

## Food & Beverage Expectations of Potential Tourists Based on Differences Between Generations

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### Article History

Received: 07.11.2021

Accepted: 25.12.2021

### Keywords

Tourism

Tourist

Generation

Food & beverage expectations

### Abstract

This study aimed to understand the expectations of potential tourists, belonging to different generations, towards foods and beverages. It is important to be able to determine the points related to the food experiences and expectations of tourists to contribute to the literature. For the study, a convenience sampling method was applied, and for data collection, an online questionnaire method was used. Analyses were carried out with 341 questionnaires and CHAID (Chi-Square Automatic Interaction Detector) analysis was applied. A questionnaire contained sixteen items were asked of the participants regarding their food and beverage expectations. After the analysis, it was observed that the expectations for only four of the sixteen items differed between generations. Gender and income were other demographic variables that caused differences in expectations. Baby Boomer and Generation X tourists were found to give more importance to food variety, nutrition and organicity compared to Generation Y and Z tourists. The Baby Boomer and X generations were also more eager to taste local foods than the Y and Z generations.

### Article Type

Research Article

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DOI:10.21325/jotags.2021.904

## INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon that expresses the short-term and temporary movements of people out of the place they live (Burkart & Medlik, 1988; UNWTO, 2020). Food and beverage activities of tourists are the most important expenditure factors in tourism activity, accounting for more than one third of tourism expenditures (UNWTO, 2012). Therefore, food and beverages of a destination have the power to positively affect the tourism experience (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2021; Quan & Wang, 2004).

Food provides a medium for the expression of local culture, allowing tourists to be involved in a culture in both sensory and intellectual ways (Quan & Wang, 2004, p. 299-300). It is accepted that food, which plays an important role in creating an unforgettable travel experience, positively affects the experience of tourists (Peštek and Činjarević, 2014, p. 1831) and tourists expenditure on local food has the potential to stimulate the local economy starting from the agricultural point of view (Robinson & Getz, 2014, p. 690).

Gastronomy tourism, as a growing market, is important for increasing destination attractiveness and competition (UNWTO, 2012). In order to increase the demand for gastronomic tourism in Turkey, it is aimed to determine the market and to expand these markets (Turkish Presidency, Presidency of Strategy and Budget, 2019). Due to this reason, it is important to be able to determine the points related to the food experiences and expectations of tourists. Tourists experience dissatisfaction when their expectations such as hygiene, variety of foods and beverages, presentation of food and consistency of the service received are not met (Ayaz & Yalı, 2017, p. 44). This study focuses on the expectations of potential tourists for foods and beverages on the basis of intergenerational differences, with the thought that members of each generation have wants, experiences, expectations, values and lifestyles that affect their lives, consumption and purchasing behaviours (Bucuța, 2015). In this context, this study has two main research questions:

- Research question 1: Do potential tourists' food and beverage expectations differ from generation to generation?
- Research question 2: What are the demographic variables that have an impact on potential tourists' food and beverage expectations?

This article consists of four sections. The first section is a brief introduction. In the second section, there is a literature review, wherein studies on intergenerational differences have been examined. In the third section, the methodology is explained; in the fourth section, the findings of the study are given. In the fifth section, the study is concluded by giving place to the conclusion and discussion.

## Review of Literature

Generation refers to people who were born in certain and similar periods and who were exposed to the social, economic, cultural and political events of the period in which they lived (Carlsson & Karlsson, 1970, p. 710). Strauss and Howe (1991) refer to each 'cohort' group as a generation, based on the concept of 'cohort', which refers to any group of people born in a limited successive period of time. Therefore, generations are certain collective identities (France and Roberts, 2015, p. 217) that express individuals with similar characteristics (Hayes et al., 2018; Ting et al., 2018). The concept of generation is used to give the meaning of the differences between age groups in society and to position individual selves and other people in historical times (Pilcher, 1994, p. 481). The generation

phenomenon has been moved from the biological context to the sociological context over time (İlhan et al., 2020, p. 69). Generation is a difficult subject to study (Abrams, 1970, p. 175), which is the subject of various debates in sociology and social anthropology (Kertzer, 1983, p. 126). Mannheim (1952), who stated that the generation issue is the subject of formal sociology, drew the framework of this concept with five items; (i) cultural heritage develops through contact with new participants emerging in the cultural process, (ii) old participants are constantly disappearing, (iii) members of any generation can participate in the historical process for a limited time temporarily, (iv) therefore, the accumulated cultural heritage is constantly transferred and (v) transmission from generation to generation is a continuous process.

