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The effect of popular culture on food and beverage consumption: The case of Generation Z¹

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ABSTRACT

Popular culture is a multifaceted phenomenon that affects individuals' daily life habits and consumption preferences. It is a culture that spreads through the media and influences people's lifestyles. Food and drink are important components of popular culture. It is important to learn how popular culture affects people's behavior and habits. This research examines the effects of popular culture on food and beverage consumption among Generation Z. In this respect, the study does not include other areas of popular culture. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of popular culture on the food and beverage consumption patterns of Generation Z individuals. The quantitative research method was used in the study. The survey method was used for data collection. The data on participants' demographic characteristics and their frequency of preference for popular-culture foods were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. T-tests and one-way analyses of variance were used to determine whether the reasons for participants' preferences for popular-culture foods differed by demographic characteristics. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on the scale used in the study using the AMOS 26 (Analysis of Moment Structures). According to the findings, more than half of the participants believe that popular culture influences food and beverage consumption. When participants' marital and professional status were compared, the reasons for choosing popular culture foods and beverages, the psychosocial impact dimension was statistically significant.

KEYWORDS

Popular culture, food and beverage consumption, Generation Z

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INTRODUCTION

Popular culture shapes individuals' daily lives not only through entertainment and media, but also directly through consumer culture (Çalışkan, 2022). Many popular culture elements, from music videos to television series, from social media phenomena to movie characters, promote certain types of food and brands, making them not just food but lifestyle indicators. Fast-food products, especially those from global chains such as McDonald's, KFC, and Starbucks, convey a sense of accessibility and social belonging to younger generations. As symbols of popular culture, these brands influence local cultures and, in some cases, even supplant local tastes (Watson, 1997; Ritzer, 2011). In this context, the impact of popular culture on consumption habits is not limited to individual preferences; intergenerational differences also shape it. People engage in eating and drinking, which are physiological needs essential to sustaining life. In the contemporary era, eating and drinking are not merely regarded as physiological necessities. People consume food and beverages to taste new flavors, spend time with friends, socialize, engage in leisure activities, and engage in novel experiences. In this context, the consumption of food and beverages can be evaluated from physiological, sensory, social, and cultural perspectives (Bekar & Kılıç, 2014; Ayaz & Yalı, 2017). Food and beverages are seen as an important source of supply for tourism destinations. As a source of supply, food and beverages are a significant indicator of a destination's socio-cultural structure. Also, it constitutes a significant draw for the destination (Çalışkan, 2013; Nebioğlu, 2017). Food and beverage consumption is one of the most concrete reflections of social culture (Fatimah, Syafrini, Wasino, & Zainul, 2021; Bekar, Yozukmaz, & Karakulak, 2021). Generational differences influence individuals' lifestyles, attitudes, and food and beverage preferences. Generation X is typically characterized as hardworking, resourceful, business-oriented, and fun-loving, with a tendency toward high brand loyalty. Generation Z individuals are quality-conscious, open to innovation, interested in different cultures, and have low brand loyalty (Keleş, 2011; Berkup, 2014). Consequently, there is likely to be variation in food and beverage preferences across generations.

In the literature, studies have been conducted to determine the eating behavior of generations X and Z (Kılıçlar, Bozkurt, Sarıkaya, & Şahin, 2021), the effect of local food presentations on generation Z individuals (Taşkesen, 2023), the effect of generation Z's eating motivation on revisit intention (Genç, Metin, & Genç, 2023), the factors affecting the eating habits of generation Z (Dilber & Dilber, 2021), the attitudes of generation Z towards gastronomy tourism (Kahvecioğlu, Bekar, & Kılıç, 2019), and the effect of popular culture on food-related behaviors (Bekar, Yozukmaz, & Karakulak, 2021). As evidenced by the studies, research on generations is common. Similarly, research on culture and food has been conducted. Parasecoli (2013) examines the relationship among food, culture, and popular culture. Gunkel (2016) explains the connection between popular culture and food in his study of food and culture. Studies on generations, culture, and popular culture are found in the literature reviewed. However, few studies include Generation Z individuals in their research. So this situation represents a gap in the literature.

