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Article

Gastronomic Experience and Destination Loyalty: A Study of the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival, Turkey

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Abstract
This study aims to determine tourists' gastronomy destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions in the context of sustainable tourism. In this context, an attempt was made to determine the opinions of tourists attending the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival through the prepared survey. A survey consisting of two parts and 35 statements was used in this study. The research data collection process consists of tourists who could be reached between April 13, 2024, and April 21, 2024. The survey prepared in order to provide an acceptable sample size (384 participants) for the universe size was delivered to the tourists attending the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival through face-to-face communication. As a result of the analysis (SPSS 24.0) conducted within the scope of the research; it was determined that the majority of the participants were between the ages of 25-60, male, married, and had a monthly income of 17003 TL-50000 TL. Significant differences were found between the research dimensions and the participants' age, gender, marital status, and monthly income. In the analysis, it was also found that there was a moderate and positive relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception; a moderate and positive relationship was found between destination experience perception and destination loyalty, and a moderate and positive relationship was found between destination loyalty and destination awareness. This situation reveals a positive relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception and loyalty.

Keywords: *Tourism, Gastronomy, Destination Awareness, Destination Loyalty, Experience Perception*

Introduction

As the tourism market becomes more and more visible with more products, destination marketers have to create more effective marketing campaigns to meet different needs and preferences. For this reason, tourism researchers have given great importance to market segmentation in recent years. One of the most effective tools of segmentation in the field of tourism is destinations. The basic idea of market segmentation is to divide a heterogeneous market into a series of smaller homogeneous markets (Chen & Lin, 2012). Tourist destinations can be considered complex products of the tourism sector, consisting of natural resources, infrastructure, superstructure, services, distinctive local features, and cultural characteristics. Destinations are in constant competition with each other to be preferred and to generate high numbers of visitors and tourist revenue. In order to be successful in this competition, it is imperative that they attract tourists and positively influence their decision-making processes (Szubert et al., 2022). Destination marketers can segment potential tourists based on which choice clusters they place destinations in, and they should be careful to ensure that the distinctions made have qualities that ensure awareness, loyalty, and positive experiences with the destination (Chen & Lin, 2012). In this process, the personal characteristics of tourists are important because they can affect their destination choices both directly awareness and indirectly. Typical socio-demographic characteristics such as age,

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gender, education, income, occupation, and marital status can affect tourists' destination choices (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012).

Tourists' experiences in previous destinations and the new destination are also of great importance when choosing a destination. In general, destination experience refers to the sum of all experiences that tourists have while visiting a destination, including interactions with local people, touristic places, accommodations, and the destination itself. Destination experience is of great importance in the field of relationship marketing as it plays an important role in shaping tourists' perceptions and ultimately affects their future behavior. In addition, by offering tourists an unforgettable travel experience, a destination can distinguish itself from others and become easily recognizable (Pramanik, 2024). In this context, the study aims to determine the tourists' gastronomic destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions. The study is important both in terms of its subject components and the fact that Adana, one of the important gastronomic destinations of Türkiye, is selected as the research area. Event tourism and festivals as a component of it have become very important in recent years in terms of marketing destinations, increasing the number of tourists, promotional efforts, and increasing competitiveness. In this respect, the study will guide both destination marketers and destination management organizations by measuring tourists' destination awareness, loyalty, and experience perceptions and by making suggestions based on the inferences to be made.

Conceptual Framework

Destination Awareness

Awareness is critical in explaining differences in various aspects of tourist perceptions and behaviors, allowing researchers to understand how tourists shape their images of a destination (Stylidis et al., 2020). The structure of destination awareness is related to the geographical distance between the starting and ending points, previous visit experience, and the general level of knowledge about the destination (Guan et al., 2022). Tourists' experiences with different attraction elements in a destination also enable them to show loyalty behaviors such as choosing the destination again in the future and recommending it to others (Şengül & Türkay, 2018).

