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# The role of gastronomy criteria in tourists' accommodation experience: an evaluation using the Analytic Hierarchy Process method

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***ABSTRACT***

*Gastronomy is important in touristic mobility. The study has been wondered which criteria, along with gastronomy, are effective in the accommodation experience of tourists and to what extent gastronomy is effective. So this study aimed to investigate the degree of impact of the criteria that constitute the accommodation experience on tourists' accommodation experiences and reveal the effect of gastronomy criteria. The criteria that make up tourists' accommodation experiences have been determined in line with opinions of field experts, the relevant literature and hotel review sites where tourists can share their experiences with the hotels they have stayed in and evaluate the hotel establishments based on these experiences. These criteria were determined to be gastronomy, location, room, sports and entertainment services, staff, cleanliness, and general services. To assess the impact levels of the criteria within the scope of the Analytic Hierarchy Process, a 9-point scale (1 was the lowest, 9 was the highest) allowing each component to be compared with other criteria was created. The geometric mean values of the criteria assessed by tourists (participants) staying in 5-star hotels in Alanya were calculated and their level of impact on the accommodation experience was determined. The results of the study showed that gastronomy with the sports and entertainment services offered by the establishment and the location of the establishment was among the top three criteria with the highest impact level among the seven criteria that affect tourists' accommodation experience in the destination of Alanya.*

## 1. Introduction

Touristic experience includes journeys to different tourist destinations (Lin et al., 2019) and the activities performed in these destinations during the travel. Tourists' expectations before traveling to a tourist destination, their experiences during their travel, and the traces left by these visits constitute the tourist experience (Larsen, 2007). Accommodation experiences are one of the important components of tourists' experiences. Criteria such as gastronomy, location, room, sports and entertainment services, staff, cleanliness, and general services specific to accommodation establishments affect tourists' accommodation experiences (Berezina et al. 2016: Cordova-Buiza et al., 2021; Mak et al., 2012; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Pekovic et al. 2019: Quan & Wang, 2004). Although gastronomy is a secondary accommodation motivation for these tourists considering the characteristics of the tourist profiles visiting a destination dominated by mass tourism (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012), improving the gastronomy facilities of the hotel establishments considering the expectations of the guests can increase customer satisfaction, their decisions to return to the destination a second time, and the revenues of the destination and hotel establishments (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2021; Mak et al., 2012; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004). Pekovic et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of the impact on tourists' satisfaction with the equipment of the team providing entertainment services in hotel businesses. Hamrouni and Touzi (2011) stated that tourists leaned toward activities that can develop adrenaline, excitement, fear, joy, and happiness in the tourist experience. According to Berezina et al. (2016), the hotel staff is one of the criteria that affect tourists' satisfaction. The characteristics of the staff such as their technical knowledge, communication skills, and physical appearance can have an impact on tourists' accommodation experiences.

There have been significant changes in the supply and demand in the tourism sector in the early years of the twenty-first century due to factors such as low-cost airlines and the widespread use of the internet, as well as the desire of people to make shorter and more frequent trips to new and exotic destinations. In this context, tourists have been increasingly motivated by new and different experiences

***Research Paper***

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(López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). In particular, food specific to different cultures often has emotional meanings for tourists and can be one of the important subcomponents of the accommodation experience (Mitchell & Hall, 2003). Culinary identity and sensory experiences impact tourists' experiences and perceptions (Recuero-Virto & Arróspide, 2024). For tourist destinations, providing convincing food experiences has become a significant concern (Yang et al., 2024). Gastronomy, which has a historical characteristic and can be defined in various ways, is also seen as a concept reflecting the cultural structures of societies in terms of the content of food and beverages (Harrington, 2005). Accordingly, it can be argued that gastronomy determines the effects of food and beverage consumption on history, culture, and environment within the context of how, where, when, and why they are consumed (Santich, 2004). Gastronomy can be a primary motivator for tourists who travel to learn about and experience the culinary culture of a region (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012; Nicoletti et al., 2019) and a secondary motivator for those for whom local cuisine plays an important role in their travel decisions but who do not make travel decisions solely based on this (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). Müller et al. (2022) stated that Croatian gastronomy could be a secondary motivator for Hungarian tourists visiting Croatia. Food consumption, an important source of revenue for destinations, is also an important part of tourist' accommodation experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004). Mak et al. (2012) examined the factors affecting tourists' food consumption in general terms under the dimensions of culture and belief values, sociodemographic characteristics, and motivational factors. Emphasizing the importance of food consumption in tourist motivation typology, they reported that food types in the destination were also one of the motivational factors and played an important role in tourists' tendency to revisit the destination. Studies have (Mak et al., 2012).

