



## Evaluation of Vegan and Vegetarian Customers' Reviews Within the Scope of Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model

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### ABSTRACT

*The increase in the number of vegans/vegetarians in recent years has led to their evaluation as potential tourists in the tourism sector. This study investigates whether Antalya, a well-known tourist destination in Turkey, meets the needs of vegan/vegetarian tourists. Using social media comments as data, the study applied the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model (EDM) to evaluate tourist experiences. The results show that 87.5% of vegan visitors had their expectations met, while 12.5% reported dissatisfaction. Of the satisfied tourists, 46% indicated an intention to return and recommend the destination. Positive feedback highlighted friendly staff, quality of service, pleasant atmosphere, convenient location, and reasonable prices. In contrast, negative feedback, although less frequent, mentioned inadequate labeling of vegan food, language barriers with staff, and inconsistent quality of service. This study highlights the importance of food quality, effective labeling, and service standards in ensuring the satisfaction of vegan travelers. To increase Antalya's appeal to vegan tourists, it is recommended that businesses train*

### RESUMEN

*El aumento en el número de veganos/vegetarianos en los últimos años ha llevado a su evaluación como turistas potenciales en el sector turístico. Este estudio investiga si Antalya, un conocido destino turístico en Turquía, satisface las necesidades de los turistas veganos/vegetarianos. Utilizando comentarios en redes sociales como datos, el estudio aplicó el Modelo de Expectativa-Desconfirmación (EDM) para evaluar las experiencias turísticas. Los resultados muestran que el 87,5% de los visitantes veganos vieron cumplidas sus expectativas, mientras que el 12,5% reportó insatisfacción. De los turistas satisfechos, el 46% indicó su intención de regresar y recomendar el destino. Los comentarios positivos destacaron la amabilidad del personal, la calidad del servicio, el ambiente agradable, la ubicación conveniente y los precios razonables. Por el contrario, los comentarios negativos, aunque menos frecuentes, mencionaron el etiquetado inadecuado de la comida vegana, las barreras lingüísticas con el personal y la calidad inconsistente del servicio. Este estudio destaca la importancia de la calidad de la comida, el etiquetado efectivo y los estándares de servicio para garantizar la satisfacción de los viajeros veganos. Para*

staff on vegan dietary needs, improve English language skills, and offer diverse, clearly labeled vegan menu options. These measures can help position Antalya as a more attractive destination for vegan travelers while increasing overall customer satisfaction.

#### KEYWORDS

Vegan; Vegetarian; Expectancy-disconfirmation model; Antalya, Consumer reviews

umentar el atractivo de Antalya para los turistas veganos, se recomienda que los negocios capaciten a su personal sobre las necesidades dietéticas veganas, mejoren sus conocimientos de inglés y ofrezcan opciones de menú veganas diversas y claramente etiquetadas. Estas medidas pueden ayudar a posicionar Antalya como un destino más atractivo para los viajeros veganos, a la vez que aumentan la satisfacción general del cliente.

#### PALABRAS CLAVE

Vegano; Vegetariano; Modelo de expectativas-desconfirmación; Antalya, Opiniones de consumidores

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Interest and inclination towards veganism and vegetarianism are steadily increasing (Kaminski *et al.*, 2020; Weiper & Vonk, 2021). Although these two concepts are related, they are not identical. Vegetarians do not consume any form of animal meat in their diet, while vegans abstain from both animal-based foods and products containing animal-derived ingredients. Additionally, vegans do not purchase or use such products (Petti *et al.*, 2017). The largest vegan community in the world, The Vegan Society (2020), defines veganism as follows: "*Veganism is a philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose; and by extension, promotes the development and use of animal-free alternatives for the benefit of animals, humans, and the environment. In dietary terms, it denotes the practice of dispensing with all products derived wholly or partly from animals.*" Vegans reject animal-sourced products and also avoid products tested on animals. Vegans aim to eliminate all forms of animal exploitation to the greatest extent possible, and they pursue these efforts both individually and collectively (Souza *et al.*, 2020). Products that vegans avoid purchasing include cosmetics with animal-derived ingredients,

furniture, and even clothing (Puuronen, 2008; Kansanen, 2013; Barrero Toral, 2016).

