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Research on Mediating Role of Gastronomic Elements in Travel Motivation

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the research is to determine the mediating role of gastronomic elements that are effective in the travel motivation of individuals. In line with the literature review, a questionnaire based on the survey model was prepared to determine individuals' travel motivation, gastronomic elements that are effective in destination visits and individuals' thoughts about their anxiety or fear of new tastes and flavors (neophobia). With the help of the questionnaire prepared in accordance with its purpose, the necessary data for the research were obtained from 391 participants by using the convenience sampling method. According to the findings, both travel motivation and thoughts about gastronomic elements differ according to the demographic characteristics of individuals. It has also been determined that there is a significant relationship between travel motivation and gastronomic elements. Within the scope of the research, the effect of neophobia on travel motivation was also investigated.

Introduction

With the advances in the period after the Industrial Revolution, tourism activities have turned into mass tourism and have reached a dimension that harms human health with the unconscious using of natural and cultural resources. After the 1980s, awareness of the importance of nature conservation for living in a healthy world by a healthy way has developed and contributed to the increase in demand for alternative tourism types.

It is stated that the interest in gastronomy tourism, which is one of the alternative tourism types, is increasing rapidly. Gastronomy tourism, which is defined as special interest tourism related to the preparation, presentation and tasting of local dishes of the preferred destination, is also expressed as cultural tourism due to the cultural impact reflected by local dishes. In addition, it is also defined as the happiness of life in connection with the pleasure and happiness created by gastronomic experiences in the human soul.

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When the people who perform gastronomy tourism are examined, it is seen that there is a directly proportional correlation between gastronomy and the desire to travel for gastronomy. In addition, travel motivation is defined as the desire that leads individuals to take part in tourism activities.

The study aims to investigate how gastronomic elements affect individuals' travel motivation and to contribute to the literature by providing suggestions on this issue.

Literature Review

The tourism sector, which is an important factor in promoting the achievement of the "Sustainable Development Goals" of the United Nations and increasing social welfare, is also considered as the driving force of sustainable economic growth. The tourism sector, which has been developing and growing since the last decade, accounts for 10.2 per cent of the world's gross domestic product. Gastronomy tourism, which is one of the most attractive types of the tourism sector and is also defined as food tourism or culinary tourism, includes local products, traditional and original dishes and cooking methods that belong to the destination and reflect the local culture at national, regional and local level, and sustainable ethical values (The United Nations World Tourism Organisations (UNWTO, 2022c). Gastronomy, a term first used by the French in history, consists of the Greek words "*gaster*" (stomach) and "*namas*" (law), and is also defined as culinary culture and methods or the art of cooking from the past to the present (Uyar & Zengin, 2015).

In the studies on gastronomic tourism and travel motivation, it is seen that research has been conducted mainly on gastronomy. When the studies in the literature on gastronomy tourism are examined, the research conducted by Lopez-Guzman et al. (2014) examined the importance of gastronomy and its effect on the travel motivation of tourists to the region in Caceres, Spain. According to the findings obtained as a result of the study, they stated that gastronomy is the main element of travel motivation and contributes to increasing the image and recognition of the agricultural products of the destination.

In the study conducted by Sotiriadis (2015), when he examined the issue of proposing gastronomy tourism and activities as a strategic planning tool, it is stated that gastronomy tourism and activities will be increased significantly and will provide employment, business opportunities and various opportunities for the destination.

According to the findings of Garibaldi and Pozzi's (2018) research on Italian producers who create a tourism experience by combining food and culture, they found that intrinsic motivation comes first in gastronomy tourism and that food and beverage producers have the potential to become important attraction centers for tourists. It is also stated that the sustainability of gastronomy tourism will further improve in the context of food museums.

The aim of the research conducted by Berbel-Pineda et al. (2019) in Seville, Spain, was to measure the satisfaction levels of gastro tourists in a destination and to examine the impact dimension of gastronomic elements on tourist motivations. According to the results of the analysis made by obtaining data through a questionnaire with 325 participants, it shows that gastronomic motivation affects the choice of touristic destination, gastronomic culture and experience satisfaction. In addition, it was found that tourists provide satisfaction from the gastronomy area that causes a significant level of loyalty.

