



**RURAL TOURISM PARTICIPATION: A MULTIFACETED ANALYSIS OF MOTIVATIONS,
DESTINATION IMAGE, AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN BAŞKONUŞ YAYLASI**

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Abstract

This research aims to analyze the motivations, perceived destination images and behavioral intentions of visitors to Başkonuş Yaylası. Başkonuş Yaylası is a popular tourist destination in the west of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey. A literature review was conducted on the subject and survey technique was used to collect the research data. A questionnaire consisting of four sections was prepared and applied online. Relational survey model was used in this study. The population of the study consists of the participants who visit Başkonuş Yaylası. Convenience sampling method was used in the study and 225 people were reached. The data were collected between January and June 2022. Demographic characteristics were found to have an important role in shaping both motivations to participate and perceived destination image, especially for young students who exhibit higher motivation in the "Exploration" dimension and perceive higher value in areas such as "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity". The study also highlighted occupational differences among visitors, reflecting important differences in several dimensions of rural tourism interest, such as "Price and Value" and "Natural Environment". These findings have profound implications for destination managers and tourism businesses operating in the destination. It is vital to understand and strategically utilize these variables to attract tourists from the target market.

Keywords: Destination Image, Behavioral Intentions, Motivation, Rural, Tourism

Introduction

Since the advent of the 1970s, tourism in rural locales has experienced a substantial ascendance, reaching global proportions across developed nations (Wu, Cheng, and Ai, 2017). This burgeoning activity has evolved into a critical engine driving economic and social revitalization in once-stagnant rural landscapes. Emerging as an innovative facet of tourism in agriculturally dominant regions, rural tourism is now recognized as an essential component in the pursuit of sustainable development for these areas (Dalgın, Atak, and Çeken, 2016). Its impact is multifaceted, contributing not only to economic growth through job creation and infrastructure enhancement but also positively influencing both cultural preservation and environmental stewardship (Albayrak and Tüzünkan, 2020). Such benefits have prompted an increased focus on the transformation of rural spaces into attractive tourist destinations. The allure of rural tourism often manifests in the contrast between the rural simplicity and the complexities of urban life (Lane, 2009). Often characterized by cost-effective domestic pursuits, including familial visits, rural tourism presents a compelling alternative to other more commercialized forms of leisure travel (Park and Yoon, 2009). The contemporary traveler's desire for destinations replete with unique traditions and a distinctive ambiance has further propelled interest in rural getaways for weekends or holiday retreats (Pujiastuti, Nimran, Suharyono, and Kusumawati, 2017).

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DOI: 10.33083/joghat.2023.375

Academic attention towards the behavior and consumption habits of rural tourists has seen a marked increase, as evidenced by a burgeoning body of literature (Bel et al., 2015; Cai and Li, 2009; Frochot, 2005; İlban, Köroğlu, and Bozok, 2008; Kastenholtz, Carneiro, Marques, and Loureiro, 2018; Loureiro and Gonzalez, 2008; Otoo and Kim, 2020; Park and Yoon, 2009; Pesonen and Komppula, 2010; Pujiastuti et al., 2017; Rid, Ezeuduji, and Pröbstl-Haider, 2014; Wu et al., 2017). However, scholars have highlighted the need for a nuanced examination of the service structures that motivate return visits to destinations (Wu et al., 2017). This underscores the current research gap and the need for the augmentation of existing theories and methodologies through the introduction of novel variables and refined frameworks (Haemmoon and Parks, 1996). In light of rural tourism's relatively nascent status in certain territories, the nexus between satisfaction and behavioral intentions within rural contexts remains an underexplored dimension (Loureiro and Gonzalez, 2008). Thus, the overarching aim of this study is to elucidate the interrelationships among the motivations, perceived destination image, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of tourists engaging in rural tourism. With a carefully selected case study providing an exclusive local context, and underpinned by well-articulated research questions, hypotheses, and a rigorous methodology, this inquiry is poised to make a substantial contribution to the extant literature.

Conceptual Framework

Rural Tourism

Rural tourism, gaining increasing importance as an alternative or complement to existing tourism types in both developed and developing countries, has been widely investigated by researchers for many years, and its significance for rural areas is universally recognized (Çeken, 2012). Its emergence as a diversification possibility to alleviate the congestion experienced in mass tourism destinations has enhanced interest in this field (Loureiro and Gonzalez, 2008). Emerging globally as a trend, rural tourism stands out as a nature-based tourism type, whose popularity is increasing every day. This rise is a response to escalating environmental problems and the destruction caused by mass tourism on the natural environment, further fueled by people's quest for authenticity (Çetin, Üzümcü, and İçöz, 2017). Simply defined as a tourism type conducted in rural areas (Bozok, Kılıç, and Özdemir, 2017), rural tourism is a new variety of tourism developing in regions where agricultural activities are intense. It is known by names like green tourism and farm tourism. This type of tourism bears significant importance both in solving the economic, social, and psychological problems arising from the concentration of tourists in specific locations and in liberating tourism from the dominance of traditional coastal tourism, exploiting the relaxing atmosphere of rural areas, and providing additional income to farmers (Çeken, Karadağ, and Dalgin, 2007). Rural tourism is integrated with rural culture, the natural environment, and agriculture. It can be easily combined with other tourism types, making it a diverse and enriching experience. With various local, national, and international initiatives, rural tourism can attract people to rural areas for holidays in many countries (Soykan, 2003).

