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ADVANCES IN GLOBAL SERVICES AND RETAIL MANAGEMENT

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Determination of Food Neophobia Levels of International Mersin Citrus Festival Participants

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Abstract

Mersin Citrus Festival is considered the biggest festival of the province and is an international event held in Mersin every year. The festival aims to introduce citrus fruits, the most important agricultural product grown in Mersin. This study was carried out in order to determine the neophobia levels of attendees' and to measure their attitudes towards new foods at the 7th International Mersin Citrus Festival. Answers to four research questions were sought in the study. The data were obtained through a survey on 1-3 November 2019, using the convenience sampling method. The obtained 152 usable questionnaires were subjected to statistical evaluations and analyzed. It has been determined that the neophobia level of the participants of Mersin Citrus Festival is "neutral". In the study, it was determined that the most common expression of participants in Mersin Citrus Festival regarding their attitudes towards food was "I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants". This study is limited to the determination of the neophobia levels of participants and their attitudes towards the different foods of Mersin Citrus Festival. When the literature is examined, the fact that there is no study on this subject for festival participants shows the originality of the study.

Keywords: International Mersin Citrus Festival, food neophobia, Mersin

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Introduction

Festivals cause an increase in the number of visitors in their destinations and contribute directly to local businesses that offer services such as food and beverage, shopping, entertainment, accommodation and travel (Raj, 2004: 70-71; Akmeşe, 2018: 27). Especially, festivals held outside the tourism season are important in terms of attracting tourists to the destination, promoting the destination and creating a positive image for the destination (Akmeşe, 2018: 27).

Mersin Citrus Festival is an international event that is considered the biggest festival of the province and is held in Mersin every year. The main purpose of the festival is to introduce citrus fruits, the most important agricultural product grown in Mersin. On the other hand, increasing the brand value of citrus products produced in the province, raising awareness in identifying citrus with the city and supporting the efforts of the farmer are among the aims of the festival. In

International Mersin Citrus Festival, guest teams invited from various countries stage their shows, on the other hand, products are exhibited in the aisles and public and private organizations promote their activities. Giant models decorated with citrus fruits are made and exhibited at the festival. While 300 thousand people participated in International Mersin Citrus Festival in 2018, this figure reached 550 thousand in 2019 (Gürdal, 2018; www.haberler.com; www.wikipedia.org). As the literature suggests, consumers try food and beverages in a destination or event for both physiological reasons and symbolic meanings such as status and prestige (Correia et al., 2008). However, during the activity, social relations and fun aspects also gain importance. In short, local food and beverages are the main attractions for consumers seeking new and different experiences (duRand & Heath, 2006).

Food and beverage habits have an important place among consumers' preferences, and it is not easy for them to try and accept new foods (Ozgen, 2014; Ronteltap et al., 2007). The situation that causes consumers to adopt an attitude towards innovation and new foods is called neophobia in Psychology, and it is called the fear that people have against the innovations that occur in their lives. The neophobia is a naturally occurring reaction that causes consumers to be reluctant to consume or try new foods (Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Knaapila et al., 2007; Alley & Potter, 2011).

In the present study, it was aimed to determine the neophobia levels and attitudes of the participants towards different foods of the International Mersin Citrus Festival. This study is important in determining whether the participants of an International Festival are open to new foods.

Literature Review

International Mersin Citrus Festival

The concept of festival is derived from the Latin word "festivitas". The festival is a social activity that people do to express their feelings of celebration or gratitude (Akmeşe, 2018: 25; Kömürçü, 2013: 28). According to another definition, the festival is defined as "a show, a celebration for the most famous product of a region" (Akmeşe, 2018: 25). For example, such as Adana Orange Blossom Festival, Strawberry Festival, Artichoke Festival, Tokat Zile Cherry Festival, and Herb Festival can all be listed under this category.

Festivals are social events that are organized by societies at certain periods, on behalf of an artist and may include artistic and cultural celebrations and promotion of a specific event, or harvest of an important product, and are open to all social events that ensure social cohesion (Falassi 1987: 3-4; Bilgili et al, 2012: 118; Çoban & Süer, 2018: 58). Festivals enrich local people's ways of enjoying their entertainment and leisure time (Sert, 2017: 190).

According to Fields (2002), there are four basic factors that direct tourists to travel for food and beverage purposes. These motivators can be listed as; (1) physical elements (tasting new and different foods and drinks, experimenting with the senses of seeing and sniffing), (2) cultural elements (learning by experiencing local cuisine and culture), (3) social elements (building new social relationships), and (4) status and prestige elements.