These consumption habits, shaped particularly by the dynamics of popular culture, including media, advertising, and social trends, exert broad influence, ranging from individual preferences to social rituals (Bahçecioğlu, 2023). However, the multilayered structure of popular culture makes it difficult to examine its impact on food and beverage consumption independently of other cultural elements. This study aims to systematically analyze the mechanisms underlying this effect and the new consumption trends it has created by focusing on the transformative role of popular culture, particularly in shaping food and beverage preferences. The scope of the research is limited to the reflections of popular culture on gastronomic habits. It aims to contribute to the understanding of the culture-consumption relationship in social change processes. As a result, this study has an original value from this perspective. In this context, this study aims to assess the impact of popular culture on food and beverage consumption among Generation Z individuals.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Culture is one of the most significant factors that differentiates societies. The way of life, identities, local foods, cuisines, rituals, values, and local dishes of societies constitute a part of

culture. Developments in information technology have shaped new lifestyles and consumption habits. The advent of social media has led to notable shifts in food and beverage consumption patterns, particularly within the contemporary consumer landscape. The advent of popular culture has given rise to novel and distinctive eating and drinking habits (Anderson, 2014; Öztürk & İspir, 2021). In the contemporary era, popular culture is characterized by constant flux and evolution. In essence, popular culture strives to continually innovate for consumers and maintain its popularity (Karaduman, 2017). It is also generally defined as the culture of daily life (Oktay, 2002).

Popular culture is defined by Storey (2021) as “cultural productions that spread through mass media and transform daily life practices”. In the context of food, Parasecoli (2017) emphasizes that culinary trends that go viral on digital platforms and standardize global consumption habits are explicitly discussed. In particular, the interaction of Generation Z with these trends was analyzed in the light of Bourdieu’s (1979) concept of cultural capital. Food preferences visible on social media play a role in shaping individuals’ social status (Abidin, 2018). This strengthens the position of popular culture foods within the experience economy, as opposed to traditional culture (Pine & Gilmore, 2019).

This shows that popular foods are no longer merely objects of consumption but have also become tools for building individuals’ social and cultural capital. Popular foods are now consumed not only for their taste or nutritional value, but also for their social significance. These foods serve functions beyond meeting people’s food needs; they also create identity, foster a sense of belonging to a group, and enhance visibility on social media (Bourdieu, 1987; Abidin, 2018). The most striking examples of this can be seen on social media platforms: For example, foods such as ‘dalgona coffee’ and ‘ramen burger’, which are popular on TikTok, not only offer beautiful images but also become ways for people to express themselves (Mejova, Abbar, & Haddadi, 2016). Consuming these types of foods reflects people’s desire to follow trends, to be visible on social media, and to stand out through creative sharing. Therefore, popular foods can be considered not only as food but also as a means of cultural communication (Zukin, 2008; Abidin, 2018).

This new status of food reveals a paradigm shift in consumption practices. Food shared on digital platforms within popular culture functions as a form of cultural capital, particularly among younger generations. Consuming a particular trending food and sharing it on social media has become one way individuals demonstrate their cultural currents and social affiliation (LeBesco & Naccarato, 2008). In this process, the consumer “consumes” not only the food but also the lifestyle and social position it represents. Thus, food becomes a carrier of meaning and part of a digital identity strategy (Sasahara, 2019). This situation reveals how multi-layered the impact of popular culture on daily life is; it shows that consumption should be considered not only in its material but also in its symbolic and social aspects (Ritzer, 2011; Johnston & Goodman, 2015).

These multilayered consumption practices enable individuals, particularly Generation Z, to develop a distinct identity. Furthermore, popular culture exhibits generational differences (Özdemir, 2019). Generations are typically classified into five categories: the Silent Generation, the Baby Boomer Generation, Generation X, Generation Y, and Generation Z. Generation Z is also referred to as the technological or internet generation (Levickaite, 2010). Generation Z individuals exhibit distinctive characteristics, including creativity, a proclivity for exploring innovations, openness to new ideas, and a more nuanced relationship with diverse sociological groups than those of other generations (Aydın & Başol 2014). It can be posited that Generation Z individuals may be more inclined to engage with and investigate diverse culinary traditions than other generations due to the aforementioned characteristics. In a study by Kılıçlar, Bozkurt, Sarıkaya, and Şahin (2021), the impact of social media on the dietary habits of Generation X and Generation Z individuals was investigated. The findings revealed notable differences in dietary patterns between the two generations with respect to social media use.

In alignment with this conceptual framework, the research questions are presented as follows:

1. How often are popular foods and drinks consumed?
2. How does widespread culture influence Gen Z’s food and beverage consumption?

3. Do the factors affecting the preference for popular food and beverages differ according to the demographic characteristics of the participants?