Destination awareness is generally divided into several dimensions, such as self-assessed awareness, informational awareness, and experiential awareness. Self-assessed awareness is the general level of awareness a tourist has with a destination. Informational awareness reflects the amount of destination-related information that tourists are exposed to through various sources. Experiential awareness refers to the tourist's previous experiences when visiting a destination (Szubert et al., 2022). In addition, awareness plays a very important role in destination reputation, tourists' perception of destination image, long-term relationship with the destination and revisit intention (Guan et al., 2022).

Destination awareness is considered an important factor affecting tourists' perceptions and behaviors. If a destination is considered more well-known than others, it may have a higher chance of being chosen by tourists. Because awareness strengthens tourists' proximity to that destination and can help carry it to the next

stages of the selection process (Guan et al., 2022). As gastronomy festivals become increasingly popular, interest in local gastronomy festivals and gastronomy tourism is also increasing (Solunoğlu & Örgün, 2024). It is known that the relationship between the physical environment of gastronomy festivals and behavioral intentions or motivation and satisfaction of visitors attending local food festivals is positive. It positively contributes to the increase of destination awareness and loyalty to gastronomy festivals (Chang et al., 2018).

Loyalty to a destination is important because of the role it plays in achieving profitability and subsequent growth and development. Although profitability is a common feature for touristic businesses and destinations, this importance increases when it comes to growth and development. Therefore, the measurement of loyalty should be accompanied by the quantification of the impact of this loyalty towards the destination on some variables of profitability or growth. One of the most used indicators to determine the situation of destinations in relation to tourists is the number of overnight stays (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). Destinations are areas where various products and services are offered together, attracting tourists from outside their current borders. While research indicates that the demand for experiences is quite popular in the tourism sector, it also draws attention to the fact that tourist destinations in today's world are in fierce competition with each other in terms of their experiential features (Şahin & Güzel, 2018). One of the important attractiveness elements for tourism destinations is the regional culinary cultures. It has been revealed as a result of many studies that regional cuisines are an important brand determinant for many destinations and that tourists visit destinations to experience regional cuisine. Both the tourists' own experiences with local cuisine in the destination and the information they obtain about the destination from their environment or through media provide significant advantages in terms of destination awareness (Şengül & Türkay, 2018).

Destination Loyalty

Customer loyalty is a frequently recurring topic in academic research. According to Web of Science results, more than three thousand articles on *"customer loyalty"* have been written in journals with an impact factor in the social sciences since 1956. However, there are only ninety-five articles on *"destination loyalty"* with this status, the first of which dates back to 2001. Most of these studies are aimed at explaining tourists' loyalty towards a destination (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). According to Yoon & Uysal (2005) satisfied tourists are more likely to return to the same destination and are more willing to share their positive travel experiences with friends and relatives. WOM recommendations are particularly critical in tourism marketing because they are considered the most reliable recommendations and therefore one of the most sought-after sources of information for potential tourists.

Destinations, where touristic products and services are produced and consumed, should have an important place in the minds of tourists and be one step ahead of their alternatives in competition. The most fundamental element in ensuring that destinations can be visited again is the sense of "*loyalty*" that will be formed in tourists. According to tourism literature, the realization of tourists' expectations or their satisfaction beyond their expectations is very important in establishing loyalty (Atsız & Türkmen, 2020). The concept of destination loyalty is a concept used in

destination marketing studies to explain the attitudinal and behavioral consequences of destination experiences, which generally include the development of image, perceived value, and satisfaction. From this point of view, destination loyalty is expressed as the long-term and determined commitment of tourists to the destination along with the knowledge they have (Benli & Yenipınar, 2018).

Destination loyalty is a key element in both post-visit behavior and marketing strategies. Loyalty is achieved by exceeding tourists' expectations, offering unique experiences, and making a commitment to these tourists. At the same time, valuing their opinions and reducing the effort to deal with problems that arise during the relationship requires seeing them as loyal tourists (Cossío-Silva et al., 2019). Tourist satisfaction is one of the most important determinants of tourist loyalty. Another determinant of destination loyalty is tourist emotions. The emotional experiences that tourists have in the destination contribute to the formation of a sense of loyalty. Emotions can guide and encourage people. The emotions that tourists feel after their holiday experience in a destination are effective in the decisions they make about the destination. Tourists who experience positive emotions tend to revisit the destination and recommend it to others (Atsız & Türkmen, 2020).

