THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED QUALITY ON THE EFFECT OF DESTINATION AWARENESS AND IMAGE IN DESTINATION SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY IN MEETING TOURISM

TOPLANTI TURİZMİNDE DESTİNASYON FARKINDALIĞININ VE İMAJININ DESTİNASYON MEMNUNİYETİ VE SADAKATİNE ETKİSİNDE ALGILANAN KALİTENİN ARACILIK ROLÜ

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ABSTRACT: There are discrete dimensions in meeting tourism which influence guest satisfaction and loyalty, which also extend the seasonal impact, generate income, create employment opportunities, and help the promotion of the country and destination. Identifying the effects of these dimensions plays a crucial role in establishing the sustainability and competitive advantage of the destination. Accordingly, this study aims to explore the mediating role of perceived quality on the effect of destination awareness and image on destination satisfaction and loyalty in meeting tourism. Data used for analysis were obtained through face-to-face surveys administered to 500 voluntary participants who visited a five-star hotel operating in the Belek/Antalya tourism center in the context of meeting tourism. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the research model. The data were analyzed using the statistical package programs SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 24.0. The analysis results uncovered that destination awareness and destination image bear direct effects on destination satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, partial mediating effects of perceived quality were identified on the impact of destination awareness and image on destination satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Destination awareness, destination image, destination loyalty, destination satisfaction, meeting tourism.

ÖZET: Turizm sektörünün mevsimsel etkilerini uzatan, gelir sağlayan, istihdam yaratan aynı zamanda ülkenin ve destinasyonun tanıtımına katkı sağlayan toplantı turizmi kapsamındaki misafirlerin memnuniyetini ve sadakatini etkileyen bir takım boyutlar bulunmaktadır. Bu boyutların etkisinin tespit edilebilmesi destinasyonun sürdürülebilirliği ve rekabet üstünlüğü sağlama açısından kritik bir rol oynamaktadır. Buradan hareketle bu araştırmada, toplantı turizminde destinasyon farkındalığının ve imajının destinasyon memnuniyeti ve sadakatine etkisinde algılanan kalitenin aracılık rolünün araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Araştırmada analiz için kullanılan veriler, Belek/Antalya turizm merkezinde faaliyet gösteren beş yıldızlı bir otel işletmesini toplantı turizmi kapsamında ziyaret eden 500 gönüllü katılımcıdan yüz yüze anket tekniği kullanılarak elde edilmiştir. Araştırma modelinin analiz edilmesinde Yapısal eşitlik modeli kullanılmıştır. Veri seti SPSS 22.0 ve AMOS 24.0 istatistiki paket programı kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Yapılan analizler sonucunda destinasyon farkındalığı ile destinasyon imajının destinasyon memnuniyeti ve destinasyon sadakati üzerinde doğrudan etkileri bulunmuştur. Ayrıca destinasyon farkındalığı ve imajının destinasyon memnuniyeti ve sadakatine etkisinde algılanan kalitenin kısmi aracılık rolünün olduğu görülmüştür.

Anahtar sözcükler: Destinasyon farkındalığı, destinasyon imajı, destinasyon sadakati, destinasyon memnuniyeti, toplantı turizmi.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the business and travel industry make up a notable and briskly developing segment of the tourism industry (Gregorić, Nađ and Gregorić, 2016, s. 197). With modern scientific and technological advancements, the concept of business tourism emerged to facilitate closer collaboration, exchange of experiences and ideas, and various such events as meetings, seminars, conferences, congresses, symposiums, exhibitions, incentive trips, and activities at national and international levels (Susic and Mojic, 2014, s. 514). Meeting tourism, as a branch of business tourism, is regarded as a vital alternative to business tourism thanks to its potential to prolong the tourism season, develop economic benefits, construct new job opportunities, modernize various market types, and serve as a propaganda tool to boost the destination to the global audience (Karasu, 1990, s. 32). Meeting tourism activities can be conducted to achieve various goals, like exchanging information, keeping up with new trends, resolving business issues through face-to-face connections, closely monitoring current industry issues and scientific developments, engaging in academic knowledge sharing, networking with new people in the same profession, along with socializing, enjoying, relaxing, and gaining motivation by visiting beautiful places.

Congress guests may be regarded as an influential investment tool since they may guide the promotion of a country or destination (Zhang, Leung and Qu, 2007, s. 1123), impact the loyalty levels of others towards destinations (Özoğul and Özel, 2015, s. 140), and draw new visitors (Alan, Kabadayı and Köksal, 2018, s. 51; Çetinsöz and Artuğer, 2013, s. 208). Ensuring guest satisfaction comes first, therefore. While meeting guests may have expectations such as adequate parking, comfortable seating, conference rooms equipped with high-quality soundproofing, professional video and audio facilities, clean and tidy toilets, well-trained, experienced, enthusiastic staff, a friendly and customer-focused service approach, a timely and planned service approach, clean and comfortable dining areas (Kuo, Chen and Lin, 2010, s. 307), they may also be affected by the rare characteristics and natural attractions of a destination (Adan, 2015, s. 6610). In this context, tourism business and regional managers targeting to establish customer satisfaction prioritize providing unique and unforgettable experiences to visitors (Öktem and Akdu, 2022, s. 968), improving service quality, and engaging in customer value-oriented activities (Selvi and Ercan, 2006, s. 159; Tam, 2000, s. 31). Thus, the purpose is to build a conclusive image and awareness of the destination in the eyes of visitors. This image is occasionally devised by visitors' own holiday experiences, recommendations from friends, family, and acquaintances having previously visited the destination (Haarhoff and De Klerk, 2019, s. 202; Yoon and Uysal, 2004, s. 46), and sometimes by certain associations and distinct communication tools (Gartner, 1994, s. 197-201). As a result of this positive image and satisfaction, visitors may advice the destination to their friends and family and engage in repeat visits to the same facility or destination in the future (Hui, Wan and Ho, 2007, s. 965; Keskin, Sezen and Dağ, 2020, s. 255). Furthermore, through their recommendations and positive word-of-mouth advertising, they may affect other visitors to prefer the relevant destination (Çetinsöz and Artuğer, 2013, s. 208) and drive each other's loyalty levels (Özoğul and Özel, 2015, s. 140).

