



## Interest of Local People in Gastronomy Tourism and Their Food Neophobia: Cases of Hatay and Gaziantep\*\*

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### Abstract

The cuisine culture is a vital element of food-beverage experience in gastronomy tourism. In this sense, foods and beverages have constituted a major part of the culture in which they belong to and become a tool in acquiring knowledge and experience about the cuisine culture of a given location. The purpose of this study is to determine the interest of the local people in Hatay and Gaziantep, which safeguard their diverse cuisine culture in traditional ways and maintain their authenticity as UNESCO's Cities of Gastronomy, in gastronomy tourism and the extent of their food neophobia. As a part of this study, the questionnaires were applied by the researchers in Gaziantep and Hatay in 2019. Total of 565 questionnaires were evaluated. The data analysis was performed based on descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, as well as factor analysis, t-test and one-way analysis of variance. The results revealed that the people in both cities are highly interested in gastronomy tourism. It was found out that the food neophobia is highly neutral for the people of both Gaziantep (56.9%) and Hatay (63.0%). It was also revealed that some respondents (Gaziantep 36.4%, Hatay 32.7%) had food neophobia to a certain extent. On the other hand, the food neophobia turned out to be more common among male respondents than female respondents. In another finding, although the food neophobia level of the participants with high education level in Hatay was low, it was found that the food neophobia levels of the participants with high education level in Gaziantep were high. The results of the the respondents from Hatay corroborate the results of past studies. However, the results of the respondents from Gaziantep suggest the contrary compared to the past studies, and indicate that the less educated respondents are, the less food neophobia they tend to have. This shows that the effect of educational background on food neophobia has yet to be evident.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Neophobia is an act of fear that manifests itself in cognitive rendition of any object that is new or unknown (Greggor, et al., 2015). Food neophobia, on the other hand, is a term that has been used in recent years to define food-based disorder (avoidant, restrictive food intake etc.). The term points to the fear of eating new or unfamiliar foods. It is also described as avoidance or reluctance of people to eat new or unusual foods based on their current diet (Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Schulze & Watson, 1995; Pliner & Salvy, 2006). Even though the fact that we live in a globalized world, it is a fact that there are various patterns of diet among countries and even different locations of a country. While some people easily adopt new foods and beverages that are unfamiliar to their cuisine that they have experienced and integrated with, some others avoid them. Food neophobia due to this avoidance can be seen in all age groups, but the response level varies between individuals, also influenced by factors such as gender, age, educational background, culture, economy and urbanizations (Koivisto & Sjoden, 1996; Ritchey, et al., 2003; Meiselman, et al., 2010). In literature, the concept of food neophobia is commonly adopted to gain insight into why people tend to avoid or embrace new or unfamiliar foods (Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Pliner, et al., 1993; Hobden & Pliner, 1995; Pliner, et al., 1995; Pliner & Melo, 1997; Tuorila, et al., 2001; Ritchey, et al., 2003). The population of most of the past studies over the food neophobia (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995; Shenoy, 2005; Derinalp-Çanakçı, 2016; Ji, et al., 2016; Alphan, 2017; Mak, et al., 2017; Üzülmöz, 2018; Kaplan, 2018) tends to be domestic and international tourists. The food neophobia has been analyzed from the perspective of food patterns of tourists especially as a part of tourism (Chang, et al., 2010; Mak, et al., 2017). This is because the food neophobia is seen as a barrier that affects the tasting of local cuisine produces (Kivela & Crofts, 2006; Wu, et al., 2016). The cuisine culture is a vital element of food-beverage experience in gastronomy tourism. In this sense, foods and beverages have constituted a major part of their culture and grown into a significant means of acquiring information and experience about the cuisine culture of a given location (Kılınç & Kılınç, 2018). Therefore, the cuisine culture is considered to be one of the most powerful identifiers of attitudes and behaviors.

Gastronomy is used as a means to define culinary and cultural efforts under the UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, and cover know-how and insight about what people eat and drink. While they are some of the leading cities when it comes to gastronomy tourism in Turkey, Hatay and Gaziantep, which are titled as UNESCO's Cities of Gastronomy, are home to traditional foods that have remained almost intact for centuries and eaten to a large extent. From the past to the present, the production and consumption knowledge of local foods and beverages have been passed down from generation to generation. And they have gained a permanent place by becoming an integral part of the life process of the local people as assets that have a use-value in the social and cultural fabric that they are born into. People in both cities safeguard their traditional methods, and maintain culinary identity and authenticity despite globalization. Yoon, Gursoy and Chen (2001) argue that sustainability of tourism in a location depends on attitudes and perceptions of local people about tourism and understanding factors with an impact on them. Therefore, it is assumed that the local community is one of the major elements that affect the growth of gastronomy tourism. In this study; it was aimed to determine the interest of the local people's in gastronomy tourism and their level of food neophobia. In this context, the current field of study is limited to Gaziantep and Hatay where ethnic and local foods are produced and consumed intensively. In addition, the implementation of the questionnaire in a certain time period (January, 2019), the limitation of the questionnaire used in the research to Turkish language, and the time and financial possibilities of the research were considered as other limiting factors.