The destination choice of the gastro tourist, which is an important element in gastronomy tourism, is primarily shaped by food preference, but also due to different reasons. Factors such as getting to know the local people and culture living in different destinations, gaining superiority and appreciation in the social society in which it is located by differentiating from the food order in the daily life routine, and having the unique features of the destination significantly affect the gastro tourist's destination choice (Galati et al., 2023). In this context, the research conducted by Cordova-Buiza et al. (2021) was carried out with a survey study of 660 foreign tourists who participated in the "Virgen de la Calenenia" festival in Peru. In this research, the aim was expressed as examining the gastronomic experiences of tourists coming to the destination. According to the findings obtained as a result of the research, it is stated that the local cuisine can add attractiveness to the destination for gastro tourists. In addition, it is stated that there are three different groups of tourists who are

interested in gastronomy in the region: "those who prefer food to survive", "those who enjoy and enjoy food" and "those who eat to experience".

Regarding the technological developments experienced globally, Vukolic et al. (2022) examined the impact of social networks on gastronomy tourism in their research in the Republic of Serbia. They analysed the data obtained by applying the survey method with 244 people in December 2021 using SPSS version 26.00. According to the results of the analysis, it was concluded that social networks for gastronomy in the Republic of Serbia can be quite effective in the development of gastronomy and gastronomy tourism.

Hsu et al. (2022) conducted research by developing a scale on how gastronomic experiences leave an emotional impact on tourists and how tourist behaviours are shaped accordingly. They stated that with the TAGES scale developed as a result of the research, the relationship between the gastronomic experiences of tourists and their behaviours can be analysed.

When the studies in the literature on gastronomy tourism and travel motivations are examined, De Albuguerque Mneguel et al. (2019) examined the contribution of "El Cellar de Can Roka", a Michelin-starred restaurant in the Catalan region, to the development of gastronomy tourism in the region. Qualitative and explanatory, indirect observation and in-depth interview techniques were used in the study. As a result of the analysis, it was concluded that "El Cellar de Can Roka", which has a Michelin star, has a significant contribution to the development of gastronomy tourism in the region.

Tourism and Gastronomy

The tourism sector is defined as one of the priority sectors that encourages social, cultural and environmental development with the development of awareness for nature conservation and the implementation of sustainability, increasing employment, contributing to economic development (Mohanty et al., 2020).

Gastronomy tourism, which is one of the alternative tourism types, is defined as cultural tourism on the grounds that it reflects the culture, lifestyle and traditions of the destination where it operates, as well as special interest tourism in terms of interest in local food, participation in activities or trainings in the form of making and presenting special dishes (Uyar & Zengin, 2015). The purpose of gastronomy tourism is stated as experiencing different and new flavours other than the known ones and experiencing the feeling of happiness and pleasure created by this experience (Güzel & Apaydın, 2016). "Gastronomy", which is also synonymous with the word "*Culinaria*" (Culinary), is defined as the unique cuisine of a country, city or a region where dishes are prepared with cooking techniques that include its own cultural elements (Kivela, 2005).

According to the research conducted by The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) for the "Global Food Report" in 2012, it is stated that gastronomy is a whole with the destination brand and image and that each country should have its own food culture, while another result of the same research states that gastronomy does not have much effect on destination choice (UNWTO, 2012). Gastronomy, which constitutes a large part of tourism activities, is defined as a cultural package with local cuisine, local recipes, unique flavours and local chefs (Sanchez-Canizares, 2012).

Tasting the dishes made in local and special regions, participating in food festivals, visiting authentic or special restaurants and food producers primarily, and the feeling of happiness experienced by the tourist as a motivational factor for the tourist's travel define gastronomy tourism as special interest tourism (Hall and Mitchell, 2013). Gastronomy tourism was first defined as "culinary tourism" in 1998 as recognising the cultural structure of a destination through experiencing its traditional foods and gaining knowledge. In addition, gastronomic tourism is defined as the combination of valuable and permanent gastronomic experiences with a sense of entertainment, travel and discovery (Dixit, 2019).

Gastronomy tourism is expressed as a form of tourism related to many fields such as chemistry in terms of the content of the substances that make up food and beverages, agriculture in terms of the cultivation and harvesting of these products, geography in terms of the region and climatic conditions

in which it grows, psychology in terms of the emotional effects it leaves on people when consumed and the reasons for preference, and economy in terms of its cost (Özdemir & Altuner, 2019).