Destination Experience Perceptions

The foundation of the tourism sector is based on the destination experiences that tourists gain by visiting different destinations. Tourists have the opportunity to gain unique and valuable experiences by leaving their homes and traveling to new places. Although tourist satisfaction and destination experience are often used interchangeably, they are different concepts. Tourist satisfaction refers to the overall satisfaction that tourists have with the services and experiences offered during their visit and reflects how well their expectations are met or exceeded (Pramanik, 2024).

According to Berknai & Marso (2023), the concept of experience has been an important research trend in consumer research since the late 1970s. With the awareness of the experiential aspects of consumption, consumption began to be seen as an activity of meaning production and symbolic exchanges, which he called the "*experiential view*". In other words, the concept of experience is a personal and subjective event with high emotional significance resulting from the consumption of products and services. Destination experience is the reactions and perceptions of tourists to the physical and social environment in the tourist destination. Since a tourist destination is a common-use area in a place, it can have an impact on the quality of the tourism destination for other tourists and service providers (Jiang & Liu, 2024).

Understanding the tourism experience is central to potential market segmentation, positioning, and sourcing based on recognizing the perceptions and emotions experienced by tourists and visitors during their stay. Destination experience can be defined as a state of perception that emerges in various ways, from ordinary practices that include accommodation, food and beverage-related services, and experiences as part of a commercial transaction to the creation of extraordinary moments and the sharing of interactive spaces. In other words, the destination experience is the continuous and interconnected services that tourists obtain in a limited geographical area and for a limited period (Türkeri, 2020). According to Karim et al. (2024) research, destination experience mediates the relationship

between destination service factors and complaint intention but does not mediate the relationship between destination service factors and WOM. In addition, destination satisfaction mediates the relationship between destination service factors and WOM and complaint intention.

Related Research

Kim et al. (2010) apply the concept of food-related personality traits to accommodation and tourism in their research and define the relationships between personality, satisfaction, and loyalty. An on-site survey was conducted with 335 visitors who attended the Gwangju Kimchi Festival held in South Korea from October 15 to 19, 2008. Structural equation modeling was used to measure the relationships among four components (food neophobia, food participation satisfaction, and loyalty) and 16 indicators. Findings reveal that food neophobia has a negative effect on satisfaction and loyalty, food involvement has a positive relationship with loyalty, and satisfaction and loyalty show a significant positive relationship.

In their research, Benli & Yenipınar (2018) examined the effects of local food experiences on destination image perceptions and destination loyalty behaviors of local tourists visiting Mersin. In the research, 410 participants were reached by using the survey technique. Participants in the study perceived local food experiences in four factors; cultural experience, sensory appeal, interpersonal relationships, and psychological relaxation. Participants also perceived Mersin's destination image in seven factors; entertainment and outdoor activities, food variety and facilities, price and value, natural resources, environment, historical places, and accessibility. Destination loyalty was perceived by the participants as a single factor. According to the structural equation model analysis; it was determined that tourists' local food experiences had a positive effect on destination image and destination loyalty. In addition, it was determined that the effect of tourists' local food experiences on destination loyalty increased significantly thanks to the perceived destination image.

Chang et al. (2018) investigated the effects of novelty seeking and food involvement on food tourism behavior and the effect of food tourism behaviour on revisiting intention to Jeonju Bibimbab Food Festival. The study also determined the effects of attitude, anticipated emotions, perceived behavioral control, and subjective norms on revisit intention. The study concluded that gastronomy festivals have a positive effect on repeat visits. Şengül & Türkay (2018) aimed to determine the effect of tourists' local cuisine brand value perceptions on destination awareness and destination loyalty. As a result of the study, it was concluded that local cuisine brand value has a positive statistical effect on destination awareness and destination loyalty.