## **Conceptual Framework**

### **Gastronomy Tourism**

Gastronomy tourism is a concept that defines one's experiences about foods and beverages in general. Zelinsky (1985) describes eating in ethnic and local food restaurants as gastronomy tourism while Zelinsky's study confines gastronomy tourism to one single activity. His contribution to the literature is that he was the first to define what gastronomy tourism is and thus lay the foundation of ensuing research. The concept of gastronomy tourism was coined by Lucy M. Long in 1998 to express various cultures based on their food (Karim & Chi, 2010, p. 532). Long (1998) refers to an anthropological perspective to define gastronomy tourism. He describes it as "purposeful and exploratory involvement in a culinary culture that one has not experienced before, ranging from production to consumption". What is interesting about the definition is that it is similar to the thought that Zelinsky (1985) contemplated. What Long highlights here is the need to travel somewhere far from home. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (2004), gastronomy or culinary tourism occurs when "food is the focus of travel, and excursions are held around cooking schools, wineries, restaurants and food festivals". Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016, p. 78) present two concepts that relate the definition of gastronomy and tourism with an economic point of view. Those are; local foods referring to the local cuisine, local food market to be offered to consumption in a certain geographical area and businesses with gastronomic culture and gastronomy specialties.

### **UNESCO Creative Cities Network of Gastronomy**

To gain insight into the role of gastronomy in creative cities, it is of vital importance to define what the term gastronomy covers to begin with. Santich (2004, p. 15) argues that gastronomy means "recommendations and guidance on combinations, circumstances, what and when to eat". Gastronomy is used as a means to define culinary and cultural efforts under the UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, and cover know-how and insight about what people eat and drink (Pearson & Pearson, 2016, p. 167). Gastronomy is one of the seven creative areas covered by UNESCO's Creative Cities Network. It is intended to safeguard local cuisine cultures as a part of ever-changing culinary culture. A total of 36 UNESCO Creative Cities of Gastronomy have been certified around the world since 2005. In Turkey, Gaziantep in 2015, Hatay in 2017, Afyon in 2020, that was incorporated into the Creative Cities Network under the title of City of Gastronomy. Offering a great diversity in terms of culinary cultures in various countries, the Creative Cities Network covers cities of major tourism destinations such as the USA, China, Spain, Brazil, Italy, Thailand, South Korea and Turkey. The aforementioned countries have two or more cities in the network (Taştan & İflazoğlu, 2018; [www.en.unesco.org](http://www.en.unesco.org)).

### **Gaziantep**

Gaziantep is one of the first cities to spring to mind when it comes to food-related activities. The interactions of multiple civilizations and its geographical location have brought about nearly 400 types of dishes and a myriad of authentic recipes (Gaziantep Ticaret Odası, 2011, p. 12). The diversity of local foods, a gastronomical heritage handed down by civilizations and interaction with a variety of cultures play a considerable role in Gaziantep being billed as a City of Gastronomy as a part of the Creative Cities Network. In addition, the fact that its cuisine heavily relies on local produces has played a major role in the authenticity of its traditional cuisine (Uçuk, et al., 2017, p. 215). Gaziantep cuisine consolidates its roots as it is traditional and going back a long way, and it is renowned by its

own name, not by the name of the country (Gaziantep Turizm Elçileri Derneği, 2011). Evliya Çelebi described the city as "neither words nor any language enough to describe it" 355 years ago in his travel book, calling it "the Pupil Eye of the World". Antep is the city of baklava billed as the crown jewel of desserts, and pistachio named after the city, and a vast number of foods. Dating back to thousands of years B.C., and having been home to various civilizations since the antiquity, and co-existence of various languages, faiths and races to still survive today, Gaziantep has historically had a diverse culinary culture as it serves as a hub of trade and production and is situated on the historic Silk Road (Arsunar, 1962, p. 10; Çiftçi, 1971, p. 57; Kopar, 2015, p. 118). Cömert (2014, p. 64) argues that climate and agricultural produces mould and diversify the culinary culture of local communities, and improve their local cuisine. Akgöl (2012, p. 52), on the other hand, describes influential factors of culinary culture as a migrant community, agricultural-based economy, religion, socio-economic level and interaction with other cultures. In short, one can suggest that Gaziantep's geographical position, location in Mesopotamia where civilizations grew and culinary culture originated, and interactions with the Middle East cuisine have added to the diversity of its culinary culture ([www.gaziantepturizm.gov.tr](http://www.gaziantepturizm.gov.tr)).

