

**A RESEARCH ON THE LOCAL GASTRONOMY IMAGE OF SIVAS**Mustafa IŞKIN¹

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The present study was carried out in order to determine the local gastronomic image of Sivas province. In the present study, it was determined how the local gastronomy of Sivas is perceived by the tourists visiting this city. Moreover, the image perceptions of tourists regarding the food and beverage companies operating in Sivas province. The universe of the present study consists of tourists visiting Sivas province in the summer season of 2019. The survey form prepared within the scope of the present study was conducted on 722 individuals. The data obtained were analyzed using frequency analysis and discriminant analyses. At the end of the study, it was determined that the perceptions of tourists, who have visited Sivas province, regarding the local gastronomic image of the city were at a low level. However, it was determined that this is because the cuisine culture, which is one of the components of local gastronomy, couldn't sufficiently be reflected by the gastronomy businesses. On the other hand, it was also determined that the local gastronomy perceptions of tourists visiting Sivas province within the scope of hometown tourism, staying at their relatives' houses, and eating the foods prepared by their relatives were higher than the others.

INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy shouldn't be considered as food and beverage only. Gastronomy is actually a culture of local society. Gastronomy is an important factor representing the locals' culture, as well as heritages, traditions, and common values they inherit from their ancestors (Sormaz et al. 2016: 725; UNWTO, 2020; Aksoy and Sezgi, 2015: 80; Sarıışık and Özbay, 2015: 265; Bucak and Aracı, 2013: 206; Green and Dougherty, 2008;). In fact, the food and beverage consumptions of tourists during their visits to the destination. Gastronomy has a wide context including visiting the primary and secondary food producers, gastronomic festivals, gastronomic expos, fairs, visits to producer (farmer) markets, food shows, and tasting foods (UNWTO, 2020; Özdemir and Altınır, 2019: 3; Sarıışık and Özbay, 2015: 265; Zengin et al. 2015: 3; Cömert and Özkaya; 2014: 63). On the other hand, culinary schools have an important place in gastronomic tourism activities (GFTA, 2020; Hjalager, 2002: 77). As can be seen, gastronomy and gastronomic tourism have a very wide context.

In general, gastronomy is perceived from a different point in Turkey. Gastronomy is considered to be limited only to the activities performed in food and beverage businesses. The dimension of culture, which is the most important factor in gastronomy, is ignored. Thus, the companies offering foods and beverages, which have no cultural character, consumed in a wide geography, have no cultural factor involved in preparation and supply, and have no link to the destination where they are offered, are considered as gastronomy companies (Reynolds, 1994: 189-191). Besides that, also the local administrations and the local actors affiliated with the tourism-related central administration may consider the gastronomic activities as adding several local foods into the current menus of food and beverage businesses (Harrington, 2005: 129-132). However, as emphasized above, gastronomy has a

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multidimensional structure. It may not be possible to practice gastronomic tourism only by offering some of the local foods on the menus.

The present study aims to determine the gastronomy image perceptions of tourists, which is one of the factors to construct the infrastructure, in order to determine the current status of Sivas in terms of gastronomic tourism and performing gastronomic tourism consciously at the local scale. Hence, it would be possible to determine the actual status of Sivas in terms of gastronomic tourism from the perspective of tourists.