Cossío-Silva et al. (2019) tried to determine destination loyalty by applying a survey to 2373 tourists in Seville, Spain. According to the findings obtained; four tourist groups were determined according to their loyalty and profitability levels, using the number of nights spent by tourists in their destination visits. The research is valuable in terms of its contribution to the creation of four tourist profiles by allowing loyalty to be measured simply, enabling marketing strategies for

differentiated relationships to be implemented, and contributing to the improvement of the destination in terms of findings.

In the research of Türkeri (2020), variables that directly and indirectly affect the destination loyalty formation process of tourists who revisit destinations and also facilitate the marketing of destinations by recommending the destinations they visited to others were examined within the scope of a model. In the structural equation model, the effects of destination experience and destination loyalty on destination loyalty were analyzed. The data used for the analysis were obtained from 395 tourists who visited Fethiye using a survey technique. The study concluded that destination experience has an effect on loyalty and that destination loyalty mediates this relationship.

Method

Purpose and Scope of the Research

This study aims to determine tourists' gastronomic destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions. In this context, the opinions of tourists attending the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival were tried to be determined through a survey prepared.

Data Collection Method of the Research

The survey technique was used in the data collection process of the research. In this study, a survey consisting of two sections and 35 statements was used. The first section of the survey consists of four statements to determine the participants and their demographic characteristics and the options that the respondents can choose regarding these statements. The second part of the survey consists of 31 statements and a five-point Likert scale (5-Strongly Agree and 1-Strongly Disagree) to determine the participants' gastronomic destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions. The studies of Çelik Uğuz & Özbek (2018), Benli (2020) & Türkeri (2020) were used in the creation of the Likert-type scale in the survey. In this study, opinions were taken from experts and competent people in text and linguistics (twenty academicians from Sinop, Balıkesir, and Harran Universities) in order to ensure the content validity of the survey.

Data Collection Process of the Research

The universe of the research consists of all tourists who visited the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival between April 13, 2024, and April 21, 2024. The sample of the research consists of tourists who visited the festival on the relevant dates and could be reached. However, it could not be determined exactly how many people visited the festival during the data collection process of the research. For this reason, since the number of individuals in the target audience was unknown, the formula $n=t^2pq/d^2$ was used to calculate the research sample (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2007: 70). According to the calculation results made within the scope of the relevant formula, the number of research samples was determined as 384. In determining the individuals to be included in the sample, the simple random sampling method, which is one of the probability-based sampling methods, was used. In the simple random sampling method; all units and individuals have an equal chance of selection. In practice, all units and individuals are listed and random units and individuals are selected from the list (Kılıç, 2013: 45). The survey

prepared to provide an acceptable sample size for the universe size (384 participants) was delivered to the tourists in the festival area by face-to-face communication. A total of 401 surveys were reached during the data collection process and all of the obtained data were analyzed.

Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this study, which is a descriptive and explanatory research, are given below.

H_1: Tourists' destination awareness, destination loyalty, and destination experience perception levels differ significantly according to their age (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Chang et al., 2018; Şengül & Türkay, 2018; Stylidis et al., 2020).

H_2: Tourists' destination awareness, destination loyalty, and destination experience perception levels differ significantly according to their gender (Kim et al., 2010; Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Şengül & Türkay, 2018; Stylidis et al., 2020).

H_3: Tourists' destination awareness, destination loyalty, and destination experience perception levels differ significantly according to their marital status (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Şengül & Türkay, 2018).

H_4: Tourists' destination awareness, destination loyalty, and destination experience perception levels differ significantly according to their income levels (Lee & Tussyadiah, 2012; Şengül & Türkay, 2018).

H_5: There is a significant relationship between tourists' destination awareness, destination loyalty, and destination experience perception levels (Szubert et al., 2022).