There are different classifications of generations. For example, ‘Missionary’ for those born in 1860–1882, ‘Lost’ for those born in 1883–1900, ‘GI’ (Government Issue) for those born in 1901–1924, ‘Silent’ for those born in 1925–1942, ‘Boomer’ for those born in 1923–1960, ‘13ER’ (Thirteenth) for those born in 1961–1981 and ‘Millennial’ for those born in 1982–2003 (Strauss & Howe, 1991, p. 36).

Novak (2014) classified the six generations living in USA as follows: GI generation (1901–1926), Silent Generation (Adult) (1927–1945), Baby Boomers (1946–1964), Generation X (1965–1980), Generation Y/Millennials (1981–2000), and Generation Z (2001 and later). McCrindle (2020) added the Alpha Generation, which he used for those born between 2010 and 2024, to this classification. This study is carried out with the generational context in order to determine the differences in expectations regarding food, with the idea that ‘generations share a picture of their own era’ (France & Roberts, 2015, p. 218). Expectation differences were examined among four generations, namely Baby Boomers, X generation, Y generation and Z generation. Each generation has some unique features.

- Baby Boomers: These are competitive individuals who give importance to personal development (Egri & Ralston, 2004). They give emphasis to issues such as family responsibilities, wellness and health (Williams & Page, 2011). They give less importance to price in food-related issues, but their expectations regarding service are high (Jin et al., 2015).
- Generation X: They are financially self-confident and may take venture risks when their expectations of loyalty are not met (Egri & Ralston, 2004). They have a traditional tendency to buy and have low brand loyalty (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016). Their pursuit of entertainment and variety is high, and the importance of healthy foods is low for them (Jin et al., 2015). They are compatible, satisfied with their job, fond of the quality of life and family (Hayes et al., 2018).
- Generation Y: They were born in a technological, electronic society and they are interested in technology more than the previous generations (Pardue & Morgan, 2008). They live in a universe where everything is possible and have strong feelings about independence and autonomy (Williams & Page, 2011). Their social relations are strong both in the real and digital world (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017).
- Generation Z: They mostly socialise through social media (Strauss & Howe, 1991). They do not know much about life without a wireless connection, mobile phone and web (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017, p. 109). They have high egalitarian values in human rights and social justice (Seemiller & Grace, 2017, pp. 22–23).

Upon examination of the relevant literature, it can be seen that there is a relationship between the ages of tourists and the changes in their destination preference, shopping decision, food and beverage selection and the understanding of entertainment (Kotler et al., 1999; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016).

When the studies on the generations in the field of tourism were examined, it was found that the studies in the following areas have been carried out: differences in tourism experience ( Pennington-Gray et al., 2003; Lehto et al., 2008), differences in tourists' wine preferences (Fountain and Charters, 2006; Getz and Carlsen, 2008), differences in motivation to participate in music activities (Kruger & Saayman, 2015) and differences in participation in adventure tourism (Gardiner & Kwek, 2017).

Pennington-Gray et al. (2003) found that generations pay less attention to national parks as they get older, individuals from the Silent generation are more inclined to luxury accommodation and individuals belonging to the X generation, Baby Boomers and Silent generation also find shopping more important during their travels as they get older. Lehto et al. (2008) found intergenerational differences related to tourism experiences and participation in activities between Baby Boomers and Silent generation tourists. The researchers found that Baby Boomers preferred vacations away from home where they can spend quality time with their families, whereas casino visits, wine and dining experiences are preferred by the Silent generation.

In the study of Fountain and Charters (2006) carried out in a wine house in Western Australia, it was found that while X and Y generation members focused on the quality of the overall experience and the service they received, older tourists gave importance to the wine itself and the environment where they would taste it. Getz and Carlsen (2008) found that generation X and Y members exhibit low levels of ego involvement with wine and are mostly interested in learning about wine in a social context.

