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The Effect of Television Productions on Gastronomy-Based Destination Perceptions and Behavioral Intentions: The Case of Kars

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Abstract

This study examines the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions and the gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention toward Kars within an integrated model. In this study, the television productions variable was considered as an element representing the perceived general influence of screen-based content in generating interest, curiosity, and travel-related consideration toward destinations, while participants' experience of watching a specific Kars-themed production was excluded from the measurement scope of this variable. Data were collected through an online survey from participants residing in Türkiye who were 18 years of age or older and had undertaken at least one trip for tourism purposes within the previous twelve months. A total of 380 valid responses were analyzed. The measurement model was tested using confirmatory factor analysis, while the structural relationships were examined through structural equation modeling and bootstrap mediation analysis. The findings indicate that the perceived general influence of television productions positively affects the gastronomic image of Kars, while its direct effect on gastronomic attractiveness did not reach a statistically significant level. Gastronomic image supports both gastronomic attractiveness and visit intention. Gastronomic attractiveness strengthens visit intention, while visit intention enhances recommendation intention. The findings further demonstrate that gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness play significant roles in explaining the indirect mechanisms within the model. The study indicates that media visibility in gastronomy-based destination marketing for Kars should be evaluated in conjunction with local culinary identity, gastronomic image, and experience-oriented attractiveness.

Keywords: Television Productions, Gastronomic Image, Gastronomic Attractiveness, Behavioral Intentions, Kars.

JEL Codes: L83, M31, Z33

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1. Introduction

Television productions are considered communication tools that can influence the formation of viewers' perceptions of destinations by producing visual and narrative representations of destinations. Screen-based content, such as films, television series, documentaries, and food programs, can support the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image and generate familiarity, curiosity, and travel interest toward a place among viewers (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beeton, 2005; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Connell, 2012). From the perspective of gastronomy tourism, this relationship is particularly important, as local culinary elements are evaluated together with destination identity, cultural authenticity, experience expectations, and perceptions of attractiveness (Hall & Sharples, 2003; Henderson, 2009; Lin et al., 2011). In this context, examining the relationship between screen-based media representations and gastronomy-oriented destination perceptions provides an important research basis for understanding the role of local culinary identity in destination marketing.

Located in northeastern Türkiye, Kars has a distinctive gastronomic identity shaped by its climatic conditions, agricultural and livestock production structure, local culinary heritage, and geographically indicated products. Products such as Kars kashar cheese, Kars gruyere cheese, Kars honey, Kars goose meat, and Kars ketesi are among the main elements that contribute to the visibility of the city's gastronomic image through tangible local values (Diker & Deniz, 2017; Derinalp Çanakçı, 2019; Turkish Patent and Trademark Office, 2026). This structure makes Kars an appropriate research context for examining gastronomy-based destination perceptions through their product, cultural, and experiential dimensions. Therefore, the case of Kars provides a strong contextual basis for examining the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions and gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, and behavioral intentions toward Kars.

In this study, the television productions variable was conceptualized as the perceived general influence of screen-based content in generating interest, curiosity, gastronomic associations, and travel-related consideration toward destinations. Participants' exposure to a specific Kars-themed production was not measured as part of this construct. In contrast, the variables of gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention were evaluated directly within the context of Kars. This distinction enables the research model to examine more consistently the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions and evaluations of Kars as a gastronomy-based destination.

The main research problem of this study is to explain how the perceived general influence of television productions is associated with the gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention toward Kars. This problem also involves identifying the perceptual mechanisms through which these relationships are formed. In the literature on film-induced tourism, gastronomic image, and behavioral intentions, these variables have mostly been addressed within separate research areas. However, studies examining media representation, gastronomy-based destination perceptions, and behavioral intentions within a sequential model in the context of a specific destination remain limited. This study addresses this research gap in the context of Kars by using structural equation modeling and bootstrap mediation analysis. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on gastronomy-based destination evaluations specific to Kars and to explain the mediating roles of gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness. It also seeks to contribute to a more systematic evaluation of Kars's gastronomic identity, which is distinguished by geographically indicated local products, from a destination marketing perspective.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Television Productions and Destination Marketing

Television productions and visual media content are regarded as representational fields that generate cultural and emotional associations in the formation of destination-related perceptions. In the literature on film-induced tourism, it is emphasized that places gaining visibility through films, television series, and television programs can generate curiosity, familiarity, and a desire to visit among viewers (Beeton, 2005; Connell, 2012). In this context, screen-based content can be considered a communication sphere that enables the joint evaluation of spatial attributes, which constitute the cognitive dimension of destination image, together with perceptions of proximity, interest, and attractiveness, which constitute its affective dimension (Kim & Richardson, 2003).

From a destination marketing perspective, television productions can make places visible through their physical attributes and within their cultural and experiential contexts. Such representations can contribute to the formation of the symbolic meaning of a destination through local culture, everyday life, social relations, and experience expectations (Iwashita, 2006; Connell, 2012). The visibility of local culinary elements in television content also makes it possible to examine the relationship between gastronomic image and destination identity in the context of me-

dia representations. While Henderson (2009) and Lin et al. (2011) emphasize the importance of local foods and culinary elements for destination identity and gastronomic image, Okumuş et al. (2013) state that local cuisines can be used in destination promotion as elements that make cultural distinctiveness and experiential value visible. Hudson and Ritchie (2006) further indicate that visual media content offers opportunities for destination marketing when supported by planned marketing practices.

In the context of Kars, television productions and visual media content provide a representational field through which different destination elements, such as the city's winter landscape, rural environment, historical texture, and everyday life practices, can be conveyed to viewers. Indeed, films such as Soğuk and Rauf, as well as television series such as Uzak Şehrin Masalı and Veliaht, show that Kars has gained visibility in screen-based productions across different periods, either as a filming location or as a narrative context (Anadolu Ajansı, 2013; Habertürk, 2016; NOW TV, 2021; Show TV, 2026). These examples support the view that, in destination perception, media representations can be addressed through the accumulation of representation, familiarity, and association over time, beyond the direct effect of a single production (Iwashita, 2006; Connell, 2012). Within this framework, the case of Kars provides an appropriate conceptual basis for explaining how the perceived general influence of television productions can be associated with destination image, spatial curiosity, and travel interest.

2.2. Gastronomic Image and Gastronomic Attractiveness

Destination image refers to individuals' mental representations of a destination and is commonly examined through cognitive and affective components (Baloğlu & McCleary, 1999). Gastronomic image is considered a specific dimension of this broader construct associated with local culinary culture and food and beverage experiences. This concept encompasses perceptions and evaluations of a destination's local foods, culinary culture, food and beverage experiences, and gastronomic identity (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Lin et al. (2011) emphasize that local foods can function as an important element of destination identity and influence how tourists mentally position a destination. This approach supports the evaluation of gastronomic image together with the cultural and symbolic meanings associated with the destination.