Analyses of the Research

The data obtained as a result of the research were analyzed in the SPSS 24.0 statistical data program. In order to test the structural validity and reliability of the survey created within the scope of the research, a pilot test was conducted with the data obtained from 95 surveys collected on April 13, 2024. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the test was determined as 0,901. This result indicates that the survey is a reliable data collection tool. In this study, in order to ensure the content validity of the survey, twenty experts from Sinop, Balıkesir, and Harran Universities who are experts and competent in their fields were asked to examine the survey form. Within the framework of the feedback obtained as a result of content validity, the survey was finalized and applied to tourists. The data obtained during the data collection process of the research were evaluated by performing frequency, reliability, factor, difference, regression, and correlation tests in the analysis process.

Fındıngs

This section will include the findings and comments obtained as a result of the analysis of the data obtained on the subject under study.

Findings Regarding Demographic Variables of Participants

Of the tourists participating in the research %36,2 were between the ages of 25-60, %58,1 were male, %53,9 were married and %43,1 had a monthly income between 17003 TL and 50000 TL (Table 1).

Table 1. Findings Regarding Demographic Variables of Participants (n=401)

Demographic Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Age	15-24 Age	103	25,7
	25-60 Age	**145**	**36,2**
	61-80 Age	70	17,5
	81 Age and Above	83	20,6
Gender	Female	168	41,9
	Male	**233**	**58,1**
Marital Status	Married	**216**	**53,9**
	Single	185	46,1
Income Level	17002 TL ve Below	153	38,2
	17003 TL-50000 TL	**173**	**43,1**
	50001 TL and Above	75	18,7
	Total	**401**	**100**

Findings Regarding Reliability Analysis

In this study, as a result of the reliability analysis of the scale for determining tourists' gastronomic destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was determined as ,930 (Table 2).

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Findings Regarding the Research Scale

N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Samples	Percentage
31	,930	401	100

Findings Regarding the Factor Analysis of the Research

According to the normality test findings applied in this study, the Skewness value was determined to be between -1,340 and ,727, and the Kurtosis value was determined to be between -1,081 and 1,440. The determination of the relevant values between -1.5 and +1.5 indicates that the research scale has a normal distribution (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). After the normal distribution test, explanatory factor analysis was applied to the research scale. With factor analysis, firstly Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are obtained. Bartlett's test of sphericity shows whether the level of relationship between variables required for factor analysis is sufficient ($p<0,05$). Similarly, KMO sample adequacy is also decisive in deciding whether the correlation between variables is sufficient for factor analysis (Durmuş et al., 2010: 79-80). As a finding of the explanatory factor analysis (Table 3); the KMO value was determined as ,909 at sig. (p)=0,000 significance level. In addition, Barlett's Test result was determined as 9717,218. This value and the obtained KMO value indicate that the sample size is sufficient and appropriate for factor analysis.

Table 3. Factor Analysis Findings Regarding the Research Scale (n=401)

Research Statements	DA	DEP	DL	x
DA 3	,906			
DA 5	,889			
DA 1	,858			
DA 4	,889			3,14
DA 2	,819			
DA 7	,816			
DEP 16		,687		
DEP 15		,665		3,34
DEP 14		,658		

DEP 17		,620		
DEP 10		,588		
DEP 9		,582		
DEP 13		,579		
DEP 12		,565		
DEP 11		,551		
DEP 18		,548		
DEP 25		,521		
DEP 26		,515		
DL 27			,750	
DL 28			,727	
DL 29			,691	4,20
DL 30			,688	
DL 31			,625	
Eigenvalues	**3,267**	**11,324**	**2,467**	
Reliability Analysis-Alpha	**,941**	**,834**	**,922**	
Explained Variance (%)	**30,619**	**30,911**	**13,494**	
Total Explained Variance (%)		**75,024**		
KMO Adequacy		**,909**		
Bartlett's Sphericity		**9717,218**		
Sig. p-value		**,000**		