Kruger and Saayman (2015) found that the Y generation market is not homogeneous, meaning that there are socio-demographic, behavioural characteristics and differences in their motivation to attend concerts. Garibaldi et al. (2020) found that those born in the Y generation and later are more interested in gastronomy-related activities on their travels. Balderas et al. (2021), who examined the issue based on age, found that older tourists are generally more interested in food and beverage activities than younger individuals. In addition to these studies, Kamenidou et al. (2020) investigated the attitudes of Generation Z, Generation Y, Generation X, Baby Boomers and Silent generation towards organic products and found that all generation cohorts exhibited a positive attitude towards organic food.

In the study of Kim et al. (2018), it was determined that the video content created to market a destination in terms of gastronomy has an effect on convincing potential tourists and this effect differs between generations.

## **Methodology**

### **Purpose**

In this study, we aimed to determine the expectations of members of different generations, who are potential tourists, regarding foods and beverages during their tourism experience. The research focused on determining the expectations of four different generations and identifying the differences between generations.

## Research Questionnaire

In this study, a thirteen-item questionnaire developed by Ayaz and Yalı (2017) was used. In addition, three more statements were added within the framework of the purpose of the research. These expressions were as follows: 'I care about the appearance of food in the places I go', 'I care about the portion size of the food in the places I go' and 'I care about tasting local foods in the places I go'.

## Implementation and Sample Group

This research, which was conducted between 14 December 2018 and 14 January 2019 using an online survey method, is limited to potential tourists who agreed to participate in the research.

The study population consisted of potential tourists born after 1946. According to Turkish Statistical Institute's (2019) data, a total of 78 million 523 thousand travellers visited Turkey in 2018. In this framework, 384 people were deemed sufficient as a sample in the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 264). In order to reach the number 384 within the scope of the research, the convenience sampling method was preferred.

The questionnaire was sent to approximately 1500 people online via e-mail and messaging groups, and 343 responses were received. The response rate for the study was 23%. After the examinations, empty and erroneous data were removed from the data set and the analysis of the study was carried out with 341 responses.

## Analysis

CHAID analysis, one of the decision tree methods that can be applied to parametric and non-parametric data (Díaz-Pérez & Bethencourt-Cejas, 2016), was applied for RQ\_1 and RQ\_2. The decision tree method is one of the most widely used methods to classify and predict data (Biggs et al., 1991; Li et al., 2019). Decision trees consist of a root node with no input and internal nodes whose output is the input of another node (Rokach & Maimon, 2009, p. 149). CHAID analysis uses stepwise chi-square analysis to reclassify each of the variables independently to most accurately predict the outcome (Kass, 1980). It uses a systematic algorithm to detect the strongest relationship between the predictor variables and the outcome variable (Chan et al., 2006, p. 261). CHAID analysis continues close category consolidation with similar ratios until the relationship between variable and outcome cannot be statistically improved any further and compares the recategorised variables and selects the one that predicts the outcome most strongly according to their p values (Hill et al., 1997).

## Findings

This study aimed to determine whether the expectations of potential tourists for food differ between generations. In this context, the expectations of the participants regarding the dining experience, the price, variety, saturation, nutritiveness, organicity, modernity of the dining room, the calmness of the dining room, the cleanliness of the dining room, the compliance of the employees with the hygiene rules, the fast serving of the meals, the attention of the employees, the cleanliness of the toilets and sinks, the cleanliness of the service equipment, the appearance of the meals, the portion size and local food tasting were interpreted as sixteen items.

In Table 1, the frequency and percentage distributions of the participants based on gender, income and year of birth are given.

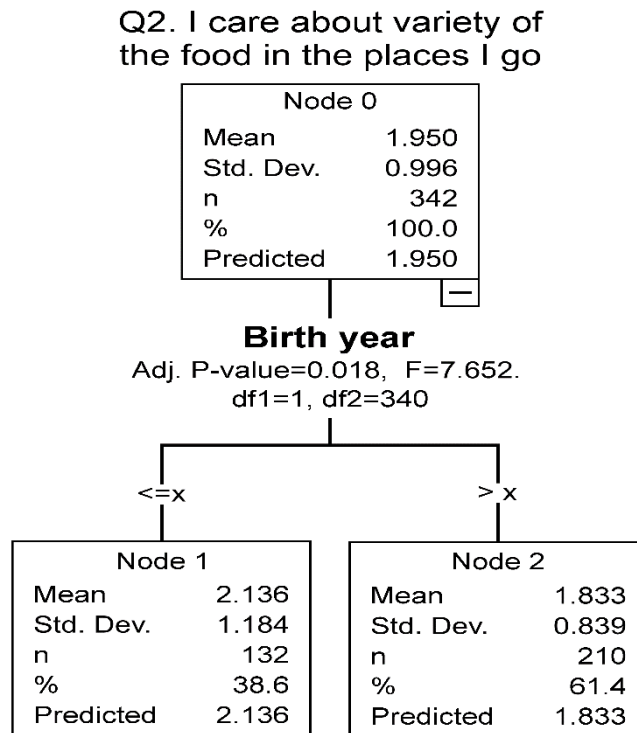
**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of participants