Çalışkan (2013: 43-44) points out that the food and beverage experience, which is accepted as a supportive experience of the tourist experience, strengthens the search for new and different foods and drink. However, as Quan & Wang (2004) stated, the search for food and drink in the supportive

experience is considered to be high experience when it takes place as participation in a festival for the purpose of food tasting at the destination.

According to Sağır (2012: 2686), festivals can be held in two ways. The first is the festivals traditionally organized by communities with different cultural identities in order to maintain their identity. The second form of festivals is festivals focused on agricultural production. In these festivals, the aim is to promote the products produced in the destination in the national and international markets and to interact and solidarity with each other. For example, in festivals organized for the purpose of maintaining their identity, community-specific dishes are at the forefront, while festivals focused on agricultural products are organized food organizations focused on agricultural products produced.

International Mersin Citrus Festival was organized for the first time in 2010 under the auspices of Mersin Governorship, with the coordination of Mersin Commodity Exchange, the support and contributions of Mersin Metropolitan Municipality, central district municipalities, Çukurova Development Agency, trade associations and organizations and non-governmental organizations. The festival is inspired by the Fete du Citron (Lemon Festival) festival held in the town of Menton, France. The main purpose of the festival is to promote citrus products produced in Mersin and the touristic potential of the city in national and international arena (Gürdal, 2018). Other purposes of the Mersin Citrus Festival can be considered as follows: (1) Promoting the province of Mersin and attracting attention with it, (2) supporting the efforts to revitalize tourism in the province, (3) increasing the aesthetics and image of the province, (4) to promote a traditional product festival in the province (5) to promote the citrus products owned by Mersin locally, nationally and internationally, (6) to increase the consumption of citrus products and to increase the brand value, (7) to increase the capacity and marketing chances in citrus, and (8) to act together to create a colorful, different and common activity that it can be enjoyed all together (www.mersinnarenciyefestivali.com). The International Mersin Citrus Festival is held after the citrus harvest, usually in the 3rd week of November every year. Although there are many festivals held which oriented agricultural products in Turkey, Mersin Citrus Festival is the only the festival adorned with real fruit (Gürdal, 2018).

Nearly 700 performers from 30 countries participate in the festival every year and they add color to the festival by taking the stage with dances specific to their countries and various activities. In addition to corteges and shows, exhibitions of various flavors made with citrus and gastro shows, fashion shows, mini concerts, sailing races and flyboard shows are held in the festival. At the festival, in 2018, 30 figures were decorated with 70,000 kilos (500,000 pieces) of citrus fruits. At the end of the festival, citrus fruits are distributed free of charge to the public (Gürdal, 2018).

When the literature on citrus activities is examined, it is determined that the oldest citrus festival is the "Menton Citrus Festival". The festival is held in Menton, France. Another citrus event organized in Turkey is the "Adana Orange Flower Carnival" (Atçeken, Doğrul & Çabuk, 2018: 151).

Neophobia and the Festivals

The neophobia is defined as the unintentional reactions of individuals to new foods (Yiğit & Doğdubay, 2017: 163-164; Birdir, İflazoğlu & Birdir, 2019). The neophobia emerges when the

individual perceives the consumption of a new food that is unfamiliar to him / her as a threat, and it affects the desire to try the new food and reacts negatively to the food in question (Asperin, Phillips & Wolfe, 2011: 2; Fenko, Leufkens & Van Hoof, 2015: 269; Flight, Leppard & Cox, 2003: 51).

Kim, Suh & Eves (2010), in their studies with the participation of 335 visitors attending the Gwangju Kimchi (local food) Festival in South Korea, tried to determine the relationships between personality traits and neophobia, food participation, satisfaction and loyalty. According to the findings, while the neophobia negatively affects satisfaction and loyalty, there is a positive relationship between food participation, loyalty and satisfaction.

Marković, Mitrović & Racz (2019) examined the wine and food attendance of visitors, neophobia and the quality of experience dimensions at the VinoCOM wine festival held in Zagreb. In the study, it was found that there is a positive relationship between wine and food participation, experience quality and experience results, and a negative relationship between wine and neophobia.

Ramaprasad et al (2020) investigated the intentions of visitors to re-participate in food festivals in the context of food neophobia (FN) and domain-specific innovativeness (DSI) in their study in India. It shows that site-specific innovation has a positive effect on visitors' intention to revisit the food festival, while neophobia has a negative impact on visitors' intention to revisit the food festival.