## Hatay

Some factors have played a role in turning the concept of eating and cooking into a social phenomenon (rituals performed for gods, the formation of societies upon the advent of settled life, and political structure and private property) (Aksoy, et al., 2016, p. 61). The diversity brought about by each civilization, religion and experience in Hatay has paved the way for a vast and long-established culinary culture. In Hatay food does not merely mean people are meeting their need for nutritional purposes. For local people, food stands for unity, bliss, groups of people sitting at a table chatting for hours, and a unique set of delicacies that take days to prepare and a short notice to eat (Babat, et al., 2016, p. 2). Food is a need to live on while living for food is a philosophy of life. Food as a philosophy of life is more relevant in Hatay given the diversity, authenticity and functionality of its dishes (Türk & Şahin, 2004, p. 121). Goody (2013, p. 130) emphasizes that the quality of a cuisine is related to the production and distribution system of the food. They are the number of ingredients, diversity of recipes, critical and bold food consumers and pleasure in eating while agricultural and commercial developments are reportedly decisive, too. Hatay has been influenced by a variety of ethnic and cultural structures, and created a culinary culture that has been around for centuries. All of them have led to the creation of nearly 600 recipes and a vast range of culinary culture, and most of the recipes have remained intact to a large extent (Taştan & İflazoğlu, 2018: 385).

The inevitable influence of Roman and Byzantine civilizations on culinary culture still remains in effect in Hatay, which had been home to them. In her book titled as "Everyday Life in Byzantium: Constantinople the Jewel of Byzantium", the Byzantine historian Tamara T. Rice reports that Byzantine people had three meals a day namely breakfast, lunch and dinner, and that they would serve three courses which included hors d'oeuvre (appetizers), and then seafood or meat, and a dessert (Rice, 2002, p. 15). Serving appetizers is intriguing as it is the origin of a tradition is persistently and deliberately carried on in Hatay. Masonry ovens, which are a common tradition in Hatay and many people think it dates back to the recent past, actually go back to the Roman times according to the historians (Kaypak & Uçar, 2018, p. 198). Hatay is home to dishes dating back to 2000, 1500, 1000, 800, 500, 200 and 100 years ago. Hatay has a culinary culture that has maintained its original recipes without much of a change. For instance, among them are stuffed kidney from the 3rd century, Isbangi (Borani) from the 11th century, Tüffahiye from the 13th

century, chard with yogurt from the 15th century, Squash Stew from the 16th century, Kamhi from the 15th century, Kişki Leben from the 16th century, and Soup Ak Darı from the 17th century (Budak, 2008, p. 29-31; Birdir, et al., 2018, p. 305). In addition, it is reported that İbni Seyyar El Varak, who lived in Iraq back in the 10th century and wrote the cookbook *Kitab-ı Tabh*, features a recipe for which he combined pomegranate syrup and green olives, and this totally corresponds to "olive salad", which is one of the traditional salads in Hatay's cuisine (Budak, 2008, p. 37). The influence of ancient civilizations on the local cuisine is a solid evidence for Hatay's diverse culinary culture. The cultural background of foods and beverages is considered to be important to trace back any food. This is because it is an integral part of any culinary culture as a whole. The portrayal of a cuisine's background means forming a solid basis for a civilization and thus referring to people who help its cuisine grow (Aksoy, et al., 2016, p. 55).

### **Food Neophobia**

Food neophobia is described as reluctance to eat any new food (Fischler, 1988; Pliner and Hobden, 1992) and a pattern of behaviors that refuse any suggestion to try any unfamiliar food (Dimitrovski & Crespi-Vallbona, 2017). Food neophobia is a consequence of natural tendencies of people to dislike new and unfamiliar foods or has doubts about them (Pliner & Salvy, 2006; Knaapila, et al., 2007; Dovey, et al., 2008). However, food neophobia is also considered to be a tendency not only to avoid unfamiliar foods but also dislike them (Hwang & Lin, 2010). Therefore, one can argue that food neophobia is a behavioral and personality characterized by a reluctance to try unfamiliar foods (Eertmans, et al., 2005; Kim, et al., 2009). The desire to try new foods is described as a continuous search for something new about food (Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Mak, et al., 2013). Capiola and Raudenbush (2012) argue that the desire to try new foods is the willingness of people to try new foods while Chang, et al., (2011, p. 7) describe it as people's search for any food that is new, different and strange. In short, one can argue that people with a desire to try new foods are more prone to welcome new developments and changes in foods (Yazıcıoğlu & Alphan, 2017, p. 121). As foods are more diverse now in modern cities compared to years ago, young people tend to experience new foods at an earlier age than elderly people. In addition, foods are more diverse in cities than in rural areas. Based on this context, Tuorila, et al., 2001; Flight, et al., 2003; Verbeke, et al., 2005; Olabi, et al., 2009; Meiselman, et al., 2010: made observations about those relations in their studies. The results of their studies corroborate the argument that people have less food neophobia as a result of urban life subjecting them to new foods more often, higher education and incremental income while people in rural settlements have a higher degree of food neophobia as they are less exposed to new foods. Food neophobia is a personal trait that manifests itself in various forms depending on one's age, socioeconomic status, educational background and how urbanized one is (Ribeiro de Andrade Previato & Behrens, 2015, p. 929). Food neophobia is associated with variables such as gender, age and tendencies while being familiar to a food is considered to be not only a cultural but also an individual experience (Tuorila, et al., 2001, p. 32). Some studies reported significant differences between genders as men turned out to be more neophobic than women (Hursti & Sjoden, 1997, p. 99; Tuorila, et al., 2001, p. 35). However, the influence of gender on food neophobia is not evident yet (Meiselman, et al., 2010, p. 896). Other studies reported no significant difference between genders (Pliner & Hobden, 1992; Nordin, et al., 2004, p. 300; Fernandez-Ruiz, et al., 2013, p. 222). Analyzing the correlation between food neophobia and educational background, some studies reported that the more educated people are, the less food neophobia they tend to have (Hursti & Sjoden, 1997; Tuorila, et al., 2001; Schickenberg, et al., 2006; Meiselman, et al., 2010; Sanjuán-López, et al., 2011; D'Antuono & Bignami, 2012).