Demographic characteristics	n	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	231	67.7
Male	109	32.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>99.7</b>
<b>Birth year</b>		
1946–1964 (Baby Boomer)	33	9.7
1965–1980 (Generation X)	98	28.7
1981–2000 (Generation Y)	169	49.6
2001 and beyond (Generation Z and beyond)	41	12.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Income status</b>		
No income	123	37.5
1600 TL and below	30	8.8
1601–3000 TL	46	13.5
3001–5000 TL	54	15.8
5001–7000 TL	29	8.5
7001–10000 TL	14	4.1
10001 TL and above	37	10.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>99.1</b>

67.7% of the participants were female and 32% were male, 9.7% belonged to the Baby Boomer generation, 28.7% were from generation X, 49.6% were from generation Y and 12% individuals belonged to the Z generation and later. While the results of the CHAID Analysis for RQ\_1 and RQ\_2 are given, only the analysis outputs related to the topics that differ between generations (Figures 1–5) have been presented. The analysis results for the expressions in which no significant difference was found regarding the generational differences are presented without the analysis output.

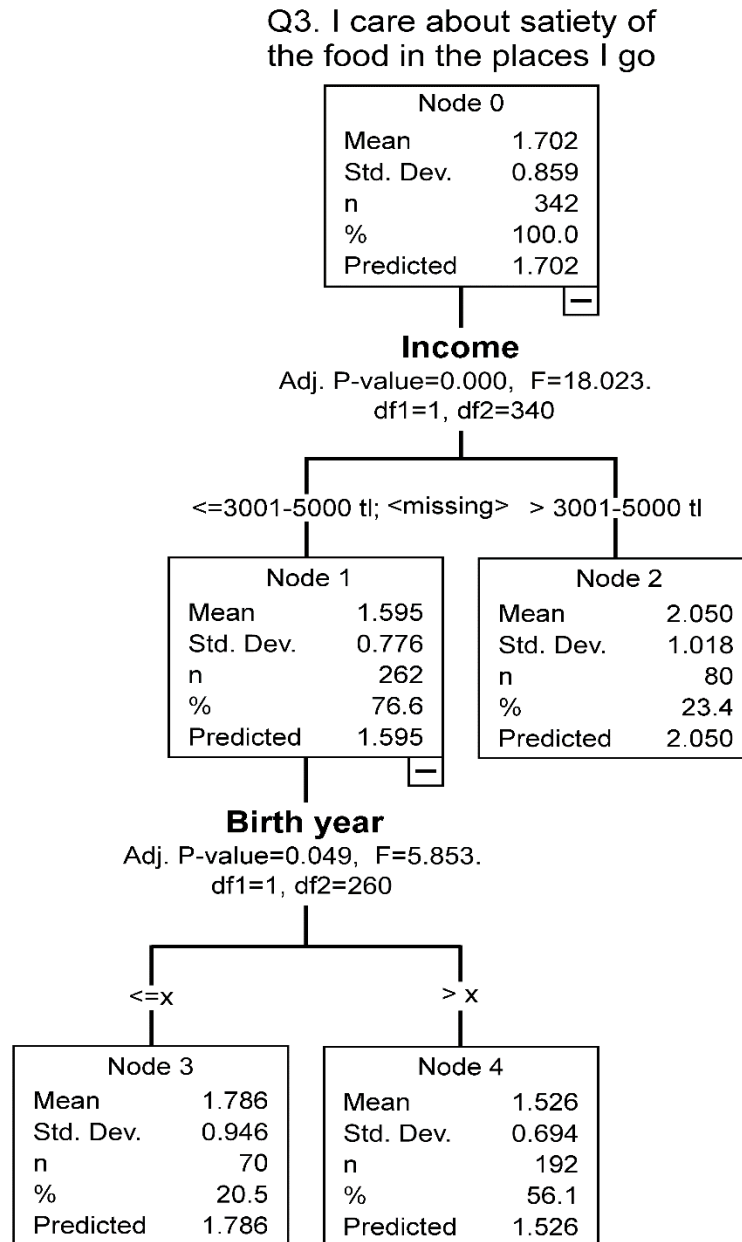
According to the results of the CHAID Analysis, it was observed that ‘income’ is an important variable in the price of food. It can be stated that the participants with an income of 3001–5000 TL (Turkish Lira) and below (mean = 1.73, sd= 0.84) give more importance to the price of food than the participants whose income is higher than 3001–5000 TL (mean = 2.40, sd = 1.37). However, it has been determined that generation is an effective variable on the importance given to food variety. In Figure 1, the results of the analysis for the diversity of the dishes are given. According to Figure 1, it can be stated that the participation rate of the participants from the X generation and the Baby Boomer generation (mean = 2.14, sd = 1.18) in the statement about the importance given to food variety is lower than that of the Y and Z generations (mean = 1.83, sd = 0.84).