In the study, Kumar, Khen & Govindarajo (2018) explored the neophobia and participants' intention to rejoin the festival attending the Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) held in Malaysia. They found that there was a direct and positive relationship between their revisit intention. In addition, they found that factors such as food diversity, originality, nutritional value and presentation, especially food safety, became the factors that neophobic tourists sought in their food choices.

The California Avocado Festival started in 1986 as a weekend event with the idea of recognizing the destination and helping stimulate the local economy. Many different types of products, from avocado to beauty products, are offered for sale at the festival. At the festival, avocado, which has an important place in Mexican cuisine and is frequently used in sushi making and salads, was served on "tacos" made from corn. The festival, which attracts many visitors, includes live music and dance performances as well as a food banquet (avofest.com).

In the study conducted by Sünnetçioğlu, Çakıcı & Erdem (2020), the effect of tourists' travel lifestyle, cultural sensitivity and food neophobia on local food preferences was investigated. The questionnaire for foreign tourists visiting Istanbul Sultanahmet was applied face to face. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that food neophobia negatively affected local food preferences, whereas travel style and cultural sensitivity did not affect local food preferences.

In the study conducted by Nicholson & Pearce (2000), it was determined that the tourists participating in the festivals held in the South Island of New Zealand act with the motive to taste local foods and therefore participate in the festivals. Therefore, it can be stated that festivals are a good tool for promoting local foods and influencing the preferences of tourists.

The Napa International Truffle Festival is held in California in January, and celebrated chefs and guests are hosted at the festival. During the festival, food, wine tastings, food and wine pairings and mushroom gathering activities are carried out. In addition, unusual Truffle dishes paired with wines are tasted (Napa Truffle Festival, 2019).

The study conducted by Sapawi, et al. (2019) aims to measure the food neophobia and food security concerns of local tourists towards traditional dishes of Kadazandus. It has been determined that most of the tourists visiting Kota Kinabalu from the Malaysian Peninsula are between non-neophobic and having light food neophobia.

Methods

In this study, both descriptive and exploratory research models were used. The study is a descriptive study as it aims to reveal the new food experiment fear levels and attitudes towards food of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival. In descriptive studies, it is aimed to reveal the characteristics of a particular population by observation, questionnaire, interview and sampling (Seyidođlu, 2000). Exploratory research "... are researches aimed at finding a relationship, determining the situation, and informing the reader" (Seyidođlu, 2000: 34). Since there are few studies on Mersin Citrus Festival participants in the literature, an exploratory research model has also been used. In the study, it was aimed to determine the neophobia levels and attitudes towards food of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival. In the literature, it was determined that Atçeken, Dođrul and Çabuk (2018) conducted a study on the promotion activities carried out in the 5th Mersin International Citrus Festival. Therefore, this study is important in terms of determining whether the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival are open to try new foods.

Sample

Participants in the International Mersin Citrus Festival constitute the universe of the study. 300 thousand people participated in Mersin Citrus Festival in 2018 (www.haberler.com; www.wikipedia.org). However, since it is not possible to reach the entire universe, a sample mass that can represent the universe has been selected. While determining the sample mass, the simple random sampling method formula ($n = t^2 \cdot p \cdot q / d^2$) was used (Yazıcıođlu & Erdođan, 2004: 48). The sample size was calculated as $n = (1.96)^2 \times (0.5) \times (0.5) / (0.05)^2 = 384$ persons at 95% confidence level and ± 0.05 deviation interval. In this study, convenience sampling method, one of the non-probabilistic sampling methods, was used to collect the data, and 152 usable questionnaires were collected.

Data Collection

Questionnaire technique was used in this study. The questionnaire consists of the "neophobia" scale consisting of 10 items including the fear of trying new food, a 5 item scale measuring "attitude towards food" and demographic information of the participants. The neophobia scale developed by Pliner and Hobden (1992) and adapted into Turkish by Yiđit (2018) was used. The second scale used in the questionnaire is the scale developed by Shenoy (2005) and adapted into Turkish by Karagigliođlu (2015). The questionnaire was conducted in Turkish. In the study, 5-point Likert scale, which is one of the Likert type scales, was used, and the level of agreement with

the statements in the scales; 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree and 5 = Strongly agree. Cronbach α reliability criterion (Cronbach, 1990) was used in the study. Data for the pretest was collected on 1 November 2019 (24 questionnaires). The pretest Cronbach's alpha value of the "neophobia" scale is 0.615. The pre-test Cronbach α value of the "attitude towards food" scale was determined as 0.642. The data collected for the pretest have not been combined with the data collected later. In the main application, data were collected by face-to-face data collection method on 2-3 November 2019. The Cronbach α value of the "neophobia" scale was 0.672, and the Cronbach α value of the "attitude towards food" scale was 0.611.