Based on the previous information provided, the purpose of this study is to analyze the influence of destination awareness and perception on the loyalty and satisfaction of tourists in the meeting tourism industry. For this purpose, data were collected from the guests of a five-star hotel in the Belek/Antalya region with a focus on meeting tourism. Belek/Antalya region hotels operate for meeting tourism in certain periods in order to

spread tourism activity throughout the year. When the potential and physical facilities of the hotels in the region are examined, it is seen that statistically sufficient data can be collected from a hotel. By collecting data from a hotel, it will be possible to obtain generalizable results for all hotels in the region. In addition, considering the time and cost constraints of the research, it was thought that it would be sufficient to collect data from a hotel. Furthermore, this research aims to investigate the mediating effect of perceived quality in these relationships. Though perceived quality has been utilized as a mediator variable in previous studies, no similar study has been found which investigates a model tested in the context of meeting tourism in the tourism industry in the way it is addressed in this study. This aspect underscores the novelty of the research and emphasizes its significance to the discipline. Therefore, identifying the direct and indirect relationships among variables which may influence the satisfaction and loyalty of meeting guests towards a destination is indispensable for the sustainability of the relevant destination's future and for tourism businesses to anticipate their future in meeting tourism. On this subject, following the presentation of the conceptual framework, the findings are evaluated, and the results are discussed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research question.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL APPROACHES

Thanks to the development of industrialization, international collaborative approaches, easier travel, and the increasing significance of knowledge sharing, there has appeared an escalation in business tourism activities. Conference tourism is treated one of the most critical types of business tourism (Kaya and Batman, 2016, s. 79). Events such as conferences, seminars, symposiums, panels, fairs, and academic congresses are regarded within the scope of conference tourism, and these events are attributed to as "meetings" (Aksu, Ören and Özcan, 2004, s. 44). Guests within the context of conference tourism are usually those travelling for business purposes within the framework of compulsory and conditional workplaces, duties, or projects (Susic and Mojic, 2014, s. 514). However, such activities as entertainment, shopping, and sightseeing may also be organized outside of meetings (Kaya and Batman, 2016, s. 81). It is evident that the average expenses of conference guests with a high income and cultural level are broadly higher than those of other tourists (Aksu, 2004, s. 46). Many distinct market segments derive from delegate expenditures, along with conference centers and accommodation facilities (Karasu, 1990, s. 32; Timor, 2010, s. 126). Conference tourism may be appraised as a vital tourism branch both for performing business activities and for providing morale and motivation. At the same time, it is gaining boosting significance for contributing to the economy by bringing movement to the season during periods when tourism is slow-moving (Pechlaner, Zeni and Raich, 2007, s. 32), providing foreign exchange income to the country, growing employment, strengthening the infrastructure of tourism (Timor, 2011, s. 126), and helping the country's image by offering its cultural and natural riches (Aksu et al., 2004, s. 46).

The prominence of conference tourism in Turkey is flourishing thanks to its season-extending impacts on accommodation establishments and destinations, together with its positive economic, cultural, and social effects (Yozcu and İçöz, 2010, s. 106). Turkey is an alluring country with regard to its proximity to European countries, sun-sea-sand facilities, geographical location, rich historical and cultural values, natural beauties, climate conditions, infrastructure and transportation facilities, qualified accommodation facilities, meeting centers, and adequate meeting halls, and it enjoys notable potential in point of international relations (Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of

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Turkey, 2023). In Turkey, major cities such as Istanbul, Antalya, Ankara, Izmir, Mugla, and Bursa bear great potency for conference tourism. In recent years, significant activity has been observed in international conference tourism, and Istanbul and Antalya stand out in this regard. Especially when considering other major conference centers in Europe, Antalya holds a significant competitive advantage on account of satisfactory climate conditions, natural tourism attractions, nearby historical and archaeological attractions, infrastructure activities, transportation facilities, air connections, and a wide range of events. It is observed that Antalya has hosted many national and international conferences so far. The hotels and resorts in Antalya Belek are convenient for conference tourism (Timor, 2011, s. 137-139). As well as having sufficient numbers and capacities of conference centers, the availability of adequate numbers of accommodation facilities and congress hotels in Antalya is also one of the leading features that sets this destination apart (Gogitidze, 2021, s. 64).

To create a deep and meaningful impression of a destination, it is essential to first establish positive awareness regarding the destination (Ye, 2012, s. 399). Destination awareness is one of the important elements that affect the decision-making processes of tourists about the destination. Destination awareness includes information, perceptions and attractiveness about the destination. (Boo, Busser and Baloglu, 2009; Fesenmaier, Vogt and Stewart, 1993). The level of knowledge a visitor possesses about a particular destination can be an indicator of the overall destination image that is held within the individual's mind, as stated by Chen (2011, s. 85). Destination image is defined as the perspective that includes tourists' beliefs, thoughts and impressions about a place (Avcıkurt, 2005, s. 24). Destination image plays an important role in all kinds of decisions about where individuals will go (Chen and Kerstetter, 1999, s. 256). A strong and distinctive destination image is indispensable for boosting the tendency of repeat visitors and drawing new visitors to the destination (Qu, Kim and Im, 2011, s. 473). A destination image is built based on information gained from various communication sources, such as friends, family and acquaintances who have previously paid a visit to the destination, visitors' past knowledge and experiences (Haarhoff and De Klerk, 2019, s. 202; Yoon and Uysal, 2004, s. 46-48) tour operators, organizers, mass media publications, advertisements, documentaries, films, television programs, brochures, billboards, articles, stories (Gartner, 1994, s. 197-201; Toyama and Yamada, 2012, s. 15), social media, online review websites (Aşıroğlu and Çuhadar, 2021, s. 925; Ercan, 2019, s. 555; Taşkın, Şaylan and Azimov, 2021, s. 272; Tuzcu, 2023), among others. Especially in this context, Mice tourism departments, with the aim of introducing destination features, meeting requirements such as accommodation, travel, shopping, entertainment professionally, exhibiting effective approaches and ensuring the highest level of guest satisfaction (Ficarelli, Sendra, Parra and Lloret, 2013, s. 7) meeting organization companies, professional organizers, meeting and visitor offices, hotel management and local government, food and beverage services, and meeting centers, international associations and associations are in cooperation with each other (Gogitidze, 2021). The success of the meeting industry is possible with the best possible presentation, promotion, marketing, and execution of the whole of services. Being a preferred destination point for the meeting sector is directly proportional to the development in marketing, infrastructure, and service points (Mono, 2018). Susic and Mojic (2014, s. 514) suggested that meeting attendees have particular service expectations that are based on "*ethical principles, including honesty, reliability, quality, comfort, speed, convenience, flexibility, originality, creativity, and innovation*". These ethical principles represent fundamental guidelines for the planning and execution of each meeting. However, the presence of infrastructure like

airports, train stations, highways providing easy access to the meeting venue, underground and surface parking buildings around the meeting buildings, climate and environmental conditions, the location of the hotel, attitudes and behaviors of employees, cleanliness and hygiene, the size of the hotel, all-inclusive concepts, atmosphere, architectural design of the hotel, facilities offered (pavilion, a la carte, aqua park activities, etc.), differentiation, food and beverage service, innovation, trust, price, and experience are all essential to create visitor satisfaction (Tuzcu, 2023, s. 19). In this context, the quality of tourism services is considered a crucial factor in creating a unique "*destination image*" in the minds of visitors and ultimately fostering "*destination loyalty*" (Akroush et al., 2016, s. 20). To attain "*customer satisfaction and loyalty*", it is essential to prioritize the creation of value for customers, as well as to provide high levels of "*service quality*". According to Tam (2000, s. 31) and Selvi and Ercan (2006, s. 159), "*customer satisfaction and loyalty*" can be achieved through these key factors. Studies have displayed that visitors who are satisfied with a destination or hotel operation have a high tendency to revisit the relevant destination and advice it to others (do Valle, Silva, Mendes and Guerreriro, 2006, s. 38; Ekici, Güven and Büyükdağ, 2017, s. 485; Keskin et al., 2020, s. 255). In general, when visitors cultivate awareness and a decisive image of a destination, it is anticipated that their satisfaction levels with the destination will increase, leading to an intention to revisit. To build a positive perception of a hotel or destination, it is inevitable to fulfill certain service expectations in a professional manner and carry out activities to enhance destination quality.