Vegan and vegetarian dietary choices are driven by various sources of motivation for individuals, including ethical, cognitive, social, ecological, and health-related factors (Güler & Çağlayan, 2021). Among these motivational sources are a desire to oppose animal cruelty or not contribute to it (Hoek *et al.*, 2004), a wish for a healthier lifestyle from certain perspectives (Key *et al.*, 2006; Petti *et al.*, 2017), aversion to consuming meat (Kenyon & Barker, 1998), awareness of the adverse ecological impacts of animal-based food consumption (Gaard, 2002), food beliefs, peer or family influences (Lea & Worsley, 2001), and certain religious beliefs like Buddhism (Fraser, 2003). Global animal agriculture is a significant contributor to environmental degradation, human health issues, and animal suffering (Bryant, 2019). Furthermore, raising animals for food is a major factor in eutrophication, acidification, freshwater depletion, deforestation, and climate change (Poore & Nemecek, 2018). It is estimated that approximately 14.5% of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions are associated with animal agriculture. Additionally, due to land demand for animal farming or feed production, it is reported that up to 91% of deforestation in the Amazon is a result of animal agriculture (Margulis,

2003). Globally, it's estimated that over 90% of farm animals are kept in cages in factory farms throughout their entire lives (Anthis & Anthis, 2019), making contemporary animal agriculture one of the greatest moral failures of our time (Poore & Nemecek, 2018).

In an era where communication channels have become increasingly widespread, and people can easily convey their negative thoughts about animal products to others, the number of vegans is rapidly rising. According to 2023 statistics, approximately 1.1% (88 million) of the world's population are vegans. The highest percentage of vegans, 19%, resides in India, while the UK has 2 million vegans, and the United States has 1 million. Belgium has 3% of its population as vegans, Israel has over 5%, Austria has 1.45%, and so on. The vegan food market, which was valued at \$14.2 billion in 2014, is estimated to reach \$31.4 billion by 2026 (Osborn, 2023). Considering all these developments, it is evident that vegans can be considered a new type of tourist. Food and beverage consumption is a fundamental need that travelers bring with them as part of their lifestyle, whether for religious or lifestyle reasons (Son & Xu, 2013; Lee *et al.*, 2014). The availability of food and beverage services at a destination is a crucial factor in why tourists choose to visit a particular place (Rimmington & Yüksel, 1998; Quan & Wang, 2004). Studies conducted by Hopwood *et al.* (2020) and Janssen *et al.* (2016) have shed light on the requirements and anticipations of vegan and vegetarian travelers. These studies emphasize the concerns as well, as health and environmental reasons that drive individuals to adopt a plant-based diet. The motivations align closely with the food-related expectations of vegan and vegetarian tourists when it comes to the availability of food options that meet their preferences and ethical standards at the places they visit.

In Türkiye, there is a growing number of vegan-friendly accommodations, food and beverage businesses, grocery stores, and markets catering to approximately 80,000 vegans (Tapınç, 2021). Examples of accommodations include Altinyunus Resort & Thermal Hotel, Venezia Palace, Otel Zeytinada, and Omm Inn. Notable businesses in Istanbul include Vegan Bakkal, Vegan Dükkan, Makai, İyi Lokanta, Bi Nevi Deli, Muhtelif Mekan, and Mahatma. In Izmir, there are places like Yaşam Kafe and Seromoni Kafe, while in Ankara, establishments such as Vegiso and Veganka are on the rise (Vatan & Türkbaş, 2018). The rise in vegan and vegetarian populations and businesses in Türkiye has significantly boosted academic research on these topics (Kaytez & Tunçay, 2020; Ayyıldız & Sezgin, 2021; Güler & Çağlayan, 2021; Türker & Ayyıldız, 2021). Sünnetçioğlu *et al.* (2017) found that vegans face challenges when dining out, such as menu content, staff attitudes, and overall experiences. Ayyıldız & Sezgin (2021) highlighted issues in food and beverage establishments, including high prices, lack of trust, and insufficient staff knowledge regarding menu content.