Data Source

Consumers consume food and beverage in a destination or event for both physiological reasons and symbolic meanings such as status and prestige (Correia et al., 2008). However, during the activity, social relations and fun aspects also gain importance. In short, local food and beverages are the main attractions for consumers seeking new and different experiences (duRand & Heath, 2006). However, Adongo et al. (2015) emphasize that at an event or on a trip, experiencing new foods and drinks is one of the greatest pleasure of eating. Therefore, based on the question of whether the consumers who experience new foods during the festival are open to innovations and how their attitudes towards food take place, the study seeks answers to four questions:

- RQ₁: What is the level of neophobia of those who attend the International Mersin Citrus Festival?
- RQ₂: Does the level of neophobia for the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival differ according to their demographic characteristics?
- RQ₃: How are the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival attitudes towards food?
- RQ₄: Do the attitudes of the participants in the International Mersin Citrus Festival towards food differ according to their demographic characteristics?

Descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean, mode, median and standard deviation were used in the analysis of the data. In addition, t-test and variance analysis were used to determine whether the level of neophobia and attitudes towards food of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival changed according to their demographic characteristics.

Findings

The demographic information of the participants of Internarional Mersin Citrus Festival is included in Table 1. According to the table, the rate of "female" participants is 55.9% and the rate of "male" participants is 44.1%. 57.2% of the participants are "single" and 42.8% are married. When the participants were examined by age, it was determined that 44.7% were in the "21-30" age range, 28.3% were in the "41 and over" age range, and 27% were in the "31-40" age range. Considering the educational status of the participants, it was determined that 40.8% of them were "University" graduates. This is followed by "High School" graduates with a rate of 33.6% and "Associate Degree" graduates with a rate of 25.7%. 27.6% of those participating in the research have "business owner", 26.3% "student" and "officer" and 19.7% "other" occupations. When the findings regarding the monthly income of the participants are examined, it is determined that the biggest proportion belongs to the participants with a monthly income of "2000TL and below" with

42.1%. It was found that the participants with a monthly income between "2001-4000TL" has a rate of 37.5% and participants with a monthly income of "4001TL and above" has a rate of 20.4%.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants of Mersin Citrus Festival

Characteristics	f	%	Characteristics	f	%
Gender			Age		
Women	85	55,9	21-30	68	44,7
Man	67	44,1	31-40	41	27,0
Total	152	100	41 +	43	28,3
Occupation			Total		
Business owner	42	27,6	152	100	
Officer	40	26,3	Marital status		
Sudent	40	26,3	Single	87	57,2
Other	30	19,7	Married	65	42,8
Total	152	100	Total	152	100
Your income			Education Status		
2000 TL and below	64	42,1	High school	51	33,6
2001-4000 TL	57	37,5	Associate Degree	39	25,7
4001 and above	31	20,4	University	62	40,8
Total	152	100	Total	152	100
Have you attended Mersin Citrus Festival before?			Your level of satisfaction		
Yes	83	54,6	I am not satisfied at all	10	6,6
No	69	45,4	I am not satisfied	7	4,6
Total	152	100	I'm neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	27	17,8
			Satisfied	86	56,6
			Very satisfied	21	13,8
			Not specified	1	0,7
			Total	152	100

The rate of those who previously participated in the International Mersin Citrus Festival is 54.6%. On the other hand, when the satisfaction level of the participants is examined, it is determined that 56.6% of the participants are "satisfied" and 13.8% "very satisfied" with the festival. It was determined that 6.6% of the participants were "not satisfied at all", 4.6% "not satisfied" and 17.8% "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied".

The first of the questions that the study seeks to answer is to determine whether the participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival have neophobia towards trying new foods. Here, the averages of the answers given to the items directed to the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival were taken and the propositions were ranked from the highest average to the lowest. Table 2 shows the relative importance of the responses of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival to the expressions of "neophobia".

The scale measures the neophobia and their level of openness to new food. While expressions 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 among the expressions of the scale express the presence of neophobia, the statements 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 express the level of neophilic.

