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The Effect of Destination Image Between Place Attachment and Cuisine Brand Value: Beyağaç Culture and Tarhana Festival

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Abstract

While meeting the food and beverage needs of the visitors participating in the festival, highlighting the elements of local cuisine is an important tool in promoting the culinary culture. The aim of this research is to measure the mediating effect of destination image on cuisine brand value and place attachment. Data were collected from visitors who participated in the Beyağaç Culture and Tarhana Festival with a questionnaire. The obtained data were analyzed with partial least squares structural equation modeling. In this context, according to the results of the research, it has been determined that the destination image has a mediating effect on place attachment and culinary brand value.

Keywords: cuisine, brand value, image, place attachment

Introduction

In the globalizing world, the number of events with strong cultural components is increasing significantly. It is known that festivals have a large share in these events. The number of festivals has increased in national and international arenas, and festivals with different themes have started to be organized. From this point of view, festivals offer unforgettable experiences within the scope of removing individuals from ordinary life, providing socialization opportunities, and taking time for the individual (Ma & Lew, 2011). Festivals are one of the important events that ensure the development of tourism activity at the national and international level. With the increase in tourism activity, festivals are organized on different themes such as food, music, theater, culture, history, and nature. In this context, individuals participating in festivals have the opportunity to see new places, try different dishes, and get to know new cultures (Akoğlan Kozak & Bahçe, 2012). Experiencing local cuisine creates positive and memorable experiences and reflects the level of place attachment (Hsu & Scott, 2020; Tsai, 2016).

Destinations have started to highlight local cuisine in order to differentiate and gain competitive power (Yesilyurt & Arıca, 2018). The concept of cuisine brand value refers to the trust, awareness, and loyalty of visitors to a destination's cuisine (Liu, 2015). At the same time, culinary brand value creates the culinary experiences and evaluations of visitors over time, and culinary experience

shapes the scope and direction of brand value development (Horng et al., 2012). During the festival, memories are formed as a result of the visitors experiencing the local cuisine, and these memories are an important indicator of loyalty and place attachment to the destination, and local food has a positive effect on the place attachment and behavioral intentions of the visitors (Sthapit, 2017). In this context, the aim of this research is to reveal the effect of the destination image on brand value and place attachment. Within the scope of festivals, it presents a different perspective to the literature.

Literature Review

Food festivals have emerged around the world as gastronomic tourism has become more recognized as an element of recreation and tourist attraction. In order to contribute to the branding of the destination, local food products and cuisine should be used as elements representing the destination in festivals (Kalkstein et al., 2008). It is important in terms of determining the brand value of the local cuisine for visitors and the development and marketing of tourism products for the destinations of the local cuisine (Guan & Jones, 2015). As the local cuisine brand value becomes popular in the subconscious of the visitors, it increases their loyalty to the local cuisine by creating positive expectations in terms of quality, reliability, and service (Horng et al., 2011). In the tourism literature, the concept of local cuisine culture is considered an intangible cultural heritage, with the products included in it in terms of cultural tourism and the cooking and presentation of the region according to its own traditions (Bilgin, 2018). Destination familiarity plays a moderator role, which positively affects the effect of loyalty and quality on travel intentions (Horng et al., 2012). The perception of local cuisine brand value has a positive effect on loyalty and destination awareness, and local cuisines are one of the most important cultural heritage elements in creating destination loyalty (Şengül & Türkay, 2018; Arıca & Çorbacı, 2020).

Food festivals play an important and decisive role in destination branding (Lee & Arcodia, 2011). In addition, in order to improve the positive image of the local food and destination and to increase the effect of the festivals on the destination branding, it has been suggested that the food festivals use local foods and promote the attractiveness of the regions (Lee & Arcodia, 2011; Arıca & Çorbacı, 2019). In the study conducted by Tsai and Wang (2017) to determine the effects of destination food image on behavioral intention, it was found that there is a significant positive relationship between the factors that affect food image value for money, service excellence, aesthetics, and fun, and behavioral intention for the future.

Özperçin (2021) aimed to reveal the effects of service quality on consumer-based destination brand value perception in gastronomy festivals and concluded that food services and entertainment services offered at festivals have positive effects on destination brand value dimensions. When the subject of cuisine brand value is examined in the literature, it has been observed that there are mostly qualitative and quantitative studies on gastronomy tourism and behavioral intentions (Choe & Kim, 2018; Horng et al., 2012; Liu, 2015; Sthapit, 2017; Tsai, 2016; Tsai & Wang, 2017).

