-cultural tours bring distinction to destinations. Therefore, the gastronomy brand image of a destination can affect the perceived value and satisfaction level of these tours. The study aims to contribute to the literature by determining the effects of gastronomy brand image on perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction for gastro-cultural tours. In the study, firstly, the theoretical framework was created as a result of the literature review, and as a result, hypotheses were determined. In addition to measuring the relationship in the study, it is provided that the results to be obtained will enrich the literature and contribute greatly to the competitive advantage of destinations due to the limited number of studies on the perceived value of gastro-cultural tours and the issue of gastronomy brand image. The effects of the gastronomy brand image on the perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction for the gastro-cultural tours organized in the GAP region were investigated in this study. Hypotheses regarding the effects of gastronomy brand image on perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction for gastro-cultural tours were formed separately.

H₁ and H₂ hypotheses were formed in order to measure the effects of the gastronomy brand image, which constitutes the aim of the study, on the perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction for gastro-cultural tours.

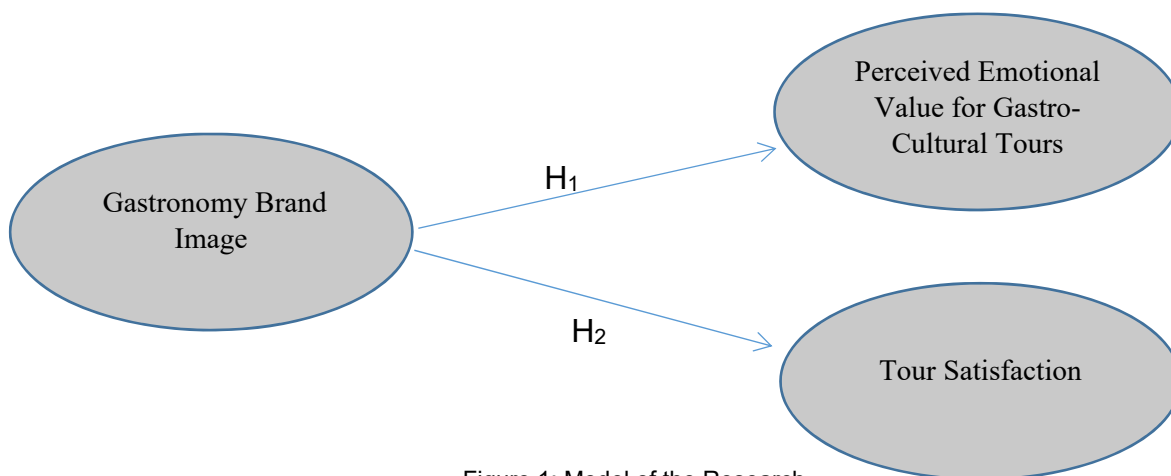


Figure 1: Model of the Research
Source: Authors

H₁: Gastronomy brand image has a positive and significant effect on the perceived emotional value of gastro-cultural tours.

H₂: Gastronomy brand image has a positive and significant effect on tour satisfaction.

3.2) RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The universe of this research consists of tourists participating in gastro-cultural tours within the scope of GAP tours in Turkey. The sample of the research is the tourists who participated in the GAP tour, which was determined randomly to represent the universe. In the research, questionnaires were distributed to 450 tourists both online and face-to-face during the tours. All of the distributed questionnaires were returned, 64 incorrectly and incompletely filled questionnaires were not taken into consideration and as a result, 386 survey forms from respondents were accepted for analysis. Tillé (2020) states that 386 observations would be sufficient with a sampling error margin of 0.05% for an unlimited population size. Therefore, our sample meets the population requirement.