**Figure 1.** Factors affecting the importance of food diversity



According to the results of the CHAID analysis, it was determined that statistically the most important variable on the importance given to the satiety of the meals was ‘income’ and the second variable was ‘generation’. In Figure 2, the results of the analysis regarding the satiety of the meals are given. According to Figure 2, it can be stated that the participants with an income of 3001–5000 TL and below (mean = 1.59, sd = 0.77) give more importance to the satiety of the food than the participants whose income is higher than 3001–5000 TL (mean = 2.05, sd = 1.01). Among the participants whose income is 3001–5000 TL and below, it can be stated that the participants from the X generation and Baby Boomer generation (mean = 1.78, sd = 3.94) give less importance to the satiety of food than the Y generation and Z generation (mean = 1.52, sd = 0.69).

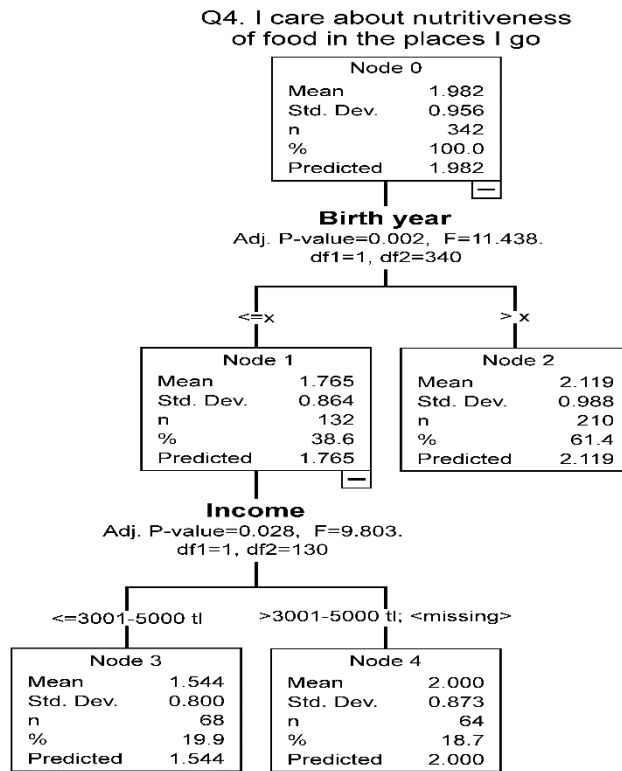
**Figure 2.** Factors affecting the importance of meal satiety



According to the results of the CHAID analysis, it was determined that the most statistically-significant variable on the importance given to nutritiveness of the meals was the ‘generation’. In Figure 3, the results of the analysis for the nutritional value of the meals are given. According to Figure 3, it can be stated that the participants of the X generation and Baby Boomer generation (mean = 1.77, sd = 0.86) attach more importance to the nutritiveness of the meals than the Y generation and Z generation (mean = 2.12, sd = 0.99). However, it was observed that the opinions of the X generation and Baby Boomer generation participants also differ in terms of income status. It can be stated that the participants with an income of 3001–5000 TL (mean = 1.54, sd = 0.86) and below attach more importance to the nutritiveness of the meals compared to the participants whose income is higher than 3001–5000 TL (mean = 2.00, sd = 0.99).