Methodology

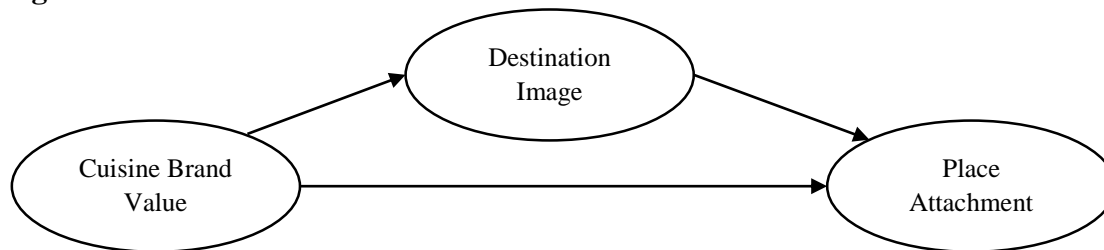
The aim of this research is to reveal the mediating effect of destination image on kitchen brand value and place attachment. The hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- H1: There is a significant relationship between the cuisine brand value and destination image.
- H2: There is a significant relationship between brand value and place attachment.
- H3: There is a significant relationship between the destination image and place attachment.
- H4: Destination image has a mediating effect between cuisine brand value and place attachment.

Questionnaire was used to obtain the research data. In the study, a partial least squares structural equation model (PLS-SEM) was used to determine the effect of local cuisine brand value perception on destination image and place attachment. While determining the sample size in the partial least squares structural equation model method, the distribution characteristics of the data, the psychometric properties of the variables, and the size of their relationships should be taken into account (Wong, 2013). It is suggested that the sample size should be between 100 and 200 for path modeling to occur (Hoyle, 1995).

The population of this research consists of the participants who participated in the Beyağaç Culture and Tarhana Festival. Since it is not possible to reach all participants in the festival in terms of time and budget, convenience sampling was preferred over non-probability sampling. In this study, the data collection process was carried out by reaching 248 participants who participated in the festival with convenience sampling methods. The model created for the purpose of the research is given in Figure 1. The model includes kitchen brand value, place attachment, and destination image as mediating variables. Although destination image and place attachment are included in many research models, it has been seen that there is no model study in which local cuisine brand value, destination image, and loyalty variables are used as a whole.

Figure 1. Research Model



The questionnaire form prepared within the scope of the research consists of two parts. In the first part, statements about local cuisine, brand value, destination image, and place attachment are included. In the second part, the demographic characteristics of the participants, such as gender, marital status, age, and education level, as well as the information sources they learned about the festival within the scope of the research and statements about whether they lived in the destination where the festival was held or not, were included.

Cuisine brand value, destination image dimension, and place attachment dimension were adapted from previous studies (Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001; Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Boo et al., 2009; Boulding et al., 1993; Çetinsöz & Artuğer, 2013; Horng et al., 2012; Kim & Eves, 2012; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007; Sönmez & Sırakaya, 2002; Ujang, 2012; Yoon & Uysal, 2005; Zeithaml et al., 1996).

This research was conducted by participants in the Beyağaç Culture and Tarhana Festival, and the questionnaires were sent online to the participants after the festival. A total of 299 participants were reached, but 51 questionnaires were excluded from the analysis because they were incomplete and incorrect. The data obtained from the participants in the study was analyzed with the help of partial least squares structural equation modeling. Partial least squares structural equation modeling, which is generally used in the field of social sciences, does not require normal distribution, so it can work in smaller sample groups and reveal the relationships in complex models (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019).

Findings

It is seen that the majority of the participants are men (52.0%). When the age groups of the participants are examined, the majority of them are in the 26–30 age group, with 26.6%. It was determined that the majority of the participants were married (60.9%). Table 1 includes factor loads, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) values.

Table 1. Indicator, Lodging, and Validity Indexes

Statement	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE
<u>Cuisine Brand Value</u>		.799	.663	.552
Attractive dishes	.524			
Dish experience	.626			
Worth trying	.586			
Worth buying	.614			
Cooking techniques	.817			
Presentation techniques	.765			
Branding of the region	.565			
Culture of the region	.614			
Discover something new	.564			
Lifestyle of local people	.516			
<u>Destination Image</u>		.726	.641	.564
Local cuisine	.624			
Delicious	.572			
Attractive	.546			
Pleasure	.574			
Rich food culture	.568			
Traditional food culture	.582			
<u>Place Attachment</u>		.700	.689	.524
Recommend the area	.645			
Encourage	.674			
Positive thoughts	.710			
Means	.561			
Preference	.596			

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that the factor loads of the expressions vary between .516 and .817. The reliability of the research scales is between .700 and .799, which indicates that the scale is reliable. Since the Cronbach's alpha (CA) values of the expressions are above .70, the scale has high reliability. It was observed that the AVE value was .641 and above. The AVE value must be .5 and above in order to ensure concordance validity (Alarcón & Sánchez, 2015). CR values should always be higher than AVE values (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 and Table 3 show Fornell-Larcker (FLC), cross-loading, and heteroid-monotrait ratio (HTMT) values for Discriminant Validity, which shows that one variable is different from other variables within the scope of the study.

Table 2. Fornell-Larcker Values

Variable	Cuisine Brand Value	Destination Image	Place Attachment
Cuisine Brand Value	.880	-	-
Destination Image	.814	.391	-
Place Attachment	.619	.478	.389

Table 2 shows the results of the analysis made according to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria, and the FLC range from 0.389 to 0.880.