3.3) DATA COLLECTION TOOL AND SCALES

The questionnaire method was used in order to test the hypotheses formed in line with the research. In the creation of the survey questions, statements about

gastronomy brand image were derived from the study developed by Horng, Liu, Chou and Tsai (2012) and revised by Tsai and Wang (2017), and questions concerning perceived emotional value were derived from the study by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) and tour satisfaction questions were obtained from the study by Lee, Yoon and Lee (2007). The scales were translated and made ready for pilot application by taking the opinions of experts and academicians in the sector and adapting them to gastro-cultural tours. To complete the application process of the study, a questionnaire consisting of four parts was developed. In the first part of the questionnaire, demographic information was sought. In the second part, questions consisting of 9 variables that include the destination gastronomy brand image were asked. In the third part, 5 variables related to the perceived value of gastro-cultural tours were asked. In the fourth part, 3 variables related to satisfaction were questioned. Tourists participating in tours in the GAP region were asked to answer these variables on a 5-point Likert scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither Agree, nor Disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree).

Since a quantitative approach was adopted in the research, the data were analyzed to determine the relationships between statistical concepts. In a quantitative study, the independent variables are used to judge the effects on the dependent variable (Thomas et al., 2015). The measurement model has structural equations that show the connection between observed variables and latent variables. Each latent variable is measured with various observed variables (Yılmaz & Çelik, 2009). In structural equation modeling studies, normal distribution of the data is a prerequisite. (Kline, 2011). On the basis of the data normality test obtained from AMOS output, all variables met the normal distribution criterion according to C.R. (Critical Ratio) values of skewness and kurtosis coefficients (Westfall and Henning, 2013). It is also necessary to apply some independent evaluation criteria in order to evaluate the model. These values, called Goodness of Fit Indices, allow judgments to be made about whether each model as a whole is supported by the data at an acceptable level. The fit statistics are interpreted using some acceptable limit values regarding whether the model is acceptable or not. In other words, it is desired that the fit statistics produced as a result of the analyzes are above or below certain values (Şimşek, 2007). The data of the study were analyzed with the AMOS package program.

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings obtained through the analysis are presented. Further detail on descriptive statistics, variables, measurement model and hypotheses are given in tables separately. According to the findings shown in Table 1, the gender distribution of the participants is relatively balanced. The majority of the participants are married (59.1%) and predominantly represent the young population. A greater part of the participants had a higher education degree. It is shown that the amount that the participants of the research foresee spending on gastro-cultural tours in the GAP region is especially concentrated in the range of 1001 2000 TL (28,8%) and 2001-3000 TL (26,7 %).

Gender	N	Percent (%)	Education	N	Percent (%)
Male	200	51,8	Primary	38	9,8
Female	186	48,2	High School	104	26,9
Marital Status	N	Percent (%)	Education	N	Percent (%)
Married	228	59,1	Associate	87	22,5
Single	158	40,9	Bachelor's	104	26,9
Age	N	Percent (%)	Expenditure (Turkish Lira)	N	Percent (%)
18-25	54	14,0	0-1000	52	13,5
26-35	103	26,7	1001-2000	111	28,8
36-45	129	33,4	2001-3000	103	26,7
46-54	67	17,4	3001-4000	68	17,6
55 and above	33	8,5	4001-5000	33	8,5
			5001 and above	19	4,9
TOTAL	386	100		386	100

Table 1. Demographics of Respondents
Source: Authors

A thorough picture of overall assessment of constructs, items, and factor loadings is reflected on Table 2 to illustrate the measurement model. One independent and two dependent variables represent the structure of the model. In the measurement model, Gastronomy Brand Image scale consisting of 9 items, developed by Horng et al. (2012) and revised by Tsai and Wang (2017) was used. Secondly, Perceived Emotional Value, which is a sub-dimension of the Perceived Value Scale originally developed by Sweeney & Soutar (2001) and consists of 5 statements, was used. 1 item in the Perceived Emotional Value dependent variable was removed from the model due to low factor loading. The last variable, Tour Satisfaction, was obtained from the study by Lee, Yoon and Lee (2007). Thus, the measurement model has taken its final form.