The purpose of this research is to assess the attractiveness of Antalya by analyzing its appeal to vegan and vegetarian travelers in alignment with the increasing trend toward veganism. The study aims to explore the experiences of vegan and vegetarian travelers in Antalya and gauge their satisfaction levels. It also seeks to delve into the reasons behind any dissatisfaction they may have encountered and assess their likelihood of returning to the destination. Although Antalya is a globally recognized tourism destination, there is a lack of comprehensive research on its attractiveness to vegan tourists (Yu *et al.*, 2024). While vegan tourism attracts attention as a growing niche market (Akkan & Bozyiğit, 2020), Antalya's potential in this field is a missing topic. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the

extent to which businesses in the region meet the expectations of vegan tourists. The research aims to evaluate whether Antalya is a suitable destination for vegan tourists and to provide improvement suggestions for tourism businesses by analyzing their positive and negative experiences. Antalya is also one of the most visited cities in Türkiye with its wide tourism potential and globally recognized destination quality. Therefore, evaluating the services offered by the city for vegan tourists can reveal important results not only for the region but also for the tourism sector in general.

Additionally, the study will provide recommendations and evaluate tourists' satisfaction levels based on the Expectation Dissatisfaction Model by identifying both positive and negative aspects of service offered by tourism businesses. The study examined all the evaluations based on insights gathered from social media comments.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1) VEGAN/VEGETARIAN TOURISTS IN TOURISM SECTOR

In the last few years, there has been a growing interest in the vegan movement and veganism (Souza *et al.*, 2020; Bertella, 2020). It is believed that a plant-based diet, which restricts animal products, can improve personal health, alleviate animal suffering, reduce global shortages, and enhance sustainability (Wu, 2014). While Hoek *et al.* (2004) draw attention to the emergence of 'vegetarian-focused consumerism' addressing ethical and environmental concerns, Fox (1999) recommends that a vegetarian economy, affecting both developed and developing countries, contributes to 'ecosystem health' by diminishing the effect on land degradation through environmental pollution, intensive agriculture, and grazing.

Veganism is defined as a "*philosophy and way of living which seeks to exclude—as far as is possible and practicable—all forms of exploitation of, and*

*cruelty to, animals for food, clothing, or any other purpose*" (The Vegan Society, 2020). This definition emphasizes a lifestyle beyond diet, comprising clothing, furniture, and personal care. The restrictive clause of the definition *as far as is possible and practicable* is crucial because, given the wide range from tennis balls tested on animals to pharmaceuticals, absolute avoidance of animal products is nearly impossible. Even in the process of growing vegan foods, numerous animals unavoidably die, such as rodents (Gruen & Jones, 2015).

Veganism involves the adoption of a diet that excludes all animal products, including meat, dairy, eggs, and other animal-derived products (Souza *et al.*, 2020). Various factors contribute to people adopting a vegan or vegetarian diet. Examples of these factors include ethical and religious beliefs, the environmental impact of the diet, the health benefits of a plant-based diet, and concerns for animal welfare (Aktaş *et al.*, 2019). In a study aimed at identifying the motivation sources of vegetarians, Fox & Ward (2008) found that vegetarianism was initially a significant source of motivation for preventive action against health-related reasons and reducing the symptoms of diseases. The second motivation source is ethical concerns about animal welfare. Ethical reasons significantly motivate vegetarians based on both emotional and philosophical grounds. Out of the 33 vegetarians who participated in the study, only one identified environmentalism as their primary motivation. Some empirical evidence indicates that the main driving force behind veganism is an ethical concern for animal welfare. Furthermore, expected health benefits come in second place, with an expected advantage for the environment ranking third. Additionally, ethical concerns for animals encourage vegetarians to maintain their dietary choices

consistently and even transition from vegetarianism to veganism (Rosenfeld, 2018).