Activities in rural tourism are increasingly attracting visitors for various purposes. Multiple studies on rural tourism destinations provide strong evidence that people are motivated to visit these destinations either for relaxation, entertainment, and sports activities or for genuine, even spiritual, nature experiences (Kastenholtz et al., 2018). Like urban or seaside tourism, the appeal of rural tourism lies in the diversity and quality of attractions and facilities. However, the current complex and unsettled structure of rural accommodation supply in terms of size, type, hospitality, and activities offered negatively affects this quality (Loureiro and Gonzalez, 2008). Additionally, the low education level of rural tourism entrepreneurs or their engagement in other professions (e.g., farming), contrasting with the educated and relatively different profile of potential customers, is considered one of the most significant barriers to the development of rural tourism (Loureiro and Gonzalez, 2008). In this context, the development and enrichment of rural areas in terms of tourism are closely related to the specific rural image formed in the minds of potential visitors. The definition of the rural image has not yet been fully discovered and clarified. Nevertheless, building on the general definition of image, rural image can be defined as the sum of beliefs, ideas, or impressions that a tourist holds about a rural destination. This image is evaluated as a result of how the tourist perceives a rural destination or the vision that arises about this place (Wu et al., 2017).

Destination Image

Destination image, in its simplest form, is the image perceived by a specific tourist market about a destination (Öter and Özdoğan, 2005). The generally accepted definition of image consists of the beliefs, ideas, and

impressions that people have about a place or destination (Baloglu and McCleary, 1999). Shaped according to the diversity of tourism types a region possesses, destination image is expressed as the most reliable source in the visitors' decision-making process (Kılıç and Akyurt, 2011). Information reaching tourists before visiting a destination usually supports their mental image about that place. Often, what determines where a tourist will travel is not actual knowledge but, more likely, the image. Thus, the image is seen as a critical element in the destination choice process. The construction of this image in the mind of a potential tourist to represent a region is crucial in forming an idea about the destination (Chen and Kerstetter, 1999). Knowing the attitudes and interests of those visiting a destination is also essential in managing this image (Kılıç and Akyurt, 2011). Because destination image is considered a mixture of both positive and negative perceptions, tourists only make the destination choice decision where the positive image outweighs in the scenarios before making their final decision about travel destinations (Chen and Kerstetter, 1999). Destination image, being regarded as a key variable in individual behavior (del Bosque and San Martín, 2008), has been a subject of great interest in the related academic literature and has provided significant contributions to understanding tourist behaviors better. This concept has become one of the first and crucial indicators in increasing the number of tourists visiting destinations (Beerli and Martín, 2004). From this perspective, it can be said that existing studies related to destination choices focus on defining the dominant features of destination image and uncovering the role they play in selecting a touristic destination (İlban et al., 2008).

Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as the judgment that results from a consumption experience, manifesting in the customer's belief that a product or service has provided an acceptable level of satisfaction (Oliver, 1997). A key construct in tourist behavior research, satisfaction (Huang, Weiler, and Assaker, 2015), encompasses the elucidation of post-purchase activities through learnings derived from past experiences (Silik, 2018). Westbrook and Oliver (1991) considered satisfaction as a significant variable in experiences, as customers conduct cognitive evaluations of services based on individual experiences (Storbacka, Strandvik, and Gronroos, 1994). The resulting evaluation of tourist satisfaction with a destination drives positive behaviors, such as intention to revisit, and emerges as a critical factor in guiding tourism supply and understanding tourists' needs (Kozak and Rimmington, 2000). Expectations and desires wield substantial influence on satisfaction, with tourist satisfaction determined by brand performance and the ability to fulfill inherent needs, wants, or desires (Correia, Kozak, and Ferradeira, 2013). Research on destination loyalty reveals that one of the most decisive factors encouraging tourists to visit a destination more frequently is their satisfaction from previous visits (Alegre and Garau, 2010).

Behavioral Intent

Behavioral intentions reflect some individuals' willingness towards certain behaviors (Ajzen and Driver, 1992) and indicate how much effort one is willing to exert to perform a behavior (Jennings and Seaman, 1990). According to Baker and Crompton (2000), behavioral intent serves as an indicator of whether a tourist will re-engage in a touristic activity they have previously participated in, shaping their positive or negative intent. Positive behavioral intentions often represent customer loyalty, a significant target in consumer marketing and a key component for long-term viability or sustainability of a business (Chen and Chen, 2010). Understanding customer behavior is vital for creating a sustainable strategy for attractions, necessitating the analysis of core factors like visitor motivations and behavioral intentions (Dean and Suhartanto, 2019). While behavioral intent may not substitute for actual behavior (Suhartanto, Chen, Mohi, and Sosianika, 2018), it serves as a pivotal element for researchers to assess the strength of visitors' future intentions, making it a suitable method for predicting customer behavior in the tourism sector (Chen and Chen, 2010).