Constructs and Items	t- values (critical ratio)	R ²	P	Standardized Factor Loadings	CR (Composite Reliability)	AVE* (>0.50)
Gastronomy Brand Image					0,934	0,614
GIB1	-	,490		,700		
GIB2	19,374	,673	***	,820		
GIB3	15,880	,737	***	,858		
GIB4	15,548	,704	***	,839		
GIB5	15,417	,693	***	,833		
GIB6	14,439	,605	***	,778		
GIB7	12,437	,442	***	,665		
GIB8	14,744	,630	***	,794		
GIB9	13,869	,555	***	,745		
Perceived Emotional Value					0,933	0,778
PEV1	-	,792		,890		
PEV2	25,782	,804	***	,897		
PEV3	26,052	,818	***	,904		
PEV4	21,868	,695	***	,834		
Tour Satisfaction					0,906	0,763
SAT1	-	,732		,855		
SAT2	23,192	,881	***	,939		
SAT3	20,083	,677	***	,823		

***p<,001

Composite Reliability (CR)>0.7, Average Variance Extracted (AVE)>0.5 and CR>AVE (Hair et al, 2019; Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

Table 2. Overall CFA for Measurement Model
Source: Authors

Table 3 shows overall structural equation model (SEM) test results with required parameters. The fit indices of X^2/DF , GFI, NFI, IFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR and RMSEA were calculated and it resulted that each of the indices was within the required ranges (Hair et al, 2019). According to the goodness of fit indices given in the table, the SEM shows a good/very good fit of the overall model. Illustration of the SEM is given on Figure 2.

	X ²	X ² /df	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Ref. Values	-	<5	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	<0,08	<0,10
Measurement Model*	255,78	2,61	0,922	0,952	0,970	0,970	0,963	0,0432	0,065

* Hair et al. (2019)

Table 3. SEM Analysis Results For The Structural Model
Source: Authors

Figure 2 illustrates the effect of GBI on TS and PEV. Each one-dimensional variable represents a component of a consistent structural equation model. To adjust the model as per modification indices (MI), 3 within-construct covariances were drawn between the error terms due to their practically identical expressions for the Gastronomy Brand Image variable (i.e., “My dining experience in the GAP region is consistent with my impression” and “GAP region offers appealing food” (impression and appeal); “GAP region has a rich food culture” and “Visiting the GAP region is a wonderful opportunity for sampling cuisine” (richness and sampling), and last co-varying statements were “GAP’s cuisine is diverse” and “GAP cuisine is unique” (diversity and uniqueness). As for PEV variable, modification indices were examined and 1 error covariance was drawn between measurement items: “My gastro-cultural tour experience in the GAP region would make me feel good” and “My gastro-cultural tour experience in the GAP region would give me pleasure”. Following the model modification suggestions, the model fit became considerably better than the preceding model after drawing error covariance between error terms for items with the highest MI (the other two expressions evoked emotions of relaxation and enjoyment and thus were not co-varied). Due to other items’ divergent connotations in 2 dependent variables (TS and PEV), no commonalities were determined.

In the model created to measure the effect of gastronomy brand image on tour satisfaction and perceived emotional value, it was concluded that the gastronomy brand image has a positive and significant effect on the satisfaction of tourists from the tours organized for the GAP region ($\beta=0.430$; $p<0.001$) and on the perceived emotional value ($\beta=0.816$; $p<0.001$). Predictive accuracy for the model also indicated that gastronomy brand image (exogenous variable) accounts for about 67% of the variations in perceived emotional value ($R^2=0,668$) and 19% in tour satisfaction ($R^2=0,185$). The results manifested the accuracy of the goodness of fit.