The challenges and difficulties of being vegan can be grouped under three common themes: (1) individual barriers and preferences, such as difficulties in giving up meat, dairy, and egg consumption and catering to taste preferences; (2) practical obstacles like limited options when dining out and a lack of time to change dietary habits; and (3) social barriers such as stigmatization, prejudice, and harassment against vegans (Souza *et al.*, 2020). Finding food outside their local area is often difficult

for vegans due to the limited availability and higher cost of vegan products. For traveling vegans/vegetarians, offering a variety of high-quality meals is essential to effectively meet their tastes and needs (Akkan & Bozyiğit, 2020). Academic research focusing on the needs of such tourists has started to take place in the literature. Table 1 summarizes studies on vegan/vegetarian perspectives in tourism, focusing on objectives, methods, and findings.

Findings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The study explored the attributes of a vegan hotel and identified six attributes: health and beauty, guilt, social ethics, environmental concern, religion, and curiosity.</li> <li>-The attributes of vegan hotels have a positive effect on well-being perceptions, perceived advantage and enjoyment, and the positive behavioral intentions of vegan hotel guests.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The promotion of meatless gastronomy can be seen not as a threat but as a great opportunity that will help to support sustainability and make the destinations even more attractive.</li> <li>-It is important to understand that the success of such an initiative depends on the cooperation of all the stakeholders, strategic marketing, and the ability to keep the prices reasonable.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-In a vegan-friendly destination, aspects such as commitment to vegan philosophy, vegan cuisine, meeting the needs of vegan visitors, eliminating or reducing animal exploitation, complementary social interactions, and positive attitudes of local people stand out.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Vegan hotels enhance consumption value by integrating health, ethical, and environmental values, fostering customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth. However, perceived costs may diminish these effects, highlighting the importance of balanced pricing and effective communication of benefits.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The vegan lifestyle significantly shapes travel experiences and influences destination choices.</li> <li>-Vegans prioritize destinations with plant-based dining options, ethical practices, and accessibility to vegan-friendly services.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Travelers are motivated to experience a tour where vegan food is available, as well as to encourage a positive attitude toward vegan food amongst their family.</li> <li>-There are links between vegan tour and its positive psychological benefits.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Vegetarians choose hotels that are clean, animal-friendly, and that care about animal rights.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Both gender and level of education do not affect the priority that these tourists assign to their nutrition when they travel. However, age, nationality, and income level do affect the prioritization that these tourists give nutrition when they travel.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-When people choose vegetarian restaurants, they prefer ones that provide Chinese-style cuisines, organic foods, cuisines that can help to lose weight, interiors with simple décor, and ones that promote environmental protection.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The travel motivators and the type of travel impact the attitudes toward food habits while traveling. For vegan culinary tourists, the quality of the food has a bigger impact on the travel experience than for those with other travel motivators. Amongst all the respondents the impact on travel experience was mostly seen more as a positive issue rather than negative. The majority of the respondents did not feel that their diet influenced getting to know the culture of the destination.</li> </ul>

Author(s)	Country	Objective	Theory Applied	Methodology
Yu, Kim, Baah, & Han	South Korea	-To explore the attributes of vegan hotels using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, -To investigate the effects of the explored attributes on perceived well-being, perceived advantage, perceived enjoyment, and behavioral intentions.	N/A	Qualitative and Quantitative
Lochman & Wagner	-	To evaluate the potential impact of promoting and increasing the availability of meatless gastronomy on the attractiveness of a popular European urban destination.	N/A	Qualitative
Basol & Alvarez	Turkiye	To explore how to develop vegan-friendly tourism destinations.	N/A	Qualitative
Yu, Kim, Baah, Seo & Han	Korea	To study how vegan-friendly attributes impact consumer behavior in hotels.	The Consumption Value Theory	Qualitative & Quantitative
Ottensbacher, Busam, Harrington & Allhoff	-	To explore how the vegan lifestyle shapes travel experiences, focusing on challenges faced during travel and key factors influencing destination selection.	N/A	Quantitative
Li, Liu, Cai, & Scott	China	To examine the features of a vegan tour to Wuyi Mountain, explore tourists' motivations for joining, and their benefits from such a tour. Motivations include personal vegan food preferences, changing family members' attitudes toward vegan food, and visiting local attractions.	N/A	Qualitative
Dilek & Fennell	Turkiye	To investigate the hotel selection preferences of vegetarians in Turkiye.	N/Av	Quantitative
Molina-Gomez, Ruiz, & Mele	Spain	To understand the factors that determine the destination choice of vegetarian tourists.	N/A	Quantitative
Cheng, Lin, & Tsai	Taiwan	-To understand and evaluate the customers' preferences when selecting vegetarian restaurants. -To research ways to encourage consumers to choose vegetarian restaurants.	N/A	Quantitative
Kansanen	Finland	To figure out how a vegan diet influences travel experiences and to understand what solutions vegans have come up with in order to deal with a situation where suitable food is not available.	N/A	Qualitative