Gastronomy tourism, which is an expression of the traditions, lifestyle, values, geography and most of all the emotions of the peoples consisting of different communities, makes many contributions, especially employment, in the destination where it operates (UNWTO, 2022b). While food culture reflects the traditions, cultural structure and lifestyle of the region and society to which it belongs, it also contributes to tourism and travel activities (WFTA {World Food Travel Association}, 2022a; 2022b).

In gastronomic tourism, although the importance of authenticity between the dishes offered to the tourist and the dishes preferred by the tourist is high, today, with the development of sustainability awareness, gastro-tourists prefer to experience food and beverages consisting of foods grown under ecological and natural conditions and reflecting local culture (Gajic, 2015; Kivela, 2006).

Factors Affecting Gastronomy Tourism

In gastronomy tourism, which incorporates the basic cultural elements of the destination, tourists' food and beverage preferences vary depending on various reasons such as physical, cultural, prestige and communication (Su, 2015). Physical factors explain the feeling of pleasure, relaxation and happiness given by the food and beverages of the destination, the cultural factor explains the discovery of the culture of the region, the prestige factor enables the tourist to share the gastronomic experiences in the destination with the social environment, and the communication factor ensures that social relations are further strengthened through gastronomic activities (Su, 2015).

In gastronomy tourism, the historical and cultural resources, geographical and geological structure, climate structure, lifestyle of the local people, ethnic values and local cuisine belonging to the destination are stated as the parts that make up the whole. In addition, one of the main elements that make up cultural festivals is local cuisine, which is defined as the most valuable cultural heritage (Kokkranikal & Carabelli, 2021).

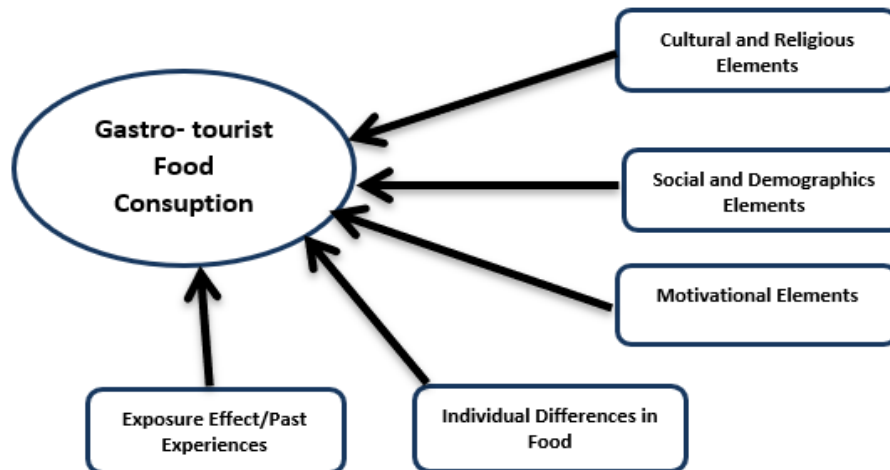
Local dishes and flavours belonging to the destination visited by the gastro-tourist provide an effective cultural exchange between the tourist and the local people, and gastronomy tourism is defined as an important component of cultural acquaintance on a global scale (Gülen, 2017). National and local dishes such as Turkey's kebab, baklava and Turkish delight, Italy's pizza and pasta, and France's wines, which contain cultural elements that belong to the tourist destination and reflect the characteristics of the society in which it is located, are important as a recognition and image element of the destination and create a gastronomic attraction element (Henderson, 2009).

Factors Affecting the Preferences of Gastro-Tourists

Individuals who want to experience the local, cultural food and beverages of the destination they are travelling to, and who also travel to participate in food festivals and receive gastronomy education are defined as gastro-tourists (Çanakçı, 2016). Individuals, whose most basic need is to be fed throughout their lives, show an interest in local food in order to meet their food needs in the destinations they travel and make an important contribution to the economic development of the region by making gastronomy an important part of the local culture (Lopez-Guzman and Sanchez-Canizares, 2012).

The factors determining the food consumption behaviour of gastro-tourist are divided into three categories as individual, food and environment. The most influential factors on food consumption preference are defined as individual elements, which are divided into socio-cultural, psychological and physiological, the food element with the sensory properties of the substances that affect the taste, texture, aroma and appearance during the preparation and presentation of the food, and social, cultural and physical factors are defined as environmental elements (Martinez, 2015).