Gastronomic attractiveness is conceptualized as a motivational construct associated with individuals' interest, curiosity, and desire to experience the cuisine of a destination (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). While gastronomic image represents perceptual and evaluative judgments regarding destination cuisine, gastronomic attractiveness refers to the aspect of these perceptions reflected in the desire to taste local cuisine, engage in culinary experiences, and visit the destination. Kivela and Crotts (2006) state that tourists' evaluations of destination cuisine may be associated with satisfaction and revisit intention. Björk and Kauppinen-Räisänen (2016) show that local foods can be considered an important source in the formation of destination attractiveness. Within this framework, gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness can be evaluated as explanatory variables in the process through which perceptions of local cuisine translate into visit intention.

Kars cuisine provides an appropriate context in which the distinction between gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness can be concretely examined within a destination setting. The city's local culinary heritage, distinctive product diversity, and livestock-based production culture allow the gastronomic image of Kars to be evaluated through the dimensions of cultural richness, authenticity, quality, and diversity (Diker & Deniz, 2017; Derinalp Çanakçı, 2019). Geographically indicated products further support the visibility of this image through tangible local products (Turkish Patent and Trademark Office, 2026). In this context, positive perceptions of Kars cuisine may strengthen the city's gastronomic attractiveness and the desire to experience its local cuisine.

2.3. Behavioral Intentions and the Gastronomic Context of Kars

Visit intention refers to an individual's behavioral tendency to visit a particular destination in the future and is considered an important outcome variable in explaining the relationship between destination perception and tourist behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Recommendation intention indicates an individual's tendency to share positive evaluations of a destination within their social environment and to recommend the destination to others (Zeithaml et al., 1996). Within this framework, visit intention represents an individual's travel orientation, whereas recommendation intention reflects the transfer of positive destination evaluations into the sphere of social interaction. Evaluations related to gastronomic experiences, local food consumption, and the bond established with a destination also support the joint consideration of local cuisine perceptions with visit and recommendation intentions (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Tsai, 2016). In the context of Kars, these behavioral tendencies are important for linking perceptions of the city's gastronomic identity with intentions to visit and recommend the destination.

In gastronomy-based destination evaluations, a sequential relationship can be established among local food perception, destination image, and behavioral intentions. Horng et al. (2012) show that gastronomy-based destination brand equity and destination familiarity are associated with travel intention. Chi et al. (2013) examine the relationships among tourists' perceived food image, satisfaction, culinary quality, and behavioral intentions through a structural model. Choe and Kim (2018) demonstrate that local food consumption value is effective in explaining attitude, food destination image, and behavioral intentions. Within this framework, positive perceptions of Kars's gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness can be evaluated as complementary conceptual elements in explaining tendencies to visit the city and recommend it to others.

Evaluating behavioral intentions specifically in the case of Kars requires considering the city's gastronomic image together with recognition, cultural associations, and destination perceptions. Turan (2026) examines domestic tourists' perceptions of the gastronomic image of Kars through the dimensions of "image" and "recognition" and shows that participants generally attribute a positive image to Kars cuisine. However, the need for improvement in the level of recognition indicates that, in the transformation of positive gastronomic perceptions into visit and recommendation tendencies, visibility and attractiveness are also important alongside image. In this context, gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness toward Kars can be positioned as complementary explanatory concepts in terms of the intention to visit Kars and the intention to recommend Kars.

3. Purpose and Significance of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions and the gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention toward Kars. This aim seeks to explain how the gastronomy-based destination perception of Kars may be associated with media representations. The television productions variable was conceptualized at the general destination level, whereas gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention were measured directly in relation to Kars. In this respect, the study provides a clearer assessment of how Kars-specific gastronomic perceptions are linked to visit and recommendation intentions.

The significance of the study can be summarized in three main points. First, by examining media representations and gastronomy-based destination perceptions together in the specific context of Kars, the study establishes a conceptual link among the literatures on television productions, destination marketing, and gastronomy tourism. Second, it provides a destination-focused empirical framework for explaining the relationships between the concepts of gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness, based on Kars's local culinary identity, and visit and recommendation intentions. Third, the findings are expected to generate implications that can be used in relation to Kars's media visibility, gastronomy routes, local product promotion, and destination marketing practices. In these respects, the study aims to contribute to academic and practical discussions on the gastronomy-based destination positioning of Kars.

4. Method

4.1. Research Model and Hypotheses

The research model developed in this study was designed to explain the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions, gastronomy-based destination perceptions and behavioral intentions toward Kars. In the model, the perceived general influence of television productions is positioned as the independent variable; gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness as explanatory mediating constructs; visit intention as the behavioral outcome variable; and recommendation intention as the final behavioral outcome. While gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention are addressed directly within the context of the Kars destination, the perceived general influence of television productions is conceptualized as a general perception of the influence of screen-based content on destinations. This distinction indicates that, in the model, the television productions variable is evaluated in terms of perceived general influence of screen-based content on destinations, while exposure to a specific Kars-themed production remains outside of this construct.

Figure 1 presents the direct and indirect hypotheses included in the research model. H1–H6 represent the direct effects tested in the model, whereas H7 and H8 represent the indirect effects examined through the existing structural paths. H7 refers to the path-specific indirect effect of the perceived general influence of television productions on visit intention through gastronomic image. H8 refers to the indirect effect of gastronomic image on visit intention through gastronomic attractiveness. This presentation makes the indirect-effect hypotheses visible in the model while keeping the model free from an additional direct structural path from television productions to visit intention.

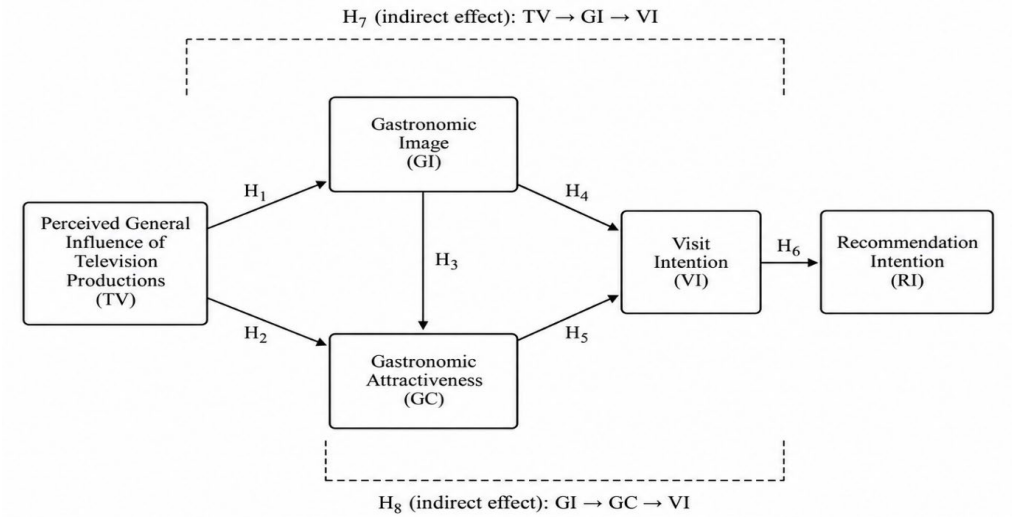


Figure 1. Research Model

Note: H1–H6 represent direct-effect hypotheses. H7 and H8 represent indirect-effect hypotheses tested through the corresponding mediated paths. Dashed brackets are used only to highlight these indirect-effect paths and do not indicate additional direct structural paths.

