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THE ROLE OF LOCAL FOODS OFFERED AT RESTAURANTS IN THE ATRACTIVENESS OF HATAY DESTINATION

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ABSTRACT

The increase in the popularity of eating out and the related trips has enhanced the number of studies on determining the relationship between food and tourism. This has resulted in some studies on the role of food on the tourists' destination preferences. The aim of the study is to determine image perceptions for Hatay, the general satisfaction level for the meals, the relationship with the Hatay image and satisfaction, and the elements that stand out before visiting Hatay of the visitors who eat food at the restaurants that serve Hatay's culinary offerings. After the necessary information is given in the theoretical part of the study, the data to be analyzed in the study will be obtained via a questionnaire. In this context, the study includes a series of practical applications for both public and private organizations supporting the development of tourism in the city and tourism enterprises. Key Words: Gastronomy tourism, local food, destination attractiveness
INTRODUCTION 324 Turkey has been described as a tourism paradise with its historical, cultural, and natural beauties. However, the majority of visitors to the country come for sightseeing, entertainment, or sea-sandsun (Bucak & Araci, 2016). Until the recent years, all promotion, marketing, and investment policies were concerned with these factors. Alternative tourism types need to develop to increase tourism from other attractions that Turkey possesses, to save tourism from seasonality, and to take advantage of opportunities in terms of sustainability (Hacioglu & Avcikurt, 2011). Today, one of the most open areas of alternative tourism development is gastronomy tourism. Various researchers have considered the development of local and regional cuisine as a new platform for tourist destinations. In other words, the culinary heritage that a region possesses has gained considerable strength as a tourist attraction in its own right and has come to the fore of tourist activities (Goker, 2011; Selwood, 2003). Gastronomy tourism or travel for food has become growing a trend in many countries of the world. Countries such as Italy, France, and Thailand, which are particularly popular with their meals, have a reputation for gastronomy tourism. Similarly, Australia and Canada have made their meals one of the reasons for visiting tourists visiting their country (Karim & Geng-Qing Chi, 2010). Turkey has taken its place among the developing countries in terms of gastronomic tourism with the activities it has organized and the entry of Gaziantep into the network of UNESCO creative cities (TURSAB Gastronomy Tourism Report, Access: 27.02.2017). Gastronomy is becoming an important feature, especially in the development of small spaces. Although the literature supports the view that