According to Table 2, participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival agreed more with the statement "I am very particular about the foods I will eat (3,0263)" compared to other expressions. This is respectively, (2) "If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it.(2.9868)", (3) "I will eat almost anything (2.9803)", (4) "I am constantly sampling new and different foods (2,5855)" and (5) "At dinner parties, I will try a new food (2,5263)" followed.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Neophobia of Participants of Mersin Citrus Festival

Expression	Mean	S. deviation	Relative Importance
5-I am very particular about the foods I will eat.	3,0263	1,27610	1
2-If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it.	2,9868	1,48719	2
9-I will eat almost anything. (R)	2,9803	1,37369	3
6-I am constantly sampling new and different foods. (R)	2,5855	1,26828	4
7-At dinner parties, I will try a new food. (R)	2,5263	1,32199	5
4-I am afraid to eat things I have never had before.	2,5263	1,32699	6
1-I don't trust new foods.	2,4868	1,29690	7
8-I like foods from different countries. (R)	2,4013	1,17513	8
3-Ethnic food looks too weird to eat.	2,4013	1,37268	9
10-I like to try new ethnic restaurants. (R)	2,2829	1,15900	10

Note. Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree, ... 5: Strongly agree. R: Reverse coding method before analysis.

The neophobia score is parallel to the Likert Scale used in the literature. Based on the literature, since the scale used in the study is a 5-Likert type, the score range for neophobia has been considered between "10-50". Therefore, the neophobia score was grouped under three headings. If the score is between "10-18" values, it is "neophilic", if between "19-31" it is "neutral" and "32-50", it is "neophobic"(Choe & Cho, 2011: 673; Tuorila et al., 2001: 30; Yiğit, 2018: 54; Henriques, King & Meiselman, 2009: 85; Flight, Leppard & Cox, 2003: 55; Olabi et al., 2009: 354).

When the responses of the participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival are examined, the score of "neophobia" was determined as 26.20. According to the findings, it was determined that the "neophobia" level of the festival participants was "neutral". It was determined that 63.8% of the festival participants were "neutral", 23% were "neophobic" and 13.2% were "neophilic" (Table 3).

Table 3: Neophobia Classification of Participants of Mersin Citrus Festival

	f	%
Neophilic	20	13,2
Neutral	97	63,8
Neophobia	35	23,0
Total	152	100

The second question of the study is to determine whether the level of neophobia of the participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival differs according to their demographic characteristics. T-test and analysis of variance were made to find the answer to this question. T-test was conducted to determine whether the level of neophobia differ significantly between "gender" and "marital status". No significant difference was found as a result of the "level of neophobia" and "gender" t-test of the festival participants. In similar studies by Yiğit (2018), Kaplan (2018) and Birdir et al, (2019), it was determined that there was no significant difference between "gender" and "level of neophobia".

As can be seen from Table 4, a significant difference was found in a single item as a result of the t-test performed between the "level of neophobia" and "marital status" of the festival participants. According to the meaningful difference in the statement "I am afraid to eat things I have never had before", it was determined that "married" participants were unwilling to try new foods compared to "single" participants.

An analysis of variance was performed to determine whether the festival participants differed between the "level of neophobia" and "age", it was determined that there was a significant difference in a single item (Table 5). According to this, the meaningful difference in the statement "Ethnic food looks too weird to eat." is between the festival participants in the age range of "31-

40" and the festival participants in the age range of "41-50". It was found that festival participants between the ages of 41-50 are reluctant to try ethnic foods.

Table 4: Distribution of Level of Neophobia by Marital Status of Participants

Expression	Marital Status	N	Mean	S. deviation	F value	Sig.
1-I don't trust new foods.	Single	87	2,4253	1,23545	2,248	,507
	Married	65	2,5692	1,38032		
2-If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it.	Single	87	2,9310	1,39595	4,692	,602
	Married	65	3,0615	1,60932		
3-Ethnic food looks too weird to eat.	Single	87	2,3103	1,32341	1,082	,352
	Married	65	2,5231	1,43731		
4-I am afraid to eat things I have never had before.	Single	87	2,2644	1,17592	8,768	,006*
	Married	65	2,8769	1,44165		
5-I am very particular about the foods I will eat.	Single	87	2,9080	1,24482	2,681	,822
	Married	65	3,1846	1,30973		
6-I am constantly sampling new and different foods.	Single	87	2,4828	1,24697	1,148	,191
	Married	65	2,7231	1,29310		
7-At dinner parties, I will try a new food.	Single	87	2,5172	1,31062	,160	,252
	Married	65	2,5385	1,34718		
8-I like foods from different countries.	Single	87	2,3448	1,09786	,120	,923
	Married	65	2,4769	1,27607		
9-I will eat almost anything.	Single	87	3,1494	1,40206	2,280	,504
	Married	65	2,7538	1,31138		
10-I like to try new ethnic restaurants.	Married	65	2,1954	1,09798	2,456	,283