Motivation

Literature on consumer behavior argues that motivation embodies individual internal forces leading to action. Investigating the reasons or motivations for traveling contributes to understanding tourism as a social and psychological phenomenon (Park and Yoon, 2009). Research on travel motives has primarily been guided by the push and pull motivation theory (Otoo and Kim, 2020). The theory postulates that people are pushed to make travel decisions by internal forces related to their needs and pulled towards specific destinations by external forces or destination-specific attributes (Uysal, McGehee, and Loker-Murphy, 1996). Tourists are pushed to places where they expect their needs to be met, making push motivations useful in explaining the

desire to travel. Pull factors are destination-specific features that attract individuals after the decision to travel has been made (Pesonen and Komppula, 2010).

Researchers like Jang and Wu (2006) have identified common push factors such as information-seeking, relaxation, and family togetherness, and common pull factors like natural and historical environments, cost, facilities, safety, and accessibility. Others like Pearce and Lee (2005) have stated that escape, relaxation, relationships, and self-development form the central backbone of travel motivation for all travelers. According to Cai and Li (2009), rural tourists expect family togetherness, peace and quiet, friendly reception, and good food, with beautiful landscapes, opportunities for outdoor activities, and safe environments as important pull factors. Cronin and Taylor (1992) evaluated the effect of both quality and satisfaction on behavioral intentions, finding that satisfaction has a more potent and consistent impact on purchasing intentions compared to service quality.

Method

This study employed a relational scanning model. The investigation aimed to analyze the motivations, perceived destination images, and behavioral intentions of visitors to Başkonuş Yaylası. Başkonuş Yaylası is a popular tourist destination in the west of Kahramanmaraş, Turkey. A literature review related to the subject was conducted, and survey techniques were used to collect the study data. A four-section survey was prepared and administered online. The questions in the first section were designed to identify the demographic characteristics of the individuals and their habits of visiting Başkonuş Yaylası. The second section consists of a visitation motivation scale. The third section is a scale prepared to determine the individuals' perceived destination image. The last section is a scale prepared to determine the participants' behavioral intentions. The universe of the research consists of participants visiting Başkonuş Yaylası. The study employed a convenience sampling method, reaching 225 individuals. The data were collected between January and June 2022.

In the study, the 'Local Food Festival Participation Motivation Scale', developed by Yayla in 2017, was restructured by researchers to reveal the motivations of the visitors to Başkonuş Yaylası and renamed the "Rural Tourism Participation Motivation Scale." The Destination Image Scale and the Behavioral Intent Scale were also used in their form as developed by Yayla (2017). The data obtained as a result of the study were analyzed using statistical methods. SPSS 27.0 software was used to analyze the study data. The reliability level of the scale used in the study was tested with Cronbach's Alpha values. For data related to the demographic characteristics of the participants, frequency analysis was conducted, and percentage distributions and standard deviation values were examined. Skewness and kurtosis values and histograms were examined to determine the normality of the data distribution. Since the data were found to be normally distributed, Independent Sample t-Test and One-Way ANOVA were used to test the hypotheses. Factor analysis was conducted to determine the validity of the scales.

The Ethics Committee Report dated 25.06.2021 and numbered 2021/6/6 was obtained from Osmaniye Korkut Ata University's Social Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee for the questionnaire form used in this study.

Findings

This section of the study presents the findings and interpretations obtained from the collected data.

Findings Related to Participants' Personal Characteristics

Table 1 details the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Personal Characteristics of Participants

	Group	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	125	55.6
	Male	100	44.4
	Total	225	100
Age	18-25 years	136	60.4
	26-35 years	55	24.4
	36-45 years	26	11.6
	46 years and above	8	3.6
	Total	225	100

Marital Status	Single	155	68.9
	Married	70	31.1
	Total	225	100
Educational Status	Primary School	7	3.1
	High School or Equivalent	19	8.4
	Associate Degree	126	56.0
	Bachelor's Degree	62	27.6
	Postgraduate	11	4.9
	Total	225	100
Occupation	Private Sector Employee	50	22.2
	Public Sector Employee	45	20.0
	Tradesperson	8	3.6
	Freelance	5	2.2
	Housewife	15	6.7
	Student	102	45.3
	Total	225	100

As seen in Table 1, 55.6% of the participants (125 individuals) are female, and 44.4% (100 individuals) are male. A majority, 60.4% (136 individuals), are young people aged between 18-25 years. Following age groups are 26-35 years (55 individuals), 36-45 years (26 individuals), and over 46 years (8 individuals). Generally speaking, the visitors to Başkonuş Yaylası are young, and the frequency of visits decreases with age. Examining the marital status of the participants reveals that a large majority of 68.9% (155 individuals) are single, while married participants constitute 31.1% (70 individuals). Education-wise, 56% (126 individuals) of the participants have an associate degree level of education. The proportions for bachelor's degree are 27.6% (62 individuals), high school equivalent 8.4% (19 individuals), postgraduate 4.9% (11 individuals), and primary school 3.1% (7 individuals). When examining their professions, students lead with 45.3% (102 individuals), followed by private sector employees with 22.2% (50 individuals), public sector employees with 20% (45 individuals), housewives with 6.7% (15 individuals), tradespeople with 3.6% (8 individuals), and freelancers with 2.2% (5 individuals). In other words, it's individuals fitting this typology that visit Başkonuş Yaylası.