The research questions were formulated within this framework. The findings obtained in this direction are presented in the conclusion section.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed quantitative research methodology. The study population comprises Generation Z individuals residing in the provinces of Muğla, Bartın, and Aksaray. Muğla, Bartın, and Aksaray provinces were selected as the study population because the researchers reside in these provinces and the study sample could be more easily reached.

Additionally, the provinces of Muğla, Bartın, and Aksaray were selected to ensure representativeness across sociocultural and demographic variables. Neuman (2014) emphasizes the importance of representing the population's social diversity in sample selection. The mentioned provinces, located in different geographical regions (Aegean, Black Sea, and Central Anatolia), reflect Türkiye's regional diversity.

The research sample comprises Generation Z consumers of popular-culture foods who were selected from these provinces via convenience sampling and volunteered to participate in the study. A three-part questionnaire was used for data collection. The initial section of the questionnaire sought to ascertain the reasons for individuals' preferences for popular-culture foods. The subsequent section questioned the frequency of consumption of these foods. Finally, questions were included to determine the demographic characteristics of the individuals surveyed. The statements were evaluated using a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 representing "Strongly Disagree" and 5 representing "Strongly Agree." To ascertain the reasons individuals prefer popular-culture foods, a 15-item scale, previously used by Bekar, Yozukmaz, and Karakulak (2021) and shown to be valid and reliable, was employed. The data for the study were collected via an online survey. The researchers distributed the prepared questionnaire to Generation Z individuals online. A total of 430 questionnaires were distributed for analysis. Thirteen questionnaires were identified as having been completed without being read and were therefore excluded from the dataset. Consequently, the analysis phase proceeded with the remaining 417 questionnaires. Data on participants' demographic characteristics and the frequency of popular-culture food preferences were analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages. A t-test and one-way analysis of variance were used to determine whether the reasons participants preferred popular-culture foods differed by demographic characteristics. Then, using AMOS 26 (Analysis of Moment Structures), a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the scale used in the study.

The scale used in the study was validated using confirmatory factor analysis. Moreover, although it is preferable for standardized factor loadings on the measured constructs to be at least 0.70 (Hair et al., 2017), values of 0.50 or above (Hair et al., 2013) are also acceptable. As shown in Table 1, the standardized factor loadings for each scale variable range from 0.554 (PI 1) to 0.954 (PI 3). Additionally, the t-value (≥ 2.58) of each item is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$) (Byrne, 2016; Kline, 2016; Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, for a scale to be considered reliable, Cronbach's alpha should exceed 0.70. The total reliability coefficient of the scale utilized in this study was 0.86. represents one of the most significant factors that distinguishes a society from others. The way of life, identities, local foods, cuisines, rituals, values, and local dishes of societies constitute.

Table 1.
Result of Measurement Model (Source: Own research)

Construct	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Factor loading	t-Value	p-value	AVE	CR	CA
Product features							0,58	0,87	0,87
	PF1	4,048	0,994	0,759	fixed*	***			
	PF2	3,755	1,008	0,754	15,242	***			
	PF3	3,913	0,993	0,699	14,042	***			
	PF4	3,829	0,998	0,834	16,929	***			
	PF5	3,731	1,094	0,783	15,874	***			
Affordability							0,55	0,78	0,78
	A1	4,019	1,069	0,779	fixed*	***			
	A2	4,182	1,016	0,735	12,796	***			
	A3	4,036	1,083	0,718	12,628	***			
Psychosocial impacts							0,72	0,91	0,90
	PI1	3,628	1,208	0,554	fixed*	***			
	PI2	3,330	1,480	0,887	12,557	***			
	PI3	3,158	1,475	0,954	12,981	***			
	PI4	3,170	1,474	0,952	12,971	***			
Spatial features							0,53	0,77	0,77
	SF1	3,558	1,213	0,664	fixed*	***			
	SF2	3,738	1,112	0,738	12,839	***			
	SF3	3,561	1,137	0,791	11,956	***			

(*) The indicator was fixed at 1 (***) $p < 0,001$

AVE: Average variance extracted; **CR:** Composite / construct reliability; **CA:** Cronbach Alpha
 χ^2 : 254,737 **df:** 84 χ^2/df : 3,033 **CFI= 0,952 NFI= 0,930 TLI= 0,939 RMSEA= 0,070**

Upon examination of the goodness of fit values ($\chi^2=254,737$; $d.f.=84$; $\chi^2/d.f.=3.033$; $CFI=0.952$; $NFI=0.930$; $TLI=0.939$; $RMSEA=0.070$) resulting from confirmatory factor analysis, it is evident that they fall within the acceptable range of goodness of fit values (Hair et al., 2009).