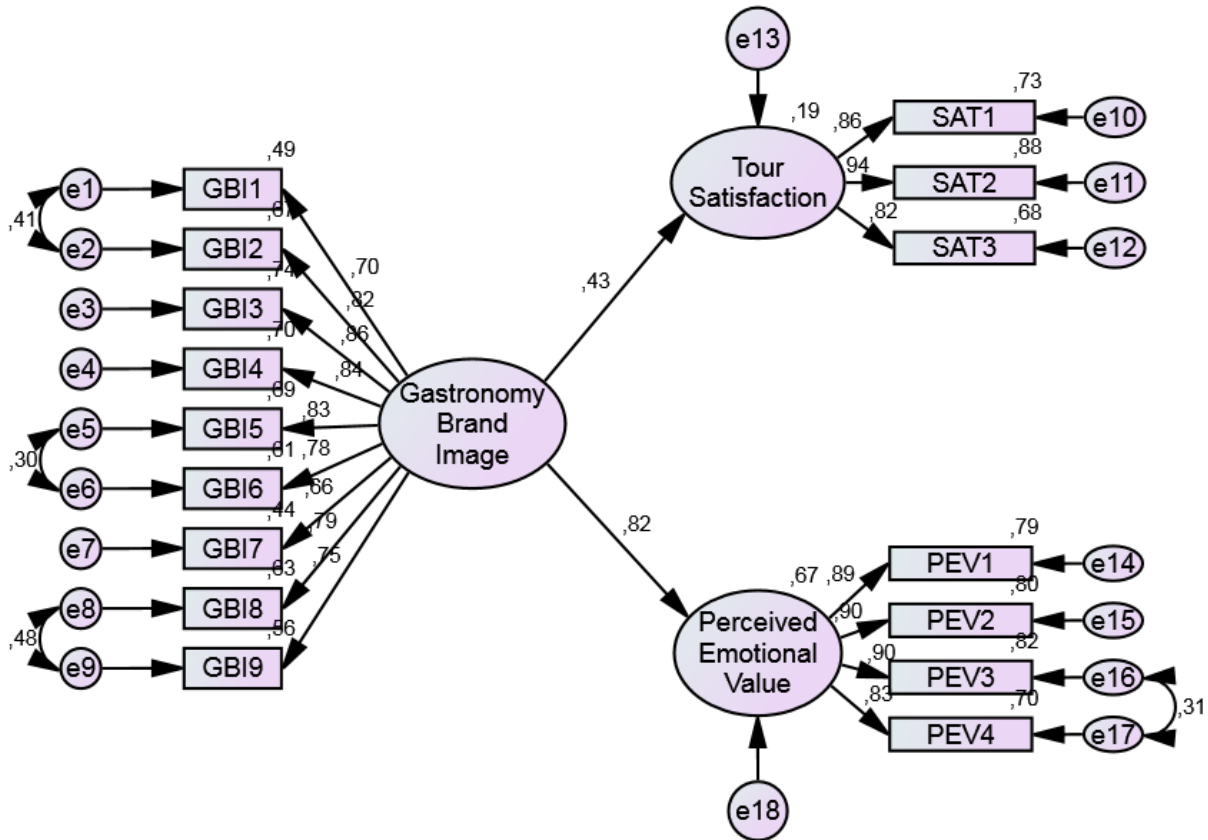


Figure 2. Structural Equation Model of the Construct
Source: Authors

In order to determine the relationship between the variables, Pearson correlation coefficient was used. Table 4 illustrates correlations between variables of the construct. Table shows that Pearson correlation between gastronomy brand image (independent variable), perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction, range between 0,416 and 0,812 ($p < 0,001$). Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the internal consistency. Ideally, an alpha value above 0,70 is the criterion (DeVellis, 2012) for the reliability of the scales. The table shows that the Cronbach alpha value for each scale was over 0,90 and indicated a good internal consistency.

Variables	Mean	SD	Cronbach Alpha	PEV	GBI	SAT
PEV	4,15	0,82	0,937	1		
GBI	4,11	0,76	0,936	0,812*	1	
SAT	4,06	0,76	0,904	0,446*	0,416*	1

* $p < ,001$ (two-tailed Pearson correlation is significant)
Table 4. Correlations and Descriptive Statistics of the Variables
Source: Authors

Following the determination of the correlation values between the variables, a table of goodness of fit indices are presented as separate tables for the GBI, TS and PEV

variables. Table 5 shows measurement model results for gastronomy brand image (predictor variable). A confirmatory factor analysis was performed for validation of the construct. Since the model constituted a one-dimensional structure, discriminant validity could not be assessed. Considering the convergent validity, AVE and CR values were found to be at the desired level and the CR value was greater than the AVE value. The fit indices of X^2/DF , GFI, NFI, IFI, CFI, TLI, SRMR and RMSEA were calculated and each of the indices was found to be within the required ranges (Hair et al., 2019; MacCallum et al., 1996).