RESEARCH

In the literature, it is observed that studies on consumer-based destination value are conducted from different perspectives and on different destinations. This study was carried out in the Belek/Antalya region, which holds an important position in terms of meeting tourism. Within this framework, it was meant to evaluate the perceptions of guests participating in meeting tourism regarding the awareness, image, satisfaction, and loyalty of the Belek/Antalya destination in this study, which utilized quantitative research processes. In this section of the study, the purpose and significance of the research, research model and hypotheses, data collection tool, population and sample, data collection process, data analysis, and findings obtained in the study are emphasized. These findings are described and interpreted.
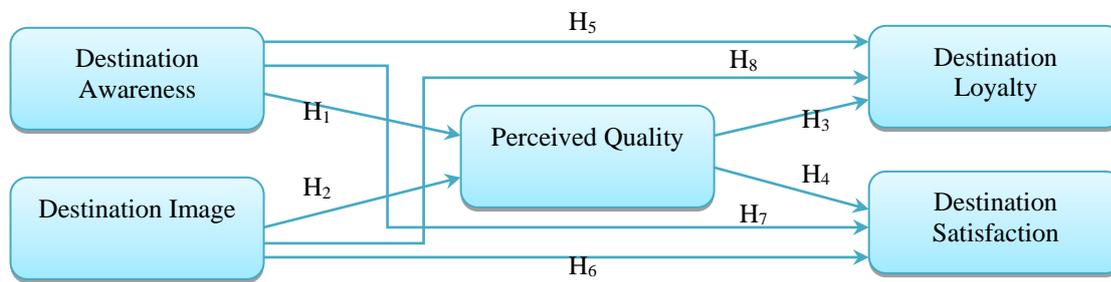
Purpose and Importance of the Research

Meeting tourism is regarded as a crucial alternative form of tourism to relieve the seasonal structure of the tourism sector and to enable vitality to the tourism market and the economy. It is obvious that the extension of the season or the year-round operation of hotels in the Antalya region is firmly connected with meeting tourism. It is thus important to determine the thoughts and behaviors of guests involved in meeting tourism concerning destination awareness, image, satisfaction, and loyalty, and to agent strategies accordingly to ensure the sustainability of the destination, its branding, competitive advantage, and the ability of tourism businesses to foresee their future. The primary objective of this research is to examine the impact of "*destination awareness and destination image on the satisfaction and loyalty*" of meeting guests, and to explore the mediating role of perceived quality in this relationship. Although perceived quality has been used as a mediator variable in some studies, there is no similar study in the tourism sector testing a model specifically designed for meeting tourism. As a result, the originality and contribution of this study to the field are emphasized by highlighting this aspect of the research.

Model and Hypotheses

In line with the research objective, a research model was proposed using scales taken from the literature. Each variable included in the study is presented in a box in the model. The impacts of the variables on each other are shown by arrow signs. As well as including dependent and independent variables, the research model also involves a mediating variable. As there is a mediating variable in the research, both direct and indirect effects are investigated to test the mediation effect. The model created in the scope of the research is indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Research Model

When examining Figure 1, it may be noticed that destination awareness and destination image represent the independent variables in the study, while destination loyalty and destination satisfaction serve as the dependent variables. Additionally, perceived quality is contained in the model as a mediating variable. Based on the research model built within the scope of the research objective, the proposed hypotheses are enabled below within the framework of their theoretical foundations.

On reviewing the literature, it appears that there are studies which measure the direct relationships between variables. According to the results of these studies, "*destination image*" bears an effect on "*perceived quality*" and "*destination satisfaction*" (Uslu and İnanır, 2020), "*perceived service quality*" and "*destination image*" have an influence on both "*revisitation intention*" and "*recommendation intention*" (Öztürk and Şahbaz, 2019), "*perceived value*" and "*satisfaction*" enjoy a direct influence on "*destination loyalty*" (Wang, Yang, Han and Shi, 2017), "*destination image*", "*consumer travel experience*", and "*destination satisfaction*" are the key determinants of "*destination loyalty*" (Wu, 2015), "*destination image*" and "*destination personality*" provide an impact on "*visitors' satisfaction levels*", as well as their "*intention to revisit*" and "*recommend to others*" (Umur, 2015), there appears a strong relationship between "*perceived destination quality*", "*destination satisfaction*", and "*destination loyalty*", and on the other hand, there is an interaction chain between "*destination awareness, destination image, and perceived quality*" (Davras, 2019). Additionally, studies suggest that satisfaction affects the tendency to revisit and recommend the destination to others, based on the positive experience lived (do Valle et al., 2006; Ekici et al., 2017; Keskin et al., 2020). Considering the interaction between "*destination awareness, destination image, perceived quality, destination satisfaction, and destination loyalty*", the following hypotheses were proposed. Since Kim, Choe and Petrick (2018) and Kodaş (2021) found a significant

relationship between brand awareness and perceived quality, the following hypothesis was proposed, considering that awareness affects perceived quality:

"H1: Destination awareness has a positive effect on perceived quality in meeting tourism."

When the image and perceived quality literature is examined; Keni, Oktora and Wilson (2018) found that the destination image affects the perceived quality. However, Tsai (2015) found significant relationships between destination image and perceived quality. From this point of view, the following hypothesis has been proposed in this study, which shows the effect of destination image on perceived quality:

"H2: Destination image has a positive effect on perceived quality in meeting tourism."

When the relationship between perceived quality and destination loyalty in the research model is examined; Hallak, Assaker and El-Haddad (2018) and Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010) found a significant relationship between these two variables. Similarly, Kodaş (2021) and Koçoğlu (2019) concluded in their research that perceived quality has an effect on destination loyalty. Based on this, the following hypothesis was proposed in this study:

"H3: Perceived quality has a positive effect on destination loyalty in meeting tourism."

In the literature, it is seen that the variables of perceived quality and destination satisfaction have been examined and tested many times. Žabkar, Brenčič and Dmitrović, (2010); Wang, Tran and Tran (2017); Allameh, Pool, Jaberi, Salehzadeh and Asadi (2015); Hallak et al., (2018); Uslu and İnanır (2020) measured the relationships between perceived quality and destination satisfaction and found significant relationships. Based on the existence of these relationships, the following hypothesis has been proposed in this research to measure the effect of perceived quality on destination satisfaction:

"H4: Perceived quality has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."