FINDINGS

Table 2 presents the demographic characteristics of the participants. It is noteworthy that over half of the participants in the study were female (63%), single (88%), and held either an associate or bachelor's degree (65%). Additionally, the majority of participants were from middle-income backgrounds (61%) and resided in urban centers (64%).

Table 2.
Demographic Findings (n=417) (Source: Own research)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	263	63,1
	Male	154	36,9
Marital Status	Single	368	88,2
	Married	49	11,8
Educational Level	Secondary education	17	4,1
	High school	113	27,1
	Associate / Bachelor	273	65,5
	Master's / PhD degree	14	3,4
Occupation	Student	272	65,2
	Government sector Employee	16	3,8
	Private sector	85	20,4
	Unemployed	44	10,6
Average Monthly Income Level	Very low	37	8,9
	Low	63	15,1
	Middle	255	61,2
	High	52	12,4
	Very high	10	2,4
Where are you staying?	Private dormitory	13	3,1
	State dormitory	146	35,0
	Alone at home	62	14,9
	With my family	196	47,0
Where are you living now?	City center	270	64,7
	District	91	21,8
	Village / town	56	13,5

Table 3 presents the frequency with which participants expressed a preference for popular cultural foods. Notably, participants reported never consuming sushi (63%), tacos (43%), hot dogs (38%), or noodles (31%) among popular foods. It was found that participants consumed salad-type foods such as chicken, avocado, and vegan options (14%) and wraps (10%) daily. It is evident that the participants consume pasta and wraps most frequently, several times per week.

Table 3.
The Frequency of Respondents' Expressed Preference for Popular Culture Foods (Source: Own research)

Popular food and beverages	Every day	Several times a week	Once a week	1-2 times a month	Once a year	Never
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Taco	2,4	3,1	6,0	18,9	25,7	43,9
Burger	2,9	10,3	15,3	45,6	21,1	4,8
Pizza	4,3	9,6	10,1	50,1	23,0	2,9
Salad (chicken, avocado, vegan, etc.)	14,9	29,7	12,5	20,1	10,8	12,0
Hot Dog	2,2	6,7	6,5	20,6	25,9	38,1
Noodle	6,0	15,1	10,1	20,6	16,8	31,4
Pasta (pasta with vegetables, spaghetti, etc.)	6,7	38,1	21,8	26,1	4,8	2,4
Wrap	10,1	29,0	20,6	30,2	7,4	2,6
Sushi	1,9	2,9	3,1	7,4	21,1	63,5
Fried chicken	3,8	13,7	11,5	39,6	22,8	8,6
Waffle, donut, croissant, macaron	4,1	12,7	11,8	37,9	25,2	8,4
Tiramisu, profiterole, supangle, etc.	5,0	12,5	14,9	42,4	18,9	6,2
Frozen, smoothie, freppe, etc.	3,8	13,2	11,5	31,2	21,1	19,2

It is observed that the participants consume pasta (38%), a popular cultural food, several times per week. It was determined that most participants (31%) consume popular-culture drinks, such as frozen drinks and smoothies, 1-2 times per month.

The participants were asked, "How influential is popular culture in your food and beverage consumption?" The responses are presented in Figure 1.