The literature on film tourism and destination image shows that screen-based representations can support cognitive and affective evaluations of destinations and contribute to familiarity, curiosity, and visit interest (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Beeton, 2005; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). In this study, the perceived general influence of television productions refers to the role of screen-based content in generating interest, curiosity, gastronomic associations, and travel-related consideration toward destinations. This influence is expected to support the gastronomic image of Kars by associating the destination with local values and by contributing to the formation of gastronomy-based associations. Accordingly, H1 was developed.

- H1: The perceived general influence of television productions positively affects the gastronomic image of Kars.

Gastronomic attractiveness refers to a more experience-oriented construct that, in contrast to gastronomic image, is reflected in the desire to experience local cuisine, the willingness to taste it, and travel motivation (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). The prominence of Kars cuisine through tangible, local, and experiential gastronomic elements strengthens the expectation that the perceived general influence of television productions may support the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars. Accordingly, H2 was developed.

- H2: The perceived general influence of television productions positively affects the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars.

Gastronomic image refers to perceptual and evaluative judgments regarding destination cuisine, whereas gastronomic attractiveness represents the aspect of these perceptions reflected in the desire to experience local cuisine, the willingness to taste it, and travel motivation (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Local foods and culinary elements are among the visible components of destination identity and contribute to the formation of destination attractiveness (Lin et al., 2011; Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Within this framework, a positive gastronomic image may support the perception of destination cuisine as distinctive, recognizable, and worth experiencing. Considering the gastronomic identity of Kars, which is strengthened by its local culinary culture, product diversity, and geographically indicated products, the gastronomic image of Kars is expected to enhance its gastronomic attractiveness. Accordingly, H3 was developed.

- H3: The gastronomic image of Kars positively affects the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars.

Destination image is one of the main constructs explaining how individuals mentally evaluate a destination and shape their future behavioral tendencies (Chen & Tsai, 2007). In the context of gastronomy, positive perceptions of local cuisine may support visit intention by strengthening the cultural identity, authenticity, and experiential value of the destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Choe & Kim, 2018). Within this framework, a positive gastronomic image of Kars cuisine is expected to create a more favorable mental evaluation of the destination and strengthen the tendency to visit Kars. Accordingly, H4 was developed.

- H4: The gastronomic image of Kars positively affects the intention to visit Kars.

Gastronomic attractiveness is considered a motivational construct that goes beyond a positive perception of local cuisine and includes the desire to experience this cuisine at the destination, taste it, and establish direct contact with the destination. In the gastronomy tourism literature, local foods and culi-

nary experiences are among the influential factors shaping tourists' destination preferences and travel intentions (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Horng et al., 2012; Choe & Kim, 2018). Within this framework, the perception of Kars cuisine as worth experiencing may support the perception of the destination as more attractive on a gastronomic basis and strengthen the intention to visit Kars. Accordingly, H5 was developed.

- H5: The gastronomic attractiveness of Kars positively affects the intention to visit Kars.

Visit intention refers to an individual's personal travel tendency toward a particular destination, whereas recommendation intention represents the transfer of this tendency to the social environment through positive opinion sharing and word-of-mouth communication. In the behavioral intentions literature, positive evaluations are emphasized as being associated with behavioral outcomes such as recommendation, positive word-of-mouth, and revisit tendencies (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). Within this framework, the intention to visit Kars is expected to support the tendency to share positive opinions about the destination and recommend Kars to others. Accordingly, H6 was developed.

- H6: The intention to visit Kars positively affects the intention to recommend Kars.

The reflection of the perceived general influence of television productions on visit intention can be conceptually explained through the formation of destination image. In the destination image literature, information sources and media representations are emphasized as factors that can shape destination-related perceptions, and these perceptions are associated with behavioral tendencies such as visit intention (Tasci & Gartner, 2007; Chen & Tsai, 2007). Since the television productions variable in this study is conceptualized at the general destination level, this influence is expected to be reflected in the intention to visit Kars through the gastronomic image of Kars. Accordingly, H7 was developed to test the path-specific indirect effect between the perceived general influence of television productions and the intention to visit Kars within the model.

- H7: The perceived general influence of television productions has a positive path-specific indirect effect on the intention to visit Kars through the gastronomic image of Kars.

Gastronomic image represents positive perceptual evaluations of destination cuisine, whereas gastronomic attractiveness refers to the aspect of these evaluations reflected in the desire to experience local cuisine and travel motivation. In the gastronomy tourism literature, local culinary experiences are emphasized as factors that can enhance destination attractiveness and support visit intention (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). In this context, the positive gastronomic image of Kars cuisine is expected to be reflected in visit intention both directly and indirectly through gastronomic attractiveness. Gastronomic attractiveness is positioned as a mediating mechanism that explains the transformation of perceptual evaluations into an experience-oriented travel tendency. Accordingly, H8 was developed.

- H8: The gastronomic image of Kars has a positive indirect effect on the intention to visit Kars through the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars.

4.2. Population, Sample, and Data Collection Process

The target population of the study consists of individuals living in Türkiye who are aged 18 or older and have undertaken at least one trip for touristic purposes within the last twelve months. This target population was defined to include individuals with recent touristic experience who would be able to answer questions related to destination perception, gastronomic evaluation, and behavioral intentions. The Household Domestic Tourism data published by the Turkish Statistical Institute (2026) were examined to determine whether the size of this composite target population could be approximated using official statistics. Although these statistics provide aggregate domestic tourism indicators, they do not directly correspond to the combined eligibility criteria at the individual level. Accordingly, the available official data provide only an indirect basis for approximating the size of this specific target population, and the population was therefore defined conceptually. The lack of a name-based or directly accessible sampling frame for this population also limits the determination of its exact numerical size and the ability to claim statistical representativeness of the sample. A sampling frame is considered an accessible list or set of units from which individuals in the target population can be selected (Martínez-Mesa et al., 2016; Taherdoost, 2016). Therefore, criterion sampling and convenience sampling approaches were used together as the sampling strategy of the study in place of probability sampling (Etikan et al., 2016). Given this sampling structure, the findings are evaluated within the framework of the research sample and the tested model, while statistical generalization to the target population is beyond the scope of the study.