Tanska, et al., (2017, p. 373) point out that neophobic tendency results from insufficient knowledge of people about foods. Rozin (1988) argues that among the foods and drinks that are accepted and tasted by the person, foods that are generally considered to be beneficial are preferred. McFarlene and Pliner (1997, p. 228) reported in their study that information offered about the benefits of a food and importance attached to it from the perspective of one's health increases the desire to eat a new food. One's knowledge about taste and benefit is directly based on his/her experience about food while being exposed to new foods all the time gives the impression that they are safe. Neophobic people expect new foods to be tasteless. Being exposed to tasty new foods and exploring them helps people change their negative perspective on new foods. Positive experiences about new foods are likely to allow for generalization about other new foods, and mitigate food neophobia (Pliner & Salvy, 2006, p. 77). Playing a pivotal role in how people like and consume foods, the social influence drive people to be affected by what people around them and tend to have what they eat (Pliner, et al., 1993: 113: Derinalp-Çanakçı & Birdir, 2019, p. 4). Hendy and Raudenbush (2000) argue that people are influenced by spouses, friends and relatives, and thus tend to experience new foods. In the similar vein, Hobden and Pliner (1995, p. 111-112) reported that the extent of one's fear could be mitigated by the presence of another person with a positive tendency to try new foods, and even make one willing to try them.

## Material and Methods

Intended to determine the interest of local people from Gaziantep and Hatay, <sup>1</sup>in gastronomy tourism and their food neophobia, this study was built on quantitative research as a method. Books, dissertations, articles and databases were analyzed for the literature review of the study. The establishment of the conceptual framework was followed by the practice. As a part of the study, the scale was predicated on Shenoy's 3-item gastronomy tourism interest scale (2005), and the 10-item food neophobia scale (FNS) developed by Pliner and Hobden (1992). Both scales were translated from English to Turkish by experts. Then, the questionnaire was taken in Turkish as a part of a pilot study responded by 57 people. Based on the data collected from the pilot practice, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of the 3-item scale of interest in gastronomy tourism turned out to be 0.880 for the respondents from Gaziantep, and 0.722 for the respondents from Hatay. The Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of the 10-item scale of food neophobia turned out to be 0.666 for the respondents from Gaziantep, and 0.899 for the respondents from Hatay. The figures show that the scales are reliable (Kalaycı 2009). The questionnaire was taken following the pilot practice and the reliability analysis. The questionnaire data were collected through convenience sampling. The study was conducted in January 2019, and a total of 565 questionnaires were collected, and all of them were analyzed. Collected by means of questionnaires, data were coded, exported to a statistical package software and analyzed. The data analysis was performed based on descriptive statistics such as arithmetic mean and standard deviation, as well as factor analysis, t-test and one-way analysis of variance. The literature review

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<sup>1</sup> This article, is derived from Nurhayat IFLAZOĞLU's master thesis titled "Unesco Gastronomi Şehirlerinde Gastronomi Turizmi ve Yeni Yiyecek Deneme Korkusu (Food Neophobia): Hatay ve Gaziantep Örneği" which is prepared under the supervision of Assoc. Prof. Dr. Sevdâ SAHILLI BIRDİR.

was followed by the formation of the following questions to seek answers for the interest of people from Gaziantep and Hatay in gastronomy tourism and their food neophobia.