Year	2024	2024	2024	2023	2023	2021	2018	2018	2014	2013
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Table 1. Empirical studies in tourism literature with a focus on vegan/vegetarian perspectives

The dining experience greatly influences the perceptions and satisfaction of travelers. Unfavorable feedback could influence their loyalty and how they view the place they are visiting, ultimately affecting the destination's reputation (Molina-Gomez *et al.*, 2018). Research carried out by Ottenbacher *et al.* (2023) has shown that vegan travelers expressed dissatisfaction with the options and subpar quality of vegan meals available to them during their travels. The study also highlighted that the primary concern raised by vegan travelers is the common mix-up between veganism and vegetarianism. For vegan tourists, finding products and meals that meet their expectations and requirements can be quite challenging, which significantly limits their available options (Barrero Toral, 2016).

Dilek & Dilek (2020: 152) defined the vegan tourist as “*primarily a person who has a sense of responsibility, prioritizes sustainability, opposes all kinds of the commodification of animals and transforms this into a way of life*”. Vegan tourists, hailing from a group exceeding 600 million people worldwide who have embraced vegan or vegetarian diets (Vatan & Türkbaş, 2018), share similar expectations with other tourists, seeking novel experiences, knowledge, and flavors. Therefore, travel companies offer diverse dietary options to ensure a satisfying experience for their customers. When the primary goal of a trip is to relish food and actively engage in culinary activities, it is inevitable that food considerations become decisive factors in destination and activity choices. Many travel companies explore various culinary offerings to provide their customers with a positive and

memorable experience throughout their journey (Barrero Toral, 2016).

According to the research conducted by Zouni and Klouvidaki (2022) on the destination selection of vegans, it was found that the most important reason for traveling among vegans is leisure, while the primary source of information for destination selection is articles in newspapers and magazines. Another significant finding of this research is the concerns regarding food options at the destinations. While the respondents’ top priority is the attractions, vegan restaurants are the second most important factor. Cheng *et al.*’s (2014) study indicates that vegetarian tourists prioritize food quality, cuisine style, health concept, restaurant design, and environmental protection when selecting a restaurant. Specifically, the most important factors are food quality, particularly if it is organic, the style of cuisine, the health benefits of the food, the design and ambiance of the restaurant, and the restaurant’s commitment to environmental sustainability. In the study by Kaygalak Çelebi and Günlü Küçükaltan (2017), which was conducted in Türkiye and focused on the tourism experiences of vegan bloggers, vegan local foods emerged as an important factor in the bloggers' travel experiences. However, the bloggers also particularly emphasized the inadequacy of vegan hotels and restaurants where these foods could be experienced.

The proliferation of vegan/vegetarian dietary models has led to a gradual increase in the number of destinations, accommodation establishments, and restaurants sporting vegetarian or vegan labels. Vegetarian and vegan festivals are organized in many regions around the world. From a culinary tourism perspective, Didim, following in the

footsteps of Barcelona, one of the world's foremost destinations, has put forth its candidacy as a *Vegan-Friendly City*. In this context, Didim has established itself as a destination hosting the Vegan Festival since 2017 (Aktaş *et al.*, 2019). Dilek & Fennell (2018), examined the hotel choices of 328 vegans/vegetarians at this vegan festival in Didim and also examined in detail their preferences for the service they received at restaurants. The study's findings on restaurant selection indicate that vegetarian tourists place significant importance on animal-friendly and environmentally-friendly practices, hygiene and food safety, vegetarian menu options, and the knowledge level of the staff. Specifically, factors such as food safety standards, the absence of chemical additives and GMOs, healthy and organic food, offering a separate vegetarian menu, and staff providing information about food and beverages are among the most important considerations. On the other hand, Başol & Alvarez (2023) investigated Didim's potential as a vegan destination and found that vegan tourists in Didim highly value the availability of authentic local vegan cuisine and the overall vegan-friendly atmosphere when selecting dining options. The research highlights that while Didim offers some vegan-friendly restaurants and local foods, the limited options and lack of promotional materials to guide vegan visitors indicate a need for further development to fully meet the expectations of vegan tourists.