Based on the literature review on gastronomy, there are gaps in the context of academic studies in this field, which has an important place as a tourist product, as Scarpato (2001) stated. It is seen that studies on the general tourism experience (Chen et al., 2017; Kim & Thapa, 2018) and tourists' accommodation experiences have been conducted. The present study aimed to investigate the degree of impact of the criteria that constitute the accommodation experience on tourists' accommodation experiences and to reveal the impact of gastronomy criteria. This study is thought to contribute to the relevant literature and the tourism sector.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Today, the rapidly changing and increasingly competitive tourism sector offers tourists various alternatives. Gastronomy tourism can be one of the important attraction factors for touristic destinations with the unique gastronomy experience opportunity that it offers to tourists (Kivela & Crotts, 2006). It is also seen as one of the sustainable tourism resources that offer the opportunity to use local products as touristic products and support local producers and the local economy (Kyriakaki et al., 2016). For example, olive oil tourism is regarded as one of the most promising approaches to increasing sustainability in many rural areas of Europe (Pato, 2024). Coastal gastronomy is an alternative that strengthens and promotes the sustainability of emerging destinations (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). Gastronomy, which contributes significantly to the sustainability and development of tourist destinations (Galvez et al., 2017; Jiménez Beltrán et al., 2016; Rinaldi, 2017), can be an important motivational factor especially for tourists who travel to gain gastronomic experience (local resources and gastronomy routes) (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012; Nistor & Dezsi, 2022) and can form an important part of accommodation experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004). Tourism contributes to the preservation and sustainability of local cuisines (Uyar, 2023). Healthy eating opportunities can be offered to individuals and environmentally friendly food production activities can be supported through sustainable gastronomy (Scarpato, 2002).

Food and beverage revenues constitute an important part of the tourism revenues of tourism businesses and destinations (Mak et al., 2012) because food and beverage experiences and the places where tourists consume these foods and beverages constitute an important part of tourist experiences (Richards, 2001). Gastronomic consumption, which creates a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in tourists, is one of the factors forming the accommodation experience and contributes to increasing the level of satisfaction (Quan & Wang, 2004). In this context, gastronomy tourism is both an important attraction factor and an important source of income for destinations, and it has an impact on tourists' accommodation decisions. Tourists' accommodation experiences in this context, however, may have both a positive and negative impact on the accommodation decisions of potential tourists.

The use of gastronomic traditions and resources depends on the demands of new and richer customers (Hjalager, 2001). Thus, gastronomy products and presentation styles can vary according to customer perceptions and form a part of customer experiences. In this context, gastronomy is important for destination tourism. Studies on the factors affecting destination image categorize gastronomy under the culture, history, and art dimension; restaurants, nightclubs, and discos are categorized under the touristic infrastructure dimension (Beerli & Martin, 2004). Buhalis (2000) summarized the skeletal structure of a destination in six dimensions, categorizing food and beverage facilities as one of the subdimensions (Buhalis, 2000). Therefore, considering destination image as one of the factors that significantly affect tourists' decisions on accommodation, gastronomy has a significant impact on tourists' experiences and decisions. Accordingly, gastronomy as a tourism activity is an important source of income,