The results to be achieved would provide important inputs for the future gastronomic tourism plans to be made for Sivas. The information to be achieved from the analyses has an important place in the situation analysis within the scope of gastronomic tourism planning. By using the results obtained from the present research, it will be possible in the process of situation analysis to determine the tourists' gastronomic image perceptions regarding Sivas, as well as the deficiencies and satisfactory aspects they perceive. Thus, the opinions of tourists, who are among the most important parties in gastronomic tourism, on the destination will be objectively revealed.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Gastronomy is actually a concept that individuals cannot clearly define but interpret when hearing it. It is not easy to conceptually define gastronomy with words. On the other hand, it can also be seen that gastronomy already has certain reflections depending on the perspective of individuals. Although there are no clear definitions in some of the previous studies, some others incorporate general definitions. Some of the researchers advocate that gastronomy begins with the cultivation of materials used in the preparation of foods and beverages. According to these researchers, gastronomy incorporates the process of farming the foods. On the other hand, some researchers focus only on the kitchen. According to those researchers, gastronomy includes selection of products, cooking methods, use of cooking equipment, exploring them, and the taste and science of meals (Çağlı, 2012: 23; Hussin, 2018; 2). Besides these perspectives, some other researchers assume that gastronomy includes measurement of taste and smell perceptions of those consuming the meals. Furthermore, there also are approaches advocating that gastronomy is a cultural phenomenon and it has a sociological dimension (Hjalager and Corigliano, 2000: 281; Scarpato, 2002: 51-53). Some of the researchers assume that gastronomy is a cultural outcome and it arises from the cultural background of a society (Richards, 2002: 5). The points emphasized above represent the truth from their perspectives. For this reason, it can be assumed that the sum of these perspectives constitutes the concept of gastronomy. It can be stated that gastronomy is a comprehensive concept that incorporates the production and selection of materials used in foods and beverages, processing and making these foods to be ready for consumption, and the processes after the consumption of foods and beverages (Kivela and Crotts, 2006: 356; Gökdeniz et al. 2015: 16). Besides that, it can also be stated that the definition of gastronomy may evolve in the course of time as a result of possible developments and transformations in social and scientific fields.

The concept of gastronomic tourism has a wide context, as concept of gastronomy has. In gastronomic tourism, individuals can visit the production areas, where they can observe the production places and processes of materials used in preparing the foods and beverages (Ramírez-Gutiérrez et al. 2020: 1). Moreover, food and beverage festivals and competitions are also within the scope of gastronomic tourism (Fox, 2007: 547). Besides them, participation in food and beverage courses and the touristic activities engaged for these purposes are within the scope of gastronomic tourism. Finally, the touristic activities for tasting the gastronomy products and knowing the culture, which creates those products, are considered within the scope of gastronomic tourism (Özdemir and Altın, 2019: 3; Sarıışık and Özbay, 2015: 265; Şahin, 2015: 79; Zengin et al. 2015: 3; Cömert and Özkaya; 2014: 63). As seen, gastronomic tourism has different dimensions. The dimensions of gastronomic tourism include knowing the processes of cultivating the gastronomic products, food and beverage trainings and courses addressing these products, and the culture creating these products.

In tourism activities, gastronomic tourism has gained an important place in recent years. It can be seen that gastronomic tourism revenues significantly increased before the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of individuals engaged in gastronomic tourism activities showed an important increase. Tourists have a different motivation regarding transnational and intercity travels (Afshardoost and Eshaghi, 2020: 104-105; Lee and Xue, 2020: 394; Lai et al. 2019: 4; Güzel and Apaydın, 2016: 394; Hosany et al. 2007: 63-64; Fields, 2002: 37). However, the important point here is the gastronomy images of destinations (Cardoso et al. 2019: 3; Soiden et al. 2017: 54; Qu et al. 2011: 465; Cohen and Avieli, 2004: 756; Beerli and Martin, 2004: 658; Echtner and Ritchie, 1993: 4). While visiting a destination within the scope of gastronomic tourism, individuals consider the gastronomy images of those destinations. The gastronomy image includes visitors' thoughts, ideas, projections, and experiences about the food and beverage activities and gastronomic backgrounds of a destination (İlban, et al. 2008: 124). Several factors come