## **2.2) EXPECTANCY-DISCONFIRMATION MODEL AND CUSTOMER PREFERENCES**

The study of consumer buying behavior in marketing began in the 1950s (Nilsson, 2010:35). Consumer buying behavior encompasses individuals' processes of researching, selecting, purchasing, using, and evaluating products or services, as well as their subjective mental and material activities (Xinhui & Han, 2016). The central

elements of this framework are consumer satisfaction and expectation.

Research on psychology and organizational behavior frequently utilizes the concept of expectations. It is generally accepted that expectations are subjective evaluations and judgments that people or groups make in particular circumstances (Jia *et al.*, 2024). Customers' expectations include their assumptions and forecasts on the product or service they will receive (Benek, 2022). Consumers' expectations are shaped by their past experiences with the product or service; personal needs and objectives; the individual's personality traits; the characteristics features and experiences the brand has so far offered; the possibilities for future goods and services the brand may give; and the intangible feeling the product creates in the customer (Altın, 2021; Şengün, 2021; Canoz & Gündüz, 2022; Dixit, 2013). Consumers with high expectations for a product or service tend to have a higher level of uncertainty avoidance. The satisfaction level of such consumers tends to be lower, whereas those with low service expectations tend to have a high level of satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is a concept highly emphasized and explored by the marketing and service sectors, as it is regarded as a critical success factor in various industries, including accommodation (Barbosa, 2019; Alzoubi *et al.*, 2021). Satisfaction is defined from the consumer's perspective by Oliver (1981: 29) as "*the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer's prior feelings about the consumption experience.*" Customer satisfaction, which enhances customer loyalty, positive word-of-mouth communication, the psychological response of the customer, customer retention, and consequently the profitability of the company, is also defined as an overall evaluation of the performance

of various features that constitute a product or service (Bartikowski & Llosa, 2004; Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014). One of the most widely used theories to explain customer satisfaction is the Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), which posits that satisfaction results from the inconsistency between expectations and perceived performance (Bartikowski & Llosa, 2004; Bhattacharjee, 2001; Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014; Hui *et al.*, 2007). This theory has become the most commonly applied method to investigate customer satisfaction and dissatisfaction with products and services (Lee *et al.*, 2022).

Consumer behavior is a complex process that encompasses activities individuals undertake when seeking, selecting, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products and services to satisfy their needs, wishes, and desires. Various internal and external factors influence consumer behaviors and satisfaction, with emotional concerns and expectations being among the primary factors. The initial propositions that linked disconfirmed expectations to customer satisfaction were developed by Engel *et al.* (1968) and Howard & Sheth (1969, 145-150).

In this regard, Engel *et al.* (1978) proposed the Consumer Decision Making Model (EKB Model), which explains how consumers make decisions during the decision-making process and select from the list of available alternatives. This model, built upon consumer psychology theories and models developed by Howard (1963) and Nicosia (1966), consists of five steps in which information is processed before consumption decisions are made (cited in Oliver, 1980). On the other hand, according to Howard and Sheth (1969), the concept of satisfaction expresses the degree of inconsistency between expectations and perceived experiences. Expectancy confirmation/disconfirmation can be determined through two methods, such as the

inferred approach and the direct approach. The inferred approach involves calculating the inconsistency between expectations and performance evaluations, while the direct approach uses scales to measure confirmation/disconfirmation, such as "better than expected" and "worse than expected" (Dai *et al.*, 2020: 6).