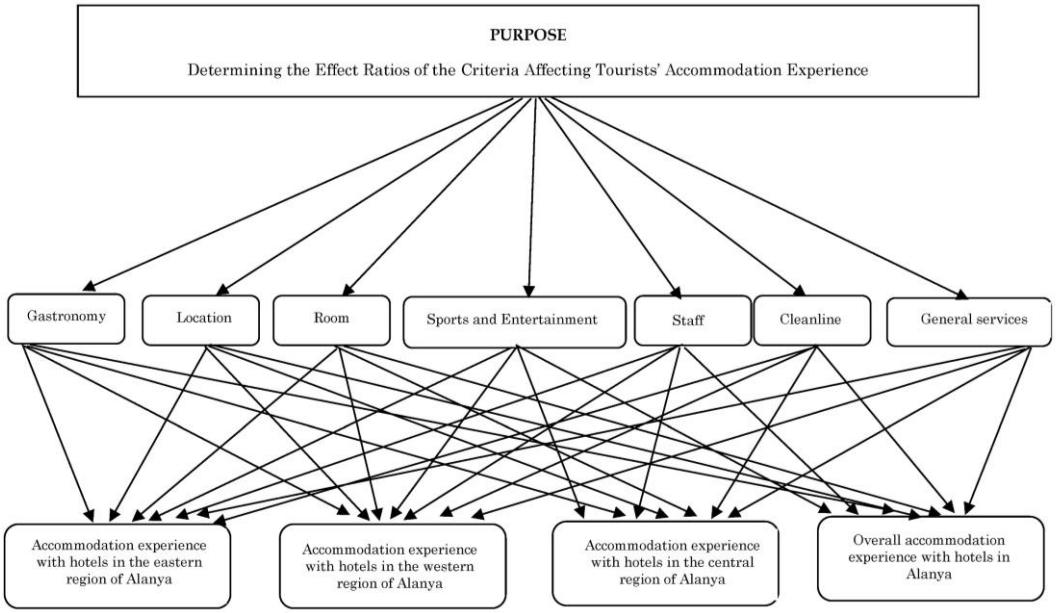


**Figure 1: Hierarchical Structure of the Study**

*Source: Created by the authors.*

promotion, advertising, and marketing. The rapidly growing media and internet networks that have spread over much of the world in recent years offer potential tourists a wide range of information about accommodation destinations. Therefore, the internet can be an influential tourism marketing tool for consumers who seek new gastronomic experiences (Fields, 2001). In the tourism sector, where the internet is used as an important tool of social media, tourists have the opportunity to share their opinions in the context of satisfaction, dissatisfaction, expectations, requests, and complaints about the hotel businesses they have stayed in and their evaluations about the business with other tourists through hotel review websites (Luo et al., 2004). These websites provide information to tourists who are planning a trip about the destination, the hotel establishment where they want to stay, and the activities they can do during their accommodation and form a part of social media (Miguéns et al., 2008). Visitors' perceptions of touristic destinations can be analyzed through these sites (Teles et al., 2024).

## 3. Methods

This study aimed to investigate the degree of impact of the criteria that constitute the accommodation experience on tourists' accommodation experiences the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) and reveal the effect of gastronomy criteria. AHP was used to analyze the research data. AHP is one of the basic approaches among multicriteria decision-making methods frequently used in solving complex decision problems. In this method, alternatives are ranked and selected according to their importance by calculating the weights of each of the criteria affecting these alternatives and comparing them with each other (Saaty & Vargas, 2001). Based on their preferences, decision-makers determine the degree of importance of each criterion (Anderson et al., 2000). The

**Table 1: Main Criteria and Content**

| Codes | Criteria | Content |
|---|---|---|
| C1 | Gastronomy | Atmosphere and decoration of restaurants and dining areas; quality of food and beverages; general cleanliness of restaurants, dining areas, food, and beverages |
| C2 | Location | Distance of the hotel to the airport, city center, and sea |
| C3 | Room | Physical conditions of the room, cleanliness, usage area, atmosphere, and decoration |
| C4 | Sports and entertainment services | Sports and leisure facilities and activity areas |
| C5 | Staff | Communication and professional knowledge |
| C6 | Cleaning | Cleaning, hygiene, and sanitation of tools and equipment offered to guests in public and private areas |
| C7 | General services | Free Wi-Fi, free babysitting service, welcome products offered once for each guest in the rooms, free use of public areas and other facilities |

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

hierarchical structure of the research was first created in line with the purpose and criteria of the study.

The criteria that make up tourists' accommodation experiences have been determined in line with opinions of field experts, the relevant literature and hotel review sites where tourists can share their experiences with the hotels they have stayed in and evaluate the hotel establishments based on these experiences.

The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the impact levels of the criteria constituting the accommodation experiences of tourists staying in the central region of Alanya?
2. What are the impact levels of the criteria constituting the accommodation experience of tourists staying in the eastern region of Alanya?
3. What are the impact levels of the criteria constituting the accommodation experiences of tourists staying in the western region of Alanya?
4. What are the impact levels of the criteria constituting the accommodation experiences of tourists staying in the Alanya region?
5. What is the level of impact of gastronomy on the accommodation experiences of tourists staying in Alanya, and its central, eastern, and western regions?