Note. *: p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p <.001

Table 5: Distribution of Level of Neophobia by Age of Participants

Expression	Age group	N	Mean	S. deviation	F value	Sig.
1-I don't trust new foods.	21-30	68	2,4265	1,34182	,255	,775
	31-40	41	2,4634	1,09767		
	41-50	43	2,6047	1,41656		
2-If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it.	21-30	68	2,8824	1,45098	1,857	,160
	31-40	41	2,7805	1,45795		
	41-50	43	3,3488	1,54124		
3-Ethnic food looks too weird to eat.	21-30	68	2,2647	1,41017	3,567	,031*
	31-40	41	2,1463	1,25620		
	41-50	43	2,8605	1,33776		
4-I am afraid to eat things I have never had before.	21-30	68	2,2941	1,31647	2,883	,059
	31-40	41	2,5122	1,20669		
	41-50	43	2,9070	1,39410		
5-I am very particular about the foods I will eat.	21-30	68	2,8971	1,29453	,822	,441
	31-40	41	3,2195	1,33252		
	41-50	43	3,0465	1,19430		
6-I am constantly sampling new and different foods.	21-30	68	2,5294	1,34354	,240	,787
	31-40	41	2,5610	1,07352		
	41-50	43	2,6977	1,33693		
7-At dinner parties, I will try a new food.	21-30	68	2,5294	1,37646	,032	,969
	31-40	41	2,5610	1,24597		
	41-50	43	2,4884	1,33403		
8-I like foods from different countries.	21-30	68	2,3088	1,20022	,382	,683
	31-40	41	2,4878	1,05171		
	41-50	43	2,4651	1,26017		
9-I will eat almost anything.	21-30	68	3,1176	1,48152	1,306	,274
	31-40	41	3,0488	1,24401		
	41-50	43	2,6977	1,30082		
10-I like to try new ethnic restaurants.	21-30	68	2,1912	1,20022	,415	,661
	31-40	41	2,3902	1,09266		
	41-50	43	2,3256	1,16947		

Note. *: p <.05; ** p <.01; *** p <.001

Variance analysis was conducted to determine whether the festival participants differ according to their "level of neophobia" and their "education level", "income level" and "profession", and as a result of the analysis, It has been determined that there is no significant difference in any of the items above.

In the study, in order to find the answer to the third question developed for determining the attitudes of the participants in the International Mersin Citrus Festival towards food, the averages of the answers given to the items addressed to the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival was taken and the propositions were ranked from the highest average to the lowest. Table 6 presents the relative importance levels of the responses of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival to the expressions of "attitude towards food".

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics Regarding the Attitudes Towards Food of Participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival

Expression	Mean	S. deviation	Relative Importance
2-I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants.	3,5855	1,15342	1
3-Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do.	3,3421	1,16860	2
1-I am very sensitive about the things I will eat	3,2105	1,37928	3
4-Most of my time is spent with food-related activities.	2,8092	1,16649	4
5-Changing my preference from food-related activities to another leisure activity is a serious decision.	2,6974	1,07370	5

Note. Response categories: 1: Strongly disagree, ... 5: Strongly agree.

According to Table 6, it was determined that the most common statement about the attitudes of those participating in International Mersin Citrus Festival was (1) "I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants (3,5855)". (2) "Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do (3,3421)", (3) "I am very sensitive about the things I will eat(3,2105)", (4) "Most of my time is spent with food-related activities(2.8092)"and (5)"Changing my preference from food-related activities to another leisure activity is a serious decision(2,6974) followed the statements.

The fourth and last question of the study is to determine whether the participants' attitudes towards food in Internatonal Mersin Citrus Festival differ according to their demographic characteristics. T-test and analysis of variance were made to find the answer to this question. In order to determine whether the participants of Internatonal Mersin Citrus Festival's attitudes towards food differ significantly between "gender" and "marital status", a t-test was conducted. A significant difference was found in a single item as a result of the t-test conducted between "attitudes towards food" and "gender" of the festival participants (Table 7). According to the results of the analysis, it was found that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of the festival participants towards food and the expression "I am very sensitive about the things I will eat" between "gender", and that "female" participants are more sensitive about food than "male" participants.