Findings Related to Participants' Visits to Başkonuş Yaylası

Findings concerning the participants' visits to Başkonuş Yaylası are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Information Regarding Participants' Visits to Başkonuş Yaylası

	Group	Frequency	%
City of Residence	Kahramanmaraş	187	83.1
	Gaziantep	12	5.3
	Other	26	11.6
	Total	225	100
Number of Visits	First time	102	45.3
	Twice	40	17.8
	Thrice	13	5.8
	Four times	24	10.7
	Five times or more	46	20.4
	Total	225	100
Manner of Visit	Alone	10	4.4
	With family members	111	49.3
	With a group of friends	97	43.1
	With a tour	7	3.1
	Total	225	100
Source of Information	Friend/relative recommendation	181	80.4
	Social media	44	19.6
	Total	225	100

As shown in Table 2, the vast majority of the participants (83.1%) reside in Kahramanmaraş province, where Başkonuş Yaylası is located. 5.3% of the participants are visitors from the neighboring province of Gaziantep.

Other participants reside in Hatay, Osmaniye, Malatya, Kayseri, Adana, and Kilis provinces. A significant proportion of the participants (45.3%) are visiting Başkonuş Yaylası for the first time. 20.4% of the participants have visited Başkonuş Yaylası five times or more. They are followed by those who have visited twice (17.8%), four times (10.7%), and three times. It is observed that participants mainly visit Başkonuş Yaylası with family or friends. Those visiting with family members constitute 49.3% of the participants, while those visiting with friends make up 43.1%. Participants visiting Başkonuş Yaylası alone account for 4.4%, while those visiting with a tour make up 3.1%. Participants mainly visit Başkonuş Yaylası based on friends/relatives' recommendations (80.4%). Social media has also played an influential role, with 19.6% of the participants being influenced by it in their decision to visit Başkonuş Yaylası.

Findings Related to Rural Tourism Participation Motivation, Destination Image, and Behavioral Intent Scales

In the study, the skewness and kurtosis analyses conducted for the items of the scales utilized revealed that values are within the range of -1 to +1. Additionally, by examining histograms concerning the items, it has been observed that the data are normally distributed. The reliability of the scales was determined by the Cronbach's Alpha score, while the validity was tested through factor analysis.

Reliability and Validity Analysis Findings for Rural Tourism Participation Scale

In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) result for the 21 statements in the Rural Tourism Participation Motivation Scale, three dimensions (factors), their corresponding eigenvalues, the variance explanation ratios of the dimensions, cumulative variance ratios, and factor loadings of the items in the survey form are shown in Table 3. In the Exploratory Factor Analysis, the varimax (orthogonal rotation) method was chosen, and it was determined that communality scores related to each statement were above 0.50. Table 4 also includes the reliability analysis results of the factors, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation values. According to the results of the exploratory factor analysis, the obtained three dimensions explain 70.903% of the total variance.

Table 3. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results Related to Rural Tourism Participation Motivation Scale

Factors	Cultural Experience	Exploration	Escape
M1	0.865		
M2	0.863		
M3	0.846		
M4	0.761		
M5	0.742		
M6	0.700		
M7	0.662		
M8	0.660		
M9	0.608		
M10		0.836	
M11		0.764	
M12		0.721	
M13		0.718	
M14		0.701	
M15		0.681	
M16		0.669	
M17		0.527	
M18			0.872
M19			0.863
M20			0.771
M21			0.567
Eigenvalue	6.339	5.417	3.134
Percentage of Variance Explained	30.186	25.794	14.923
Cumulative Variance	30.186	55.980	70.903
Cronbach's Alpha (For Each Dimension)	0.946	0.924	0.866
Cronbach's Alpha (For Entire Scale)		0.956	
Average Values Related to Factors	4.4532	4.3094	4.3544
Standard Deviation Values Related to Factors	0.4909	0.6286	0.6010

Total Variance Explanation Ratio	70.903
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The first factor, consisting of nine statements, has an eigenvalue of 6.339 and a variance explanation ratio of 30.186, with an arithmetic mean value of 4.4532 and a standard deviation of 0.4909. This first factor, containing statements related to experiencing different cultures, has been named "Cultural Experience." The second factor, with an eigenvalue of 5.417, a variance explanation ratio of 25.794, an arithmetic mean value of 4.3094, and a standard deviation of 0.6286, consists of eight statements related to participants' motivations to seek new things and have fun. This factor has been named "Exploration." The third factor, with an eigenvalue of 3.134, a variance explanation ratio of 14.923, an arithmetic mean value of 4.3544, and a standard deviation of 0.6010, consists of four statements related to participants' desires to escape the stress of daily life. This factor has been named "Escape." In the study, internal consistency was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. Accordingly, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients are 0.946 for the Cultural Experience dimension, 0.924 for the Exploration dimension, and 0.866 for the Escape dimension. For the entire scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.956. In this context, it can be said that all dimensions forming the scale are highly reliable.