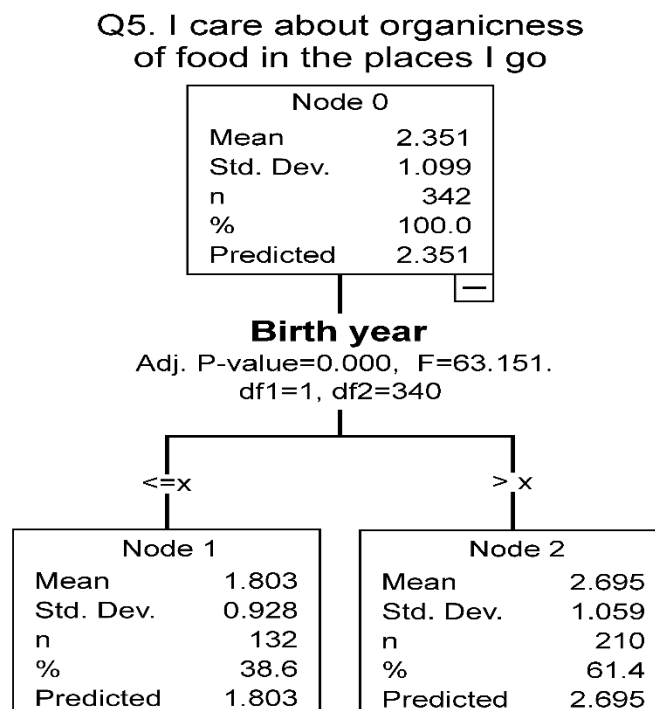


**Figure 3.** Factors affecting the importance given to the nutritiveness of meals



According to the results of the CHAID analysis, it was observed that the most statistically-significant variable on the importance given to the organicity of the food is the ‘generation’ of the participants. In Figure 4, the results of the analysis for the organicity of the food are given. According to Figure 4, it can be stated that the participants from the X generation and Baby Boomer generation (mean = 1.80, sd = 0.93) attach more importance to the organicity of their food than the Y generation and Z generation (mean = 2.70, sd = 1.06).

**Figure 4.** Factors affecting the importance of organicity of food

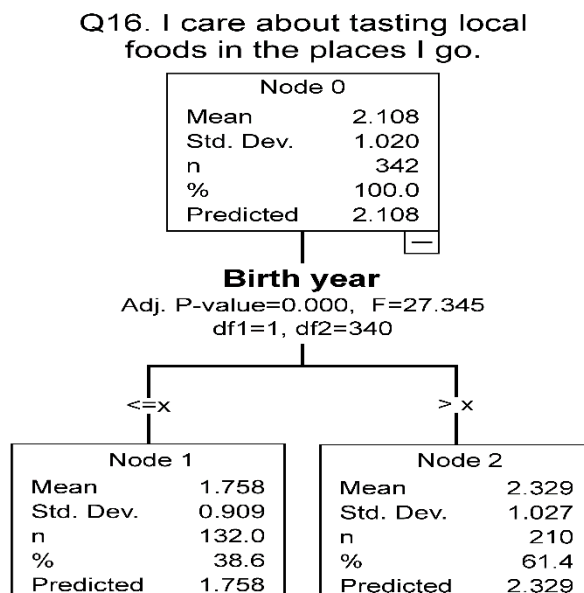


Based on the results of the CHAID analysis, it was determined that the modernity of the dining hall is more important for the participants whose income is 5001–7000 TL and below (mean = 2.51, sd = 1.14) as compared to the participants whose income is above 5001–7000 TL (mean = 3.01, sd = 1.01). According to the results of the CHAID analysis, there was no variable that had an effect on the calmness of the eating environment. However, it was determined that the most effective variable on the importance given to the cleanliness of the living room was the ‘gender’ variable. It was determined that women (mean = 1.17, sd = 1.04) attach more importance to the cleanliness of the hall with a small difference as compared to men (mean = 1.37, sd = 0.65). Similarly, it was determined that the importance given to the compliance of the restaurant employees with the hygiene rules differed in the context of the ‘gender’ variable. According to the results of the analysis, it was seen that women (mean = 1.16, sd = 0.39) give more importance to the compliance of the restaurant employees with the hygiene rules with a small difference as compared to men (mean = 1.39, sd = 0.75).