to the forefront in the formation of a gastronomy image. These factors include local people, relevant businesses, and public institutions and organizations (Kozak, 2008: 145). These actors play important roles in formation of gastronomy image. For the gastronomy image, it is important for locals to protect the gastronomic products, as well as protecting the cultural characteristics of those products and maintaining the presence of gastronomic products representing the cultural character (Niedbala et al. 2020; Kivela ve Crotts, 2006: 355; López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012: 64-65). Moreover, the businesses operating in that destination should incorporate the local gastronomic products in their menus. These local gastronomic products should be prepared and offered in accordance with the original and in the way representing the culture of destination. On the other hand, for the development of gastronomy image, public institutions should support the local gastronomy through their studies and make effort to promote the local gastronomy. The gastronomy images of destinations may vary in the course of time (Kozak, 2008: 145). At this point, the gastronomy image of a destination may be improved through a planned management by the relevant shareholders (Knollenberg et al. 2020: 3-4; Şahin and Tosun, 2020: 566; Tasci and Gartner, 2007: 413-415; Tasci et al. 2007: 195; Gallarza et al. 2002: 58). The present study was carried out in order to determine the current status of Sivas in terms of local gastronomy image. Thus, by determining the local gastronomy image of Sivas, an important source of information would be provided for managing the local gastronomy image of Sivas.

Within the scope of this theoretical background, the following hypotheses were established in order to determine the current gastronomy image of Sivas and to determine if the gastronomy image varies depending on the characteristics and preferences of tourists;

H1: The positive perception levels of visitors, who visit Sivas, regarding Sivas' gastronomy image is high.

H2: Sivas's gastronomy image significantly varies depending on the descriptive characteristics and preferences of visitors visiting Sivas.

METHOD

The present study aims to determine the perceptions of visitors regarding the gastronomy image of Sivas. On the other hand, it was also aimed to contribute to the situation analysis needed for planning and managing the gastronomy image of Sivas by determining the tourists' perceptions about Sivas's gastronomy image. The present study provides information for the situation analysis on this gastronomy image. The study is important since it is the first study on the gastronomy image of Sivas. In this process, the answers to questions "How the gastronomy image perceptions of tourists visiting Sivas about the destination are" and "Do the sub-variables constituting the gastronomy image vary depending on the demographic characteristics and preferences of tourists visiting the destination" were sought firsts. The main reason for searching for an answer to these questions is the absence of a study investigating the gastronomy image of Sivas and to determine the perceptions on the gastronomy image of Sivas because there is an idea that the gastronomy image of Sivas is generally positive. Local people and relevant shareholders living in Sivas think that gastronomy image of Sivas is positive and at a high level. The validity of this thought and opinion will be tested in the present study. The scale used in this study was adapted from the gastronomy image scale developed by Eren (2016). The scale developed by Eren (2016: 73) consists of 21 items and 3 sub-variables. In the present study, some of the items included in the original study of Eren (2016) were excluded and 15 items were used. 5-point Likert scale used in measuring the gastronomy image. Since the study carried out by Eren (2016) was at national level, some of the items were modified in order to adapt to the local scale. However, the sub-variables were kept. Because of the modifications made in the scale, a preliminary application was performed on 81 participants. In the process of preliminary application, the opinions of experts, business managers, tourists, and relevant public institutions were collected. As a result of the preliminary application, it was determined that the load on the sub-variables in all the statements, except for two of them, was higher than 0.50. The two statements with factor load lower than 0.50 were excluded from the scale. Then the scale was given its final form. The universe of study consists of tourists visiting Sivas in year 2019. The number of tourists visiting Sivas in this period was 519,606 (Sivas Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, 2021). As a result of the sample size calculation with the error margin of 0.5, the minimum number of samples was calculated to be 384. The sampling method was random (simple possibility, random, and unbiased) sampling (Bayar and Bayar, 2015: 119; Karagöz, 2017: 63; Can, 2019: 25) method. Within the scope of the present study, 1000 tourists were contacted and 722 tourists responded. The pattern of the study was designed in accordance with the non-experimental research approach. The difference comparison method among the non-experimental comparison methods determining the relationship between variables was used. The characteristics and preferences of participants were determined using a non-experimental descriptive approach. The reliability tests of data were performed first. Then, after the

reliability test, the factor analysis was performed in order to determine if the statements have the factor loads at the desired level. Then, the frequency analyses were performed for the characteristics and preferences of participating tourists. Then, the normality of data was tested and it was determined that the data were not distributed normally. For this reason, it was decided to use non-parametric difference tests. However, it was determined that the statements regarding the characteristics and preferences were clustered in a minimum of 3 groups. Thus, Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra Ordered Alternatives Test analyses were implemented.