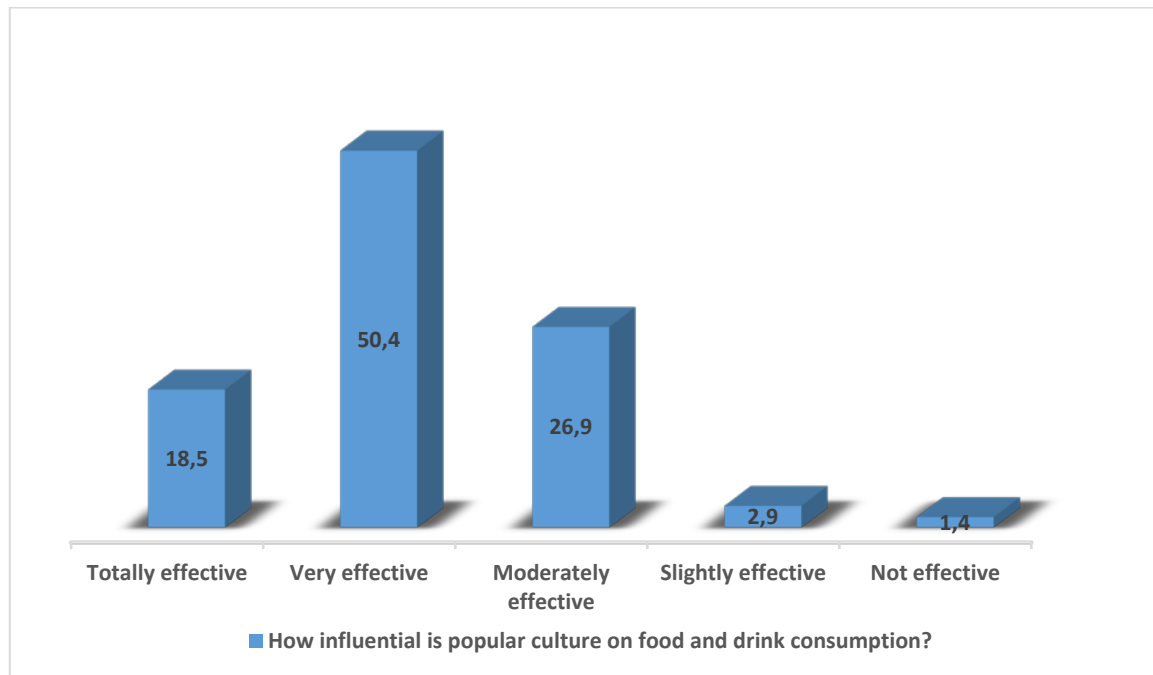


Figure 1. The Participants' Responses Regarding the Impact of Popular Culture on Their Food and Beverage Consumption (Source: Own research)

While 1.4% of respondents reported that popular culture did not influence their food and beverage consumption, 18.5% reported that it was very influential. The proportion of respondents who consider popular culture to be less influential is 2.9%. The proportion of those who consider it to be moderately influential is 26.9%, while the proportion of those who consider it to be very influential is 50.4%. Consequently, over half of the participants indicated that popular culture is an effective influence on food and beverage consumption.

Table 4 presents a comparison of the reasons for preferring popular-culture food and beverages, stratified by participants' demographic characteristics. While there is no statistically significant difference in the reasons for the preference of popular culture food and beverages according to gender, it can be posited that male participants are more influenced by popular culture than female participants in terms of affordability, psychosocial impact, and spatial feature factors, respectively ($p > 0.05$). A comparative analysis of the effect of marital status on consumers' reasons for preferring popular food and beverages reveals that married respondents report higher mean values than single respondents. The mean value for the factor of being affected by psychosocial effects was 3.27 ± 1.26 for single participants and 3.65 ± 1.04 for married participants. These findings are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). While product features, affordability, and spatial features exhibit higher mean values among married respondents, the observed difference between the groups is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

As shown in Table 4, respondents with a high school education had the highest mean values for product features and affordability factors. With regard to the spatial feature factor, it is noteworthy that the mean values for the participant group with an associate or bachelor's degree are the lowest observed. The difference was statistically significant with respect to the psychosocial impact factor. To ascertain which groups exhibited the discrepancy, a Tukey test was conducted. As a result of the Tukey test, there is a difference between participants who graduated from high school or equivalent schools and those who graduated with associate or bachelor's degrees.

With regard to the product features factor, the mean values for the unemployed and private-sector employees are higher than those for the other groups. Therefore, the difference in product features is statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Nevertheless, despite the significant difference identified, it remained unclear which groups were responsible for this discrepancy. Concerning the psychosocial impact factor, the student participants exhibited the lowest mean score. With respect to affordability and spatial characteristics, no statistically significant differences were observed ($p > 0.05$). However, the non-working participant group exhibited the highest average for both factors.

An examination of whether the reasons participants prefer popular food and beverages differ by income level reveals no statistically significant differences ($p > 0.05$). However, participants with very high income levels exhibit the highest average ratings for affordability, product features, spatial features, and the psychosocial impact factor, respectively. Regarding the psychosocial impact factor, the findings indicated that participants in the low-income group had the lowest average score compared with other groups.