Ethics committee approval was granted by the Kafkas University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee through Decision No. 135, adopted at its 99th meeting on April 13, 2026. Data were collected between April 14 and May 10, 2026, through an online questionnaire administered via Google Forms. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked whether they met the criteria of being aged 18 or older

and having undertaken at least one trip for touristic purposes within the last twelve months. During the data collection process, a total of 428 questionnaire responses were obtained. Forms failing to meet the eligibility criteria, contained missing responses, or lacked usable data for analysis were excluded, leaving 380 valid responses for analysis. The 380 valid responses were considered as the valid sample size used to test the relationships proposed in the research model, while a claim of statistical representation of the population was positioned outside this evaluation. In structural equation modeling studies, sample size requirements may vary depending on factors such as model complexity, the number of parameters to be estimated, and measurement quality (Wolf et al., 2013).

To more clearly assess participants' relationship with Kars as a destination, several control questions were included in the questionnaire. In this context, participants were asked about their previous visits to Kars, their prior knowledge of Kars cuisine, whether they had considered visiting a destination after being influenced by television productions, and their annual frequency of tourism related trips. These data allow the sample to be evaluated beyond demographic characteristics and in terms of participants' experience, awareness, and travel tendencies related to Kars. At the same time, these control questions are structured to provide a complementary indicator of the influence of television productions on general destination preferences, while exposure to a specific Kars-themed television production remains outside the scope of this measurement. The distributions related to participants' relationship with Kars and their travel profiles are presented in Table 3.

4.3. Measurement Instrument

In the study, a structured questionnaire form was used as the data collection instrument. The questionnaire consisted of an informed consent statement, pre-screening questions related to the eligibility criteria, scale items, control questions, and demographic information. In the pre-screening section, participants were asked whether they were aged 18 or older and whether they had undertaken at least one trip for touristic purposes within the last twelve months. The scale items were measured using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire included five main constructs: perceived general influence of television productions, gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention.

Table 1. Sources and Adaptation Process of the Measurement Instrument

Construct	Number of Items in This Study	Source Basis	Adaptation Process
Perceived general influence of television productions	5	Riley et al. (1998), Kim & Richardson (2003), Hudson & Ritchie (2006)	The items were operationalized at the general destination level by drawing on film-induced tourism and media-based destination image literature. They were worded to capture the perceived general influence of screen-based content on destination interest, curiosity, gastronomic associations, and travel-related consideration. Exposure to a specific Kars-themed production remained outside the construct scope.
Gastronomic image	6	Kivela & Crotts (2006), Ab Karim & Chi (2010)	The items were adapted to the Kars context to measure participants' evaluative perceptions of Kars cuisine and Kars' gastronomy-based destination image. The wording was revised to refer directly to Kars cuisine.
Gastronomic attractiveness	5	Kivela & Crotts (2006), Ab Karim & Chi (2010)	The items were adapted to the Kars context to measure the perceived attractiveness of experiencing Kars cuisine. The wording emphasized local cuisine experience, tasting interest, and gastronomy-based travel motivation.
Visit intention	4	Zeithaml et al. (1996), Chen & Tsai (2007), Afshardoost & Eshaghi (2020)	The items were reworded for the Kars destination based on behavioral intention literature and were structured to reflect participants' intention to visit Kars.
Recommendation intention	4	Zeithaml et al. (1996), Chen & Tsai (2007), Afshardoost & Eshaghi (2020)	The items were reworded for the Kars destination based on behavioral intention literature and were structured to reflect participants' intention to recommend Kars to others.

The final measurement instrument included 24 scale items across five constructs. As shown in Table 1, the perceived general influence of television productions was measured with five items developed at the general destination level by drawing on studies on film-induced tourism and media-based destination image (Riley et al., 1998; Kim & Richardson, 2003; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006). An example item for this construct is "Gastronomic elements featured in television productions can increase my curiosity toward a destination." Gastronomic image was measured with six items, and gastronomic attractiveness was measured with five items. These items were adapted to the Kars context in line with the literature on gastronomic experience, destination cuisine, and perceptions of local cuisine (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). The statements "Kars cuisine generally creates a positive impression" for gastronomic image and "I would like to experience Kars cuisine" for gastronomic attractiveness are examples of these constructs. Visit intention and recommendation intention were each measured with four items and were adapted specifically to the Kars context based on studies examining destination image and behavioral intention (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Chen & Tsai, 2007; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). The example items for these constructs are "I am considering visiting Kars" and "I tend to recommend Kars to people close to me."

The source studies were used as conceptual and measurement references in constructing the item pool at the construct level. The final number of items was determined according to the present research model and the Kars destination context, and the source scales were used selectively during item-pool development. Relevant item statements were selected from the source-based item pool, adapted to the construct measured, and reworded for the Kars destination context. The perceived general influence of television productions was operationalized as a general perception-based construct, and exposure to a specific Kars-themed television series, film, documentary, or program remained outside the measurement scope. Accordingly, the findings related to this construct were interpreted within this general perception-based measurement framework. Gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention were contextualized directly within the Kars destination context. Expert opinions were obtained from academics specializing in tourism and gastronomy to assess content validity, clarity, comprehensibility, and suitability for the research aim. Following this stage, a pre-test was conducted with 50 participants to evaluate the clarity of the items, the comprehensibility of the response format, and the overall applicability of the questionnaire. Based on the expert evaluations and pre-test feedback, revisions were limited to language and wording refinements, and the 24-item measurement structure was retained for the main data collection process.

4.4. Data Analysis

Data analyses were conducted in the Python 3 environment, and the semopy 2.3.11 package was used to perform confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. This package is regarded as an open-source analysis tool that enables the estimation of relationships between observed and latent variables within the structural equation modeling framework in Python (Igolkina & Meshcheryakov, 2020). Prior to the analyses, the dataset was examined in terms of eligibility criteria, missing responses, outliers, univariate normality, and multicollinearity. Forms containing missing responses, failing to meet the eligibility criteria, or lacking usable data for analysis were excluded from the dataset. Skewness and kurtosis values were considered for univariate normality, variance inflation factor values for multicollinearity, and Mahalanobis distance for multivariate outliers (Kline, 2023). Within the scope of descriptive statistics, participants' demographic characteristics, their relationship with Kars, their travel profiles, and the basic distributions related to the scale items were reported.