RESULTS

The results of analyses on descriptive characteristics, preferences, and opinions of tourists visiting Sivas are shown in Table 1. As seen in Table 1, 44.7% of visitors visiting Sivas have visited the destination for homeland tourism, followed by cultural tourism. The visits for the purpose of gastronomic tourism examined in the present study have a very low percentage in the total. On the other hand, given the results of analyses examining what Sivas reminds the visitors of, it can be seen that 28% of tourists reminded of Sivas shepherd dog first, followed by Sivas Meatball with the rate of 15.5%, Divriği Ulu Camii (Mosque) with the rate of 11.9%, and 4 Eylül Congress Building with the rate of 11.6%. Another point that the scale examines is what Sivas gastronomy reminds the tourists of. It was determined that 37% of tourists were reminded of Sivas meatball, followed by Etli Ekmek with 16.5% and Sivas Kebab with 11.6%.

Table 1. Statistics on Descriptive Characteristics, Preferences, and Opinions of Participating Tourists (N:722)

Tourist's purpose of visiting Sivas	N	%	What does Sivas Remind the Tourist of	N	%
Homeland Tourism	323	44.7	Divriği Ulu Cami	86	11.9
Entertainment and Resort	35	4.8	Kangal Shepherd Dog	202	28.0
Business Tourism	70	9.7	4 Eylül Congress Building	84	11.6
Medical Tourism	84	11.6	Sivas Meatball	112	15.5
Cultural Tourism	112	15.5	Sivas Kebab	21	2.9
Belief Tourism	28	3.9	Gürün Gök Pınar	49	6.8
Gastronomic Tourism	42	5.8	Hafik Lake	28	3.9
Congress Tourism	28	3.9	Tödürge Lake	14	1.9
Total	722	100.0	Balıklı Kaplıca (Spa)	77	10.7
			Sıcak Çermik (Hot Spring)	35	4.8
			Soğuk Çermik (Cold Spring)	14	1.9
			Total	722	100.0
What does the Gastronomy Sivas Remind the Tourist of	N	%	How Many Times the Visitor Has Visited Sivas Destination	N	%
Sivas Meatball	267	37.0	1-2	182	25.2
Sivas Kebab	84	11.6	3-4	91	12.6
Subura	49	6.8	5-6	70	9.7
Hıngel	35	4.8	7-8	56	7.8
Stuffed Meatballs	14	1.9	9-10	48	6.6
Ayran Soup	49	6.8	11 and higher	275	38.1
Peskütan Soup	42	5.8	Total	722	100.0
Etli Ekmek (Bread with Ground Meat)	119	16.5			
Katmer (a Flaky Pastry)	35	4.8			
Divriği Rice	28	3.9			
Total	722	100.0			
Where Have You Eaten Sivas Dishes at most?	N	%	Do the Gastronomy Businesses in Sivas Give Sufficient Place to Local Gastronomy?	N	%
Relative's House	309	42.8	No	449	62.2
Restaurant	161	22.3	Neutral	245	33.9
Hotel Restaurant	98	13.6	Yes	28	3.9
Public Social Facilities	154	21.3	Total	722	100.0
Total	722	100.0			

Given the tourists' number of visit to Sivas, it was found that 38.1% of participants visited Sivas for 11 times and more, followed by those visiting Sivas for 1-2 times with a share of 25.2%. It was determined that 42.8% of tourists visiting Sivas have eaten Sivas dishes mainly in houses of their relatives, followed by restaurants with 22.3% and public social facilities with 21.3%. On the other hand, 61.2% of tourists visiting Sivas stated that gastronomy businesses in Sivas do not give sufficient place to local gastronomy in their menus. The rate of those stating that gastronomy businesses in Sivas give sufficient place to local gastronomy in their menus was only 3.9%.