Figure 1. Factors Affecting the Food Choice of the Gastro Tourist



Source: Martinez (2015: 5).

The factors affecting the food preferences of gastro tourists shown in Figure 1 are explained as cultural and religious factors, socio-demographic factors, individual differences related to food, exposure effect and past experiences (Martinez, 2015).

Motivation Concept and Travel Motivation

According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK) (2022) dictionary, the word motivation, which means willingness and motivation, has passed into our language from the Latin word "*movere*" (Yazıcıoğlu & Akbulut, 2016). It is defined as the element of power that affects any behaviour, directs it to perform it and ensures its continuation (Krou et al., 2021). Motivation is defined as an internal and psychological force that originates from personal needs that have not reached sufficient satisfaction and directs individuals to participate in behaviour and activity to meet certain needs (Khan et al., 2017).

Motivation, which is a concept based on human psychology, is defined as an incentive or driving force that directs individuals to achieve their goals and desires and meet their needs (Khan et al., 2019; Lin & Zhang, 2021; Wijaya, 2018). Motivation is explained as a basic intrinsic motive that integrates the emotions of the individual and directs them to act (Smith & Costello, 2009). Motivation is defined as an important variable for understanding the travel behaviour of individuals, as well as an effective factor in destination choice (Chen & Chen, 2015). While travel motivation is defined as the emergence of travel behaviour and mobility with the combination of psychological and physical needs of individuals, it is also expressed as the basic point and the most effective psychological element to understand the reason for tourists' travel behaviour (Khan et al., 2019). In addition, travel motivation is also defined as the desire that leads people to take part in tourism activities (Lin & Zhang, 2021).

While it is stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs that holiday or travel behaviour provides physiological and emotional relaxation on individuals and is the basic element of travel motivation, it is also stated that factors such as participating in new environments, gaining appreciation and visiting acquaintances are also effective on travel motivation (Özkan & Koleoğlu, 2019). Since the motivation of the gastro-tourist who visits a destination is primarily to eat as a physical need, to experience new flavours and to explore the environment, the history and culture of the region directly transforms into gastronomy tourism (Güzel & Apaydın, 2016). It is stated that the most important motivational factor for tourists in gastronomy tourism is the richness of local food (Çorbacı et al., 2018).

While travel motivation differs from individual to individual, the factors that lead tourists to travel are classified as internal and external factors (Toksöz & Aras, 2016). While internal factors express the needs experienced by all individuals, external factors explain the existence of special situations arising from certain needs (Smith & Costello, 2009). In addition, these factors, which are effective on tourists' travel motivation, are also defined as "push" and "pull" (Khan et al., 2017).

People are appreciated and accepted in the society as a result of the behaviours they learn and develop in the social environment and within the framework of social requirements. The social environment, society and reward-based driving force that is the basis for this behaviour are expressed

as extrinsic or attractive motivation factors (Aslan & Doğan, 2020). The second factor is defined as intrinsic or push factors. Intrinsic factors consist of push factors such as the psychological desire to escape, the need for rest and relaxation in daily life (Cordova-Buiza, 2021; Khuong et al., 2014).

The factors affecting travel motivation for gastronomy tourism are divided into three different categories: physical, behavioural and cultural motivators. Physical motivators refer to the motivation of tourists through human senses such as sight, taste and smell that they perceive from the food in their location. Behavioural motivation factors are defined as the socialisation of individuals with their environment and members of the community they are in through food. Gastronomy tourism is also defined as cultural tourism because it reflects the local culture of the society in which it operates. Accordingly, the cultural and unique flavours, traditional cooking tools and methods of the destination constitute the cultural elements that encourage the gastro-tourist to travel (Farid, 2021).

In gastronomy tourism, which is based on food and beverages, as flavour and quality are positively differentiated, it is expressed as one of the most attractive factors in the formation of touristic demand in the destination (Özdemir, 2021). Neo-phobia, which is defined as the discomfort of experiencing an unknown food or drink and avoiding new flavours, is important as an element related to gastronomy tourism (Jiménez-Beltrán et al., 2019).