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to evaluate the measurement model. The internal consistency of the scales was examined using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values, while convergent validity was assessed through standardized factor loadings and average variance extracted values. In structural equation modeling studies, measurement quality is recommended to be reported together with indicators of reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity (Cheung et al., 2024). In this scope, values of 0.70 and above for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, 0.50 and above for standardized factor loadings, and 0.50 and above for average variance extracted were considered as the basic acceptance criteria (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was examined based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and MSV and ASV values were evaluated as complementary indicators. Accordingly, the $\sqrt{AVE}$ value for each construct was expected to be higher than the inter-construct correlations, and the AVE value was expected to be greater than the MSV and ASV values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In the evaluation of the structural model, model fit indices, standardized path coefficients, significance levels, and explained variance values were taken into account. Model fit was examined using the χ^2/df, CFI, TLI, GFI, AGFI, NFI, RMSEA, and SRMR indices, and the joint evaluation of different fit indicators was taken as the basis in structural equation modeling over reliance on a single fit index (Kline, 2023). In this scope, values of 0.90 and above for CFI and TLI were evaluated as indicators of acceptable fit, whi-

le values close to and above 0.95 were considered stronger criteria indicating good fit. For RMSEA and SRMR values, values below 0.08 were evaluated as an acceptable fit level, while an RMSEA value below 0.06 was interpreted as an indicator of good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Hooper et al., 2008). In testing the hypotheses, standardized path coefficients, p values, and R^2 values for the relevant endogenous variables were reported. Mediation effects were evaluated using 5,000 bootstrap samples, and the significance of indirect effects was assessed using 95% confidence intervals. A bootstrap confidence interval lying entirely above or below zero was used as the basic criterion for accepting the indirect effect as statistically significant (Hayes, 2022).

5. Results

This section presents the findings obtained from the dataset analyzed in the study. The presentation of the findings begins with the descriptive results regarding participants' demographic profile and their relationship with the Kars destination. Then, the findings related to data screening and descriptive statistics, the measurement model, the structural model, and the mediation hypotheses are reported respectively. This sequence presents the sample characteristics alongside the Kars-related context and allows the model results to be evaluated according to the interpretation criteria outlined in Section 4.4.

5.1. Participant Profile and Destination-Related Characteristics

Table 2 presents the demographic profile of the 380 participants included in the analysis. Of the participants, 55.26% were female and 44.74% were male. In terms of age distribution, the 25–34 age group constituted the largest share with 34.21%. Regarding education level, bachelor's degree graduates represented the largest group with 52.37%. In terms of monthly personal income, the total proportion of participants in the 0–45,000 TL range was 54.21%. By region of residence, the highest participation was from the Marmara Region with 30.00%. Overall, the sample shows a structure that includes different participant groups in terms of age, education level, income, and region of residence.

Table 2. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	210	55.26
	Male	170	44.74
Age	18–24	75	19.74
	25–34	130	34.21
	35–44	80	21.05
	45–54	55	14.47
	55 and above	40	10.53
Education level	High school or below	62	16.32
	Associate degree	48	12.63
	Bachelor's degree	199	52.37
	Master's degree	55	14.47
	Doctorate	16	4.21
Monthly personal income	0–30,000 TRY	105	27.63
	30,001–45,000 TRY	101	26.58
	45,001–60,000 TRY	88	23.16
	60,001–80,000 TRY	61	16.05
	80,001 TRY and above	25	6.58

Region of residence	Marmara	114	30.00
	Aegean	53	13.95
	Mediterranean	69	18.16
	Central Anatolia	75	19.74
	Black Sea	28	7.37
	Eastern Anatolia	17	4.47
	Southeastern Anatolia	24	6.32

Table 3 shows participants' characteristics related to the Kars destination and travel behavior. Of the participants, 20.79% stated that they had previously visited Kars, while 44.47% indicated that they had prior knowledge of Kars cuisine. In addition, 58.42% of the participants stated that they had considered visiting a destination after being influenced by television productions. In terms of annual touristic travel frequency, the highest proportion belonged to participants who traveled 2–3 times a year, with 42.89%. These findings indicate that direct prior experience with Kars was limited within the sample. By contrast, the participant profile provides an appropriate structure for the study in terms of awareness of Kars cuisine and the evaluation of the influence of television productions on general destination preferences.

Table 3. Destination-Related and Travel Characteristics of the Participants

Variable	Category	n	%
Have you visited Kars before?	Yes	79	20.79
	No	301	79.21
Have you ever considered visiting a destination after seeing it in television productions?	Yes	222	58.42
	No	158	41.58
Were you previously aware of Kars cuisine?	Yes	169	44.47
	No	211	55.53
How often do you travel annually?	Once a year	116	30.53
	2–3 times a year	163	42.89
	4–5 times a year	73	19.21
	6 times a year or more	28	7.37

5.2. Data Screening and Descriptive Statistics

Before conducting the main analyses, the dataset was examined in terms of missing values, outliers, normality, and multicollinearity. The final dataset included complete responses for all variables. Multivariate outliers were evaluated using Mahalanobis distance, and all observations remained below the critical value of $\chi^2(24, p = 0.001) = 51.179$. Skewness coefficients for the scale items ranged between -0.528 and -0.088, and kurtosis coefficients ranged between -0.773 and -0.166. These results indicate that the values were within acceptable limits for univariate normality. Multicollinearity was assessed through VIF values, which varied from 1.000 to 1.456. This range indicates that multicollinearity remained within acceptable limits among the variables. Item-level descriptive statistics are reported in Table 4.

Table 4. Item-Level Descriptive Statistics

Item	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
TV1	3.661	0.861	-0.231	-0.210
TV2	3.700	0.936	-0.302	-0.338
TV3	3.479	0.900	-0.177	-0.485
TV4	3.663	0.962	-0.408	-0.166

TV5	3.503	0.935	-0.222	-0.443
GI1	3.495	0.923	-0.146	-0.482
GI2	3.337	0.965	-0.098	-0.304
GI3	3.455	0.959	-0.152	-0.441
GI4	3.482	0.965	-0.293	-0.313
GI5	3.355	0.973	-0.088	-0.608
GI6	3.418	0.964	-0.175	-0.444
GC1	3.608	0.973	-0.254	-0.476
GC2	3.718	0.920	-0.352	-0.214
GC3	3.550	0.881	-0.246	-0.227
GC4	3.647	1.008	-0.478	-0.186
GC5	3.524	0.897	-0.193	-0.335
VI1	3.674	1.092	-0.426	-0.579
VI2	3.616	0.991	-0.201	-0.649
VI3	3.692	1.003	-0.300	-0.773
VI4	3.563	1.019	-0.398	-0.307
RI1	3.721	1.030	-0.497	-0.425
RI2	3.666	1.036	-0.528	-0.238
RI3	3.553	1.053	-0.419	-0.389
RI4	3.663	1.044	-0.523	-0.232

Note: SD = standard deviation. TV = perceived general influence of television productions, GI = gastronomic image, GC = gastronomic attractiveness, VI = visit intention, RI = recommendation intention. Responses were measured between 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients falling within the ±1 range were evaluated as acceptable for univariate normality. VIF values below 5 were evaluated as acceptable in terms of multicollinearity. Mahalanobis distance was compared with the critical value of $\chi^2(24, p = 0.001) = 51.179$.