Reliability and Validity Analysis Findings for Destination Image Scale

In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) result for the 23 statements in the Destination Image Scale, three dimensions (factors), their corresponding eigenvalues, the variance explanation ratios of the dimensions, cumulative variance ratios, and factor loadings of the items in the survey form are shown in Table 4. In the Exploratory Factor Analysis, the varimax (orthogonal rotation) method was chosen, and it was determined that communality scores related to each statement were above 0.50. Table 4 also includes the reliability analysis results of the factors, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation values. According to the results of the exploratory factor analysis, the obtained three dimensions explain 68.931% of the total variance.

Table 4. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results Related to Destination Image Scale

Factors	Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	Price and Value	Natural Environment
DI1	0.829		
DI2	0.790		
DI3	0.772		
DI4	0.761		
DI5	0.737		
DI6	0.663		
DI7	0.641		
DI8	0.596		
DI9	0.562		
DI10	0.524		
DI11		0.808	
DI12		0.808	
DI13		0.807	
DI14		0.753	
DI15		0.746	
DI16		0.697	
DI17		0.635	
DI18		0.623	
DI19		0.552	
DI20		0.486	
DI21			0.856
DI22			0.833
DI23			0.801
Eigenvalue	6.670	6.439	2.745

Percentage Of Variance Explained	29.001	27.996	11.934
Cumulative Variance	29.001	56.997	68.931
Cronbach's Alpha (For Each Dimension)	0.943	0.939	0.813
Cronbach's Alpha (For Entire Scale)	0.960		
Average Values Related to Factors	3.9293	3.7778	4.6415
Standard Deviation Values Related to Factors	0.7871	0.8592	0.4949
Total Variance Explanation Ratio	68.931		

The first factor, consisting of 10 statements, has an eigenvalue of 6.670 and a variance explanation ratio of 29.001, with an arithmetic mean value of 3.9293 and a standard deviation of 0.7871. This first factor, containing statements about Başkonuş Yaylası's infrastructure and entertainment diversity, has been named "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity." The second factor, with an eigenvalue of 6.439, a variance explanation ratio of 27.996, an arithmetic mean value of 3.7778, and a standard deviation of 0.8592, consists of ten statements related to product prices and their value. This factor has been named "Price and Value." The third factor, with an eigenvalue of 2.745, a variance explanation ratio of 11.934, an arithmetic mean value of 4.6415, and a standard deviation of 0.4949, consists of two statements that relate to the natural environment of Başkonuş Yaylası. This factor has been named "Natural Environment." In the study, internal consistency was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. Accordingly, the Cronbach Alpha coefficients are 0.943 for the Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity dimension, 0.939 for the Price and Value dimension, and 0.813 for the Natural Environment dimension. For the entire scale, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found to be 0.960. In this context, it can be said that all dimensions forming the scale are highly reliable.

Reliability and Validity Analysis Findings for Behavioral Intention Scale

In the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) result for the 5 statements in the Behavioral Intention Scale, the single dimension (factor), its corresponding eigenvalue, and the variance explanation ratio of the dimension, along with the factor loadings of the items in the survey form, are shown in Table 5. In the Exploratory Factor Analysis, it was determined that communality scores related to each statement were above 0.50. Table 5 also includes the reliability analysis results of the factor, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation values. According to the results of the exploratory factor analysis, the obtained dimension explains 78.472% of the total variance.

Table 5. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results Related to Behavioral Intention Scale

Factors	Behavioral Intention
BI1	0.829
BI2	0.790
BI3	0.772
BI4	0.761
BI5	0.737
Eigenvalue	3.924
Percentage of Variance Explained	78.472
Cronbach's Alpha	0.930
Average Value Related to Factor	4.4507
Standard Deviation Value Related to Factor	0.5299

The Behavioral Intention Scale, consisting of five statements, has an eigenvalue of 3.924 and a variance explanation ratio of 78.472, with an arithmetic mean value of 4.4507 and a standard deviation of 0.5299. In the study, internal consistency was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient. Accordingly, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the Behavioral Intention Scale was found to be 0.930. In this context, it can be said that the scale is highly reliable.

Variation of Participants' Motivations for Participating in Rural Tourism Based on Demographic Characteristics

By examining the skewness and kurtosis values and histograms related to the research data, it was determined that the data followed a normal distribution. In this context, the variations in the participants' motivations for

participating in rural tourism, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions, according to demographic characteristics, were examined using the Independent Sample t-Test and One-Way ANOVA.

Variation in Participants' Motivations for Participating in Rural Tourism, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions Based on Gender

An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether the participants' motivations for participating in rural tourism, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions vary by gender. The findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Independent Sample T Test According to Participants' Genders

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means		
		F	p	t	df	p (two tailed)
Escape	Assuming equal variances	1.008	.317	-2.729	223	.007
	Assuming unequal variances			-2.762	219.972	.006

According to the results of the independent sample t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference in participants' motivations for participating in rural tourism, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions based on their marital status; it was found that there was a statistically significant difference in the "Escape" dimension (p=0.007) regarding rural tourism participation motivations according to marital status (p<0.05). When comparing arithmetic means, it was observed that male participants' (x=4.4750) motivations for participating in rural tourism in the "Escape" dimension were higher than those of female participants (x=4.2580). In other words, men's "Escape" motivations are higher than women's.