tourism is a link to gastronomy, very little is known about gastronomic tourists. For example, is there a segment called the gastronomy-tourism market segment? Does gastronomy contribute to the quality of tourists' experiences when visiting a destination? Do tourists go back to the destination to re-experience gastronomic activities? Nowadays, researchers have been seeking answers to these and similar questions. For example, Kivela and Crotss (2005) found that tourists prefer gastronomy as their basic travel motivation. In the continuation of their study, they found that gastronomic activities have an important place when the experience about the destination is positive or negative. Image has been defined as the sum of all the beliefs, ideas, and impressions people associate with a goal. The image of a destination has been defined as the expression of all objective knowledge, prejudices, imagination, and emotional thoughts of an individual or group of a specific place (Ferreira Lopes, 2011). This study will attempt to detect the effects of local food and beverages on the visitor's perception of image. At the same time, we will try to determine what the main 325 motivation is for visiting a destination that is famous for its local food. LITERATURE REVIEW As in the rest of the world, tourism activities have grown in Turkey in recent years (Zengin, 2010). Turkey is the seventh country in terms of number of tourists and the ninth country in terms of tourism revenues in the world rankings. Destinations compete with each other in order to get higher in these rankings. Hence, destinations are using marketing strategies and a variety of promotional tools to achieve more revenue and attract more tourists. Destinations with the same kind of attractiveness are trying to differentiate from others with their cultures and infrastructures. One of the areas where these differences are most obvious is local food and beverages (Eren, 2012). Researchers have defined local food and beverages as products produced using region-specific raw material and cooking techniques. Local foods perceived as part of the tourist experience are products that reflect the cultures of the region where they have been produced and, at the same time, are important in terms of tourist attraction. The menus have become a major tourist attraction and constitute the basic motivation of gastronomic tourism. Local foods have sometimes seen as a basic charm element for tourism destinations, but sometimes as a supporting element (Quan & Wang, 2004).The concept of gastronomic tourism emerges when local food and beverages are the main motivation to visit somewhere (Nummedal & Hall, 2006). Gastronomy has been described as a study of where, when, how much, and how to consume food and drink (Santich, 2004). Gastronomy tourism, however, has been expressed as the attraction of local foods and beverages inherent to a destination (Eren, 2012). According to a more comprehensive definition, gastronomy tourism is a type of tourism offering the opportunity to experience food and drink that tourists cannot find elsewhere and to recognize, experiment, and learn local tastes (Akdag, Akgunduz, Guler, & Benli, 2015; Beşirli, 2010; McKercher, Okumuş, & Okumuş, 2008; Qalişkan, 2013). Wolf (2006) has defined gastronomy tourism as travel motivation and behavior that provides an unforgettable food and beverage experience for the individual. In other words, experiencing the taste of a special meal produced in that region, seeing the production stages of a meal, and visiting food festivals has been considered within the scope of gastronomy tourism (Deveci, Turkmen, & Avcikurt, 2013). Food and beverages, which have been regarded as supportive products for many years in the tourism sector, were not seen as travel motivation alone among the attractiveness of destinations. However, the culinary heritage that a region today possesses has gained considerable strength as a touristic 326 product in addition to being a part of tourist products, and it has come to the fore of touristic activities (Goker, 2011; Selwood, 2003). Gastronomy tourism provides a significant benefit to a destination and creates a unique market. It is clear how important gastronomic tourism is in the attractiveness of destinations as an effective alternative for tourists who want to get away from mass tourism and for destinations that do not have the substructure of sea mass (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Rand et al., 2003). In recent years, studies have been conducted on destination images to better understand tourist behavior. According to these studies, perception of the image of tourist destinations directly affected the

purchasing behavior (Ateşoglu & Turkish, 2013). In other words, it has emphasized that the image of a destination has been crucial in deciding which destination a visitor will go to, or will definitely not go, or what basic motivation is operative. Especially on the first visits to be made, tourists can make an assessment of the images of all alternatives and choose according to this (Beerli & Martin, 2004). The formation of the image had been described by Reynolds (1965) as a development of a mental structure based on several views selected from a stream of information. The destination image has many sources such as 'information bulletins', promotions (travel brochures, posters), others' opinions (family / friends, travel agencies) and general media (newspapers, magazines, television, books, movies). In addition, by visiting the destination, it is possible to influence or change the image of the destination based on first-hand knowledge and experience (Echtner & Brent Ritchie, 2003). PURPOSE AND METHOD The purpose of this study is to determine image perceptions for Hatay, the general satisfaction level for the meals, the relationship with the Hatay image and satisfaction, and the elements that stand out before visiting Hatay of the visitors who eat food at the restaurants that serve Hatay's culinary offerings. The scope of the research is gastronomy tourism, local dining experience, and destination image. Tourist interest in local destinations in Turkey has allowed these destinations to come to the forefront of regional culinary culture. One of these destinations is Hatay, which has been home many nations with various beliefs throughout history, thanks to its position. UNESCO has declared Hatay 'Peace City' with this feature. Hatay, with its historical texture, rich culture, and natural beauties, is as important as it is with its cuisine. The variety of flavors stemming from the rooted past and the fusion of the cultures in this past constitute Hatay's kitchen richness. There are about 600 kinds of food in Hatay cuisine with its many unique features. 327 It is necessary to ask some questions about the personal characteristics of tourists visiting this tourist destination, their travel motivations, and their perception of the image of this destination. These questions will provide useful information for revealing the gastronomic tourism image presented by Hatay and the overlap of the perception of the tourists in the consumer position. In this context, the main research questions sought in the research are listed below. Did the visitors travel to Hatay before eating a meal in restaurants serving Hatay's local food and drink? What is the importance of Hatay's food and drinks in the image perception of Hatay? Is there a meaningful difference between the groups that visited Hatay before and in terms of the importance level of Hatay's food and drinks in the perception of image towards Hatay? What is the overall satisfaction levels of visitors who eat food in restaurants that offers Hatay's local food and drink? Is there a meaningful difference between the groups that visited Hatay before and did not visit Hatay in terms of their overall satisfaction levels for the food they were eating at restaurants that offer Hatay's local food and drinks? Is there a meaningful relationship between the general satisfaction levels for the foods that are eaten in restaurants serving Hatay's local food and drink and the importance of Hatay's food and drink in image perception for Hatay? What are the factors for the visitor who eat in restaurants serving Hatay's local food and drink that attach importance to visiting Hatay? The scope of our research consists of visitors who eat in restaurants serving Hatay's local food and drink. In the restaurants where the data were collected, there was no statistical data for the number of visitors who visited the restaurant, and it was assumed that the number of patrons was over 10,000 and the sample size was determined using the unlimited universe sampling formula (n=p.q.z2 a/e2) 454 (Ural & Kilic, 2006). The sample size was determined as 384 persons with a 5% significance level and a 5% sampling error considering the variance of maximum variance (p: 0.50) (n= p.q.z2 a/e2 =1,962 x 0,5 x 0,5 / 0,072 = 3,8416 x 0,25 / 0,0049 = 384). A part of the questionnaire used in the study is titled Gastronomy as a motivation tool: A research on travel motivations, food & beverage experiences and travel satisfaction of domestic tourists 328 visiting Hatay by Akdag, Gunduz, Guler, and Benli (2015). This was used as a data collection tool in the research. A sorting scale with a 5 - point scale measures expressions on the research. The survey was conducted between 1 February 2017 and 1 March 2017,