5.3. Evaluation of the Measurement Model

The measurement model was evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis based on five latent constructs and 24 observed indicators. These constructs comprised the perceived general influence of television productions, gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention. Standardized factor loadings ranged from 0.779 to 0.889, and all factor loadings were found to be statistically significant at the $p < 0.001$ level. Table 5 presents the reliability and convergent validity results for the constructs. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.910 to 0.941, composite reliability values ranged from 0.910 to 0.941, and average variance extracted values ranged from 0.670 to 0.777. These results show that the constructs included in the measurement model met acceptable levels in terms of reliability and convergent validity.

Table 5. Reliability and Convergent Validity Results

Construct	Number of items	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	Loading range
Influence of television productions	5	0.914	0.914	0.681	0.797–0.855
Gastronomic image	6	0.941	0.941	0.726	0.829–0.883
Gastronomic attractiveness	5	0.910	0.910	0.670	0.779–0.858
Visit intention	4	0.926	0.926	0.759	0.866–0.878
Recommendation intention	4	0.933	0.933	0.777	0.876–0.889

Note: CR = composite reliability, AVE = average variance extracted. Standardized factor loadings of 0.50 and above, Cronbach's alpha and CR values of 0.70 and above, and AVE values of 0.50 and above were considered acceptable criteria for reliability and convergent validity. All factor loadings are significant at the $p < 0.001$ level.

Discriminant validity was examined based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion in line with the criteria explained in Section 4.4, and MSV and ASV values were evaluated as complementary indicators. As shown in Table 6, the √AVE value for each construct is higher than the correlation values of the relevant construct with the other constructs. In addition, AVE values were above MSV and ASV values for all constructs. These findings show that the constructs included in the measurement model are sufficiently distinct from each other and that discriminant validity was established.

Table 6. Discriminant Validity Results: Fornell-Larcker Criterion, MSV, and ASV

Construct	AVE	MSV	ASV	TV	GI	GC	VI	RI
TV	**0.681**	**0.230**	**0.114**	**0.825**				
GI	**0.726**	**0.365**	**0.243**	0.480	**0.852**			
GC	**0.670**	**0.415**	**0.309**	0.365	0.604	**0.819**		
VI	**0.759**	**0.581**	**0.320**	0.234	0.479	0.644	**0.871**	
RI	**0.777**	**0.581**	**0.273**	0.199	0.386	0.568	0.762	**0.881**

Note: Diagonal values represent √AVE, and off-diagonal values represent inter-construct correlations. MSV = maximum shared variance, ASV = average shared variance. Discriminant validity was assessed based on √AVE values being higher than inter-construct correlations and AVE values exceeding MSV and ASV values.

5.4. Testing the Structural Model and Direct Effects

After the reliability and validity conditions related to the measurement model were met, the structural model was tested. Table 7 presents a comparative overview of the fit indices for the measurement model and the structural model. For the structural model, the χ^2/df value was calculated as 1.148, the CFI value as 0.995, the TLI value as 0.995, the RMSEA value as 0.020, and the SRMR value as 0.029. These values show that the structural model achieved a good level of fit with the data in line with the interpretation criteria explained in Section 4.4. Therefore, the testing of the direct effect hypotheses was conducted.

Table 7. Fit Indices of the Measurement and Structural Models

Index	Measurement model	Structural model	Acceptance criterion
χ^2	275.251	282.291	—
df	242	246	—
p	0.070	0.056	—
χ^2/df	1.137	1.148	< 3
CFI	0.996	0.995	> 0.90
TLI	0.995	0.995	> 0.90
GFI	0.964	0.963	> 0.90
AGFI	0.959	0.959	> 0.90
NFI	0.964	0.963	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.019	0.020	< 0.08
SRMR	0.025	0.029	< 0.08

Note: χ^2/df = chi-square/degrees of freedom, CFI = comparative fit index, TLI = Tucker-Lewis index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, SRMR = standardized root mean square residual. χ^2/df values below 3, CFI, TLI, GFI, AGFI, and NFI values above 0.90, and RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.08 were considered criteria for acceptable model fit. CFI and TLI values close to or above 0.95 and RMSEA values below 0.06 were interpreted as indicators of good fit.

The explained variance values (R^2) indicate the extent to which the model explains the endogenous variables. The perceived general influence of television productions explains 23.0% of the variance in the gastronomic image of Kars. The perceived general influence of television productions and gastronomic image together explain 37.2% of the variance in the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars. The gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness of Kars explain 43.7% of the variance in the intention to visit

Kars. The intention to visit Kars explains 59.0% of the variance in the intention to recommend Kars. These results show that the model provides a strong explanatory structure, particularly for explaining visit and recommendation intentions toward Kars.

Table 8 presents the findings related to the direct-effect hypotheses. In addition, Figure 2 visually summarizes the standardized path coefficients, supported paths, paths outside empirical support, and R^2 values for the endogenous variables. The effect of the perceived general influence of television productions on the gastronomic image of Kars was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.480$, $p < 0.001$). This result supports H1. By contrast, the direct effect of the perceived general influence of television productions on the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars remained below the threshold of statistical significance ($\beta = 0.094$, $p = 0.080$). Therefore, H2 remained outside the supported hypotheses. The gastronomic image of Kars positively affected gastronomic attractiveness ($\beta = 0.559$, $p < 0.001$). This result supports H3. The effect of the gastronomic image of Kars on visit intention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.136$, $p = 0.017$). The effect of the gastronomic attractiveness of Kars on visit intention was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.570$, $p < 0.001$). These findings support H4 and H5. Finally, the intention to visit Kars positively affected the intention to recommend Kars ($\beta = 0.768$, $p < 0.001$). This result supports H6.

Table 8. Structural Model and Direct-Effect Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Path	β	B	SE	z	p	Decision
H1	TV → GI	0.480	0.552	0.063	8.779	< 0.001	Supported
H2	TV → GC	0.094	0.115	0.065	1.752	0.080	Not supported
H3	GI → GC	0.559	0.590	0.061	9.668	< 0.001	Supported
H4	GI → VI	0.136	0.163	0.068	2.389	0.017	Supported
H5	GC → VI	0.570	0.648	0.070	9.223	< 0.001	Supported
H6	VI → RI	0.768	0.741	0.046	16.069	< 0.001	Supported

Note: β = standardized path coefficient, B = unstandardized path coefficient, SE = standard error, z = critical ratio. TV = perceived general influence of television productions, GI = gastronomic image, GC = gastronomic attractiveness, VI = visit intention, RI = recommendation intention. Hypothesis decisions were made based on the $p < 0.05$ significance level.