**Q<sub>1</sub>** How interested are the people of Hatay and Gaziantep in gastronomy tourism?

**Q<sub>2</sub>** Do the interests of people of Hatay and Gaziantep in gastronomy tourism vary by demographics?

**Q<sub>3</sub>** What is the extent of food neophobia for the people of Hatay and Gaziantep?

**Q<sub>4</sub>** Does the extent of food neophobia of people in Hatay and Gaziantep vary by demographics?

The questionnaire was filled out in January 2019 by a total of 565 respondents who reside in Gaziantep (283) and Hatay (282). Based on the data collected from the respondents, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of the 3-item scale of interest in gastronomy tourism turned out to be 0.748 for the respondents from Gaziantep, and 0.678 for the respondents from Hatay. The Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) coefficient of the 10-item scale of food neophobia turned out to be 0.708 for the respondents from Gaziantep, and 0.773 for the respondents from Hatay. Therefore, one can argue that the internal consistency of the scale was high. Explanatory factor analysis applied to three statements in order to test the construct validity of the gastronomic tourism interest scale was collected in one item, and it explains 61,067% of the total variance in the participants in Hatay province. The analysis revealed that KMO sampling adequacy was 64.3% while Bartlett's test was significant ( $X^2$ : 139.545 and 0.000). According to the explanatory factor analysis applied to ten items to test the construct validity of the food neophobia scale, the scale explains 63.001% of the total variance for the province of Hatay. The factor analysis with one single item revealed that Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy was 68.9% while Bartlett's test was significant ( $X^2$ : 194.665 and 0.000). Performed on ten statements to test the construct validity of the scale of food neophobia, the exploratory factor analysis revealed that the scale of food neophobia gave account for 63.001% of the total variance for the city of Hatay. The analysis based on three factors in total revealed that KMO sampling adequacy was 80.3% while Bartlett's test was significant ( $X^2$ : 743.753 and 0.000). On the other hand, the factor analysis, which was performed on ten statements, revealed that the scale of food neophobia was focused on three aspects and gave account for 62.621% of the total variance for the city of Gaziantep. The analysis revealed that Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy was 77% while Bartlett's test was significant ( $X^2$ : 729.259 and 0.000). Any KMO value equal to 0.60 and above points to the fact that the sample is adequate for factor analysis (Nakip, 2006; Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018).

## Findings

The descriptive characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. 50.4% of 282 respondents from Hatay were female while 49.6% of them were male, and 51.2% of 283 respondents from Gaziantep were female, and 48.8% of them were male. 27.7% of the respondents from Hatay were single and 72.3% of them were married while 48.1% of the respondents from Gaziantep were single, and 51.9% of them were married. 60.6% of the respondents from Hatay held a bachelor's degree, with 20.2% being elementary school dropouts, 8.2% high school dropouts, 6% holding a master's degree, and 5% holding an associate degree. 41.0% of the respondents from Gaziantep held a bachelor's degree, with 16.2% holding an associate degree, 15.5% being elementary school dropouts, and 10.2% holding a master's degree.

**Table 1.** Respondents by Descriptive Characteristics

	Hatay		Gaziantep			Hatay		Gaziantep	
	f	%	f	%		f	%	f	%
<b>Gender</b>					<b>Age</b>				
Female	142	50.4	145	51.2	21 to 30	66	23.4	129	45.6
Male	140	49.6	138	48.8	31 to 40	121	42.9	110	38.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>	41 to 50	80	28.4	29	10.2
					51 to 60	15	5.3	15	5.3
<b>Marital Status</b>					<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>
Single	78	27.7	136	48.1	<b>Education</b>				
Married	204	72.3	147	51.9	Elementary school	57	20.2	44	15.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>	High school	23	8.2	47	16.6
					Associate degree	14	5.0	47	16.6
<b>Income</b>					Bachelor's degree	171	60.6	116	41.0
TRY 1001 to 2000	83	29.4	97	34.3	Master's degree	17	6.0	29	10.2
TRY 2001 to 3000	32	11.3	77	27.2	<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>
TRY 3001 to 4000	101	35.8	37	13.1					
TRY 4001 to 5000	46	16.3	37	13.1	<b>Occupation</b>				
TRY 5001 and above	20	7.1	35	12.4	Civil servant	159	56.4	93	32.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>	Self-employed	41	14.5	38	13.4
					Worker	24	8.5	67	23.7
					Student	6	2.1	41	14.5
					Other	52	18.4	44	15.5
					<b>Total</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>

**Question 1:** How interested are the people of Hatay and Gaziantep in gastronomy tourism?

The respondents from Hatay tended to agree with the statements "I am interested in what people from different cultures eat" and "I like eating ethnic foods" more than they did with the statement "I travel to taste dishes of different cultures". On the other hand, the respondents from Gaziantep tended to agree with the statements "I am interested in what people eat from different cultures" and "I like eating ethnic foods" to a similar extent, and less strongly agree with the statement "I travel to taste dishes of different cultures" (Table 2). The t test revealed that the interest of the respondents does not depend on where they live.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Table for the Interests of Respondents in Gastronomy Tourism

Statements	Hatay			Gaziantep		
	f	x	s.d	f	x	s.d
1- I am interested in what people eat from different cultures.	282	3.5709	1.32735	283	3.3675	1.38608
3- I like eating ethnic foods.	282	3.4397	1.20420	283	3.3498	1.26934
2- I travel to taste dishes of different cultures.	282	2.6844	1.23834	283	2.7774	1.25616

**Note:** Categories of answers: 1: I strongly disagree, .....5: I strongly agree

**Question 2:** Do the interests of people of Hatay and Gaziantep in gastronomy tourism vary by demographics?

The independent sampling t-test revealed no significant difference between the interest of the respondents in gastronomy tourism, and their gender and marital status. The analysis revealed no significant difference between the interest in gastronomy tourism and gender and marital status. On the other hand, it was found out that the respondents aged 21 to 30 from both cities were more interested in gastronomy tourism compared to other age groups. The items with a significant difference as a result of the variance analysis performed according to the "interest in gastronomy tourism" and "education" of the participants of both provinces are as follows: The item with a meaningful difference by the participants of both provinces is the statement "I wonder what people eat from different cultures" and "undergraduate and graduate". It has been determined that the educated participants agree more with this statement.