with face-to-face interviews based on the sampling technique. At the end of the process, 364 participants were collected. Because there were no missing or incorrectly filled surveys, 364 questionnaires were used. Reliability analysis was applied to the 'travel motivation' scale included in the questionnaire. Cronbach's alpha statistical test values were used to test the internal reliability of the 12-item travel motivation scale. As a result of the analysis made, Cronbach's alpha reliability statistic was found as 0.924. As stated by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010), the value of 0.70 is the confidence value, and the scales on this value are reasonably reliable. Table 1 presents the results of the visiting situation of the visitors who eat in restaurants serving Hatay's local food. According to Table 1, 77.7% of the participants have never visited Hatay before. According to Table 2, 50.3% of the local foods served in image perceptions for Hatay are important and 30.2% are very important. That is why we can say that approximately 80.5% of the respondents said that food served in these restaurants have an important role in image perception for Hatay. The arithmetic mean and standard deviation values of the scores of Hatay's local foods on the importance scale for the image perception of Hatay according to their previous visits to Hatay are 329 shown in Table 3. In addition, a t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the arithmetic mean and the results are shown in Table 4. Table 3: The Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values of the Scores of Hatay's Local Foods on the Importance Scale for the Image Perception of Hatay According to Previous Visits to Hatay IMAGE Visitation N X SS Yes 81 4,1235 ,89976 No 283 4,0389 ,80020 According to Table 4, there is no significant difference between the groups that visited Hatay before and the importance level of Hatay's local foods in the image perception towards Hatay (t=0,415; p= 0,158). Table 5 shows the frequency distribution for overall satisfaction levels of visitors for the local food that they eat. According to Table 5, 58.2% of the respondents stated that they were satisfied and 15.9% of the participants said that they were very satisfied with the food they had eaten. Of the remaining participants, 8.5% stated they were not satisfied with the food they had consumed, and 17.3% of participants used the expression 'neither satisfied nor dissatisfied'. 330 Table 6 summarizes the arithmetic mean and standard deviation of the scores they received from the general satisfaction level scale for the foods they have previously eaten while visiting Hatay. In addition, it was examined by t-test whether there was a significant difference between the arithmetic mean and the results are shown in Table 7. Table 6: Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values of the Scores Received by the Scale of the Overall Satisfaction Levels for the Foods of the Visitors According to Their Previous Visits to Hatay Satisfaction Visitation N X SS Yes 81 3,7778 1,00000 No 283 3,7915 ,83941 When Table 6 and Table 7 were examined, it was found that there was no meaningful difference between the groups that visited Hatay before and their general satisfaction levels for the foods they ate (t=0,901; p= 0,061). Table 7: T test Results of the Scale of Hatay Local Food According to the Scores Obtained with General Satisfaction Levels Levene's Test t-test for Equality of Means F Sig. t Df Sig. (2- tailed) Mean Satisfaction Equal variances 3,529 ,061 ,124 362 ,901 ,01374 Equal variances ,113 114,204 ,910 ,01374 A correlation analysis was carried out to determine whether there is a meaningful relationship between the general satisfaction levels for the foods served and the significance level of Hatay's local foods in image perceptions for Hatay. Correlation analysis was applied for two variables: image and satisfaction. The results of the correlation analysis are shown in Table 8. Table 8: Analysis of the Correlation Between the Level of General Satisfaction and the Importance of Hatay's Local foods in Image Perception towards Hatay Satisfaction 331 Image Pearson Correlation ,365** Sig. (2-tailed) ,000 N 364 Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).** Analysis of the correlation between the level of general satisfaction and the importance of Hatay's local foods in image perception towards Hatay shows there was a meaningful correlation between the level of general satisfaction and the importance of Hatay's local foods in image perception towards Hatay (p < 0,01). There is a relatively weak correlation between the variables (r = 0.365). As the level of general satisfaction towards the catered food of the visitors