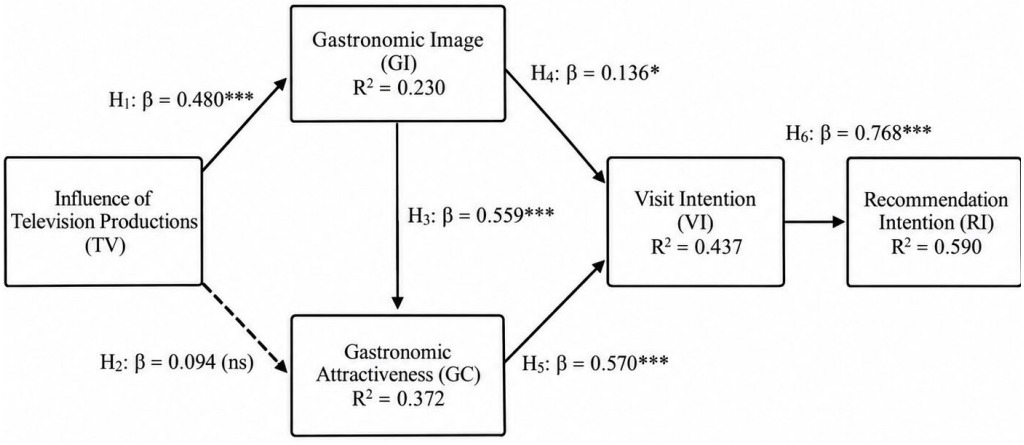


Figure 2. Structural Model Results

Note: β = standardized path coefficient. R^2 values indicate the explained variance of endogenous constructs. Solid lines indicate statistically significant supported direct paths, while the dashed line indicates the nonsignificant direct path. Indirect-effect results for H7 and H8 are presented separately in Table 9. *p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001, ns = nonsignificant.

The direct-effect results show that the perceived general influence of television productions emerges as a factor strengthening the gastronomic image of Kars. The fact that its direct effect on gastronomic attractiveness did not reach statistical significance indicates that the general influence of screen-based content may operate primarily through gastronomic image, rather than being directly translated into the desire to experience Kars cuisine. The finding that the gastronomic image of Kars supports gastronomic attractiveness indicates that perceptions of the city's cuisine play a central role in destination attractiveness. In addition, the strong effect of gastronomic attractiveness on visit intention reveals that the desire to experience Kars cuisine is an important factor increasing the tendency to travel. The effect

of visit intention on recommendation intention indicates that a positive travel tendency toward Kars may translate into the potential for word-of-mouth communication.

5.5. Findings on Mediation Effects

The mediation hypotheses were evaluated based on bootstrap confidence intervals. Table 9 presents the specific indirect paths tested within the scope of H7 and H8, the direct and indirect effects, total effect values where applicable, Boot SE values, 95% bootstrap confidence intervals, hypothesis decisions, and mediation types. The indirect effect reported within the scope of H7 represents the specific TV → GI → VI path from the perceived general influence of television productions to the intention to visit Kars. Since the TV → VI direct path was outside the specification of the main structural model, the total effect for H7 was not reported. For H8, because the GI → VI direct path was included in the model, the total effect was evaluated as the sum of the direct effect and the GI → GC → VI indirect effect.

Table 9. Bootstrap Test Results for Mediation Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect path	Direct effect (β)	Indirect effect	Total effect	Boot SE	95% CI	Decision	Mediation type
H7	TV → GI → VI	—	0.065	—	0.028	[0.014, 0.124]	Supported	Path-specific indirect effect
H8	GI → GC → VI	0.136*	0.319	0.455	0.043	[0.243, 0.413]	Supported	Partial complementary mediation

Note: Boot SE = bootstrap standard error. CI = 95% bootstrap confidence interval. All effects are standardized. TV = general effect perception of television productions, GI = gastronomic image, GC = gastronomic attractiveness, VI = visit intention. For H7, the indirect effect refers to the specific path TV → GI → VI. Since the TV → VI direct path was not estimated in the main model, the total effect is not reported. For H8, total effect equals the sum of the GI → VI direct effect and the GI → GC → VI indirect effect. Confidence intervals excluding zero indicate statistically significant indirect effects. *p < 0.05.

Within the scope of H7, the path-specific indirect role of the gastronomic image of Kars in the relationship between the perceived general influence of television productions and the intention to visit Kars was examined. In this context, the reported value of 0.065 represents the specific indirect effect of the TV → GI → VI path. The 95% bootstrap confidence interval [0.014, 0.124], which lies entirely above zero, shows that this specific indirect effect is statistically significant. This result indicates that H7 is supported. In the complementary model check conducted by adding the TV → VI direct path to the main model, this path remained below the threshold of statistical significance (β = -0.049, p = 0.340). This finding indicates that the relationship between the perceived general influence of television productions and the intention to visit Kars can be explained through an indirect mechanism operating through the gastronomic image of Kars.

Within the scope of H8, the mediating role of gastronomic attractiveness in the effect of the gastronomic image of Kars on the intention to visit Kars was examined. The findings show that the indirect effect of the GI → GC → VI path is positive and statistically significant. The indirect effect for this path was calculated 0.319, the Boot SE value 0.043, and the 95% bootstrap confidence interval [0.243, 0.413]. The confidence interval, which lies entirely above zero, shows that the indirect effect is significant. In addition, the direct effect of the gastronomic image of Kars on visit intention is also positive and significant. Therefore, H8 was supported, and gastronomic attractiveness was found to play a partial and complementary mediating role in the relationship between the gastronomic image of Kars and the intention to visit Kars. This finding shows that the positive gastronomic image of Kars contributes directly to visit intention and also supports visit intention by strengthening perceptions of gastronomic attractiveness.

6. Discussion

The positive effect of the perceived general influence of television productions on the gastronomic image of Kars is consistent with studies indicating that visual media content can strengthen destination awareness, image, and mental associations (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006; Connell, 2012). This finding can be interpreted in terms of the distinction between image formation and experience-based attractiveness. Screen-based content may first operate at the level of symbolic and cognitive destination associations, making its effect more clearly reflected in gastronomic image. In the case of Kars, the perceived general influence of television productions appears to support the formation of gastronomic associations by increasing destination awareness and curiosity about local culinary identity. The direct effect of the same perception on gastronomic attractiveness remained empirically unsupported, representing a divergence from the expected model relationship. This divergence can

be explained by the more concrete and experiential character of gastronomic attractiveness. Gastronomic attractiveness requires a more experience-oriented evaluation involving the desire to taste local cuisine, engage in culinary experiences, and establish direct contact with the destination (Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Accordingly, general screen-based influence may create a perceptual basis for image formation, whereas the transformation of this basis into gastronomic attractiveness may require more concrete experiential cues, such as direct knowledge of Kars cuisine, previous destination experience, or specific culinary representations. Participants' limited direct experience with Kars and their moderate level of prior knowledge about Kars cuisine may also have weakened the direct transformation of general media influence into gastronomic attractiveness.