However, there was a significant difference between elementary school dropouts and respondents holding an associate degree for the statement "I travel to taste dishes of different cultures" when it came to the respondents from Hatay, and the respondents with an associate degree seemed to agree more with the statement. Whether the interest in gastronomy tourism varies by income of the respondents or not was analyzed. The analysis revealed no significant difference between the interest of the respondents from Hatay in gastronomy tourism, and their income. However, a significant difference was reported among the mid-income and high-income respondents from Gaziantep for the statement "I am interested in what people eat from different cultures" as high-income respondents agree more with the statement.

**Question 3:** What is the extent of food neophobia for the people of Hatay and Gaziantep?

The scale measures the extent of food neophobia of the respondents. Of the statements in the scale, the statements 2, 3, 5, 7 and 8 stand for food neophobia while the statements 1, 4, 6, 9 and 10 stand for the desire to try new foods. The statements "If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it" and "I will eat almost anything" ranked high among the respondents from Hatay about their food neophobia. It was the statements "If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it", "I will eat almost anything" and "I am very particular about the foods I will eat" that ranked high among the respondents from Gaziantep about their food neophobia (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Descriptive Table for Food Neophobia of Respondents

	Statements	Hatay		Gaziantep	
		x	s.d	x	s.d
1	I am constantly sampling new and different foods (R)	2.9787	1.17790	2.9859	1.19684
2	I don't trust new foods	2.8652	1.23254	2.8163	1.20643
3	If I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it	3.5106	1.34517	3.3286	1.33480
4	I like foods from different countries (R)	2.7340	1.11133	2.8693	1.15495
5	Ethnic food looks too weird to eat	2.6050	1.16367	2.6996	1.19019
6	At dinner parties, I will try a new food (R)	2.6064	1.14951	2.6396	1.10646
7	I am afraid to eat things I have never had before	2.8759	1.29694	2.7703	1.27728
8	I am very particular about the foods I will eat	2.9113	1.31888	3.2332	1.30548
9	I will eat almost anything (R)	3.2908	1.29899	3.3286	1.29981
10	I like to try new ethnic restaurants (R)	2.8298	1.15956	2.8375	1.25834

**Note:** The statements marked by R are reversely encoded.

Since the study was built on a 5-point Likert scale, the score of food neophobia ranged from 10 to 50. Therefore, the range of food neophobia was combined under three titles: The scoring range from 10 to 18 is considered to be food neophilic, 19 to 31 neutral and 32 to 50 food neophobic (Tuorila et al., 2001; Flight et al., 2003; Olabi et al., 2009; Yiğit, 2018). The analyses revealed that the respondents from Hatay had a score of 29.18 for food neophobia based on the extent they agreed with the statements. Based on the scoring range in literature, the score of the respondents from Hatay for food neophobia turned out to be neutral. Table 4 summarizes the food neophobia of the respondents. The table suggests that 63% of the respondents from Hatay are neutral, with 32.7% of them food neophobic, and 4.3% of them food neophilic. The analyses were also performed for the respondents from Gaziantep, and they revealed that they had a score of 29.50 for food neophobia. Based on the scoring range in literature, the score of the respondents from Gaziantep for food neophobia turned out to be neutral. The same table also presents statistical results about the food neophobia of the respondents from Gaziantep. This suggests that 56.9% of the respondents from Gaziantep are neutral, with 36.4% of them food neophobic, and 6.7% of them food neophilic.

**Table 4.** Table of Classification for Food Neophobia

Classification	Hatay		Gaziantep	
	f	%	f	%
Food Neophilia	12	4.3	19	6.7
Neutral	177	63.0	161	56.9
Food Neophobia	92	32.7	103	36.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>100</b>