	X^2	X^2/df	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Ref. Values	-	<5	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	<0,08	<0,10
Measurement Model	114,02	4,75	0,935	0,958	0,967	0,966	0,950	0,0356	0,099

Table 5. One-Factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis For Gastronomy Brand Image
Source: Authors

Table 6 illustrates the results for the tour satisfaction (outcome variable) measurement model. A confirmatory factor analysis was performed for validation of the construct. Since the model constituted a one-dimensional structure, discriminant validity could not be assessed. Regarding the convergent validity, AVE and CR values were found to be at the desired level and the CR value was greater than the AVE value.

	X^2	X^2/df	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Ref. Values	-	<5	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	$\geq 0,90$	<0,08	<0,10
Measurement Model	Model has zero degrees of freedom and therefore fit indices cannot be calculated (Blunch, 2008).								

Table 6. One-Factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis For Tour Satisfaction
Source: Authors

Table 7 shows measurement model results for perceived emotional value (outcome variable). A confirmatory factor analysis was performed for validation of the construct. Due to the zero degrees of freedom, fit indices were undefined. The model also constituted a one-dimensional structure and discriminant validity could not be assessed. Considering the convergent validity, AVE and CR values were found to be at the desired level and the CR value was greater than the AVE value.

	X²	X²/df	GFI	NFI	IFI	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
Ref. Values	-	<5	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	≥0,90	<0,08	<0,10
Measurement Model	0,883	0,883	0,999	0,999	1,000	1,000	1,000	0,0031	0,000

Table 7. One-Factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis For Perceived Emotional Value

Source: Authors

As can be seen from Table 8, based on the significant effect of gastronomy brand image on tour satisfaction, H₁ hypothesis was accepted ($\beta=0.430$; $p<0.001$). The second hypothesis of the research, H₂ was also accepted as gastronomy brand image significantly affects the perceived emotional value ($\beta=0.816$; $p<0.001$).

Hypotheses	Standardized Value	S.E.	t Value	Result
H ₁ : Gastronomy Brand Image => Tour Satisfaction	0,430***	0,054	7,743	Supported
H ₂ : Gastronomy Brand Image => Perceived Emotional Value	0,816***	0,062	14,826	Supported

*** $p<,001$

Table 8. Hypotheses Results of Model Path Analysis

Source: Authors

5. DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

Today, it has become more difficult for similar destinations to demarcate from others and to gain strength in the market as a unique tourist product. In order for the tourist to position a particular destination among the others in their mind, it is essential that the destination evocate different qualities than a uniform tourism pattern. Destination-specific cuisine is a powerful treasure that can make this difference. Attracting tourists to these gastronomically rich destinations is vital for both word-of-mouth marketing and the sustainable development of local cuisine.

The image of a destination is formed by the cuisine to a great extent, and it even constitutes a power that can repair the negative image of that destination. Supporting this, research conducted by Castillo-Villar (2020) argued that cuisine can be an effective way to rebrand a destination, and the findings showed that local chefs are one of the key elements for the development of a new and successful cuisine that can change the negative image of a destination. Destinations, which are the target of gastro-cultural tours that promise different tastes, stories and experiences to the

tourists, have a unique gastronomy brand image and from this aspect, are an essential component that determine the tourism demand. In this context, the aim of the study is to investigate the effects of gastronomy brand image on perceived emotional value and, tour satisfaction on gastro-cultural tours organized to the GAP region.