Jun (2016) explained a structural relationship between destination awareness and destination loyalty. In the study conducted by Lai and Vinh (2013), they tested a similar relationship with the data they obtained from tourists using airline travel. Şengül and Türkay (2018) tried to explain the relationship between destination awareness and destination loyalty through regional cuisines. Kodaş (2021) included these two variables in his research model and examined their relationships. Based on this, the following hypothesis has been proposed in this study:

"H5: Destination awareness has a positive effect on destination loyalty in meeting tourism."

In the research model, the relationship between the proposed destination image and destination satisfaction is seen. Artuğer, Çetinsöz and Kılıç (2013) confirmed the effect of destination image on destination loyalty. Similarly, Rajesh (2013) tested the effect of destination image on destination loyalty with a model. Chi and Qu (2008) discussed the structural relationship between destination image and destination loyalty with a holistic approach. Esen and Bahar (2019) evaluated the relationship between these variables in the context of thermal tourism. Based on this literature, the following

hypothesis has been proposed, based on the idea that destination image affects destination loyalty:

"H6: Destination image has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."

Destination awareness and destination satisfaction variables, which are discussed within the scope of the research, are frequently discussed together in the literature. Chi and Qu (2008); Wang and Hsu (2010); Hernández-Lobato, Solis-Radilla, Moliner-Tena and Sánchez-García (2006); Pub (2014); Rajesh (2013); Lee, Lee and Lee (2014); Al-Ansi and Khan (2019); Gün, Durmaz and Tutcu (2019); Esen and Bahar (2019); Unal and Caber (2019) focused on the relationships between destination awareness and destination satisfaction. In these studies, the relationships between the two variables are emphasized, and it is also seen that the effect of destination awareness on the destination image is emphasized. Based on this, the following hypothesis was proposed in this study:

"H7: Destination awareness has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."

Destination image and destination loyalty have taken their place in the literature as variables that are considered together. Artuger, Cetinsöz and Kilic (2013); Rajesh (2013); Song, Su and Li (2013); Chi and Qu (2008); Kim and Malek (2017); Esen and Bahar (2019); Öztürk (2021) focused on the relationships between these two variables and obtained significant results. From this point of view, in this research, the following hypothesis has been proposed to measure the effect of destination image on destination loyalty:

"H8: Destination image has a positive effect on destination loyalty in meeting tourism."

In the scope of the research, the concept of "*perceived quality*", which is thought to have a drastic effect on "*customer satisfaction*" and "*loyalty*", was employed as a mediator variable. When the studies in the literature were examined generally, it was observed that "*destination brand awareness, perceived quality, and destination brand image*" had a positive effect on "*destination brand loyalty*" (Kodaş, 2021); there was a partial mediating role of "*perceived destination quality*" in the relationship between "*destination image*" and "*destination satisfaction*" (Uslu and İnanır, 2020); there was a positive relationship between "*destination brand image*" and "*destination brand loyalty*", and "*perceived destination quality*" played a partial mediating role in this relationship (Koçoğlu, 2019); "*perceived value*" and "*visitor satisfaction*" mediated the relationship between "*destination image and loyalty*" (Wang et al., 2017); "*destination image*" had an impact on the "*intention to revisit*" through "*service quality and destination trust*" (Siregar et al., 2021); "*perceived service quality*" had a partial effect on "*perceived value, customer satisfaction, and attitudinal brand loyalty*" (Demirağ, 2019); and "*destination familiarity*" had a mediating effect on the relationships between "*country image and destination image*", and "*destination image and intention to visit*" (Chaulagain et al., 2019). Based on these findings, the following hypotheses were proposed in this study:

"H9: Perceived quality mediates the relationship between destination awareness and destination loyalty in the meeting tourism."

"H10: Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination awareness on destination satisfaction in the meeting tourism.".

"H11: Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination image on destination loyalty in the meeting tourism".

"H12: Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination image on destination satisfaction in the meeting tourism".

Data Collection Tool

A 24-item survey questionnaire consisting of two main sections was arranged to assess the perceptions and demographic characteristics of meeting guests concerning "*destination awareness, image, satisfaction, and loyalty*". The first section is made up 21 Likert-type scale questions (1=strongly disagree … 5=strongly agree) designed to specify participants' perceptions of "*destination awareness, image, satisfaction, and loyalty*". In this study, the "Consumer-Based Destination Brand Value Scale" (Cronbach's alpha=,89) employed by Demirer and Akgün (2022), which explains 21 statements with 5 dimensions, was adopted. As these five dimensions involve different statements related to "*destination awareness, image, satisfaction, loyalty, and perceived quality*", each of them was treated as a separate variable in the scope of the study. Additionally, other studies which used these scale dimensions (Davras, 2019; Boo, Busser and Baloglu, 2009; Çetinsöz and Artuğer, 2013; Özoğul and Özel, 2015; Yang, Liu and Li, 2015; Turpcu, Selçuk and Akyurt, 2017) were also utilized in this research. The second section covers 3 questions as regards to the socio-demographic characteristics of meeting guests.

After the questionnaire was prepared, two academic experts in the field were consulted, and a pilot test was performed on a sample group of 50 individuals to test the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions and to conduct any necessary adjustments rooted in the suggestions received. Following these adjustments, the final version of the questionnaire was provided. Before proceeding to data collection, ethical approval was acquired from the "Ethics Committee of Süleyman Demirel University" (approval number 134/6, dated 20.09.2022).

Universe and Sample

The population of this study includes domestic and foreign guests paying a visit to Belek/Antalya region for meeting tourism purposes and stayed for at least 5 nights between October and November 2022. Due to time constraints and difficulty in accessing the sample, non-probability sampling method "convenience sampling" was adopted in this study. Before collecting data, a pilot study was carried out with 50 people to finalize the questionnaire, test the clarity and comprehensibility of the questions. As a result of the pilot study, it was figured out that the statements did not cause difficulty in understanding, and no changes were made to the questions, and the questionnaire was finalized, therefore. In order not to disturb the guests, face-to-face questionnaire forms were specifically applied to the participants during their non-meeting hours. The research was carried out in a meeting held in the field of health so that the participants of meeting tourism could be evaluated in the same category. The name of the meeting is kept confidential by the researcher for academic ethics. The obtained surveys yielded the following outcomes; a total of 500 participants were reached, and no data loss was experienced owing to the researcher's direct involvement in the data collection process.

Data Collection Process

One of Turkey's leading tourism centers, a 5-star hotel chain located in Belek/Antalya, was picked out for data collection. Permission was taken from the Guest Relations Department Manager to carry out the survey. As a condition of the permission,

the hotel name was not to be used in any way, communication with guests was to be made within their convenient time periods, and the results procured in the research were to be shared with the hotel management. Therefore, in accordance with academic ethics, the researcher did not use the hotel's name anywhere. Sharing the research results with the hotel management is critical in terms of boosting the extensive effect of the research findings.