On the other hand, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference in the dimensions of "Cultural Experience" and "Exploration" according to the marital status of participants' motivations for participating in rural tourism; in the dimensions of perceived destination image "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity", "Price and Value", and "Natural Environment"; and in the behavioral intentions (p>0.05).

Variation in Participants' Motivations for Participating in Rural Tourism, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions Based on Marital Status

To determine whether participants' motivations for participating in rural tourism, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions differ according to marital status, an independent sample t-test has been conducted. The findings are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Independent Sample T Test According to Participants' Marital Status

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means		
		F	p	t	df	p (two tailed)
Exploration	Assuming equal variances	2.302	.131	2.619	223	.009
	Assuming unequal variances			2.465	115.947	.015
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	Assuming equal variances	.540	.463	4.826	223	.000
	Assuming unequal variances			4.958	142.321	.000
Price and Value	Assuming equal variances	3.100	.080	5.577	223	.000
	Assuming unequal variances			5.709	140.979	.000
Natural Environment	Assuming equal variances	13.499	.000	-2.785	223	.006
	Assuming unequal variances			-3.208	189.354	.002
Behavioral Intention	Assuming equal variances	.008	.930	2.346	223	.020
	Assuming unequal variances			2.302	127.415	.023

According to the results of the independent sample t-test conducted to determine whether there are significant differences in the motivations for rural tourism participation, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions based on marital status:

- In the "Exploration" dimension of participants' motivations for rural tourism according to marital status, there was a statistically significant difference (p=0.009).
- In the "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (p=0.000), "Price and Value" (p=0.000), and "Natural Environment" (p=0.002) dimensions of the perceived destination image, and in behavioral intentions (p=0.02), statistically significant differences were observed (p<0.05).
- Comparing arithmetic means, it was found that single participants (x=4.3823) had higher motivations in the "Exploration" dimension compared to married participants (x=4.4182). In other words, the "Exploration" motivations of singles are higher than those of married individuals.
- Moreover, single participants perceived the destination image higher in "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (x=4.0916) and "Price and Value" (x=3.9794) compared to married participants (x=3.5700 and x=3.3314, respectively). Conversely, married participants rated higher in the "Natural Environment" (x=4.7762) compared to single participants (x=4.5806).
- Additionally, single participants (x=4.5058) had higher behavioral intentions than married participants (x=4.3286).

On the other hand, it was determined that there was no statistically significant difference in the dimensions of "Cultural Experience" and "Escape" concerning the motivations for participating in rural tourism according to marital status (p>0.05).

Variation in Participants' Motivations for Participating in Rural Tourism, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions Based on Age

To determine whether participants' motivations for participating in rural tourism, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions differ according to their ages, a One-Way ANOVA test has been performed. Post-hoc tests (multiple comparison tests) were applied to identify between which groups the differences occurred. In instances where homogeneity was violated within the study, Tamhane's T2 test was used. The findings are presented in Tables 8 and 9.

Table 8. One-Way ANOVA Test According to Participants' Ages

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means		
	p		df	F	p (two tailed)
Exploration	.007	Between Groups: 3 Within Groups: 221 Total: 224	3	3.685	.013
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	.037	Between Groups: 3 Within Groups: 221 Total: 224	3	19.276	<.001
Price and Value	.014	Between Groups: 3 Within Groups: 221 Total: 224	3	18.696	<.001
Natural Environment	<.001	Between Groups: 3 Within Groups: 221 Total: 224	3	6.092	<.001

Table 9. Post-Hoc Test According to Participants' Ages

Factors	Age Groups	p (ANOVA)	Tamhane's T2
Exploration	18-25 years (a)	.013	b<a
	26-35 years (b)		
	36-45 years (c)		
	46 years and above (d)		
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	18-25 years (a)	<.001	b<a; c<a; d<a
	26-35 years (b)		
	36-45 years (c)		
	46 years and above (d)		

Price and Value	18-25 years (a)	<.001	b<a; c<a; d<a
	26-35 years(b)		
	36-45 years (c)		
	46 years and above (d)		
Natural Environment	18-25 years (a)	<.001	a<b
	26-35 years (b)		
	36-45 years (c)		
	46 years and above (d)		

According to the results of the One-Way ANOVA conducted to determine whether there were significant differences in participants' motivations for rural tourism participation, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions based on age:

- In the "Exploration" dimension of rural tourism participation motivations, there was a statistically significant difference according to age (p=0.013).
- In the dimensions of "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (p=0.001), "Price and Value" (p=0.001), and "Natural Environment" (p=0.001) of the perceived destination image, statistically significant differences were observed (p<0.05).