Stages of the model include the recognition of a need or problem, acquiring relevant information from various sources, evaluating alternatives based on the consumer's personal criteria in determining preferences, purchasing the selected alternative once a decision is made, and post-purchase evaluation. Satisfied customers tend to form intentions for repeat purchases, while dissatisfied customers discontinue their future use (Bhattacharjee, 2001). If the product or service experience meets or exceeds the expectations held when making the purchase choice, the consumer will be satisfied with their purchase decision. Nevertheless, when product or service expectations are not met, dissonance is experienced. When this happens, the consumer initiates a research, information acquisition, and evaluation process regarding other options (Tan, 2010). This evaluation of the service forms the foundation for the development of feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Nilsson, 2010).

The Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT), also known as the Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT) in the literature (Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014), drew inspiration from the Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) proposed by Leon Festinger (1957). EDT was developed as a way to explain the consumer's decision-making process (Grimmelikhuijsen & Porumbescu, 2017). EDM, which is widely used in the field of tourism (Zehrer *et al.*, 2011; Ye *et al.*, 2019), is depicted in Figure 1.

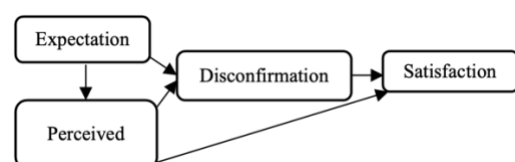


Figure 1. Expectancy disconfirmation model (Oliver, 1980)

According to the Expectation Disconfirmation Theory, individuals enter a certain level of expectation regarding a service just before making a purchase. When they actively use the service, they compare their perceived service performance with their expectations. When perceived performance exceeds expectations, it leads to positive disconfirmation; when it meets expectations, it results in confirmation, and when it falls short of expectations, negative disconfirmation occurs (Serenko & Stach, 2009; Oliver, 1980; Hui *et al.*, 2007; Abrate *et al.*, 2021; Bhattacharjee, 2001; Özer, 1999; Awara & Anyadighibe, 2014; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001).

Olshavsky and Miller (1972), who examined both the positive and negative consequences of disconfirmation of expectation for a product, identified four categories: high expectancy-high performance (HE-HP), high expectancy-low performance (HE-LP), low expectancy-high performance (LE-HP), and low expectancy-low performance (LE-LP). EDT argues that consumer intention to repurchase a product or continue to use a service is primarily determined by their satisfaction from the previous use of that product or service. EDT also considers expectation a determining factor for satisfaction (Bhattacharjee, 2001). This theory introduced by Oliver (1980) has shed light on subsequent research. Building upon EDT, Parasuraman *et al.* (1985, 1988) introduced the Service Quality Model, arguing that perceived service quality is the result of comparing the expected service with the perceived service.

The Expectation Disconfirmation Theory is largely used in research within the tourism sector (Ye *et al.*, 2019; Zehrer *et al.*, 2011; Yüksel & Yüksel, 2001; Pizam & Milman, 1993; Weber, 1997; Abrate *et al.*, 2021; Lakho *et al.*, 2023; Rathjens *et al.*, 2023; Wang *et al.*, 2023). While not directly

mentioning that their research relies on EDT, numerous studies have delved into customer preferences and satisfaction levels, as well as recommendations and the likelihood of customers revisiting establishments. In a study conducted by Kala (2020), it was found that customer preferences were significantly influenced by factors such as the restaurant's location and ambiance along with the quality of service provided. The study also emphasized how traditional cooking methods and locally sourced authentic dishes contributed to a memorable dining experience for patrons. Furthermore, the appearance of restaurant staff and their interactions with customers play a role in boosting customer satisfaction levels and fostering repeat visits to the establishment.

A study by Gvion (2023) focusing on vegan dining establishments in Israel indicates that the increasing presence of vegan restaurants has an impact on customer satisfaction levels and the likelihood of receiving recommendations and repeat visits due to making veganism more accessible and appealing to a wider audience, serving to bridge social divides and project a favorable image of veganism while also dealing with the challenges of upholding its unique ethical and political messages. The research by Li *et al.* (2021) found that catering to the specific dietary requirements of vegan travelers significantly boosts their overall satisfaction, with their travel experiences. Guests were really happy with the vegan food options and the attentive service provided at the venue which went beyond what they expected. Special experiences like tea ceremonies added to their experience. Some issues like not having enough vegan choices and staff not being fully aware of vegan needs led to some negative feedback. In summary, it is key to know and meet the expectations of vegan travelers, for a great experience and positive reviews. Yu *et al.*'s (2023)

research revealed that features of vegan hotels influenced customer satisfaction and loyalty. The study discovered the perceived benefits of choosing vegan accommodations in terms of health advantages, ethical gratification, and environmental support.