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this research was to explore the effect of "*destination awareness*" and "*image on destination satisfaction*" and "*loyalty*" in the meeting tourism context. Based on the literature, it is concluded that "*destination awareness*" and "*image*" influence "*destination satisfaction and loyalty*", and that "*perceived quality*" mediates this relationship. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the multiple causality relationships in the research model. The primary reasons for using SEM were its ability to analyze the relationship between several variables in a single model in social science research (Bayram, 2010, s. 41), its ability to provide a more advanced statistical foundation for theoretical and empirical studies, and its stronger competence to identify an intermediary role consistently compared to the regression approach (Iacobucci, Saldanha and Deng, 2007). Therefore, AMOS 24.0 and SPSS 22.0 statistical package programs were utilized for the analysis of the research model. Descriptive statistics techniques were exerted to specify participants' socio-demographic characteristics. Path analysis was adopted to test the model and hypotheses in accord with the research objective.

FINDINGS

To determine which type of analysis, parametric or non-parametric, should be employed for data analysis, the normal distribution fit of the data was first tested. Based on the requirement that data must exhibit a normal distribution for parametric analysis to be performed, missing and outlier data were checked, and Skewness and Kurtosis values were examined, which were found to be between -1 and +1, as described by Morgan, Leech, Gloeckner and Barrett (2004, s. 49). Therefore, it was determined to apply parametric tests to the data without any transformation. Depending on the purpose of the study, evaluations were first made regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants, followed using quantitative analysis methods to specify the impact of "*destination awareness*" and "*image*" of guests participating in meeting tourism on "*destination satisfaction and loyalty*", along with the mediating role of "*perceived quality*".

Socio-Demographical Characteristics of the Participants

The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants in the study were evaluated based on gender, age, and region of residence. When Table 1 is examined, 30.35% of the participants were female, and 69.65% were male. Furthermore, it was determined that 11.14% of the participants were 30 years old or younger, 27.73% were between 31-40 years old, 39.30% were between 41-50 years old, and 21.83% were 51 years old or older. Additionally, when the regions where the participants reside were considered, it was found that 8.73% of the participants were from the Black Sea Region, 9.83% were from the Aegean Region, 42.14% were from the Central Anatolia Region, 13.54% were from the Marmara Region, 17.69% were from the Mediterranean Region, 5.02% were from the Southeastern Anatolia Region, and 3.06% were from the Eastern Anatolia Region.

Tablo 1.

Demographic Characteristics

Variables		f	%
Gender	Female	139	30.35
	Male	319	69.65
Age	30 years old or younger	51	11.14
	between 31-40 years old	127	27.73
	between 41-50 years old	180	39.30
	51 years old or older	100	21.83
Region of Residence	Black Sea Region	40	8.73
	Aegean Region	45	9.83
	Central Anatolia Region	193	42.14
	Marmara Region	62	13.54
	Mediterranean Region	81	17.69
	Southeastern Anatolia Region	23	5.02
	Eastern Anatolia Region	14	3.06
TOTAL		458	100

Measurement Model Findings

The analyses were performed employing a two-stage structural equation modeling approach, which includes analyzing data and testing hypotheses (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). In the first stage, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to test convergence and discriminant validity. For convergence validity, factor loadings of all scale items should be significant and above 0.50, the average variance explained (AVE) of the items should be greater than the unexplained variance, and the factor composite reliability (CR) should be 0.60 or higher. For discriminant validity, the AVE values should be greater than the correlation values between dimensions (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The values for the scales used are given in Table 2.

Tablo 2.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Factor Load	t-value	SE	CR	GFI	AVE	MSV	α
Destination Awareness (Awareness)				0.943	0.905	0.765	0.805	.853
awareness1	.779	16.254	0.116					
awareness2	.716	18.171	0.137					
awareness3	.813	13.300	0.066					
awareness4	.694	9.931	0.089					
Destination (Image)				0.921	0.901	0.709	0.801	.891
image1	.648	15.101	0.103					
image2	.758	18.198	0.098					
image3	.724	17.312	0.167					
image4	.769	9.994	0.112					
image5	.728	12.011	0.069					
Destination Loyalty (loyalty)				0.910	0.890	0.603	0.668	.817
loyalty1	.617	15.001	0.099					
loyalty2	.591	16.127	0.107					
loyalty3	.641	14.333	0.134					
loyalty4	.672	10.298	0.109					
Destination Satisfaction				0.897	0.870	0.596	0.613	.886

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(satisfaction)									
satisfaction1	.726	14.321	0.111						
satisfaction2	.681	18.064	0.068						
satisfaction3	.638	13.447	0.110						
satisfaction4	.633	12.141	0.149						
Perceived Quality (quality)				0.899	0.872	0.599	0.627	.849	
perceived quality1	.664	9.669	0.191						
perceived quality2	.637	15.014	0.124						
perceived quality3	.584	12.007	0.086						
perceived quality4	.691	18.024	0.107						

"CR=Composite Reliability; AVE=Average Variance Extracted; MSV=Maximum Shared Variance; α=Cronbach's Alpha"

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to statistically determine the construct validity of the scales used in the study. None of the items in the five scales included a value that would compromise their convergent validity, and therefore no item was removed from the measurement model (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The average of the items whose structure was confirmed by CFA was taken for each scale, and multicollinearity was checked in the model. To this end, the VIF values of each scale were examined, and it was determined that there was no multicollinearity problem since the VIF values of the scales [$VIF_{(awareness)}$=1,734; $VIF_{(image)}$=2,691; $VIF_{(loyalty)}$=2,817; $VIF_{(satisfaction)}$=1,912; $VIF_{(perceived quality)}$=1,483] were less than 5 (Craney and Surles, 2002). To test the reliability of the scales, Cronbach's alpha values were analyzed, and it was noticed that the values were above acceptable levels (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham, 2006; Zinbarg, Revelle, Yovel and Li, 2005). Additionally, when the normal distribution of the data set was checked out, it was observed that the skewness and kurtosis values of the scale items were between -1 and +1, indicating that the data set showed a normal distribution (Blanca, Arnau, López-Montiel, Bono and Bendayan, 2013; Cain, Zhang and Yuan, 2017). The fit indices of the model is given in Table 3.

Tablo 3.

Fit Index Values of Model

	χ^2/df <5	AGFI >.85	GFI >.80	CFI >.90	NFI >.90	TLI >.90	RMSEA <.08
Fit Index Values of Model	3,013	,893	,890	,913	,909	,909	,074

In determining the values of goodness of fit for the concept of harmony, commonly employed "acceptable values of goodness of fit" in the literature were adopted. To this criterion, it was observed that the goodness of fit values for all scales used in the study are at a good level (Hu and Bentler, 1999; Sivo, Fan, Witta and Willse, 2006). When all the results are evaluated together, it was concluded that the scales are valid, reliable, and show good fit, and the analysis of the structural model was performed within the framework of the proposed model in the study.