Comparing arithmetic means, it was found that:

- Participants in the 18-25 age group (x=4.4053) had higher motivations in the "Exploration" dimension compared to those in the 26-35 age group (x=4.1477). In other words, the "Exploration" motivations of the 18-25 age group are higher.
- Participants in the 18-25 age group perceived the destination image higher in "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (x=4.2154) compared to those in the 26-35 age group (x=3.4418), 36-45 age group (x=3.6231), and those over 46 (x=3.4125). Similar patterns were observed in the "Price and Value" dimension (x=4.0868) compared to the other age groups.
- Conversely, participants in the 26-35 age group (x=4.8242) rated higher in the "Natural Environment" dimension compared to the 18-25 age group (x=4.5319).

On the other hand, no statistically significant differences were found in the dimensions of "Cultural Experience" and "Escape" concerning the motivations for participating in rural tourism and in behavioral intentions based on age (p>0.05).

Variation in Participants' Motivations for Rural Tourism Participation, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions Based on Education Level

To determine whether Participants' Motivations for Rural Tourism Participation, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions vary according to their education level, a One-Way ANOVA test was conducted. Post-hoc tests (multiple comparison tests) were applied to identify between which groups the differences occur. In cases where the variances were homogeneous, the Bonferroni test was used, which does not require an equal sample size principle; whereas, the Tamhane's T2 test was utilized when the homogeneity of variances was violated. The findings are shown in Table 10 and Table 11.

Table 10. One-Way ANOVA Test According to Participants' Education Levels

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-Test for Equality of Means		
	p		df	F	P (two tailed)
Exploration	.018	Between Groups: 4 Within Groups: 220 Total: 224		3.046	.018
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	.313	Between Groups: 4 Within Groups: 220 Total: 224		9.713	<.001
Price and Value	.053	Between Groups: 4 Within Groups: 220 Total: 224		11.234	<.001

Natural Environment	<.001	Between Groups: 4 Within Groups: 220 Total: 224	4.189	.003
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Table 11. Post-Hoc Test According to Participants' Education Levels

Factors	Education Level	p (ANOVA)	Bonferroni/Tamhane's T2
Exploration	Primary School (a)	.018	e<b
	High School or Equivalent (b)		
	Associate Degree (c)		
	Bachelor's Degree (d)		
	Postgraduate (e)		
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	Primary School (a)	<.001	e<b; d<c; e<c
	High School or Equivalent (b)		
	Associate Degree (c)		
	Bachelor's Degree (d)		
	Postgraduate (e)		
Price and Value	Primary School (a)	<.001	d<c; e<c
	High School or Equivalent (b)		
	Associate Degree (c)		
	Bachelor's Degree (d)		
	Postgraduate (e)		
Natural Environment	Primary School (a)	.003	b<a; c<a; d<a; c<d
	High School or Equivalent (b)		
	Associate Degree (c)		
	Bachelor's Degree (d)		
	Postgraduate (e)		

According to the results of the One-Way ANOVA conducted to determine whether Participants' Motivations for Rural Tourism Participation, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions significantly differ by age; it was found that Participants' Motivations for Rural Tourism Participation according to marital status in the dimension of "Exploration" (p=0.018), and their Perceived Destination Image in the dimensions of "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (p=0.001), "Price and Value" (p=0.001), and "Natural Environment" (p=0.003) were statistically significant (p<0.05). Comparing arithmetic means, it was observed that high school graduates (x=4.5395) have higher rural tourism participation motivations in the "Exploration" dimension than postgraduate participants (x=3.8636). Additionally, high school graduates' Perceived Destination Image in the "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (x=3.9947) dimension was higher than postgraduate participants (x=3.2000); associate degree holders (X=4.1651) were also higher than undergraduate (x=3.5758) and postgraduate participants (X=3.2000). Moreover, associate degree holders (x=4.0730) in the "Price and Value" dimension were higher than undergraduate (x=3.3452) and postgraduate participants (X=3.1000). However, primary school graduates (x=5.000) in the "Natural Environment" dimension were higher than high school graduates (x=4.6667), associate degree holders (x=4.5344), undergraduate participants (X=4.1915), and undergraduate participants (x=4.7796) were higher than associate degree holders (x=4.5344).

On the other hand, it was determined that Participants' Motivations for Rural Tourism Participation according to education level in the dimensions of "Cultural Experience" and "Escape" and their Behavioral Intentions did not show statistically significant differences (p>0.05).

Variation in Rural Tourism Participation Motivations, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions Based on Participants' Professions

To determine whether Participants' Rural Tourism Participation Motivations, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions differ according to their professions, a One-Way ANOVA test was conducted. Post-hoc tests (multiple comparison tests) were applied to identify differences between groups. In the study, the Bonferroni test, which does not require an equal sample size principle when variances are homogeneous, was

utilized; Tamhane's T2 test was used when the homogeneity of variances was violated. The findings are shown in Table 12 and Table 13.