**Question 4:** Does the extent of food neophobia of people in Hatay and Gaziantep vary by demographics?

An independent sampling t-test was performed to analyze whether there was any significant difference between the extent of food neophobia of the respondents and their gender and marital status. Based on a t-test performed on the potential correlation between food neophobia and marital status, the results suggest that there was no significant difference between the respondents from both cities. However, there was a significant difference between the respondents from Hatay and Gaziantep based on their gender. Of the respondents from both cities who agreed with the statement "I am very particular about the foods I will eat", men seemed to agree with it more than women did. The results of the variance analysis performed on the extent of food neophobia and age of the respondents from both cities revealed that the respondents from Hatay take more interest in different cultures as they age while the respondents from Gaziantep tend to have a heightened food neophobia as they age. The results of the variance analysis performed on the extent of food neophobia and educational background of the respondents from both cities revealed that the more educated they are, the less food neophobia the respondents from Hatay tend to have while the more education they are, the more food neophobia the respondents from Gaziantep have. The results of the variance analysis performed on the extent of food neophobia and income of the respondents from both cities revealed no significant difference between food neophobia and income for the respondents from both cities. In the variance analysis conducted for Gaziantep, a significant difference was found between the "food neophobia" and "professions" in two items (I like foods of different cultures and I like to go to restaurants that serve foods of different cultures), and this difference was significant between "self-employment" and "student" participants in the Scheffe test, and that the self-employed respondents agreed more than students.

### Discussion and Conclusion

The demographic details of the respondents reveal that most of them from both cities are college graduates and civil servants, and that they have a low-to-mid level income. The respondents from both cities of gastronomy are highly interested in gastronomy tourism. The results of the t-test performed to see if the interest of the respondents in gastronomy tourism differs based on demographics revealed no significant difference between their interest in gastronomy tourism and the city they reside in, their gender and marital status. Performed on the correlation between the interest of the respondents in gastronomy tourism and their age, educational background, income and occupation, the variance analysis revealed that those who agree with the statements "I am interested in what people from different cultures eat", "I like eating ethnic foods" and "I travel to taste dishes of different cultures" tend to be aged 21 to 30, hold a bachelor's and/or master's degree, and have an income of TRY 5001 and above, and work as a civil servant. The results suggest that the interest of young people starts with curiosity, carries on with travels and results in experiencing foods, and that the more educated they are, the more interested they become in gastronomy tourism.

The results of the analysis performed to determine the extent of food neophobia for the respondents revealed that the statement "if I don't know what is in a food, I won't try it" has the highest score for food neophobia of the respondents from both cities. The result of this study is compatible with the result of the study by Yiğit (2018). The past studies reported that the sociodemographic factors and frequency of being exposed to foods play a major role in one's food neophobia (Pliner, et al., 1993; Birch & Fischer 1998; Tuorila, et al., 2001; Flight, et al., 2003; Verbeke & Lopez, 2005; Olabi, et al., 2009; Meiselman, et al., 2010; Knaapila, et al., 2011). The results of this study corroborate the results of the past studies, too.

It was determined that the food neophobia level of the participants in both provinces was "neutral". Based on the characteristics of both cities, this suggests that people tend to have less food neophobia as a result of the impact of the urban life that exposes them to new foods more often (foods in urban areas are more diverse than foods in rural areas). In addition, it was revealed that most of the respondents travel to other cities or countries as a part of gastronomy tourism and they taste different dishes on their trips. Based on the results, one can argue that the people from both cities are willing to try new foods even if their scores turned out to be neutral.

Performed to see if there was any difference between food neophobia and marital status of the respondents, the t-test revealed no significant difference between the food neophobia and marital status of the respondents. Yigit (2018), on the other hand, reported a significant difference between food neophobia and marital status based on a t-test, and married respondents made the difference. In both cities male respondents agreed with the statement "I am very particular about the foods I will eat", more than female did. It was found out that male respondents have more food neophobia than female respondents from both cities. This result is consistent with the results of the studies that suggest male have more food neophobia than female (Ton Nu, et al., 1996; Hursti & Sjoden, 1997; Tuorila, et al., 2001; Kim, et al., 2009; Tornvall, 2014; Camarena, et al., 2011). On the other hand, Meiselman, et al., (2010) and Üzülmöz (2018) reported that food neophobia is more common among female. However, other studies by Pliner and Hobden (1992), Nordin, et al., (2004) Frank (2009), Fernandez-Ruiz, et al., (2013) Kaplan (2018), and Yigit (2018) reported significant differences in terms of gender. This shows that the effect of gender on food neophobia has yet to be evident.

Analyzing the correlation between food neophobia and income as a part of a literature review, some researchers (Flight et al., 2003, Backstrom et al., 2004, Olabi et al., 2009) reported that the higher the income is, the less food neophobia people tend to have, and that low-income respondents tend to prefer familiar foods more often. This study, on the other hand, reported no significant difference between food neophobia and income based on the results of the variance analysis. In a similar vein, Kaplan (2018) and Yiğit (2018) reported no significant difference between food neophobia and income. As a result of a one-way variance analysis, which was performed based on food neophobia and age, the advanced analyses on statements "I like foods from different cultures" and "I like to go to restaurants that serve foods from different cultures" revealed a difference between the respondents aged 21 to 30 and those aged 41 to 50, and that those aged 41 to 50 agreed with the aforementioned statements more on average. On the basis of this, it can be said that older respondents interest in different cultures more than young respondents. On the other hand, the results suggest that the middle-aged and older respondents from Hatay tend to have less food neophobia than young respondents. This indicates that food neophobia is higher in young people, and this fear decreases with age. Results mentioned above show consistency with the results of studies by Pliner and Hobden (1992), McFarlane