Structural Model Analysis and Testing Hypotheses

In the study, a structural model analysis was carried out to test the proposed hypotheses. Baron and Kenny (1986) characterized the mediating variable as the productivity of the influence seen between the independent and dependent variables and linked the mediation effect to three conditions. According to them, the first condition is

that the independent variable should better impact the dependent variable, the second condition is that the independent variable should better have an influence on the mediating variables, and the third condition is that the mediating variable should better affect the dependent variable. If all these conditions are met, Baron and Kenny (1986) argued that should the mediating variable is entered into the model, the relationship between the dependent and independent variables diminishes partially, and if the relationship between the dependent and independent variables becomes insignificant, then there appears complete mediation. Although this approach brings about good results, it does not provide a p-value and does not create a confidence interval for indirect effects (Falk, 2023). Accordingly Mallinckrodt, Abraham, Wei and Russell (2006) stated in their research that calculating the confidence interval for population parameters using bootstrap analyses would be advantageous. Efron and Tibshirani (1986) defined the bootstrap method as a simple and reliable method employed for resampling in statistics such as standard deviation, confidence interval, and non-parametric estimation problems. Mallinckrodt et al., (2006) also noted that having a bootstrap sample of at least 1000 would be a more rational idea (Burmaoğlu, Polat and Meydan, 2013, s. 20). The steps proposed by Baron & Kenny (1986) for analyzing mediating effects were tested using the bootstrap method, therefore. The bootstrap sample was set at 5000. The data were tested using the maximum likelihood mode in the AMOS 24 package program. Before testing the structural model, correlations on the scales were examined, and the findings were granted in Table 4."

Table 4.

Correlation Analysis Regarding the Scales

	Mean	S.d.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Destination Awareness	3.18	1.68	-				
(2) Destination Image	3.09	1.94	0.472***	-			
(3) Destination Loyalty	3.17	1.29	0.394***	0.294**	-		
(4) Destination Satisfaction	3.47	1.96	0.481***	0.432***	0.427***	-	
(5) Perceived Quality	3.15	1.72	0.399***	0.406***	0.442***	0.429***	-

N= 503; ***p< 0.001; **p< 0.01; *p< 0.05

After examining the correlation values in Table 4, it may be noticed that all scales employed in the study appear the have positive and significant relationships. These findings propose that the relationships between dependent and independent variables may be analyzed. Therefore, a path analysis was performed to test the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.
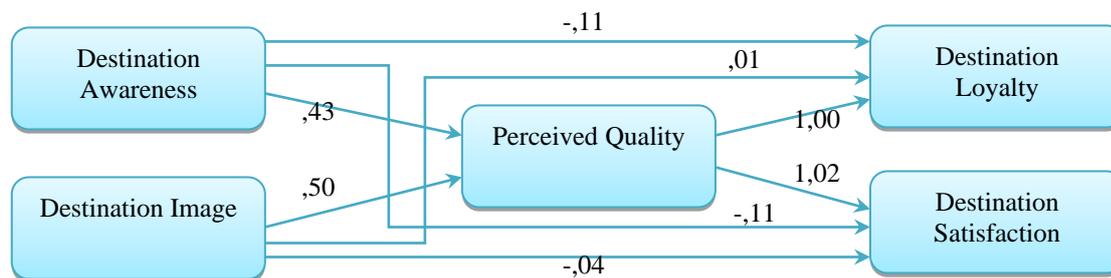
In the initial stage of the analysis, the relationship between the dependent variable ("*destination loyalty*" and "*destination satisfaction*") and the independent variable ("*destination awareness*" and "*destination image*") was examined without adding the mediating model.

The covariance between the error terms of the destination awareness and destination image scales, which were suggested by the program, were added to the model so as to enhance the fit indices of the model. The final version of the model had good fit indices: "χ^2/df=2.389, AGFI=.928, GFI=.951, CFI=.962, NFI=.939, TLI=.963, RMSEA=.054". These values show that the model has a good fit. The results of the analysis concerning the impact of independent variables on the dependent variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Effect of Independent Variables on Dependent Variables

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Destination Loyalty ← Destination Awareness	.462	.055	8.562	***
Destination Loyalty ← Destination Image	.441	.052	8.728	***
Destination Satisfaction ← Destination Awareness	.429	.051	8.317	***
Destination Satisfaction ← Destination Image	.437	.052	8.551	***

According to the analysis results, it was figured out that "*destination awareness*" has a positive and significant effect (β=0.462; p<0.001) on "*destination loyalty*", and "*destination image*" has a positive and significant effect (β=0.441; p<0.001) on "*destination loyalty*". Additionally, it was seen that "*destination awareness*" has a positive and significant effect (β=0.462; p<0.001) on "*destination satisfaction*", and "*destination image*" has a positive and significant effect (β=0.462; p<0.001) on "*destination satisfaction*". The first step of the mediator role analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), which is "the independent variable influencing the dependent variable", was confirmed, as a result.

Figure 2.

Testing the Research Model

The research model was tested within the mediation model framework proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). The mediation model of this study was constructed as shown in Figure 2. As a result of the path analysis, it was noticed that some parameters related to the goodness of fit values were not within the desired range. The modifications suggested by the AMOS package program were sequentially applied. The proposed modifications were made between the sub-dimensions of the destination awareness and destination image scales. By creating covariances between the relevant error terms, the fit indices of the model were measured as follows: "χ^2/df=2.956, AGFI=0.907, GFI=0.912, CFI=0.923, NFI=0.919, TLI=0.931, and RMSEA=0.063". Considering these values, it was concluded that the model bears very good fit indices.

Table 6.

Effect of Exogenous Variables on Endogenous Variables

Hypothesis	Direct Effects	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H_1	Perceived Quality ← Destination Awareness	.539	.126	6.627	***
H_2	Perceived Quality ← Destination Image	.553	.094	6.491	***
H_3	Destination Loyalty ← Perceived Quality	.518	.099	6.494	***
H_4	Destination Satisfaction ← Perceived Quality	.526	.101	6.297	***
H_5	Destination Loyalty ← Destination Awareness	.662	.151	6.562	***
H_6	Destination Satisfaction ← Destination Image	.537	.073	6.551	***
H_7	Destination Satisfaction ← Destination Awareness	.629	.117	6.317	***
H_8	Destination Loyalty ← Destination Image	.541	.052	6.728	***

The relationships in the main model aimed at testing the effects of the independent variables on the dependent variables were analyzed. When the findings given in Table 6 are checked, first, the effects on the mediator variable are evaluated. Accordingly, it is observed that destination awareness has a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.539$; $P<0.001$) on perceived quality. Based on this finding, it may be concluded that the hypothesis *"H₁: Destination awareness has a positive effect on perceived quality in meeting tourism."* is supported, as a result. It may also be declared that destination image has a positive and significant effect ($\beta=0.553$; $P<0.001$) on perceived quality and the hypothesis *"H₂: Destination image has a positive effect on perceived quality in meeting tourism."* is supported according to the finding, therefore.