### *Sample and Data Collection*

The district of Alanya, an important tourism destination in the Antalya province of Turkey , was selected as the study area. The study was limited to 5-star hotels in Alanya. The study area was divided into three regions of the district—east, west, and center. Because these three tourism regions have different dynamics such as transportation facilities, distance to tourism areas, price, and the qualities of accommodation establishments. Therefore, the priorities of hotel establishments providing services in the regions change. This situation also affects the accommodation preference decisions and accommodation experience of tourist' in line with their expectations.

AHP method requires expert knowledge in the decision-making process. Therefore, purposive sampling, one of the non-probability sampling methods, was preferred for the sample selection in this study. Purposive sampling is a method in which participants possessing specific characteristics are selected (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Based on expert opinions, the criteria that participants needed to meet in order to be included in the study were first determined. These criteria were defined as being a tourist and having had at least two or more holiday experiences in a five-star hotel operating within the research area. Subsequently, participants who met these criteria were included in the study through purposive sampling. The decision matrix scale developed by Saaty (1987) including a 9-point scale (1 is the lowest, 9 is the highest) was used to determine the impact levels of the criteria. This matrix, which allows each criterion to be compared with one another, was also used as a data collection tool.

**Table 2: AHP Decision Matrix Scale**

| Importance Degree | Definition | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Equally important | Both criteria have equal importance |
| 3 | Moderately important | One criterion is less important than the other |
| 5 | Strongly important | One criterion is more important than the other |
| 7 | Very strongly important | One criterion is significantly more important than the other |
| 9 | Absolutely essential | The importance of one of the criteria is considerably higher than the other |
| 2, 4, 6, 8 | Intermediate values | Intermediate values according to the importance of other criteria |

***Source**: Saaty, 1994, p. 21; Saaty, 2006, p. 73*

**Table 3: Characteristics of the Participants**

| Participant | Sex | Age | Nationality | Educational level | Location of the Hotel Accommodated |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| P1 | Male | 21 | Turkish | High school | Central Region of Alanya |
| P2 | Female | 39 | German | Graduate | Central Region of Alanya |
| P3 | Female | 38 | Belgian | Graduate | Central Region of Alanya |
| P4 | Male | 41 | British | Graduate | Central Region of Alanya |
| P5 | Female | 43 | Turkish | Postgraduate | Central Region of Alanya |
| P6 | Male | 45 | Danish | Graduate | Eastern Region of Alanya |
| P7 | Female | 44 | Danish | Graduate | Eastern Region of Alanya |
| P8 | Female | 46 | Russian | Graduate | Eastern Region of Alanya |
| P9 | Male | 43 | Turkish | Graduate | Eastern Region of Alanya |
| P10 | Female | 33 | Turkish | Postgraduate | Eastern Region of Alanya |
| P11 | Male | 18 | Russian | Student | Western Region of Alanya |
| P12 | Female | 37 | British | High school | Western Region of Alanya |
| P13 | Male | 36 | Turkish | Graduate | Western Region of Alanya |
| P14 | Male | 28 | British | Postgraduate | Western Region of Alanya |
| P15 | Male | 41 | Turkish | Graduate | Western Region of Alanya |

***Source:** Created by the authors.*

**Table 4: Decision Matrix for Hotels in the Central Region of Alanya**

| Criteria | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 1.00 | 0.261 | 1.552 | 2.631 | 3.930 | 3.650 | 3.624 |
| C2 | 3.83 | 1.00 | 0.655 | 1.285 | 3.494 | 7.610 | 2.033 |
| C3 | 0.64 | 1.53 | 1.000 | 1.153 | 3.838 | 8.790 | 1.893 |
| C4 | 0.38 | 0.78 | 0.87 | 1.00 | 7.950 | 2.983 | 3.580 |
| C5 | 0.25 | 0.29 | 0.26 | 0.13 | 1.00 | 1.644 | 1.516 |
| C6 | 0.27 | 0.13 | 0.11 | 0.34 | 0.61 | 1.00 | 1.55 |
| C7 | 0.28 | 0.49 | 0.53 | 0.28 | 0.66 | 0.64 | 1.00 |

**Source:** Created by the authors.

Participants were contacted by meeting them at their hotel establishments between July 01 and August 30, 2024. They were informed about the study and asked to fill out the decision matrices. A total of 30 participants were reached and the decision matrices completed consistently and completely by 15 participants were included in the evaluation. 'AHP provides the objective mathematics to process the inescapably subjective and personal preferences of an individual or agroup in making a decision' (Saaty & Vargas, 2012). So AHP method, the representation of the universe can be provided by a single expert opinion. Demographic information about the participants is presented in Table 3.