The data indicate that participants residing in private dormitories exhibit the highest mean values across all factors. While the averages for participants residing in private dormitories are higher across all factors, the observed difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$). The groups with the highest averages were individuals residing in the village/town, city center, and district, respectively. While the village/town participant group exhibits the highest average on the affordability factor, the observed difference is not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4.
The Comparison of the Reasons for Preference of Popular Culture Food and Beverages in Terms of Participants' Demographic Characteristics (Source: Own research)

Item	Product features		Affordability		Psychosocial impacts		Spatial features		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Gender	Female	3.87	0.85	4.05	0.88	3.27	1.24	3.56	1.01
	Male	3.82	0.80	4.11	0.88	3.40	1.24	3.71	0.85
	Test value	0.653**		-0.665**		-1.051**		-1.583**	
	p	0.514		0.506		0.294		0.114	
Marital Status	Single	3.83	0.81	4.07	0.89	3.27	1.26	3.61	0.93
	Married	4.03	0.94	4.12	0.81	3.65	1.04	3.63	1.11
	Test value	-1.586**		-0.364**		-2.327**		-0.090**	
	p	0.113		0.716		0.023*		0.929	
Educational Level	Secondary education (1)	3.74	0.83	3.78	0.80	3.66	1.18	3.80	0.85
	High school (2)	4.01	0.80	4.17	0.86	3.57	1.18	3.66	0.99
	Associate/ Bachelor (3)	3.80	0.83	4.06	0.89	3.18	1.26	3.58	0.94
	Master / PhD degree (4)	3.77	0.94	3.83	0.90	3.53	1.18	3.69	0.99
	Test value	2.000***		1.493***		3.305***		0.425***	
	p	0.113		0.216		0.020*		0.736	
	Tukey	-		-		2>3		-	
Occupation	Student (1)	3.79	0.81	4.06	0.87	3.20	1.24	3.61	0.93
	Government sector employee (2)	3.53	0.85	3.87	0.86	3.64	1.16	3.54	0.61
	Private sector (3)	3.97	0.90	4.05	1.00	3.45	1.26	3.58	1.06
	Unemployed (4)	4.12	0.73	4.30	0.65	3.65	1.16	3.74	1.02
	Test value	3.442***		1.278***		2.499***		0.323***	
	p	0.017*		0.281		0.059		0.809	
	Tukey	4>2		-		-		-	
Average Monthly Income Level	Very low	4.04	0.79	4.15	0.87	3.52	1.19	3.63	1.11
	Low	3.78	0.89	4.14	0.80	3.05	1.36	3.66	0.93
	Middle	3.81	0.81	4.00	0.93	3.31	1.21	3.56	0.95
	High	3.95	0.85	4.23	0.77	3.44	1.25	3.75	0.94
	Very high	4.14	0.77	4.40	0.64	3.82	1.24	3.93	0.69
	Test value	1.237***		1.334***		1.522***		0.718***	
	p	0.294		0.257		0.195		0.580	
Tukey	-		-		-		-		
Where are you staying?	Private dormitory	4.20	0.69	4.43	0.55	3.53	1.32	3.84	0.98
	State dormitory	3.83	0.83	4.07	0.88	3.17	1.27	3.62	0.95
	Alone at home	3.73	0.95	4.15	0.89	3.48	1.29	3.65	1.03
	With my family	3.88	0.79	4.03	0.88	3.36	1.20	3.59	0.93
	Test value	1.416***		0.994***		1.181***		0.327***	
	p	0.238		0.395		0.317		0.807	
Tukey	-		-		-		-		
Where are you living now?	City center(1)	3.78	0.88	4.08	0.86	3.28	1.26	3.59	1.00
	District(2)	3.99	0.72	4.03	0.88	3.17	1.26	3.54	0.92
	Village / town(3)	3.96	0.68	4.12	0.99	3.72	1.07	3.88	0.71
	Test value	2.720***		0.183***		3.689***		2.498***	
	p	0.067		0.833		0.026*		0.084	
Tukey	-		-		3>1>2		-		

*p<0.05, ** Independent samples t-test, ***One-way ANOVA

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSIONS

Popular culture is a multidimensional social phenomenon with a wide-ranging impact on individuals, from their daily practices to their consumption habits. The objective of this research is to ascertain the reasons for Generation Z individuals' preference for popular-culture foods. Additionally, the objective is to determine the frequency with which individuals express a preference for popular-culture foods. Three research questions were formulated within this context. The study data were collected from 430 Generation Z individuals residing in three provinces in Türkiye. It was found that popular culture influences the food and beverage preferences of Generation Z individuals. The scope of the study encompasses the food-and-beverage aspects of popular culture. It does not include other aspects of popular culture, such as entertainment, fashion, or art.