Within the scope of the explanatory factor analysis conducted on the scale, it was aimed to increase the validity of the factor analysis by excluding the expressions with both small factor loadings and small coefficients. As a result of these two operations, it was decided to remove 31 expressions (DA6, DA8, DEP 19, DEP 20, DEP 21, DEP 22, DEP 23; DEP 24) from the scale. As a result of the factor analysis, three dimensions consisting of 23 questions with eigenvalues greater than one were determined. These dimensions explain %75,024 of the total variance. The variance rate obtained in the study is at an acceptable level according to the literature (Altunışık et al., 2007: 347). In the study, Çelik Uğuz & Özbek (2018), Benli (2020), and Türkeri (2020) studies were taken as a reference regarding factor analysis, and the relevant dimensions were defined as Destination Awareness (DA), Destination Experience Perception (DEP) and Destination Loyalty (DL) (Table 3). In addition, according to the findings of tourists' evaluation of the research scale dimensions (Table 3); their participation in the dimensions of destination awareness (x=3,14), destination experience perception (x=4,34), and destination loyalty (x=4,20) is high and positive.

Difference Test Analysis Findings of the Research

One-way analysis of variance was applied to determine whether the dimensions included in the research differ according to the age variables of the tourists. According to the test findings; a significant difference was determined between the DEP dimension (,004; p<0,05) and the DL dimension (,018; p<0,05) and the age variables of the tourists. In the DEP dimension, it was found that tourists aged 81 and over (x=3,49) and between the ages of 61-80 (x=3,46) had higher participation than tourists aged 15-24 (x=3,17); in the DL dimension, tourists aged 61-80 (x=4,41) had higher participation than tourists aged 15-24 (x=4,10) and again, tourists aged 61-80 (x=4,41) had higher participation than tourists aged 25-60 (x=4,14) (Table 4). According to these findings, H_1 was tested and verified.

Table 4. ANOVA Analysis Findings Regarding the Age of Tourists

			Test of Equality of Variances			
Factor	**Groups**	**x**	**Levene**	**p**	**t**	**P**
DA	15-24 Age	3,07	,504	,680	2,067	,133
	25-60 Age	3,03				
	61-80 Age	3,28				
	81 Age and Above	3,32				
DEP	15-24 Age	3,17	1,818	,143	2,021	**,004**
	25-60 Age	3,31				
	61-80 Age	3,46				
	81 Age and Above	3,49				
DL	15-24 Age	4,10	1,395	,244	1,637	**,018**
	25-60 Age	4,14				
	61-80 Age	4,41				
	81 Age and Above	4,27				

One-way analysis of variance was applied to determine whether the dimensions included in the research differ according to the income variables of the tourists. According to the test findings, a significant difference was determined between the DA dimension (,025; p<0,05), DEP dimension (,000; p<0,05), and DL dimension (,000; p<0,05), and the income variables of the tourists. In the DA dimension, tourists with a monthly income of 50001 TL and above (x=3,44) compared to tourists with a monthly income between 17003 TL - 50000 TL (x=3,07) and 17002 TL and below (x=3,07); In the DEP dimension, it was found that tourists with a monthly income of 50001 TL and above (x=3,56) and between 17003 TL-50000 TL (x=3,39) had higher participation than tourists with a monthly income of 17002 TL and below (x=3,17) and in the DL dimension, tourists with a monthly income of 50001 TL and above (x=4,37) and between 17003 TL-50000 TL (x=4,29) had higher participation than tourists with a monthly income of 17002 TL and below (x=4,03) (Table 5). According to these findings, H_4 was tested and confirmed.