A factor analysis was performed on 15 statements in order to determine the scale's capacity for measuring the gastronomy image. It was determined that the statements had loads of >0.50 on the sub-variables to be measured. For this reason, no item was excluded. Moreover, as a result of the factor analysis, the KMO coefficient was found to be 0.921 $p(\text{sig.}) = 0.000$. This result suggests that the scale and the sample were sufficient. On the other hand, as a result of the exploratory factor analysis, it was found that the first factor explained 35.625% of the total variance, the second factor explained 18.345%, and the third factor explained 11.032%. It was also determined that eigenvalues explained 65.02% of the total variance (Karagöz, 2017: 408-409).

Considering the previous studies, the following hypothesis was tested first;

H1: "The positive perception levels of visitors, who visit Sivas, regarding Sivas's gastronomy image is high"

Within this context, the variable "Gastronomy Image", which was the main variable, was calculated as the average of three sub-variables. As a result of the analyses performed, the average of tourists' perception about the gastronomy image of Sivas was found to be 2.1. Thus, it was determined that the gastronomy image of Sivas was at a low level. Hence, hypothesis H1: "The positive perception levels of visitors, who visit Sivas, regarding Sivas's gastronomy image is high" was rejected.

As a result of the normality tests on the data collected during the research period, it was found that the data were not normally distributed. The analysis results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Normality Tests

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Gastronomy Culture	.220	722	.000	.919	722	.000
Gastronomy Businesses	.118	722	.000	.960	722	.000
Gastronomic Activities	.197	722	.000	.926	722	.000
Gastronomy Image	.158	722	.000	.955	722	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

As seen in Table 2, it was determined that the data of the main variable "Gastronomy Image" and its sub-variables "gastronomy culture, gastronomy businesses, and gastronomic activities" showed non-normal distribution. Shown in "Sig." column of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test used for determining the normality of data distribution, the p values lower than 0.05 indicate that the data have no normal distribution.

Since the data obtained showed non-normal distribution, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used in determining the differences between groups higher than 2. As a result of the Kruskal-Wallis test performed, it was determined that tourists' perception of Sivas's gastronomy image varied depending on their purpose of visit ($p < 0.05$). As a result of the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, it was found that the average of at least 1 universe is smaller than the others ($p = 0.000$). Given the ordered means presented in Table 3, it can be seen that the tourists visiting Sivas for homeland tourism generally have positive perceptions regarding the gastronomy image of Sivas (486.84). Considering the ordered means, it can be stated that those visiting Sivas for congress tourism have positive gastronomy image perception (472.50) but those visiting Sivas for gastronomic tourism have a low level of gastronomy image perceptions (50.67). On the other hand, it was determined that the gastronomy image levels of tourists visiting Sivas for cultural tourism were low (130.25).

Table 3. The Results of Kruskal-Wallis and Jonckheere-Terpstra Ordered Alternatives Tests Revealing the Tourists' Level of Gastronomy Image Perception on Sivas

	Group	N	Ordered Mean	Kruskal-Wallis			Jonckheere-Terpstra
				X ²	df	p	p
Purpose of Travel	Homeland Tourism	323	486.84	362.713	7	.000	.000
	Entertainment and Resort	35	398.50				
	Business	70	310.60				
	Medical Tourism	84	332.63				
	Cultural Tourism	112	130.25				
	Belief Tourism	28	363.50				
	Gastronomic Tourism	42	50.67				
	Congress Tourism	28	472.50				
Where have you eaten Sivas dishes at most?	Relatives' House	309	479.49	192.644	3	.000	.000
	Restaurant	161	272.50				
	Hotel Restaurant	98	200.75				
	Public Social Facilities	154	320.09				
Is the Local Gastronomy Given Sufficient Place?	No	449	403.26	48.841	2	.000	.000
	Neutral	245	297.50				
	Yes	28	251.88				
Number of Visits	1-2	178	220.38	236.104	5	.000	.000
	3-4	91	250.12				
	5-6	70	291.50				
	7-8	56	347.69				
	9-10	33	485.03				
	11 and higher	294	487.45				