Table 3. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Values

Variable	Cuisine Brand Value	Destination Image	Place Attachment
Cuisine Brand Value			
Destination Image	.779		
Place Attachment	.566	.820	

Discriminant Validity, cross-loading of factors, Fornell-Larcker Criterion and HTMT are evaluated as the correlation ratio (Hamid et al., 2017). HTMT does not require factor analysis to obtain factor loads. The HTMT ratio should be lower than 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). When Table 3 is examined, it can be said that the discriminant validity is provided since the HTMT values are below 0.820.

Table 4. Structural Model

Hypothesis	<i>ss</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Cuisine Brand Value – Image – Place Attachment	0.45	4.260	.001
Cuisine Brand Value ———— Place Attachment	0.55	5.160	.001

There is a significant relationship between the cuisine's brand value, destination image, and place attachment. It has been observed that there is a significant relationship between cuisine brand value and place attachment ($ss = 0.55$, $p < .001$). Calculate the variance value for VAF by testing the importance of direct and indirect effects (Raji & Gomez, 2017). If the VAF value is below 20%, it indicates no mediation (Hair et al., 2011). The VAF value of this study was 58%, and it was revealed that there was a partial mediation effect. It has been found that there is a significant relationship between the cuisine brand value and the destination image dimension (H1). It has been determined that there is a positive and significant relationship between cuisine brand value and place attachment (H2). It has been found that there is a positive and significant relationship between the destination image and place attachment (H3). It was concluded that the image of the destination has a mediating effect between the cuisine brand value and place attachment.

Conclusion

This research was carried out to reveal the effect of local cuisine brand value on destination image and place attachment loyalty within the scope of festivals. It has been observed that the word mostly used when talking about the festival with the participants is local dishes. A participant said, "This festival is held for the first time in Beyağaç. We want to create a brand from our local dishes by promoting our local cuisine to Denizli and even the Aegean Region through the festival." The statement "The local food I eat is an important factor in the branding of the region" supports this view of the participant. By participating in the festival, individuals get to know and learn about the culture of the destination and the social lifestyle of the local people. A participant said:

As someone who participated in the festival from outside the destination, I saw the cultural heritage elements, different musical instruments, lifestyles, and traditional local cuisine of the local people through the festival. When I listened to the preparation and story of the local dishes I tried, he made me learn about the lifestyle of the people.

And his statements, “Experiencing local food helps me see the lifestyle of the people of the region” support this view. In this study, it was revealed that the cuisine brand value has a significant effect on the destination image. The local cuisine offered at the festivals provides a place of attachment for the visitors. After the participants’ satisfaction with the festival, loyalty is formed, which contributes to the development of the destination image. In Beyağaç district, which is one of the important rural tourism points of Denizli, important responsibilities fall on the stakeholders of the destination for the development of event tourism.

Within the scope of gastronomic tourism, festivals have great importance in promoting local cuisine. Gastronomy tourism has an important place in the tourism industry with its income-generating effect. Gastronomy festivals are of great importance in the development and promotion of the region and in providing tourist attractions. In this context, the promotion of local dishes through festivals also plays an active role in terms of making the destination a city of gastronomy. Gastronomy tourism: It is possible to say that destinations can become gastronomy cities with the correct and planned promotion, the awareness of local people, and the support of tourism stakeholders. When the findings of this research were examined, it was concluded that the brochures and local media, from which most of the participants learned about the festival over the internet, were insufficient in terms of promotion.

Beyağaç destination has great potential in terms of many types of tourism and is waiting to be evaluated. In line with the findings obtained in the research, suggestions were made for the development of the Beyağaç Culture and Tarhana Festival.

- With the reorganization of the festival, the intention to revisit the destination can be increased by offering positive experiences to the participants.
- In order to reduce the daily visits of the visitors attending the festival from outside the destination, the activities held in the evening can be increased, and their accommodation can be provided.
- Collaboration should be made with stakeholders in the destination’s tourism sector to ensure the branding of the local cuisine.
- In order to promote the festival more, promotional videos should be included on television, radio, and the internet.
- In order to increase the brand value of the local cuisine, more local dishes should be included in the promotional videos.
- Activities such as excursions, competitions, and workshops should be included more in the festival program.
- While marketing the local cuisine of the destination, it is necessary to increase the awareness of the local people about the unique characteristics of the dishes.
- Local institutions and universities should create new projects in order to develop Beyağaç’s local cuisine brand value.

The research was limited to the festival held in Beyağaç. In order for the research to reach a wider audience, comparisons and qualitative research should be made in different destinations. This study

only examines cuisine brand value, destination image, and place attachment. Therefore, future studies should focus on other variables, such as brand equity dimensions and destination marketing. In future studies, it will be useful to examine the effect of local cuisine served at festivals on destination branding.

Note

This article is based on Tuğçe Koştur's Master's thesis.

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