The study's findings are consistent with those of other studies in the literature on popular culture and Generation Z. The finding that Generation Z individuals are strongly influenced by popular culture in their food and beverage consumption parallels Bekar et al.'s (2021) study. In addition, Pavelkova et al. (2023) found that Generation Z individuals tend to prefer luxury brands for ostentatious consumption and to follow social media accounts for food shopping. It has been observed that individuals' exposure to advertisements for popular-culture food and beverages, such as fast food and desserts, on social media increases their likelihood of consuming these products (Wu, Kepms, and Prichard, 2024). In their study, Pleno et al. (2025) found that Generation Z individuals prioritize fresh, nutritious foods for health and nutrition. Additionally, Generation Z individuals appear to be the most likely to order food and beverages online after clothing. They are particularly known for using online food ordering platforms for fast food, takeout, and ready-made meals (Simangunsong, 2018).

Theoretical Contributions

As popular culture influences human life in many ways, it also shapes food and beverage behaviors to a great extent (Bekar, Yozukmaz, & Karakulak, 2021). The study was conducted with a sample size of 430 participants. The majority of the participants were female, single, and had obtained either an associate's or a bachelor's degree. It was established that more than half of the participants had a median monthly income in the intermediate range and resided in the urban core. It is noteworthy that the majority of the participants never consume sushi, which is a popular cultural food, and prefer pizza 1-2 times a month. The findings indicated a preference for pasta and wraps among the participants, with consumption occurring several times a week. Furthermore, the study found that more than half of the participants identified popular culture as a significant determinant of their food and beverage preferences. These findings, consistent with Bourdieu's (1987) theory of cultural capital, suggest that popular food preferences function as a means of social differentiation in Generation Z. The high psychosocial impact observed, particularly in high school graduates, points to the transformation of habitus in the digital age.

A closer examination of the demographic characteristics associated with the preference for popular-culture foods reveals that gender and marital status are associated with higher mean levels of the economic factor. At the mean monthly income level, respondents in the very high-income group exhibit greater involvement across all factors. Psychosocial impact differed significantly by participants' educational level. This difference was observed between high school and equivalent school graduates and between associate- or bachelor's-degree graduates. Therefore, psychosocial factors are important in the preference for popular-culture foods.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical recommendations for the food industry and food and beverage businesses. One of the key findings of the study is that more than half of Generation Z members are strongly influenced by popular culture. Restaurant chains and food manufacturers need to develop digitally focused strategies with this in mind. Food and beverage businesses can reach Generation Z consumers more effectively by designing interactive campaigns and creating visually appealing presentations, particularly on social media platforms such as Instagram and TikTok. In the context of public health policies, it is critical that the Ministry

of Health and local governments develop digital food-literacy programs. Social media campaigns should be launched to target young people and to warn them about the risks of high-calorie, additive-laden foods in popular culture.

For educational institutions, it is recommended that university cafeterias and dining halls develop generation-focused menu engineering practices. Nutritional alternatives should be added to the pasta and wrap varieties that students consume several times a week. Furthermore, sharing sustainability data, such as the carbon footprint of popular foods, on menus can be an effective way to raise environmental awareness among young consumers. These practices will ensure the practical application of the study's findings and serve as a guide for industry stakeholders.

Limitations and Needs for Further Studies

As in many studies, this study has limitations that suggest directions for future research. The principal limitation of the study is that it was conducted exclusively among individuals in Generation Z. In future studies, the effects of popular culture on food and beverage consumption across generations can be examined comparatively. It is undeniable that popular culture has had, and will continue to have, a significant impact on our food and beverage consumption. In this regard, companies must update their menus to avoid losing their competitive advantage. On the other hand, this study examined only the impact of popular culture and its foods and beverages. The impact on traditional culture and the preference for its food and drink can also be measured and compared.

The data of this study were collected online. The study sample comprises Generation Z individuals. Future research could examine behavioral variables, such as the impact of reasons for choosing popular-culture foods on satisfaction and intention to revisit. In addition, the relationship between social media and popular culture warrants further research, as food and beverages can be promoted and popularized through social media. Finally, comparisons across cultures can be conducted in future research. How popular culture influences food and beverage preferences across cultures can be revealed.

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