Method

Purpose and Importance of the Research

The main purpose of the research is to examine the mediating role of gastronomic elements that are effective in individuals' travel motivation. This research was carried out with the participants in Antalya, Izmir, Istanbul, and Konya provinces of Türkiye. It is aimed that this research will benefit the studies on gastronomy tourism and travel motivation both in our country and in the world. Convenience sampling method was preferred for the research. The main purpose of choosing convenience sampling method is that it allows the data to be obtained most easily, quickly and economically from the main mass. In addition, convenience sampling method also allows the researcher to determine a non-random sample according to his/her judgements (Aaker, Kumar, & Day, 2009; Malhotra, 2019).

Data Collection Tools

The study questionnaire has an explanatory cover letter and four categories of questions. The initial set of questions enquired about the participants' demographic characteristics, including gender, age, educational attainment, marital status, occupation, and income level. The second round of questions enquired about their travel motivations. The third group of questions was developed to measure the participants' thoughts about gastronomy activities and the fourth group of questions was developed to measure their thoughts about neo-phobia. These questions were prepared according to the "5-point Likert Scale" consisting of 47 items. These five options are listed as "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Neutral", "Agree" and "Strongly Agree". Demographic characteristics were included in the first group. The items of the second, third and fourth group questions were formed by utilising the scale used by Çanakçı (2016) in his study.

Development of Data Collection Tools and Data Analysis

The questionnaire used for the research was administered to the participants one-to-one and on-line. The research was conducted between 2023 July and 2023 August, including observation, inspection and survey work. The 391 questionnaire forms applied to the participants in Antalya, Izmir, Istanbul, and Konya provinces of Türkiye were recorded electronically and a data set was created and analysed with SPSS 26.00 statistical data programme. Frequency analyses of the data obtained from the questionnaire forms were made and the suitability of the data for parametric or non-parametric analysis was checked.

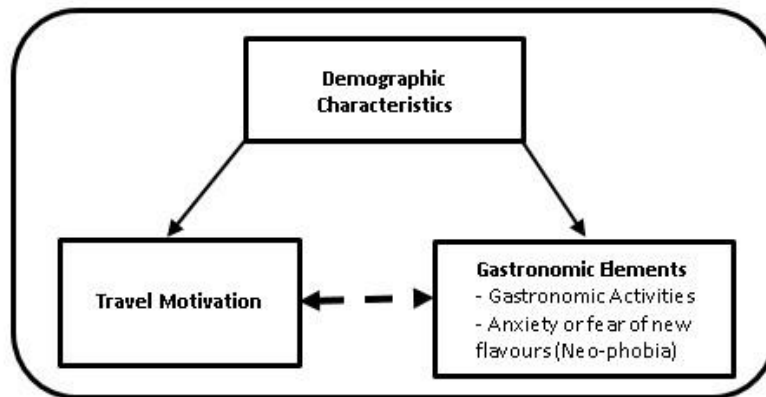
The suitability for normal distribution was determined by looking at the scales of the statements about travel motivations, gastronomy-related statements and neo-phobia-related statements used in the

questionnaire form. After the conformity to normal distribution was determined by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, Independent Sample t test, One Way Anova (One Way Variance) analysis, correlation and regression analyses were applied. In the whole study, significance levels were carried out by considering 0.05 and 0.01 values.

Research Model

In this research, it was aimed to determine the mediating role of gastronomic elements affecting travel motivation on individuals in Antalya, Izmir, Istanbul and Konya provinces of Turkey and was prepared based on the survey model. The survey model is defined as the method of conducting a survey on a sample group to be taken from all or part of the universe in order to reach a general conclusion from the universe with a large number of elements (Bahtiyar & Can, 2016). The model to be tested for the mediating role of gastronomic elements affecting travel motivation in the research and the three research questions taken as basis are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: *Gastronomic Elements Affecting Travel Motivation*



There are three research questions based on this research.

- 1-Do thoughts about gastronomic elements and travel motivation vary according to demographic characteristics?
- 2- Do thoughts regarding gastronomic activities during a trip influence the travel destination?
- 3-How important is neo-phobia in destination visit and travel motivation?

Findings

Frequency Analysis for Demographic Findings

It was determined that 56.0% (2019 people) were females and 44.0% (172 people) were males in the frequency analysis results made according to gender among the demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the research. In the results of the analyses made according to different age groups, 3.6% (14 people) were in the age range of 20 years and below, 32.7% (128 people) in the age range of 21-30 years, 30.7% (120 people) in the age range of 31-40 years, 18.9% (74 people) in the age range of 41-50 years, 14.1% (55 people) in the age range of 51 years and above.