Regarding the location where the tourists have eaten Sivas dishes at most, the analyses on if the gastronomy image of Sivas varies depending on where they have eaten Sivas dishes showed that the tourists' perceptions on Sivas's gastronomy image varied depending on where they have eaten Sivas dishes ($p < 0.05$). Jonckheere-Terpstra test indicated that the average of at least 1 universe is smaller than the others ($p = 0.000$). As seen in Table 3, the positive perception levels of those, who have eaten in their relatives' houses, on the gastronomy image of Sivas were very high (479.49). It was found that the gastronomy image perception of those eating Sivas's local dishes in public social facilities was at a high level (320.09). However, the positive perception levels of those eating dishes in the hotel restaurant were low (200.05).

As a result of the analyses performed in order to determine if the tourists' perception of Sivas's gastronomy image varied depending on if local gastronomy was given sufficient place by the local businesses, it was found that the level of positive perception on gastronomy image among those giving the response "no" was high (403.26). As a result of the Jonckheere-Terpstra test, it was found that the average of at least 1 universe is smaller than the others ($p = 0.000$). On the other hand, the positive perception of gastronomy image among those remaining neutral was at a moderate level (297.50). It was determined that the positive perception levels of tourists, who think that local gastronomy of Sivas is given sufficient place in local gastronomy businesses, on the gastronomy image of Sivas were low but close to a moderate level (251.88).

As a result of Kruskal-Wallis performed in order to determine if the positive perceptions of tourists on gastronomy image of Sivas varied depending on their number of visits to Sivas destination, it was found that the positive gastronomy image perception increased as the number of visits increased ($p < 0.05$). Jonckheere-Terpstra test showed that the average of at least 1 universe is smaller than the others ($p = 0.000$). The tourists visiting Sivas for 11 times or more had the highest level of positive gastronomy image perception (487.45), while those visiting Sivas for 9-10 times had a high level of positive gastronomy image perception (485.03). On the other hand, those visiting Sivas for 1-2 times had a low level of positive gastronomy image perception (220.38).

Given the results provided before and considering those reported in previous studies, the following hypothesis was accepted;

“H2: Sivas’s gastronomy image significantly varies depending on the descriptive characteristics and preferences of visitors visiting Sivas”.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, and SUGGESTIONS

As a result of the analyses performed during this study, it was determined that 44.7% of tourists visiting Sivas have visited the destination for homeland tourism. This is an accepted fact for Sivas because many individuals who couldn’t find a job in Sivas have migrated long years ago. Many individuals, who cannot find a job in Sivas, still have to move to other cities or even other countries. For this reason, there are many people, who have their origins in Sivas but living in other places. These individuals prefer visiting Sivas in the summer months. For this reason, the population in Sivas significantly increases in the mid-summer season. This is very beneficial for tourism companies in Sivas, but especially for the gastronomy businesses because the individuals coming from other locations create significant revenues for the gastronomy businesses in the city. On the other hand, it was found that 15.5% of tourists visiting Sivas have come for the purpose of cultural tourism. Sivas has hosted important civilizations throughout the history. For this reason, this city has an important cultural heritage. At the city center of Sivas, there are many cultural assets dating back to the Seljuk, Ottoman, and Turkish Republic periods. From this aspect, Sivas city center is actually like an open-air museum. Besides that, Sivas is also rich in intangible cultural heritage factors such as türkü (folk songs), tradition of minstrelsy, and folk dances performed in local wedding ceremonies. For this reason, it is an expected result that tourists having the motivation of cultural tourism would visit Sivas. It was determined that 11.6% of tourists visiting Sivas had the motivation of medical tourism. This finding can be explained with Balıklı Kaplıca (a spa), which has an important place in the treatment of psoriasis disease, and the individuals, who live in other cities and countries and prefer Sivas for treatment of medical problems for easier access and more affordable prices. One of the most important points here is that the percentage of tourists visiting Sivas for gastronomic tourism was low. Only 5.8% of tourists visiting Sivas have the motivation of gastronomic tourism. It might be because the local gastronomy of Sivas is not promoted sufficiently and the local gastronomy businesses do not give sufficient place to the local gastronomy products.