Based on the results of the CHAID analysis, it has been determined that the ‘income’ variable is effective in the fast service of the food. Accordingly, it can be stated that the participants with an income of 3001–5000 TL or less (mean = 1.54, sd = 0.66) give importance to the fast service of the food compared to the participants whose income is higher than 3001–5000 TL (mean = 1.92, sd = 1.05). According to the result of the CHAID analysis, a variable that causes a difference between the attention of restaurant employees and the importance given to toilet and sink cleaning could not be determined. However, it was determined that the ‘gender’ variable was effective on the cleanliness of the service equipment and the importance given to the appearance of the dishes. It can be stated that women (mean = 1.14, sd = 0.38) attach more importance to the cleaning of service equipment with a very small difference as compared to men (mean = 1.29, sd = 0.67). Similarly, it can be stated that women (mean = 1.69, sd = 0.79) give more importance to the appearance of food with a very small difference as compared to men (mean = 1.94, sd = 1.00). According to the results of the CHAID analysis, there was no variable that had an effect on the importance given to the portion size of the meals. However, it has been determined that the generation of the participant has an effect on the importance given to tasting local foods.

The results of the analysis regarding the importance given to tasting local foods are given in Figure 5.

**Figure 5.** Factors affecting the importance of tasting local foods



According to Figure 5, it can be stated that the X generation and Baby Boomer generation (mean = 1.76, sd = 0.91) attach more importance to tasting local foods than the Y generation and Z generation (mean = 2.33, sd = 1.03).

## Discussion

While food is associated with various spiritual values such as culture, history and tradition, it also produces material value for businesses such as restaurants, farmers and suppliers. This importance of food for tourism leads destination managers to benefit from food in their marketing activities (Kim et al., 2018, p. 14).

The food offered to tourists in a tourism destination affects their travel motivation. According to a study conducted by the European Travel Commission-ETC (2019), the food in the destination and the richness of the cuisine are the first factor that guides travel decisions for 15% of tourists and an effective factor in the selection phase for 55%.

The relevant literature has interpreted the generation issue on concepts such as food tourism and gastronomic tourism, which are generally carried out by people travelling for food and beverages (Fountain & Charters, 2006; Getz & Carlsen, 2008). This study focuses on the similarities and differences between expectations, with the thought that it is important to know the expectations of tourists for food.

The study has provided useful implications for destination management organisations and destination marketing professionals. Based on the results of the study, Baby Boomer and generation X tourists attach more importance to food variety, nutrition and organicity than Y and Z generation tourists. In this respect, the study is consistent with Kamenidou et al. (2020), who found that older generations attach more importance to the organicity of the food. However, according to the results of the study conducted by Garibaldi and Pozzi (2020), unlike our study, those born in and after the Y generation are more interested in food and beverages than the members of the X generation and Baby Boomer generation. Moreover, in this study, it was concluded that Baby Boomer and X generations are more willing to taste local foods than Y and Z generations. In the context of this result, the study coincides with the idea that the proportion of elderly individuals in tourism activities has increased and that elderly individuals are more enthusiastic about gastronomic activities during tourism than young people (Balderas-Cejudo et al., 2021). Within the framework of this result, it can be suggested that more importance should be given to activities related to food and beverages for elderly individuals for destination marketing.

According to the results of the study, it is seen that another factor that caused the difference between potential tourists' expectations for food was 'gender'. It has been observed that women attach more importance to issues such as the cleanliness of the dining room, the compliance of the restaurant employees with the hygiene rules, the cleanliness of the service equipment and the appearance of the food.

According to the other results of the study, it has been determined that the income status of potential tourists makes a difference in certain issues regarding their expectations about food. The income issue has been identified as an effective factor in the price of the food, its satiety and nutritiveness, the modernity of the dining halls and the fast service of the food. In this respect, this study shows that it is important to structure the price element based on customer expectations in menu design.

After the segmentation of customers, managers can analyse customer expectations and bring their services to more accurate audiences. Conducting similar studies is necessary for businesses to get to know their customers better. For this reason, the in-depth analysis of intergenerational differences in tourism in the context of gastronomy will bring

practical contribution along with its contribution to the literature. The fact that approximately 50% of the participants of this study are from the Y generation can be expressed as an important limitation of the study. Equal distribution of the sample between generations will enable the intergenerational differences to be seen in detail in studies to be conducted in this area.

### Declaration

All authors of the article contribute equally to the article process. The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

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