Regarding the marital status of the participants, it was found that 53.5% of them were married (209 people) and 46.5% were single (182 people). In addition, when the participation of the individuals participating in the research according to their educational status is evaluated, it is revealed that 39.1% (153 people) have bachelor's degree, 27.6% (108 people) have high school and before, 17.6% (69 people) have associate's degree and 15.6% (61 people) have postgraduate education.

As a result of the analysis made according to the occupational groups of the individuals participating in the questionnaire study, it was seen that 35.3% (138 people) worked in the private sector, 19.7% (77 people) worked in the public sector, 17.4% (68 people) were students, 11.3% (44 people) were retired, 9.7% (38 people) were self-employed and 6.6% (26 people) were in the other (housewife and unemployed) group.

In addition, in the results of the analysis of the survey data obtained for the research according to income status, it was determined that 33.2% (130 people) had an income of 5000 TL and below, 28.4% (111 people) had an income of 5 001-7 500 TL, 18.2% (71 people) had an income of 7 501- 10 000 TL, 12.3% (48 people) had an income of 10 001-12 500 TL, 7.9% (31 people) had an income of 12 501 TL and above.

Descriptive Analyses

In the results obtained from the descriptive analysis of the scale of "Gastronomy Related Statements that are Effective in Travel Motivation" of the research, it was seen that the mean score of the statement "I visit destinations where food suitable for my faith is served." was the highest with 3.726 and the mean score of the statement "I travel because I am very curious about what people of other countries eat." was the lowest with 3,010 (Table 1). In this context, it has been revealed that "I visit destinations where food suitable for my beliefs is served" is mostly chosen as "Agree" on a 5-point Likert scale, and "I travel because I am very curious about what people of other countries eat" is chosen as "Undecided".

Table 1. *Table of Descriptive Analysis Results*

	Items	N	Mean	SD.
Expressions Related to Gastronomy Effective in Travel Motivation	I travel to taste the cuisines of different cultures	391	3,512	1,123
	I travel to attend cooking demonstrations from different regions.	391	3,460	1,134
	I prefer to visit destinations with unfamiliar foods	391	3,481	1,141
	I visit destinations that serve food in line with my faith.	391	3,726	1,189
	I travel because I am very curious about what people in other countries eat.	391	3,010	1,187
	I choose a destination to increase my knowledge about food and beverage	391	3,414	1,156
	I travel because most of my friends participate in food-related events	391	3,033	1,226
	Gastronomic products of the destination are more important than other attractions	391	3,079	1,144
	I travel to attend events related to food and drink.	391	3,197	1,221
	I would like to travel to destinations where gastronomic trainings are given.	391	3,384	1,171
I visit the same destination several times a year for local food.	391	3,164	1,111	
Thoughts on Gastronomy Activities in the Destination	It is very important for me to participate in food-related events	391	3,284	1,165
	My participation in food-related events says a lot about who I am.	391	3,049	1,172
	Participating in food-related organizations allows me to be with my friends	391	3,811	0,979
	I enjoy discussing food-related topics and activities with my friends.	391	3,726	1,007
	For me, the best recreational activity is food-related activities.	391	3,141	1,165
	I really find myself when I participate in food-related events.	391	3,358	1,155
	I identify with people and images related to food events.	391	3,128	1,161
	I have no worries about how I behave at food-related events.	391	3,913	0,951
Statements Related to Anxiety or Fear of New Flavors (Neo-phobia)	I am always trying new and different foods.	391	2,872	1,125
	I don't trust new foods.	391	2,655	1,063
	If I don't know what's in a food, I don't try it.	391	3,601	1,146
	I am looking for food from different countries.	391	2,918	1,178
	Ethnic food seems too strange to eat.	391	2,923	1,057
	I'm going to try a new dish for dinner parties.	391	2,171	0,888
	I'm afraid to eat things I've never eaten before.	391	2,724	1,173
	I'm very meticulous about the food I eat.	391	3,992	1,027
	I eat almost everything.	391	3,005	1,319
	I like to try new ethnic restaurants.	391	1,990	0,801

According to the results of the descriptive analysis of the scale of thoughts about gastronomy activities in the destination of the research, it was revealed that the mean score of the statement "I have no worries about how I will behave in food-related activities" was the highest with 3.913 and the mean score of the statement "My participation in food-related activities tells a lot about who I am" was the lowest with 3,049 mean score (Table 1).