According to the results achieved, the first thing that tourists visiting Sivas remind of is Kangal shepherd dog. When asked about what Sivas reminded them of, 28% of participating tourists stated Sivas Kangal shepherd dog. It is known that Kangal shepherd dog has a high level of recognition. On the other hand, the gastronomy products, which are closely related with the subject of this study, rank high among the subjects coming to mind when thinking of Sivas. Sivas Meatball ranks second with a rate of 15.5%. This finding can be explained by the fact that the majority of the individuals visiting Sivas have visited the destination for homeland tourism because Sivas Meatball has an important value for the people of Sivas. In Sivas destination, there are many gastronomy businesses offering service based on Sivas Meatball. From the aspect of gastronomy, it can be stated that Sivas Meatball is a symbol of Sivas. For this reason, it is reasonable that Sivas Meatball is reminded by those visiting Sivas for homeland tourism.

According to the results achieved, when the tourists visiting Sivas were asked about what Sivas gastronomy reminds them of, Sivas Meatball ranked first with 37%, followed by Etli Ekmek with the rate of 16.5% and Sivas Kebab with 11.6%. The answers given to this item are actually in harmony with what Sivas reminds them of because Sivas Meatball is very popular in Sivas destination. Regarding the consumption of Sivas Meatball, it is known that, besides the restaurants, individuals also buy ready-to-cook meatballs from butchers and cook them in picnic areas or gardens. For this reason, Sivas Meatball is widely consumed in restaurants and houses. For this reason, it can be stated that this is an expected result because of its wide consumption, especially by those visiting Sivas for homeland tourism. On the other hand, Etli Ekmek is another gastronomic product, which is widely consumed in restaurants. Besides that, individuals also take Etli Ekmek content to local pide businesses and have them cook that content. Due to its wide consumption, it is an expected result that Etli Ekmek would be reminded of. However, there is an important point that the authentic dishes of Sivas destination other than Sivas Meatball, Etli Ekmek, and Sivas Kebab. This result may be because the local gastronomy of Sivas is not sufficiently promoted and these dishes are not given sufficient place in menus of restaurants.

Considering the number of tourists’ visits to Sivas, it can be seen that 25.2% of participants have visited Sivas 1-2 times. However, another important point is that 38.1% of participants stated that they have visited Sivas for 11 times or more. This is because the majority of those visiting Sivas prefer this destination within the scope of

homeland tourism. Many individuals visit Sivas annually for homeland tourism. For this reason, this result was an expected one.

When asked about where they have eaten the dishes of Sivas's local gastronomy at most, it was found that 42.8% of tourists have eaten these foods in their relatives' houses. Considering the fact that 44.7% of tourists have visited Sivas for homeland tourism, this is an expected result because most of those visiting Sivas for homeland tourism stay in their own houses or houses of their relatives. Hence, they eat these dishes in the houses of their relatives. Moreover, the fact that the local gastronomy products are not given sufficient place in gastronomy businesses in Sivas destination also corroborates this finding.

When asked if local gastronomy is given sufficient place in gastronomy businesses in Sivas, 62.2% of participating tourists stated that local gastronomy is not given sufficient place in these businesses. It was also determined that 33.9% remained neutral and 3.9% stated that the local gastronomy is given sufficient place. In parallel with these findings, it can be stated that gastronomy businesses do not give sufficient place to local gastronomy in their menus. The observations also corroborate this finding. However, especially the public-owned social facilities can be considered exceptions because these facilities give significant weight to the local gastronomy.