Table 7: Distribution of the Attitudes Towards Food by Gender of Participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival

Expression	Gender	N	Mean	S. deviation	F value	Sig.
1-I am very sensitive about the things I will eat	Woman	85	3,4235	1,24763	3,769	,032*
	Man	67	2,9403	1,49626		
2-I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants.	Woman	85	3,6118	1,14532	,628	,753
	Man	67	3,5522	1,17142		
3-Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do.	Woman	85	3,3765	1,17490	,792	,684
	Man	67	3,2985	1,16794		
4-Most of my time is spent with food-related activities.	Woman	85	2,7647	1,19171	,324	,598
	Man	67	2,8657	1,14012		
5-Changing my preference from food-related activities to another leisure activity is a serious decision.	Woman	85	2,6353	1,10029	,575	,424
	Man	67	2,7761	1,04186		

Note. *: p <.05;** p <.01;*** p <.001

The t-test of festival participants' attitudes towards issues related to their "marital status" also revealed the fact that there is a significant difference in the statement "I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants" and this difference is in favor of "single" participants (Table 8).

Table 8: Distribution of the Attitudes Towards Food by Marital Status of Participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival

Expression	Marital Status	N	Mean	S. deviation	F value	Sig.
1-I am very sensitive about the things I will eat	Single	87	3,3103	1,26959	5,513	,304
	Married	65	3,0769	1,51356		
2-I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants.	Single	87	3,7816	1,06121	4,540	,015*
	Married	65	3,3231	1,22612		
3-Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do.	Single	87	3,4483	1,15898	,000	,197
	Married	65	3,2000	1,17527		
4-Most of my time is spent with food-related activities.	Single	87	2,9425	1,21384	,615	,103
	Married	65	2,6308	1,08353		
5-Changing my preference from food-related activities to another leisure activity is a serious decision.	Single	87	2,6897	1,10296	,394	,919
	Married	65	2,7077	1,04168		

Note. *: p <.05;** p <.01;*** p <.001

Table 9 shows the results of variance analysis to determine whether the festival participants differ in their "attitude towards food" and "age". As a result of the variance analysis, it was found that there is a significant difference in a single item. According to this result, according to the advanced statistical Post-Hoc (Tukey) test, the meaningful difference in the statement "Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do" is between the festival participants in the age range of "31-40" and the festival participants in the age range of "41-50". It has been determined that the festival participants between the ages of "31-40" are more willing to participate in activities involving food than the festival participants between the ages of "41-50".

Table 9: Distribution of the Attitudes Towards Food by Age of Participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival

Expression	Age group	N	Mean	S. deviation	F value	Sig.
1-I am very sensitive about the things I will eat	21-30	68	3,2500	1,35355	,071	,931
	31-40	41	3,1463	1,31455		
	41-50	43	3,2093	1,50488		
2-I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants.	21-30	68	3,7353	1,16693	2,208	,114
	31-40	41	3,6585	1,01513		
	41-50	43	3,2791	1,22135		
3-Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do.	21-30	68	3,3382	1,24121	4,589	,012*
	31-40	41	3,7317	,89511		
	41-50	43	2,9767	1,18499		
4-Most of my time is spent with food-related activities.	21-30	68	2,8382	1,26503	1,397	,251
	31-40	41	3,0000	1,18322		
	41-50	43	2,5814	,95699		
5-Changing my preference from food-related activities to another leisure activity is a serious decision.	21-30	68	2,8088	1,22483	,685	,505
	31-40	41	2,6341	,96840		
	41-50	43	2,5814	,90587		

Note. *: p <.05;** p <.01;*** p <.001

Variance analysis was conducted to determine whether the festival participants differed between their "attitude towards food" and "education level", "income level" and "occupation". It was found that there was no significant difference in any item between the "attitude towards food" and "education level", "income level" and "occupation" of the festival participants.

Conclusion

In this study, which aims to measure the attitudes of the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival with their level of neophobia and their attitudes towards the food, it was found that the participants majority were "single" and at age between "21-30". It has been determined that they have a "bachelor's degree", "business owner" and income "2000TL and below". The rate of those who previously participated in the International Mersin Citrus Festival is 54.6%, and the satisfaction level of the participants from the festival is 70.4%.