According to these results, it was determined that the participants marked the statement "I have no worries about how I will behave in food-related activities" as "Agree" according to the 5-point Likert scale, and the statement "My participation in food-related activities tells a lot about who I am" was mostly selected as "Undecided".

According to the results of the descriptive analysis of the scale of "Statements about Anxiety or Fear of New Flavours (Neo-phobia)", "I am very meticulous about the food I eat." It is seen in Table 1 that the statement ranks the highest with a mean score of 3.992 and the statement "I like to try new ethnic restaurants" ranks the lowest with a mean score of 1.990. According to these results, it is seen that the individuals who participated in the survey study marked the statement "I am very meticulous about the food I will eat." as "Agree" on a 5-point Likert scale, and answered the statement "I like to try new ethnic restaurants." as "Disagree" on the same scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficients of the reliability and validity analyses for the scale of statements about travel motivation, the scale of statements about gastronomy and the scale of statements about neo-phobia are shown in Table 2. Cronbach alpha determines the degree of consistency of the relationship between the statements that form the scale in measurements containing more than one component and provides the calculation for reliability (Çakmur, 2012; Kartal & Dirlik, 2016).

Table 2. Reliability Validity Analyses

	N	Mean	Cronbach's Alpha	Skewness	Kurtosis
Statements Related to Travel Motivation	0,918	3,315	0,918	-0,059	-0,177
Gastronomy Related Activities	0,878	3,426	0,878	0,051	-0,377
Statements Related to Neo-phobia	0,621	2,767	0,584	0,551	0,030

As a result of the reliability analysis applied to the scale developed to measure the statements of individuals about travel motivation in the research, Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.918 and it is seen in Table 2 that the reliability of the scale is high. As a result of the reliability analysis applied to the scale developed to measure the thoughts of the individuals participating in the research towards gastronomy-related activities, Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.878 and the reliability of the scale is high. Likewise, according to the result of the reliability analysis applied to the scale developed with the aim of measuring the thoughts of the statements related to neo-phobia, Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.584 and it was found to be low reliability. Cronbach alpha is frequently used in Likert-type scales. Cronbach alpha is expressed as follows.

0<R₂<0.40 is not reliable,

0.40<R₂<0.60 is low reliability,

0.60<R₂<0.80 is quite reliable,

0.80<R₂<1.00 is considered to have high reliability (Yıldız & Uzunsakal, 2018: 19).

Table 3. Levels of Relationship between the Scales Applied to the Participants in the Questionnaire Study

Variables	N	Mean	SD.	1	2	3
1. Travel Motivation	391	3,315	0,864	-	,777**	,107*
2. Gastronomy Activities	391	3,426	0,806		-	,189**
3. Neo-Fobi	391	2,767	0,876			-

*p<0,05, **p<,01

According to the correlation analysis results between travel motivation, gastronomy activities and neo-phobia given in Table 3, it was determined that there was a high correlation between travel motivation and gastronomy activities with a significance level of 0.777, while there was no correlation between travel motivation and neo-phobia with a significance level of 0.107 (p<0,05).

Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is defined as a statistical measurement method used to measure the degree of relationship between two quantitative variables, one dependent and the other independent (Cankül&Avci, 2019).

Table 4. *The Effect of Gastronomy Activities on Travel Motivation (Regression Analysis)*

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t Value	Level of Meaning
	B	SD	Beta		
(Fixed)	0,461	0,120		3,833	0,000
Gastronomy Activities	0,833	0,034	0,777	24,382	0,000

Dependent variable: Travel Motivation; R: 0.777a; R2: 0.604; Adjusted R2: 0.603; F for model: 594,463; p<0,01

In the research, individuals' thoughts about gastronomy activities affect their travel motivation positively (0.777) (Table 4). In other words, one (1) unit of individuals' thoughts about gastronomy activities will change their travel motivation by 77.7% (increase or decrease).

Table 5. *The Effect of Neo-Phobia on Travel Motivation (Regression Analysis)*

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t Value	Level of Meaning
	B	SD	Beta		
(Fixed)	3,023	0,144		20,955	0,000
Neo-Fobi	0,105	0,050	0,107	2,121	0,035

Dependent variable: Travel Motivation; R: 0.107a; R2: 0.011; Adjusted R2: 0.009; F for model: 4,498; p>0,01

In the research conducted, individuals' neo-phobia status positively affects their travel motivation (0.107) (Table 5). In other words, one (1) unit of neo-phobia of individuals will change their travel motivation by 10.7% (increase or decrease).