On the other hand, it was also determined that tourists' perceptions of Sivas's gastronomy image varied depending on their purpose of travel. Especially those visiting Sivas for homeland tourism were found to have a high level of positive gastronomy image perception. It might be because tourists visiting Sivas for homeland tourism stay in their relatives' houses and they most likely eat local fishes in the houses of their relatives. Moreover, it was also determined that the positive gastronomy image level of those visiting Sivas within the scope of congress tourism was high. This might be because the tourists visiting Sivas within the scope of congress tourism are offered foods and local gastronomy products in order to promote the local culture. The menus that will reflect the culture of Sivas are preferred in congresses organized by the universities. These menus are prepared and served by the social facilities of public institutions. The other interesting results are about the gastronomy image perceptions of tourists visiting Sivas within the scope of cultural and gastronomic tourism because the tourists within this scope have a low level of positive gastronomy image perceptions on Sivas. This might be because the tourists visiting Sivas within the scope of cultural and gastronomic tourism are more conscious about the local gastronomy but they couldn't find these products since local gastronomic products are not given sufficient place in the restaurants.

Within the scope of the present study, it was examined if the gastronomy image perceptions of tourists visiting Sivas would vary depending on where they have eaten Sivas dishes. As a result of analyses performed, it was found that the positive gastronomy image perceptions of those eating in their relatives' houses were at higher levels. This might be because the local dishes were cooked in their relatives' houses and these tourists could eat these foods. They might have a high level of positive gastronomy image perception for this reason. On the other hand, also the positive gastronomy image perceptions of those eating Sivas dishes in public social facilities, which give more place to local foods, were at a high level. Considering these results, it can be concluded that the tourists that can taste the Sivas dishes had a high level of positive gastronomy image perceptions. However, the positive gastronomy image perception levels of tourists eating local foods at hotels and restaurants were low because these foods are not given sufficient place in hotel restaurants and restaurants. Making their assessments based on the local foods included in these businesses but not reflecting the Sivas cuisine at all, these tourists have a low level of positive gastronomy image perception.

As a result of analyses examining if the gastronomy image perceptions of tourists vary by their number of visits to Sivas, it was determined that the positive gastronomy image level increased with the increasing number of visits (Kivela and Crotts, 2008: 39; Hjalager, 2002: 22; Souiden, et al. 2017: 54). This might be because the chance to consume local gastronomy products increases with the increasing number of visits. Thus, they can really know the local gastronomy and they gain a positive gastronomy image perception.

As seen above, there are many factors altering the gastronomy image of Sivas in the eyes of tourists. These factors may vary depending on the destinations and conditions (Sheldon and Fox, 1988: 9; Richards, 2002: 4). For this reason, comparing the results of the present study to those reported in studies carried out on different destinations would not be a scientifically valid approach. For this reason, the results achieved here were not compared to the results obtained for different destinations (Scarpato, 2002: 51-52).

On the other hand, the shareholders making effort to improve the tourism in Sivas should recognize the importance of gastronomic tourism (Hall and Mitchell, 2002; Scarpato, 2002: 51-52). Then, the plans should be made in order to manage the gastronomy image (Fields, 2002: 36-37). The gastronomy image of Sivas can be efficiently

managed only in this way. However, planning requires a comprehensive situation analysis. The present study bridges an important data gap that is important for the situation analysis. However, since the present study was carried out only on the tourists, it provides only a part of the needed data. A more comprehensive study involving other shareholders and examining the gastronomy image is needed. Further studies should consider this point.

Moreover, the vast majority of tourists think that gastronomy businesses do not give sufficient place to foods and products related with local gastronomy. For this reason, it can be emphasized that local gastronomy firms should give more place to the foods and products representing the local gastronomy.

Etik Beyan

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