Table 5. ANOVA Analysis Findings in Terms of Tourist Income Variables

			Test of Equality of Variances			
Factor	**Groups**	**x**	**Levene**	**p**	**t**	**P**
DA	17002 TL ve Below	3,07	,932	,395	4,066	**,025**
	17003 TL-50000 TL	3,07				
	50001 TL and Above	3,44				
DEP	17002 TL ve Below	3,17	4,584	,011	4,152	**,000**
	17003 TL-50000 TL	3,39				
	50001 TL and Above	3,56				
DL	17002 TL ve Below	4,03	3,673	,026	3,979	**,000**
	17003 TL-50000 TL	4,29				
	50001 TL and Above	4,37				

An independent samples T-test was applied to determine whether the dimensions included in the research differ according to the gender variables of the tourists. According to the test findings, a significant difference was found between the DA dimension (,000; p<0,05), DEP dimension (,000; p<0,05), and DL dimension (,000; p<0,05), and the gender variables of the tourists. In the DA dimension; male tourists

(x=3,31) had higher participation than female tourists (x=2,90); in the DEP dimension; male tourists (x=3,47) had higher participation than female tourists (x=3,16) and in the DL dimension; male tourists (x=4,31) had higher participation than female tourists (x=4,05) (Table 6). According to these findings, H_2 was tested and confirmed.

Table 6. T-test Analysis Findings Regarding Gender Status of Tourists

			Test of Equality of Variances			
Factor	**Groups**	**x**	**Levene**	**p**	**t**	**P**
DA	Female	2,90	1,304	,254	-3,907	**,000**
	Male	3,31				
DEP	Female	3,16	,001	,974	-4,689	**,000**
	Male	3,47				
DL	Female	4,05	,176	,675	-3,787	**,000**
	Male	4,31				

Independent sample T-test was applied to determine whether the dimensions included in the study differ according to the marital status variables of the tourists. According to the test findings; a significant difference was found between the DEP dimension (,000; p<0,05) and the DL dimension (,013; p<0,05) and the marital status variables of the tourists. In the DEP dimension; it was found that married tourists (x=3,45) showed higher participation than single tourists (x=3,20) and in the DL dimension; married tourists (x=4,28) showed higher participation than single tourists (x=4,11) (Table 7). According to these findings, H_3 was tested and confirmed.

Table 7. T-test Analysis Findings Regarding the Marital Status of Tourists

			Test of Equality of Variances			
Factor	**Groups**	**x**	**Levene**	**p**	**t**	**P**
DA	Married	3,21	,187	,666	1,473	,142
	Single	3,06				
DEP	Married	3,45	1,291	,257	3,724	**,000**
	Single	3,20				
DL	Married	4,28	,158	,691	2,490	**,013**
	Single	4,11				

Correlation Analysis Findings of the Research

Although there are no completely agreed-upon ranges for interpreting the correlation coefficient in terms of magnitude, it should be noted that the following limits can often be used in interpreting the correlation. A correlation coefficient between 0,70 and 1,00 in absolute value can be defined as high; between 0,70 and 0,30 as medium; and between 0,30 and 0,00 as low level of relationship (Büyüköztürk, 2006: 32). When Table 8 is examined, it is seen that the research dimensions have statistically significant relationships among themselves. There is a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception (r=0,410**; p<0,01); a moderate, positive, and significant relationship between destination experience perception and destination loyalty (r=0,545**; p<0,01); and a moderate, positive and significant relationship

between destination loyalty and destination awareness (r=0,567**; p<0,01). This situation reveals a positive relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception and loyalty. According to these findings, H_5 was tested and confirmed.

Table 8. Correlation Analysis Findings of the Study

	DA	DEP	DL
DA	1	,410**	,567**
DEP	,410**	1	,545**
DL	,567**	,545**	1

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).***

Dıscussıon and Conclusıons

This study aims to determine tourists' gastronomic destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions. In this context, the opinions of tourists attending the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival were tried to be determined through a survey prepared. As a result of the analyses conducted in this context, it was determined that the majority of the participants were between the ages of 25-60, male, married, and had a monthly income of 17003 TL-50000 TL. Significant differences were found between the research dimensions and the age, gender, marital status, and monthly income of the participants. The analyses also revealed a moderate and positive relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception; a moderate and positive relationship between destination experience perception and destination loyalty; and a moderate and positive relationship between destination loyalty and destination awareness. This situation reveals a positive relationship between destination awareness and destination experience perception and loyalty.