Gastro-cultural tours are planned in such a way that visitors can experience the local foods, historical and cultural characteristics and values of the cultural heritage of the visited regions. In this respect, regions rich in local cuisine culture host gastro-cultural tours, and these tours contribute considerably to the local economy of the region. GAP, the region of Turkey known for its gastronomy, is a region that can be considered an open-air culinary museum with its deep-rooted regional cuisine, dishes, desserts, foods and local cuisine culture. Especially in terms of tourist demand and supply, the region ranks first in terms of gastro-cultural tours. The region is also rich in culinary museums. In this framework, the views of the visitors participating in the gastro-cultural tours in the GAP region about the gastronomy brand image, perceived emotional value and tour satisfaction were consulted. Sunthorncheewin et al. (2013) defined perceived emotional value as the benefit related to feelings such as comfort, peace, happiness and love obtained after purchasing a product or service. Within gastronomy, this concept includes exploring, tasting, experiencing, researching and understanding the emotional qualities of human nutrition. In this context, the perceived emotional value dimension, which is one of the sub-dimensions of perceived value, was examined in the study. Considering that the positive or negative emotional reactions depend on the experience and satisfaction with the service (Chang, 2008), the tour satisfaction of the tourists participating in the gastro-cultural tours to the GAP region was also examined.

Food and emotions are closely related to one another (Tahir, Rahman & Ravana, 2020) and tourist satisfaction is an emotional and cognitive response that occurs when the tour is experienced by the tourist (Baker & Crompton, 2000). One of the prime motivators of tourists participating in gastro-tours is a culinary exploration based on the gastronomy brand image. Tourists who interiorize the cuisine they discover, attribute an emotional value to the cuisine of this region, thus leaving the tour satisfied. Furthermore, a part of the overall tour quality in a tour planned in this region is the gastronomy brand image. However, the authenticity of GAP cuisine is not fully reflected in tours and promotions. Regarding this standpoint, Loebnitz & Grunert (2022) found that authentic food brands elicit higher purchase intentions. Therefore, positioning GAP cuisine items in the minds of tourists will create perceived food brand authenticity

(Morhart et al., 2015). Positioning the gastronomy brand image of the GAP region which dated back to the Neolithic Age (8000 B.C.) in the minds of the visitors by enriching it with historical elements, is a critical point in terms of the sustainability of the destination and its ability to attract tourists.

The results of the research reveal that individuals are today pursuing an experience in the activity they take part in, expecting more than just participating in tourism activity or eating to meet their physiological needs. According to Ghorbanzadeh & Rahehagh (2021), these accumulated experiences and multiple interactions lead to an emotional bond over time. In addition, Khan & Rahman (2017) revealed that brand experience influences emotional attachment, and brand experience and emotional attachment have a positive and significant effect on brand loyalty. From this point of view, it can be asserted that the perception of a particular region as a gastronomic brand positively affects the emotional value attributed by the participants to the tours organized in that region and inherently their satisfaction with the tour. Consequently, an emotional bond will be created between the tourist and the destination, thus enabling the tourist to taste a unique experience. Supplementarily, one of the prominent characteristics of this research that sets it apart from the others is that it orbits the unique culinary culture of a region from the perspective of foodways and scopes the touristic context through the information obtained from a gastronomic tour. In addition, the study reveals a sensory taste structure in terms of measuring how the concept of gastronomy brand image interacts with tourists' intrinsic attributes such as satisfaction and emotional value.

6. CONCLUSION

The results of the study disclose the significant effect that the gastronomy brand image had on tour satisfaction and the H₁ hypothesis was accepted ($\beta=0.430$; $p<0.001$). The H₂ hypothesis was also accepted as gastronomy brand image significantly affects the perceived emotional value ($\beta=0.816$; $p<0.001$). These results showed that a strong gastronomy brand image strengthens tour satisfaction of the tourists and enhances their perceived emotional value. Destinations can attract more tourists by transforming their gastronomic values into brands. With the emotional value perceived by the tourists, positive contributions can be made to the destination in economic and social terms. In all other respects, the destination may lose its competitive power as a result of negative perceived value.