Table 12. One-Way ANOVA Test According to Participants' Professions

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-Test for Equality of Means		
	p	df	F	p (two tailed)
Exploration	.190	Between Groups: 5 Within Groups: 219 Total: 224	2.701	.022
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	.143	Between Groups: 5 Within Groups: 219 Total: 224	7.696	<.001
Price and Value	.174	Between Groups: 5 Within Groups: 219 Total: 224	8.500	<.001
Natural Environment	<.001	Between Groups: 5 Within Groups: 219 Total: 224	4.160	.001

Table 13. Post-Hoc Test According to Participants' Professions

The results of the One-Way ANOVA, aimed at determining whether Participants' Rural Tourism Participation

Factors	Professions	p (ANOVA)	Bonferroni/Tamhane's T2
Exploration	Private Sector Employee (a)	.022	b<f
	Public Sector Employee (b)		
	Tradesperson (c)		
	Freelance (d)		
	Housewife (e)		
	Student (f)		
Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity	Private Sector Employee (a)	<.001	b<a; b<f
	Public Sector Employee (b)		
	Tradesperson (c)		
	Freelance (d)		
	Housewife (e)		
	Student (f)		
Price and Value	Private Sector Employee (a)	<.001	b<a; b<f
	Public Sector Employee (b)		
	Tradesperson (c)		
	Freelance (d)		
	Housewife (e)		
	Student (f)		
Natural Environment	Private Sector Employee (a)	.001	a<c; b<c; f<c; f<b; f<d
	Public Sector Employee (b)		
	Tradesperson (c)		
	Freelance (d)		
	Housewife (e)		
	Student (f)		

Motivations, Perceived Destination Image, and Behavioral Intentions vary significantly based on their professions, indicate that participants' Rural Tourism Participation Motivations in the "Exploration" dimension (p=0.022), as well as their Perceived Destination Image in the "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" (p=0.001), "Price and Value" (p=0.001), and "Natural Environment" (p=0.001) dimensions, have demonstrated statistically significant differences (p<0.05). Comparison of arithmetic means revealed that students (x=4.4240) in the "Exploration" dimension had higher rural tourism participation motivations compared to

public sector employees ($x=4.0333$). Moreover, public sector employees' Perceived Destination Image in the "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity" and "Price and Value" dimensions ($x=3.4200$ and $x=3.1978$, respectively) were found to be lower than private sector employees ($x=3.9060$ and $x=3.7940$, respectively) and students ($x=4.2010$ and $x=4.0667$, respectively). However, artisans' Perceived Destination Image in the "Natural Environment" dimension ($x=5.000$) was found to be higher than private sector employees ($x=4.7200$), public sector employees ($x=4.7407$), and students ($x=4.4935$); while students ($x=4.4935$) were found to be lower than public sector employees ($x=4.7407$) and freelance professionals ($x=4.8000$). On the other hand, it has been determined that participants' Rural Tourism Participation Motivations in the "Cultural Experience" and "Escape" dimensions, and Behavioral Intentions did not show statistically significant differences according to their professions ($p>0.05$).

Conclusion

The growing interest in rural tourism, seen as an alternative to mass tourism, has been consistently on the rise in contemporary society. Many rural areas are promoting rural tourism, especially for economic development. However, the key to success in rural tourism lies in understanding tourists' motivations for visiting the destination, their perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions. This study has identified the motivations, perceived destination image, and behavioral intentions of tourists visiting Başkonuş Yaylası. The majority of visitors to Başkonuş Yaylası were found to be young, primarily single, associate degree graduates, students, and individuals earning below the minimum wage. This visitor typology significantly influences their participation motivations and perceived destination image in rural tourism.

The demographics were found to play an essential role in shaping both participation motivations and perceived destination image, particularly for young students who exhibited higher motivation in the "Exploration" dimension and perceived higher value in areas such as "Infrastructure and Entertainment Diversity." The study also highlighted the occupational variations among visitors, reflecting the significant differences in several dimensions of rural tourism interest, such as "Price and Value" and "Natural Environment." These findings have profound implications for destination managers and tourism businesses operating in the destination. To attract tourists from the target market, understanding and strategically utilizing these variables is vital. The insights gained about the specific motivations and perceptions of different occupational and demographic groups can guide personalized marketing strategies and product development. Furthermore, these results emphasize the importance of aligning tourism offerings with the unique characteristics and needs of the visitors, considering both the broad appeal and the specific differences revealed in the study. By tailoring the rural tourism experience to the visitor profile identified, destinations and tourism businesses can not only enhance visitor satisfaction but also foster sustainable growth in rural tourism.

In summary, the dynamics of rural tourism are complex, with various factors influencing participation motivations and perceived destination image. This study has provided critical insights into how demographic and occupational variables shape these dynamics, and offers guidance for developing more targeted and effective marketing strategies. The holistic understanding of tourists visiting Başkonuş Yaylası serves as a valuable blueprint for both current practices and future endeavors in the growing field of rural tourism.

While this study enriches the literature on rural tourism, it also has some limitations. First of all, the data obtained from this research is based on the participants' own opinions. Therefore, the research results may not give a general idea. The non-homogeneity of the sample group and the lack of a research budget are also among the limitations of this research. It would be better to diversify the participants both numerically and demographically. Future research could investigate the motivations for participation in rural tourism with different variables. For example, revisit intention, recommendation and so on. If future research can be conducted online, more participants can be reached. Thus, the findings on rural tourism can be supported with more precise results.

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