In the second stage of the study, the variables affected by the mediator variable were inspected within the scope of the research purpose. Accordingly, it is noticed that perceived quality has a positive and significant impact on destination loyalty ($\beta=0.518$; $P<0.001$) and it may be asserted that the hypothesis *"H₃: Perceived quality has a positive effect on destination loyalty in meeting tourism."* is supported by the findings. It was also detected that perceived quality has a positive and significant effect on destination satisfaction ($\beta=0.526$; $P<0.001$) and the hypothesis *"H₄: Perceived quality has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."* is supported by the findings.

In the third stage, the impacts of the exogenous (independent) variable on the endogenous (dependent) variable were analyzed for direct effects. Accordingly, it was figured out that destination awareness had a significant positive effect on destination loyalty ($\beta=.662$; $P<0.001$), and the proposed hypothesis *"H₅: Destination awareness has a positive effect on destination loyalty in meeting tourism."* was supported by the findings. Additionally, it was discovered that destination image had a significant positive effect on destination satisfaction ($\beta=.537$; $P<0.001$), and the proposed hypothesis *"H₆: Destination image has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."* was supported by the findings, as a result. It was also procured that destination awareness had a significant positive effect on destination satisfaction ($\beta=.629$; $P<0.001$), and the proposed hypothesis *"H₇: Destination awareness has a positive effect on destination satisfaction in meeting tourism."* was supported by the findings, consequently. Finally, it was obtained that destination image had a significant positive effect on destination loyalty ($\beta=.541$; $P<0.001$), and the proposed hypothesis *"H₈: Destination image has a positive effect on destination loyalty in business meeting."* was supported by the findings, to this end. All conditions suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986) for mediation were confirmed with the findings obtained in this study. Furthermore, a bootstrap method (with 5000 samples and

.95 confidence interval) was employed to show the proposed mediation role in the model, and the results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7.

Findings Regarding the Mediator Model

Hypothesis	Mediator Effect	Direct Effect[1] (β)	Direct Effect[2] (β)	Indirect Effect (β)	Mediator Status
H_9	D. Loyalty←P. Quality.←D. Awareness	.662**	.329**	.451**	Partial Mediator Effect
H_{10}	D. Satisfaction← P. Quality.←Awareness	.629**	.167**	.328**	Partial Mediator Effect
H_{11}	D. Loyalty← P. Quality.←D. Image	.541**	.248**	.343**	Partial Mediator Effect
H_{12}	D. Satisfaction← P. Quality.←D. Image	.537**	.205**	.321**	Partial Mediator Effect

[1]Before adding a mediator variable.; [2]After adding a mediator variable.; **$p < 0.01$.

According to Table 7, the direct effect of destination awareness on destination loyalty was discovered to be significant (β=0.662, p<0.05) before adding the mediator variable, perceived quality, which was analyzed in the first stage. When the mediator variable, perceived quality, was contained in the regression analysis as part of the model in the second stage, the effect of destination awareness on destination loyalty (β=0.329, p<0.05) decreased and became significant. In the main model where, perceived quality was added as a mediator variable, it was noticed that destination awareness had a significant indirect effect (β=0.451, p<0.05) on destination loyalty. With these results, the mediating role was confirmed, and the hypothesis *"H9: Perceived quality mediates the relationship between destination awareness and destination loyalty in the meeting tourism."* was supported, as a result.

Before introducing the mediating variable, it was found that there was a significant direct effect of destination awareness on destination satisfaction (β=0.629, p<0.05). In the second stage, a mediating variable, perceived quality, was added to the model. As a result, the effect of destination awareness on destination satisfaction (β=0.167, p<0.05) decreased, but it still remained significant. The findings revealed that destination awareness had a significant indirect effect (β=0.328, p<0.05) on destination satisfaction through perceived quality in the main model where perceived quality was included as a mediating variable. These findings validate the mediating role of perceived quality and support the hypothesis that *"H10: Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination awareness on destination satisfaction in the meeting tourism."*

Before adding the mediating variable, the direct effect of destination image on destination loyalty was confirmed to be significant (β=0.541, p<0.05). In the second stage, when perceived quality, as a mediating variable, was included in the model, the effect of destination image on destination loyalty (β=0.248, p<0.05) decreased but remained significant. The results demonstrated that destination image had a significant indirect effect (β=0.451, p<0.05) on destination loyalty through perceived quality in the main model where perceived quality was involved as a mediating variable. These findings approve the mediating role of perceived quality and support the hypothesis that *"H11:*

Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination image on destination loyalty in the meeting tourism".

In advance of adding the mediating variable, the direct effect of destination image on destination satisfaction was obtained to be significant (β=0.537, p<0.05). In the second stage, when perceived quality, as a mediating variable, was contained in the model, the effect of destination image on destination satisfaction (β=0.205, p<0.05) decreased but remained significant. The results exhibited that destination image had a significant indirect effect (β=0.321, p<0.05) on destination satisfaction through perceived quality in the main model where perceived quality was involved as a mediating variable. These findings prove the mediating role of perceived quality and support the hypothesis that *"H12: Perceived quality mediates the effect of destination image on destination satisfaction in the meeting tourism".*"

In the study, the research process, which was carried out in three stages, was tried to be briefly summarized. The first step of the mediator role analysis suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986), which is "the independent variable influencing the dependent variable", was confirmed, as a result." In the second stage of the study, the variables affected by the mediator variable were inspected within the scope of the research purpose. In the third stage, the impacts of the exogenous (independent) variable on the endogenous (dependent) variable were analyzed for direct effects. At the end of this three-stage process, the model proposed in the research gave meaningful results.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Thanks to its such benefits as extending the tourism season, diversifying market types, contributing to the country's economy, flourishing business potential, and promoting the destination to the world, meeting tourism is regarded a crucial alternative to business tourism. Meetings may supply academic, scientific, promotional, and advertising, marketing and sales purposes. The structure of meetings may vary according to sectoral expectations and characteristics. Meeting guests participate in meeting tourism activities to exchange information, follow new trends, solve their business faster with face-to-face connections, follow current sectoral issues and scientific developments more closely, exchange academic knowledge, meet new people from the same profession, socialize, see beautiful places, have fun, relax, and gain motivation, among other purposes. Although the expectations and characteristics of meeting guests differ, their destination evaluations converge at a common point. One of the key factors impacting the perception of meeting guests is the unique features and attractions of the destination, in conjunction with the quality of services enabled in meeting rooms or accommodation establishments. These features leave a lasting impression on the guest's mind, causing to favorable thoughts and recommendations about the destination to others. This ultimately promotes to the likelihood of future visits to the destination. It is important to create awareness and improve the destination's image, indeed. The perception of the destination's image may differ relying on the guest's expectations, which highlights the significance of building a common understanding of perceived quality. To accomplish this, tourism businesses must address regular efforts to enhance the perceived quality of their services. All improvement efforts made by tourism businesses should better be directed towards building destination satisfaction and loyalty, since sustainability and competitive advantage are rooted in this foundation. The objective of this study is to examine the intermediary function of perceived quality in the relationship between destination awareness and image and the outcome of destination satisfaction and loyalty

in the context of business tourism. A sample of guests attending meetings at a 5-star hotel in Belek/Antalya was selected, and evaluations were conducted to realize this goal.