This study unveiled that a strong gastronomy brand image can significantly affect the emotional value that tourists attribute to gastro-cultural tours and their satisfaction with the tour they experience. In this respect, it aspired to contribute to the destination brand image and gastronomic tourism studies in general. At the same time, it aimed to emphasize the importance of gastronomic values for destinations independent of gastronomic tourism. Principally, there is a need for studies prepared by making use of different disciplines in which gastronomic attractions can be discussed in more detail in tourism studies. In this context, various inventory studies, presentation of local gastronomic values in eateries, promotional activities and handling the effects of social media in future research will contribute to the literature. In addition, the factors that will influence the formation of the gastronomy brand image can be investigated, the contributions of the stakeholders can be examined by evaluating the perspectives of the local people and various institutions and organizations in the destination.

This study further illustrates how gastronomy can evoke emotions and value judgments in tourists. According to the results of the study conducted by Işın and Yalçın (2019) to determine the relationship between the perceived destination food image and the satisfaction level of foreign tourists visiting the destination of Istanbul, a positive and significant relationship was determined between the destination food image perceived by the tourists and their satisfaction levels. In this respect, it reveals similarities with the results of our study. Our results are also consistent with the findings of Cuong (2019) who concluded that brand image has a positive impact on satisfaction and Tu, Li, & Chih (2013) who showed that brand image positively affects perceived value.

This study has limitations in some aspects. In the research, the Southeastern Anatolia Region of Turkey, which reveals a rich gastronomic value, was determined as the study area. More extensive investigations can be conducted by future researchers in distinct regions for comprehensive results. Thus, the research method and sample can be further developed for general applicability. Future researchers could focus on potential moderating variables such as age and personal characteristics and potential mediating variables such as food preference and destination loyalty, along with destination brand image. Recommendation to others and revisit intention can also be linked to the model as SEM components. Besides the quantitative nature of this research, qualitative research can also be applied to tourists for a thorough and detailed portrait. To determine the GAP region's gastronomic brand image, holistic and

more thorough investigations can be conducted. Furthermore, the scope of the subject can be broadened by including the views of tourism stakeholders, local residents, public institutions, and organizations, as well as tourists.

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Appendix: Questionnaire

Please choose the most appropriate option below.

Section 1

- 1) Age: 18-25 () 26-35 () 36-45 () 46-54 () 55 and above ()
- 2) Gender: Female () Male ()
- 3) Marital Status: Single () Married ()
- 3) Education Level: Primary () High School () Associate () Bachelor's () Graduate ()
- 4) On average, how much would you spend for Gastro-cultural tours? (Turkish Lira)
0-1000 () 1001-2000 () 2001-3000 () 3001-4000 () 4001-5000 () 5001 and above ()

Section 2

Please rate the following statements on the scale form (1: Strongly Disagree, to 5: Strongly Agree).

1	My dining experience in the GAP region is consistent with my impression	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
2	GAP region offers appealing food	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
3	My choice to visit the GAP region to enjoy local food reflects who I am	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
4	GAP region is a friendly place suitable for culinary tourism	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree

5	Visiting the GAP region is a wonderful opportunity for sampling cuisine	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
6	GAP region has a relaxing dining atmosphere	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
7	GAP region has a rich food culture	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
8	GAP region's cuisine is diverse	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
9	GAP region's cuisine is unique	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
Section 3								
10	I would enjoy experiencing gastro-cultural tours in the GAP region.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
11	Gastro-cultural tours in the GAP region would make me want to experience it.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
12	I would feel relaxed about experiencing gastro-cultural tours in the GAP region.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
13	My gastro-cultural tour experience in the GAP region would make me feel good	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
14	My gastro-cultural tour experience in the GAP region would give me pleasure	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
Section 4								
15	Overall, I am satisfied with my gastro-cultural tour of the GAP region.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
16	I am glad that the gastro-cultural tour in the GAP region met my expectations.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree
17	When I consider my time and effort, I am satisfied with my GAP tour.	Strongly Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	Strongly Agree

Thank you for your time and care!

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