### *Data Analysis*

The first step in the AHP process of problem-solving starts with the creation of a hierarchical structure consisting of objectives, criteria, and alternatives (Saaty, 2008; Saaty & Vargas, 2001). The second step is to create the decision matrix by comparing the criteria, in which the 1–9 matrix scale developed by Saaty is used (Saaty, 1994, 2006). In the third step, the percentage distributions (eigenvectors) expressing the importance levels of the criteria are calculated using the decision matrix formed in line with the preferences of the decision-makers. The last step is the calculation of the consistency ratio (CR). The CR tests whether the preferences of the decision-makers are consistent when comparing the criteria. CR is expressed by the CR value. A value less than 0.10 indicates that the decision-makers' preferences are consistent (Saaty, 2008; Yu et al., 2011). In this context, pairwise comparison matrices were created based on the geometric means of the criteria evaluated by a total of 15 participants, and the consistency ratios were found by calculating the weight vectors of the criteria. The study determined the level of impact of the criteria on tourists' accommodation experience. CR ratios less than 0.10 indicate that the results of matrix comparisons are consistent.

## 4. Results

This section gives the decision matrices related to the criteria affecting the accommodation experiences of tourists staying in the destination of Alanya, in the east, west, and central regions, the weights of the criteria obtained using the decision matrices, and the consistency ratios for each matrix.

Table 4 shows the decision matrix values regarding the criteria affecting the accommodation experience of tourists in hotel establishments providing services in the center of Alanya. The CR matrix values of the decision matrix calculated as 0.004 showed that the result was consistent. Figure 2 shows the criteria weights showing the degree of influence of these criteria on tourists' accommodation experience. The weight vector (W1) values for the criteria were found to be 0.21, 0.244, 0.206, 0.182, 0.055, 0.044, and 0.06, respectively.

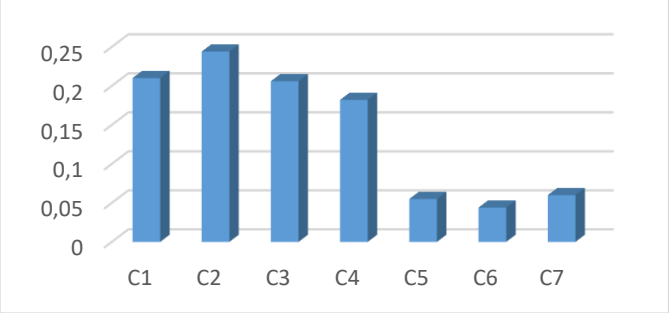


**Figure 2: Criterion Weights for Hotels in the Central Region of Alanya**

Source: Created by the authors.

The decision matrix values regarding the criteria affecting the accommodation experience of tourists staying in hotel establishments providing services in the eastern region of

**Table 5: Decision Matrix for Hotels in the Eastern Region of Alanya**

| Criteria | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 1.00 | 1.516 | 1.552 | 0.261 | 3.554 | 7.432 | 3.222 |
| C2 | 0.66 | 1.00 | 2.068 | 3.323 | 3.737 | 8.559 | 2.605 |
| C3 | 0.64 | 0.48 | 1.000 | 0.120 | 1.246 | 7.237 | 2.885 |
| C4 | 3.83 | 0.30 | 8.33 | 1.00 | 7.114 | 8.002 | 7.560 |
| C5 | 0.28 | 0.27 | 0.80 | 0.14 | 1.00 | 1.594 | 5.165 |
| C6 | 0.13 | 0.12 | 0.14 | 0.12 | 0.63 | 1.00 | 0.66 |
| C7 | 0.31 | 0.38 | 0.35 | 0.13 | 0.19 | 1.52 | 1.00 |

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

**Table 6: Decision Matrix for Hotels in the Western Region of Alanya**

| Criteria | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 1.00 | 2.178 | 1.332 | 0.313 | 0.316 | 5.073 | 1.594 |
| C2 | 0.46 | 1.00 | 1.116 | 0.245 | 0.147 | 6.534 | 0.350 |
| C3 | 0.75 | 0.90 | 1.000 | 0.280 | 0.160 | 2.555 | 2.914 |
| C4 | 3.19 | 4.08 | 3.57 | 1.00 | 3.737 | 3.554 | 7.237 |
| C5 | 3.16 | 6.80 | 6.25 | 0.27 | 1.00 | 7.505 | 8.586 |
| C6 | 0.20 | 0.15 | 0.39 | 0.28 | 0.13 | 1.00 | 0.73 |
| C7 | 0.63 | 2.86 | 0.34 | 0.14 | 0.12 | 1.38 | 1.00 |

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

Alanya are presented in Table 5. The CR matrix values of the decision matrix calculated as 0.059 showed that the result was consistent. Criteria weights showing the degree of impact of these criteria on tourists' accommodation experience are presented in Figure 3. The W1 values for the criteria were found to be 0.176, 0.244, 0.101, 0.339, 0.074, 0.025, and 0.041, respectively.