The positive effects of the gastronomic image of Kars on gastronomic attractiveness and visit intention are consistent with studies emphasizing the importance of local foods for destination identity, attractiveness, and travel behaviors (Lin et al., 2011; Horng et al., 2012; Björk & Kauppinen-Räisänen, 2016). Destination image is also indicated as one of the main constructs supporting behavioral intentions (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Similarly, Çetin and Akar Şahingöz (2025) show that local food consumption values mediate the relationship between food image and destination loyalty, thereby supporting the link between gastronomy-based perceptions and positive behavioral outcomes. This consistency can be explained by the dual role of gastronomic image as both a perceptual evaluation and a cue for anticipated experience. This finding shows that gastronomic image in Kars supports the desire to experience local cuisine and the tendency to visit, in addition to generating positive perceptions. In this respect, gastronomic image appears to function as a bridge between the symbolic meaning of local cuisine and the experiential motivation to experience that cuisine at the destination. The gastronomic structure of Kars, associated with cheese production, honey, goose meat, and pastry culture, makes the city's local identity more tangible and strengthens the experiential dimension of the destination. These local culinary elements may make the gastronomic image of Kars more tangible to potential visitors and may explain why positive image perceptions are reflected in both gastronomic attractiveness and visit intention. Therefore, a positive gastronomic image can foster visit intention by strengthening gastronomic attractiveness.

The positive effect of the intention to visit Kars on recommendation intention is consistent with studies indicating that behavioral intentions develop within a complementary structure (Zeithaml et al., 1996; Afshardoost & Eshaghi, 2020). This relationship can be interpreted through the social extension of destination-related behavioral tendencies. Once individuals develop an intention to visit a destination, this intention may also increase their willingness to share favorable evaluations and recommend the destination to others within their social environment. In the present study, this result is meaningful because recommendation intention is evaluated within a perception-based destination context and extends beyond evaluations formed only after an actual visit. The mediation findings further clarify the mechanisms through which these behavioral tendencies are formed. The link between the perceived general influence of television productions and the intention to visit Kars through gastronomic image shows that image is an important mechanism through which media influence is transferred to behavioral intentions. This finding reinforces the theoretical role of image as a perceptual mechanism linking external information sources to behavioral responses. The complementary mediating role of gastronomic attractiveness between gastronomic image and visit intention also indicates that a positive culinary perception should be supported by a desire for experience to be reflected more strongly in visit intention. In this respect, the mediation results show that the relationship between image and behavioral intention operates through both symbolic perception and experience-oriented motivation.

Overall, the findings show a gradual relationship among the perceived general influence of television productions, gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, and behavioral intentions in the context of Kars. This pattern provides a theoretical explanation for why media-related perceptions may be more strongly reflected in behavioral intentions when connected with destination-specific gastronomic meanings and experience-oriented motivations. In the Kars context, this gradual structure suggests that media visibility can support gastronomy-based destination perception, while its stronger reflection in visit and recommendation intentions depends on its integration with local culinary identity and experience-oriented attractiveness. In this respect, the study suggests that gastronomy-based behavioral intentions are shaped through a sequential process involving media-related perception, gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, and behavioral responses.

7. Conclusion

This study examined the relationships between the perceived general influence of television productions and the gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention of Kars within an integrated model. The findings show that gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness are key constructs in shaping behavioral intentions in the context of Kars. The perceived

general influence of television productions has limited direct explanatory power for gastronomic attractiveness, yet it emerges as a perceptual element associated with behavioral intentions primarily through gastronomic image. A positive gastronomic image supports gastronomic attractiveness and visit intention, while visit intention is further reflected in recommendation intention. Taken together, these findings indicate that media visibility in the gastronomy-based destination marketing of Kars should be evaluated together with local culinary identity and experience-oriented attractiveness.

The study addresses the fundamental research problem outlined in the introduction by showing how the perceived general influence of television productions is associated with gastronomy-based destination perceptions and behavioral intentions toward Kars. Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on gastronomy tourism and destination marketing by examining media-related perceptions, gastronomic image, gastronomic attractiveness, visit intention, and recommendation intention within an integrated, destination-specific model. Its original theoretical contribution lies in differentiating between gastronomic image and gastronomic attractiveness and in showing that these constructs explain behavioral intentions through both perceptual and experience-oriented mechanisms. The findings also clarify that the perceived general influence of television productions is associated with visit intention primarily through gastronomic image, while gastronomic attractiveness strengthens the transformation of gastronomic image into visit intention.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that Kars's gastronomy-based destination marketing should connect media visibility with concrete culinary experiences and local product narratives. Destination managers and local stakeholders can use television and screen-based visibility together with thematic gastronomy routes, promotional content on geographically indicated products, chef-led tasting events, and short visual stories featuring Kars cheese, honey, goose dishes, and local pastry culture. These practices can help transform general media-related awareness into more concrete gastronomic attractiveness and visit motivation. In addition, promotional campaigns can be designed to link screen-based representations of Kars with bookable culinary experiences, visits to local producers, restaurant collaborations, and seasonal gastronomy events. Such practice-oriented actions can support destination marketing, local product promotion, and experience-based tourism development in Kars by translating the study's findings into implementable promotional practices.

This study has several limitations. Since the sample was formed using convenience and criterion sampling approaches, the findings should be evaluated within the boundaries of the research sample and the tested model, with statistical representation of the population remaining outside the scope of generalization. The cross-sectional design of the study and its reliance on self-reported data led the relationships to be evaluated through participants' perceptions at a specific point in time. In addition, the variable related to television productions focuses on the general influence of television productions on destination preferences, while the extent of exposure to specific films, television series, or programs related to Kars remains outside its measurement scope. Future studies may examine exposure to specific Kars-themed productions, compare participants who have previously visited Kars with those who have not, and investigate the effects of social media and digital platform content on gastronomy-based destination perception.

Declarations

This study was conducted in accordance with scientific and ethical principles. Ethics committee approval was granted by the Kafkas University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee under Decision No. 135, taken at its 99th meeting on April 13, 2026. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were informed about the purpose of the research, confidentiality principles, and the informed consent process. Participant information was kept confidential, and the raw research data were archived. The author declares that there is no conflict of interest related to the study. The research was conducted independently and without any financial support from any institution or organization. As a single-author study, the research design, data collection, analyses, interpretation of the findings, and manuscript preparation were all undertaken by the author.

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