It has been determined that the level of neophobia of the participants in the International Mersin Citrus Festival is “neutral”. In the study conducted by Sapawi, et al. (2019: 41), it was determined that the participants were "neutral", whereas the rate of participants with "neophobia" was high. In a study conducted by Yiğit (2018), it was determined that the level of neophobia of the participants was “neutral”. Marković, Mitrović & Racz (2019: 225), on the other hand, found in their study that the level of neophobia was low among those attending the festival. They also emphasized that the neophobia of those attending the festival to try new food at the festival will change depending on whether they visit the festival for the first time or not.

No significant difference was found as a result of the t-test conducted according to "gender" and "level of neophobia" of the festival participants. The studies of Kaplan (2018), Birdir, İflazoğlu & Birdir (2019) and Yiğit (2018) also support this finding. On the other hand, as a result of the t-test performed according to the "level of neophobia" and "marital status" of the festival participants, a significant difference was found in a single item. According to the meaningful difference in the statement "I am afraid to eat things I have never had before", it was determined that "married" participants were unwilling to try new foods compared to "single" participants.

According to the variance analysis of the festival participants “level of neophobia” and “age”, a significant difference was found in one item the expression "Ethnic food looks too weird to eat" is between the age range of "31-40" and "41-50". The festival participants in the age range of "41-50" are determined that they are unwilling to new foods. This finding coincides with the study of Sapawi et al. (2019: 42), which revealed that older participants (51-60 years old) had higher neophobic scores than younger participants (21-30 years old). Based on these results, it can be said that the older the participants, the more reluctant to try ethnic foods. However, no significant difference was found according to "level of neophobia" and "education level", "income" and "occupation" among the participants. On the other hand, in the study of Marković, Mitrović & Racz (2019: 229), it was found that having a high income does not affect the neophobia at the festival. On the other hand, Sapawi, et al. (2019: 42) found that low-income participants had more neophobia than high-income participants. In the same study, it was found that participants with low educational level had more neophobia than participants with undergraduate education level.

Significant differences were found in one item according to the attitudes of the festival participants towards food and the results of the t-test based on "gender" and "marital status". According to the results of the analysis, it was found that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of the festival participants towards new foods and the expression "I am very sensitive about the things I will eat" by gender, and that "female" participants are more sensitive about food than "male" participants. As a result of the t-test on the marital status and attitudes of the festival participants towards meals, it was determined that there was a significant difference in the expression "I like to try the newly opened ethnic restaurants" and this difference was in favor of "single" participants. However, no significant difference was found as a result of the variance analysis of the festival participants “attitudes towards new foods”, “education level,” “income” and “occupation”.

As a result of the analysis of variance of the festival participants' attitude towards food and age, it was found that there is a significant difference in a single item. According to this result, the meaningful difference in the statement "Participating in cooking activities is one of the most fun things I do" is between the festival participants in the "31-40" age range and the festival participants in the "41-50" age range, according to the advanced statistical Post-Hoc test," It has

been determined that festival participants between the ages of "31-40" are more willing to participate in activities involving meals than the festival participants between the ages of "41-50". Variance analysis was conducted to determine whether the festival participants differed according to their "attitude towards food" and "education level", "income" and "occupation"; as a result of the analysis, it was determined that there was no significant difference in any item.

The safety concerns of the tourists attending the events about the food to be tasted at the event and the neophobia constitute an obstacle to the effective promotion of local traditional food offered during the events (Sapawi, et al, 2019). On the other hand, the popularity of food tastings in festivals and events is increasing (Hu, 2010). Therefore, in-depth studies on this subject are recommended for festival visitors. Spending patterns can be determined by obtaining information about the visitors who are tasting at the festival with the studies conducted on this subject. This is very important for festival researchers and destination marketers.

On the other hand, in order to increase awareness towards the festival, festivities during the harvest of citrus fruits (such as Lemon, Tangerine, Orange harvest) and festivals made of citrus products (such as the Lemonade Festival) can be organized. Citrus-based food competitions, which can be made traditional, can be held at the festival. In addition, bloggers who write about travel and local cuisine, and columnists of magazines and newspapers can be invited and hosted in the region. Thus, food and drinks specific to the region can be announced to the masses with the support of the experts in the field about the food and drinks specific to the region.

This study is limited to the determination of the neophobia and their attitudes towards the meals of the participants of International Mersin Citrus Festival. When the literature is examined, the fact that there is no study on this subject for the participants of the International Mersin Citrus Festival shows the originality of the study. The study in question may serve as a source for new research in the future. In addition, this study can be applied to different festival participants at different times to contribute to the literature.

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