Based on the research objectives, direct and indirect effects were tested in the analysis performed. Accordingly, this study asserted a direct effect of destination awareness on destination loyalty and destination satisfaction. Furthermore, the investigation revealed a direct relationship between destination image and both destination loyalty and destination satisfaction. Similar results were found in previous studies examining these variables. According to Kodaş (2021), who conducted research on brand, destination brand awareness, perceived quality, and destination brand image have a favorable impact on destination brand loyalty. In a similar vein, Davras and Demircioğlu (2021) found strong evidence for the positive influence of perceived destination quality and destination loyalty on word-of-mouth marketing, which is widely regarded as a significant indicator of satisfaction. Chen and Myagmarsuren (2010) mentioned the impact of destination awareness, destination image, perceived quality, satisfaction, and destination loyalty on each other. On the contrary, Omo-Obas and Anning-Dorson (2022) asserted that destination image plays a critical role in visitors' satisfaction, and that visitor experience has a positive impact on both satisfaction and loyalty. Lai and Vinh (2013) found noteworthy associations between destination awareness, visitor satisfaction, and destination loyalty. Moreover, their research provided evidence that online promotional activities could enhance destination loyalty. Özdemir et al. (2012) showed that there emerge significant relationships between visitor profile, satisfaction, and loyalty. Setiawan, Troena and Armanu (2014) stressed the importance of electronic word-of-mouth marketing, which has a direct and significant influence on destination image. Their study found that electronic word-of-mouth's indirect impact on satisfaction and loyalty is entirely mediated by destination image. Meanwhile, Artuğer et al., (2013) determined that destination image has a positive and powerful connection with destination loyalty, with participants reporting a generally positive perception of the destination. They also found that cognitive image has a greater impact on the formation of destination loyalty than affective image. Gün, Durmaz and Tutcu (2019) conducted a study and determined that destination image has a significant and favorable influence on visitor satisfaction. Similarly, Esen and Bahar (2019) discovered that destination image has an effect on both visitor satisfaction and destination loyalty, and that visitor satisfaction also plays a role in destination loyalty. These results are in agreement with the findings of the present study.

The present study investigated the role of perceived quality as a mediator in the connection between destination awareness and both destination loyalty and destination satisfaction. Additionally, the study evaluated the mediating effect of perceived quality in the relationship between destination image and both destination loyalty and destination satisfaction. A comprehensive literature review was conducted on the variables examined in the study, including the mediating role of perceived quality. This review led to the identification of various relevant studies. In a study conducted by Koçoğlu (2019), it was found that there is a positive correlation between destination brand image and destination brand loyalty, and that perceived destination quality partially mediated this relationship. Uslu and İnanır (2020) also observed that destination image has a significant impact on perceived destination quality and destination satisfaction, with perceived destination quality partially mediating the relationship between destination image and destination satisfaction. Additionally, Bayraktar (2022) utilized mediator analysis to validate the intermediary function of perceived service quality in the impact of brand experience on

behavioral intention. The study conducted by Chi, Yeh and Yang (2009) found that perceived quality and brand loyalty acted as mediators in the relationship between brand awareness and consumer purchase intention. Similarly, Wang et al., (2016) discovered that perceived value and visitor satisfaction played a mediating role in the association between destination image and loyalty. These findings provide evidence for the mediating impact of perceived quality, which is consistent with the outcomes of the current investigation. While there are studies that employ perceived quality as a mediator, no other similar study has been found testing a model specifically for meeting tourism in the tourism industry. This aspect emphasizes the originality of the study and presents that it was prepared to contribute to the field.

The variables discussed in the study were handled separately and evaluated together many times in different application areas. This article, unlike the existing studies in the literature, focuses on making inferences about meeting tourism by using five variables together. In particular, testing the mediating role of perceived quality distinguishes this article from similar studies in the literature. There appear certain limitations to the research, which may also aid as suggestions for future studies. The research was performed in a specific region, in a particular hotel, on a certain scale, and within a limited time frame. If the research were carried out in different regions, more generalizable results could be gained, and comparisons could be made between different regions. The research was conducted in a resort hotel, whereas meeting tourism is also a type of tourism that city hotels are interested in. Research on meeting tourism in city hotels may yield different results, therefore. The use of short-form scales was preferred specifically during the participants' non-meeting hours to avoid any backlash from hotel managers and to not disturb guests. The use of different scales on similar topics may result in different outcomes. Additionally, conducting the research over a longer period may allow for longitudinal analysis."

The research findings suggest some recommendations for the industry. In meeting tourism, the tourism sector mostly works with agencies or organization companies. For this reason, hotels can avoid direct contact with guests. Participants of meeting tourism communicate directly with the employees of the agency or organization company. The inability of the agencies or the organization company to solve the problems related to the hotel can cause significant problems in terms of loyalty and satisfaction. It should not be forgotten that the participants of meeting tourism can be guests of the hotel independently of meeting tourism. Therefore, it can be suggested that hotels should tend to provide services without distinguishing meeting tourism participants from their own guests. The study discloses that perceived quality is a critical mediator variable in destination satisfaction and loyalty. Owing to the necessity of hotels with a sustainability approach, the approach towards guests in hotels for meeting tourism should be the same as for guests during peak season. In meeting tourism, common areas are crucial for participant interaction. Therefore, cleanliness, comfort, facilities, equipment upgrades, and the number of employees is the main criteria to be taken into consideration. There are several important considerations for meeting guests, including but not limited to: the availability of appropriate parking spaces, the provision of soundproof conference rooms of high quality, conference halls equipped with professional audio and video facilities, well-maintained restroom facilities, attentive and responsive employees, refreshment offerings, natural attractions, and convenient transportation options. These factors are primary criteria for ensuring a successful meeting experience for guests. Regular innovations, service quality improvement, process improvement, and utilization of technology are

necessary to maintain and improve the destination image in meeting tourism. Meeting tourism should better be encouraged as an important activity for the sustainability of the hotel among all employees. Additionally, hotel management should better strive to collaborate with local authorities, meeting organizations, professional organizers, international associations and organizations, meeting and visitor bureaus, and meeting tourism departments.

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