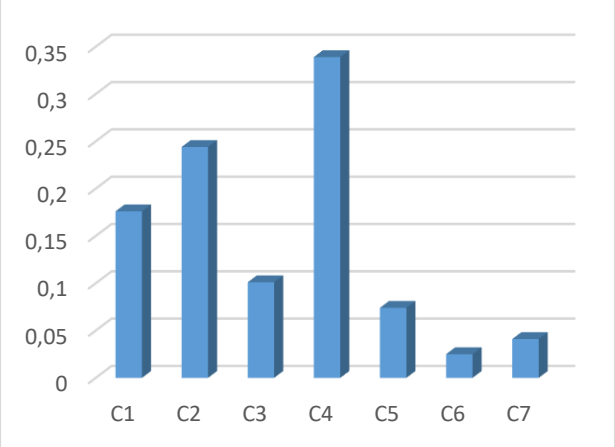


**Figure 3: Criterion Weights for Hotels in the Eastern Region of Alanya**

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

Table 6 shows the decision matrix values regarding the criteria affecting the accommodation experience of tourists staying in hotel establishments providing services in the western region of Alanya. The CR matrix values of the decision matrix calculated as 0.040 showed that the result was consistent. Figure 4 shows the criteria weights of these criteria showing the degree of their impact on tourists' accommodation experience. The W1 values for the criteria were found to be 0.108, 0.08, 0.08, 0.08, 0.334, 0.300, 0.037, and 0.06, respectively.

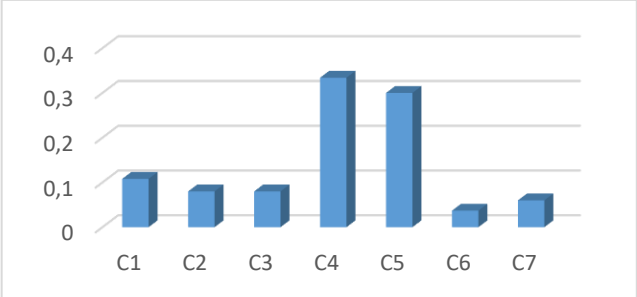


**Figure 4: Criterion Weights for Hotels in the Western Region of Alanya**

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

The decision matrix values regarding the criteria affecting the accommodation experience of tourists staying in hotel establishments providing services in Alanya are presented in Table 7. The CR matrix values of the decision matrix calculated as 0.064 showed that the result was consistent. Criteria weights showing the degree of impact of these criteria on tourists' accommodation experience are presented in Figure 4. The W1 values for the criteria were found to be 0.168, 0.178, 0.131, 0.303, 0.121, 0.038, and 0.061, respectively.

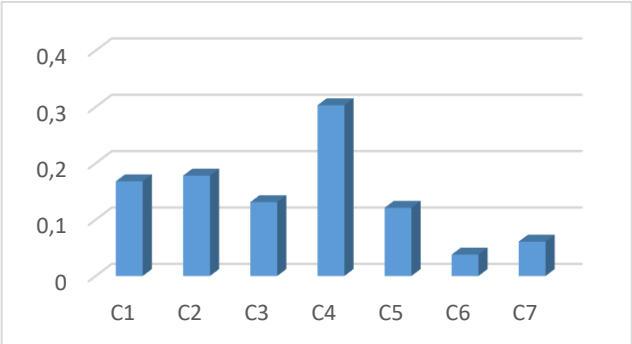


**Figure 5: General Criteria Weights for Alanya Hotels**

**Source:** Created by the authors.

**Table 7: General Decision Matrix for Alanya Hotels**

| Criteria | C1 | C2 | C3 | C4 | C5 | C6 | C7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| C1 | 1.00 | 0.951 | 1.475 | 0.600 | 1.641 | 5.163 | 2.650 |
| C2 | 1.05 | 1.00 | 1.147 | 1.015 | 1.244 | 7.522 | 1.228 |
| C3 | 0.68 | 0.87 | 1.000 | 0.338 | 0.915 | 5.457 | 2.515 |
| C4 | 1.67 | 0.99 | 2.96 | 1.00 | 5.957 | 4.394 | 5.807 |
| C5 | 0.61 | 0.80 | 1.09 | 0.17 | 1.00 | 2.699 | 4.066 |
| C6 | 0.19 | 0.13 | 0.18 | 0.23 | 0.37 | 1.00 | 0.91 |
| C7 | 0.38 | 0.81 | 0.40 | 0.17 | 0.25 | 1.10 | 1.00 |