The research findings revealed that tourists with high destination awareness also have high destination loyalty. This situation reveals the importance of tourists obtaining prior information about the destination during the process of carrying out promotional activities of the destinations. In addition, when the effect of tourists' experience perceptions on destination loyalty is examined, it is seen that positive experiences increase tourists' tendency to revisit. Negative experiences, on the other hand, weaken tourists' loyalty. At this point, it is of great importance that destination planners, destination management organizations, and stakeholders in the tourism sector make efforts to improve tourist experiences (Şahin & Güzel, 2018; Stylidis et. al., 2020; Szubert et al., 2022). The relationship between destination awareness, destination loyalty, and experience perceptions has an important place in tourism research. Analyses show that destination awareness directly affects tourists' perceptions and experiences of that destination. While a high level of awareness shapes tourists' expectations, it also contributes to the formation of positive experiences. Tourists' perceptions of experience are one of the basic elements that strengthen tourists' destination loyalty.

Destination loyalty can be expressed by tourists' desire to revisit the same destination and their tendency to recommend it to others. Tourists' destination awareness and experience perceptions are the factors that directly affect tourists' destination loyalty and when these two factors are strong, the loyalty to the

destination increases. In particular, tourists who have positive experiences with the destination make positive comments about the destination, strengthening the effect of word-of-mouth marketing and contributing to the brand value of the destination. As a result, increasing destination awareness, providing positive experiences to tourists, and ensuring destination loyalty are of critical importance for the sustainable success of tourism destinations. In this regard, it is necessary to increase awareness with effective promotional strategies, to provide service quality that will increase tourist satisfaction, and to highlight the unique values of the destination. The cooperation of tourism sector stakeholders and the development of strategies that will meet the expectations and needs of visitors will increase the desirability and loyalty rate of the destination in the long term (Çelik Uğuz & Özbek, 2018; Cossio-Silva et al., 2019).

The findings of this research reveal important implications for destination marketing and management. First of all, it has been seen that strategies aimed at increasing destination awareness and strengthening the destination loyalty of tourists. Therefore, destination managers and marketers should develop effective promotion and information campaigns aimed at tourists. Reaching tourists through digital media, social media platforms, and interactive content will play a critical role in increasing destination awareness. In terms of tourists' perception of experience, destinations that meet tourists' expectations and offer them memorable experiences are more likely to be visited again. In this context, destinations also need to focus on factors such as providing quality service, protecting cultural and natural resources, and increasing interaction with local people. Finally, destination loyalty is also of great importance for the sustainability of tourism. Tourists' desire to return to a particular destination not only provides economic gain but also supports the tourism development of the region. Therefore, destination managers should develop and implement policies to maximize tourist satisfaction. Thus, tourist loyalty can be increased and the competitiveness of the destination can be made sustainable.

Conclusion

The findings from this study on the Adana International Orange Blossom Festival provide valuable insights into the intricacies of tourist behavior regarding gastronomy destinations. By establishing significant positive correlations among destination awareness, experience perceptions, and loyalty, the research highlights the interconnectedness of these elements in shaping tourists' attitudes and behaviors.

As tourism continues to evolve, especially in the context of sustainable practices, understanding these relationships becomes increasingly crucial for destination marketers and management organizations. The demographic insights indicate that targeting specific age groups, genders, and income levels can enhance marketing efficacy and engagement with potential visitors.

Moreover, the emphasis on the unique gastronomic offerings of Adana showcases the importance of local culture and culinary experiences in attracting tourists. Such experiences not only contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction but also enhance

their loyalty to the destination, fostering repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth promotion.

Ultimately, this study underscores the significance of effective strategies that capitalize on destination awareness through targeted marketing, improved visitor experiences, and the cultivation of loyalty. By focusing on these areas, destinations like Adana can strengthen their position in the competitive tourism market, ensuring growth and sustainability in their tourism sector. Future research directions could include exploring the long-term impacts of these factors on tourist retention and the potential for broader applications in similar gastronomic festivals globally.

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