Discussion and Conclusion

The main purpose of this study is to examine the mediating role of gastronomic elements on travel motivation. According to the results of the research conducted in line with this purpose, when the demographic characteristics of the participants are evaluated; it is determined that the travel motivation of the participants in the age group of 20 years and below is higher than the age group of 50 years and above, while the participants with high school and pre-high school education have more travel motivation than the participants with associate degree education. However, it is seen that the opinions of individuals with high school and pre-high school education status regarding gastronomy activities are more positive than those of individuals with postgraduate education status.

When the participants' travel motivations were analyzed according to their occupational status, it was determined that individuals working in the public sector had a more positive opinion than the participants in the other group consisting of housewives and unemployed individuals. In addition, when the participants' opinions regarding gastronomy activities are evaluated, it is determined that public sector employees have a more positive approach than self-employed individuals. This answers the first question, "Do opinions about gastronomic elements vary according to demographic characteristics?".

In another study similar to the results of the survey, Aziz et al. (2018), as a result of their research on the travel motivation of tourists on socio-demographic variables, stated that participants in the 18-24 age range had higher travel motivation compared to other age groups. In another study, Kara and Mkwizui examined the effect of demographic characteristics of domestic and foreign tourists on travel motivation in their study conducted in Tanzania in 2020. According to the findings obtained as a result of the research, they stated that age, gender and family size have a significant impact on individuals' travel motivations.

According to the research results of Vuksonovic et al. (2017), which is one of the studies on the effect of demographic characteristics on opinions about gastronomy activities, demographic characteristics such as age, education level, income status, and gender have a significant effect on the perception of gastronomy activities.

According to the correlation analysis of the research data, there is a high correlation between travel motivation and gastronomy activities. Similar to these results, Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) examined the effect of gastronomy experiences on travel motivation in their research. According to the results obtained, it was concluded that the food in a touristic region affects destination choice and travel motivation.

According to the results of the regression analysis in the study, it was determined that individuals' thoughts about gastronomy activities positively (0.777) affected their travel motivation. This result answers the second question of the study, which is "Do opinions about gastronomic activities affect destination visitation?". Similarly, in the study conducted by Jiménez-Beltrán et al. (2019), according to the results of the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire study applied to a total of 1,014 tourists, 447 foreign and 568 domestic tourists coming to Cordoba, Spain, it was revealed that gastronomic activities and gastronomic characteristics of the destination were effective on the destination visit.

As a result of the regression analysis of the data obtained from the research, it was determined that the Neo-Phobia status of individuals positively affects their travel motivation (0.107). According to this result, tourists' neo-phobia characteristics affect their destination visit and travel motivation. Similarly, Lai, Wang, and Lattimore (2020) examined the effect of individuals' neo-phobia characteristics on destination visitation and travel motivation in their study conducted in Australia. According to the results of the research, it was concluded that the food image of the destination formed in the minds of potential tourists creates a driving force on destination choice and travel motivation.

In another study conducted by Karaman and Girgin (2021), it was determined that food neophobia has an effect on the intention to purchase local foods of the destination. In line with the results obtained from the research, in order to ensure that individuals demand more gastronomy tourism, it can be recommended to increase advertising and promotions in a way that gastronomy activities, especially in touristic destinations, will increase their travel motivation. For the successful realization of these activities, non-governmental organizations, tourism and travel businesses should work collectively with the support of local governments.

In addition, presentations should be created on social media platforms to attract the attention of both local and foreign tourists, such as the preparation, presentation and tasting of regionally different dishes that promote our interesting and traditional culinary culture. In addition, training on the preparation of local and national dishes with cultural elements should be organized, presented in tourist promotions and this training should be offered for sale in the tourism market.

Such promotional and encouraging gastronomy activities to be implemented will increase the demand for gastronomy tourism in our country and will provide an important support to the promotion of the country while providing local, regional and national economic contribution.

Ethics Statement

The writing process of the study named " A Research on The Mediating Role of Gastronomic Elements in Travel Motivation" followed to scientific, ethical, and citation criteria. The acquired data was not manipulated, and the paper was not submitted to any other academic journal for review.

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