***Source:*** *Created by the authors.*

## 5. Conclusions

The literature review has revealed that there are many criteria that make up the accommodation experience of tourists and that these criteria have an impact on customer satisfaction and travel decisions to return to the same destinations. This situation directs hotel businesses to offer services that will create value for tourists (Demangeot & Broderick, 2006). The present study examined the effectiveness levels of visitors by calculating the weight ratios of the criteria (gastronomy, location, room, sports and entertainment services, staff, cleaning, and general services) that affect the accommodation experience of tourists staying in hotel establishments providing services in Alanya. The destination was divided into three regions (east, west, and center) and the impact ratios of these criteria were calculated separately for each region and for the destination as a whole. The results of the study showed that the effectiveness ratios of the criteria, especially gastronomy, differed across each region and the destination in general.

Food specific to different cultures can often have emotional meanings for tourists and be one of the important subcomponents of the accommodation experience (Mitchell & Hall, 2003). Food and beverage revenues form a significant portion of the tourism revenues of tourism businesses and destinations (Mak et al., 2012). Food consumption, an important source of income for tourist destinations, also constitutes an important part of tourist experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004). According to the results of the research, gastronomy criteria, which consists of components such as the food and beverages offered by hotel establishments; the atmosphere, decoration, and cleanliness of the areas (e.g., restaurant and bar) where these food and beverages are served; and the quality, presentation, taste, environmental sensitivity, and attractiveness of the food and beverages, is the most important criterion that affects the accommodation experience of tourists staying in the central region of Alanya following the location of the hotel establishments. In the eastern region of Alanya, gastronomy was the most influential criterion after the sports and entertainment services offered by the establishment and the location of the establishment in the accommodation experience of tourists; in the western region of Alanya, gastronomy was the most influential criterion after the sports and entertainment services offered by the establishment and the personnel criterion in the accommodation experience of tourists. When these criteria were evaluated in the context of Alanya in general, it was the most influential criterion after the sports and entertainment services offered by the establishment and the location of the establishment. According to López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares (2012), gastronomy is a primary motivator for tourists traveling to learn about the culinary culture of the region and to have an experience in this context; it can be a secondary motivator for tourists for whom local cuisine plays an important role in their travel decisions (Nicoletti et al., 2019). Richards (2001) reports that an important part of tourist experiences consists of food and beverage experiences and the places where they consume these food and beverages. In addition, gastronomic consumption, which creates a sense of pleasure and satisfaction in tourists, is one of the factors that make up the accommodation experience and contribute to increasing the level of satisfaction (Quan & Wang, 2004). Although gastronomy is a secondary accommodation motivation for these tourists considering the characteristics of the tourist profiles visiting a destination dominated by mass tourism (López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012), improving the gastronomy facilities of the hotel establishments considering the expectations of the guests can increase customer satisfaction, their decisions to return to the destination a second time, and the revenues of the destination and hotel establishments (Cordova-Buiza et al., 2021; Mak et al., 2012; Mitchell & Hall, 2003; Quan & Wang, 2004). The results of the present study have shown that gastronomy is among the top three criteria with the highest level of impact among the seven criteria that affect the accommodation experience of tourists staying in Alanya, a finding indicating that gastronomy is strongly important in the accommodation experience of tourists staying in this destination. Also, the results are supported by the results of the studies conducted by López-Guzmán & Sánchez-Cañizares (2012): Mitchell & Hall, (2003): Nicoletti et al., (2019): Richards, (2001): Quan & Wang, (2004).

Pekovic et al. (2019) emphasized the importance of the impact on tourists' satisfaction with the equipment of the team providing entertainment services in hotel businesses. Hamrouni and Touzi (2011) stated that tourists leaned toward activities that can develop adrenaline, excitement, fear, joy, and happiness in the tourist experience. In the present study, the sports and entertainment services offered by the hotel establishments where tourists can engage in such activities were the most influential criterion affecting the experiences of tourists in the overall, eastern, and western regions of Alanya. The most effective criterion in the accommodation experience of tourists staying in the central region was the location of the hotel establishment.