and Pliner (1997), Cooke and Wardle (2003), Dovey, et al., (2008) and Kaplan (2018). The respondents of Gaziantep aged 41 to 50 agreed with the statement "I am afraid of eating foods that I have not eaten before" more than the respondents of any other age group. The results point to the fact that middle-aged respondents from Gaziantep have a heightened food neophobia, which would further increase as they age. The results of this study are similar to the results of studies in literature such as by Raudenbush, et al., (1998), Tuorila, et al., (2001), Koivisto-Hursti, et al., (2002), Dovey, et al., (2008), Meiselman, et al., (2010), Camarena, et al., (2011) and D'Antuono and Bignami (2012). Many studies over food neophobia (Hursti and Sjoden, 1997; Tuorila, et al., 2001; Schickenberg, et al., 2006; Meiselman, et al., 2010; D'Antuono and Bignami, 2012; Yiğit, 2018) report that the more educated people are, the less food neophobia they tend to have. It was inferred from this study that the more educated the respondents in Hatay were, the less food neophobia they had while the more educated the respondents in Gaziantep were, the more food neophobia they had. The results that concern the respondents from Hatay corroborate the results of past studies by Hursti and Sjoden (1997), Tuorila, et al., (2001), Schickenberg, et al., (2006), Meiselman, et al., (2010), D'Antuono and Bignami (2012), and Yigit (2018). However, the results of the respondents from Gaziantep suggest the contrary compared to the past studies, and indicate that the less educated respondents are, the less food neophobia they tend to have. This shows that the effect of educational background on food neophobia has yet to be evident.

Fischler (1988) describes food neophobia as a suspected natural tendency toward new and unfamiliar foods that people avoid trying or dislike, and regards it as a tendency to seek and taste foods that are new, strange and untried. It is a fact that there is a rising trend in travels focused on gastronomy in today's world, and thus they are based on experiencing new foods. Food neophobia is a bias of individuals toward new and unfamiliar foods, and it is billed as a barrier that affects tasting local/ethnic foods and gastronomy tourism in general. Tourists with a tendency to have food neophobia prefer to consume foods that they are familiar with rather than those from a culture on their route. Food neophobia can adversely affect one's food choices. Stakeholders (local authorities, local people, business owners etc.) can play a decisive role in the growth of gastronomy tourism in any given destination. The attitude of local people toward tourism is a major determinant. This is because local people with a negative perspective on tourism are likely to undermine elements of tourism in many aspects. Therefore, this study is considered to guide local authorities and stakeholders who play a role in the growth of gastronomy tourism, and offer major inputs for marketing strategies. Training seminars, tasting courses, training courses on diet, free trials and competitions for those avoiding unfamiliar/new foods can lead to the formation of a new industry. Stakeholders should analyze how often food neophilic people travel, their favorite choice of destinations, and the correlation between their food neophilic tendencies and their age, gender, cultural and educational background and taste. Data they collect should be analyzed and interpreted well. This should help focusing on actions to be taken for the market of gastronomy tourism. This would also help cities of gastronomy develop and make gains in material and moral terms. In conclusion, the scope of this study, which is confined to the people of Gaziantep and Hatay as two UNESCO cities of gastronomy from the perspective of their food neophobia, can be expanded to cover other cities with the same or different (situational, behavioral, psychological) variables and different subjects. In addition, the same survey can be taken in different languages and filled out by domestic and international tourists visiting either city. On the other hand, this study is based on data collection by quantitative means, and causes of food neophobia can be analyzed in further detail based on data collection in qualitative research.

Although food neophobia is mainly neutral in both cities, as a result of detailed analyzes, it has been determined that in both cities people have a certain amount of food neophobia. Therefore, our recommendations on how people in both cities would overcome their fear of trying new food are as follows (Rozin,1988; Pliner, et al., 1993; Hendy & Raudenbush, 2000; Pliner & Salvy, 2006; Tanska, et al., 2017):

- Food neophobia often results from insufficient knowledge of new foods. Therefore, having sufficient information about new foods will give us confidence in new foods and increase our desire to try them.
- When we have food neophobia, we expect new foods to become unpalatable because our knowledge of the flavor and benefits of new foods is based solely on our own experience. In this case, exposure to and discovering delicious new foods will help us change our negative attitude towards new foods. Thus, our positive experience with new foods will help us generalize for other new foods, reducing our fear of trying new foods.
- The social impact, which has an important role in loving and consuming food, leads us to be influenced by the people around us and to try similar foods consumed by the people we affect. For these reasons, neophobic individuals may spend time with individuals who have a positive tendency to try new food and increase their frequency in social settings. This will alleviate their levels of food neophobia and even make them willing to try new food.

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