increases, the level of importance of Hatay's local foods also increases in the image perception towards Hatay. Table 9 gives the ranking of the elements visitors attach importance to visiting Hatay. When the table is examined, the highest average expressions are 'Finding peace (4,1429),' 'Having fun (4,1264),' 'providing information about cultural and historical artefacts (4,0797),' and 'visiting for eating and drinking' (4,0495). 332 When Table 10 is reviewed again, it is possible to say the majority of participants think that the idea of tasting the food and drink is very important in the visitations to Hatay and that those who think that it is insignificant are very few. RESULTS The aim of the study was to determine the perception of the image of Hatay, the general satisfaction levels for the meals, the relationship between them, and the elements that stand out when visiting Hatay. In this context, the study includes a series of practical applications for both public and private organizations supporting the development of tourism in the city and tourism enterprises. First, most of the visitors who are in Istanbul and eat in Hatay local food restaurants did not visit Hatay before. This situation shows that visitors want to taste the Hatay's local food although they had never seen Hatay. This study tried to determine the importance of Hatay's local foods in the perception of visitors towards image of Hatay. Analyses showed the food served at the restaurant is very influential in the perception of Hatay's destination image. Only 3.2% of the participants stated that the food was not important. For the most of the participants, when you said something about Hatay, the first thing that comes to their mind is Hatay's local food. Another question that has been investigated about the image perceptions of the participants is whether there is a difference in the perception of the image of the Hatay between those who went 333 before and those who did not. Analyses made for this question showed there is no difference in perception of the image of the Hatay whether or not a visit Hatay is on the participant's mind. Participants are generally satisfied about the food they ate. Nevertheless, according to the t-test, there is no meaningful relationship between their local food satisfaction and visiting Hatay. Correlation analysis reveals that as the satisfaction level of the visitors increases, the importance level of Hatay's image also increases. Finally, this study ranked the elements visitors attach importance to when visiting Hatay. For this ranking, the first four elements are 'finding peace,' 'having fun,' 'providing information about cultural and historical artifacts,' and 'visiting for eating and drinking. ' These findings seem reasonable when considering the destination attractions of Hatay, an old settlement. It is a wellknown observation that travels for peacefulness and enjoyment, taking the first two orders, are preminent for almost all travel except business travel. From this point of view, it is not surprising that the 'gastronomic' element is in second place. This is an important result for gastronomy authorities in Hatay. They are always emphasizing that Hatay is famous for its local food but, according to these results, Hatay' s cultural and historical values are more in the minds of visitors than its meals. These findings are remarkable for the city of Hatay, which wants to have widespread awareness throughout the world as Gastronomy City. There are important responsibilities for tourism enterprises and food and beverage operations, especially public organizations such as the Governorship, the Tourism Provincial Directorate and Municipality, non-governmental organizations such as Hatay Tourism Association, related tourism departments of the University, and so on, to increase the recognition of this destination's gastronomic values.

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