According to Berezina et al. (2016), the hotel staff is one of the criteria that affect tourists' satisfaction. The characteristics of the staff such as their technical knowledge, communication skills, and physical appearance can have an impact on tourists' accommodation experiences. In the present study, the staff was seen as the criterion with the lowest impact rate after cleanliness in the hotels of the central region of Alanya; however, it was one of the criteria affecting the accommodation experience of tourists. The criterion with the lowest impact rate for hotels located in the central, eastern, and western regions of Alanya was the general services offered by the hotel establishment.

In conclusion, although the gastronomy criterion does not have a primary level of influence on the accommodation experience of tourists who choose the Alanya destination, it ranks among the top three out of seven criteria. The sports and entertainment services offered by hotel establishments operating in the eastern and western parts of the destination have emerged as the most influential factors affecting tourists' accommodation experiences. It can be concluded that the primary expectations of tourists staying in these regions—located farther from the city center—are focused on sports and entertainment services. In this context, it is crucial for businesses and investors operating in the region to consider the importance of infrastructure and superstructure developments that support the provision of modern and trendy sports and entertainment activities in their facility planning. Meeting tourist expectations in this area will positively influence customer satisfaction and increase the likelihood of repeat visits to these establishments. For tourists staying in the central part of the destination, the most influential criterion in their accommodation experience was the location of the hotel. The proximity of these establishments to the city's tourist and historical sites, ease of accessibility, and the availability of more transportation alternatives compared to the eastern and western regions make them more effective in meeting the expectations of tourists who prefer not to spend time in traffic and wish to explore the city on foot rather than constantly relying on transportation. In addition to location, gastronomy emerged as the second most influential criterion affecting the accommodation experience of tourists in the central region. Since location is a fixed factor, improving the variables that constitute the gastronomy criterion in ways that appeal to tourists may present a significant opportunity for businesses. The findings of the study indicate that the degree of influence of various criteria affecting tourists' accommodation experiences differs across the eastern, western, and central regions of the destination. Considering these findings in the strategic positioning of tourism investments will contribute significantly to the sector.

This study was limited to 5-star hotels providing services in Alanya. Similar studies can be carried out with different study groups staying in other categories of hotel establishments or on tourists' accommodation experiences related to the destination. Within the context of the results of the study, hotel establishments, especially those in the city center, should determine the expectations of tourists in the field of gastronomy, identify the factors that negatively affect the satisfaction of tourists in this field, and take necessary actions to improve the gastronomy opportunities they offer. The gastronomy facilities offered in line with the expectations of tourists are strongly important in terms of increasing customer satisfaction, providing tourists with a positive accommodation experience, and increasing business revenues.

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## The role of gastronomy criteria in tourists' accommodation experience: an evaluation using the Analytic Hierarchy Process method

## Abstract

*Gastronomy is important in touristic mobility. The study has been wondered which criteria, along with gastronomy, are effective in the accommodation experience of tourists and to what extent gastronomy is effective. So this study aimed to investigate the degree of impact of the criteria that constitute the accommodation experience on tourists' accommodation experiences and reveal the effect of gastronomy criteria. The criteria that make up tourists' accommodation experiences have been determined in line with opinions of field experts, the relevant literature and hotel review sites where tourists can share their experiences with the hotels they have stayed in and evaluate the hotel establishments based on these experiences. These criteria were determined to be gastronomy, location, room, sports and entertainment services, staff, cleanliness, and general services. To assess the impact levels of the criteria within the scope of the Analytic Hierarchy Process, a 9-point scale (1 was the lowest, 9 was the highest) allowing each component to be compared with other criteria was created. The geometric mean values of the criteria assessed by tourists (participants) staying in 5-star hotels in Alanya were calculated and their level of impact on the accommodation experience was determined. The results of the study showed that gastronomy with the sports and entertainment services offered by the establishment and the location of the establishment was among the top three criteria with the highest impact level among the seven criteria that affect tourists' accommodation experience in the destination of Alanya.*

**Keywords:** *Tourism, Sustainability, Accommodation experience, Analytic hierarchy process.*

## Authors



| Full Name | Author contribution roles | Contribution rate |
|---|---|---|
| ***Uyar:*** | *Conceptualism, Methodology, Validation, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft* | *100%* |



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