Research in the tourism sector delves into what travelers anticipate before their journey begins and examines their experiences while traveling, as well as their reflections after returning home. This research plays a role in helping tourism businesses refine their offerings to delight customers and inspire them to travel again. Furthermore, this body of knowledge is instrumental in advancing understanding throughout the tourism sector including areas, like how tourists seek information before vacations, plan their holidays, and rate their satisfaction levels afterward.

The review of the literature highlights the significance of fulfilling the preferences of vegan travelers with regard to food information accuracy, excellence, service provision, and staff competence. These elements are closely linked to the research aim of evaluating Antalya's appeal to vegan visitors through the EDT model. By examining results from research like the benefits of catering to vegan choices as shown in the study by Barrero Toral (2016) and the obstacles outlined by Souza *et al.* (2020); this investigation seeks to address knowledge gaps concerning how effectively a renowned tourist hotspot, such as Antalya, matches these requirements.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1) PROCEDURE OF DATA COLLECTION**

The current research evaluates the satisfaction levels of tourists visiting Antalya with businesses offering vegan food and beverages. It also evaluates their likelihood of providing recommendations or warnings based on their satisfaction, the extent of their expectations from the businesses they

patronized, and the positive and negative aspects they perceived about these establishments. The research specifically concentrated on the concept of *veganism*, which encompasses *vegetarian* nutrition as well. Furthermore, it limited its scope to comments related only to *nutrition* and did not delve into the consumption habits of vegan individuals beyond dietary considerations.

In this study, the criterion sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used to choose a sample. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects a subgroup representing the universe and is a typical example of the population. It is used especially in cases where the sampling frame is unclear and the researcher is knowledgeable about the population (Lin, 1976). Criterion sampling is the study of all cases that meet a predetermined set of criteria. The criterion is created by the researcher, or a previously prepared list of criteria can be used (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Baltacı, 2018). For criterion sampling, any situation that is the subject of research can be determined as the criterion (Grix, 2010). The criteria used in this research are consuming vegan food and beverages and commenting on Tripadvisor. According to this criterion, a total of 444 comments constitute the sample of the research. In qualitative research, the adequacy of sample size is measured by data depth rather than frequencies. Therefore, samples should consist of participants who best represent the research topic (O'Reilly & Parker, 2013; Yağar, 2023). There are different expressions of various authors regarding the sample size. For example, according to Bertaux (1981), 15 participants are sufficient, according to Charmaz (2006), and according to Green and Thorogood (2018), at least 20 participants are sufficient. According to the literature, it can be said that the number 444 is acceptable for sample adequacy.

<https://doi.org/10.33776/et.v15i1.8252>

Received 24 April 2024; Received in revised form 29 October 2024; Accepted 7 November 2024

In recent years, numerous studies in the field of tourism have utilized online comments as valuable data sources (Fernandes & Fernandes, 2018; Taecharunroj & Mathayomchan, 2019; Özen, 2021; Hu *et al.*, 2022). These comments play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' expectations about destinations and businesses (Narangajavana *et al.*, 2017). Besides, there is a common belief that comments directly from product and service users hold greater reliability compared to information provided by the businesses themselves (Zhang *et al.*, 2021). To this end, TripAdvisor, the most frequented social media platform by tourists planning their trips, with around 463 million monthly users during peak periods (Tripadvisor, 2023), served as a primary data source for this study. The data collected underwent content analysis. Initially, each comment was meticulously examined, and those relevant to the

research scope were identified. Keywords and phrases related to the research model were then highlighted, recorded, and subsequently integrated into the model. Each interpretation provided a singular perspective in the model, considered to be the contribution of an individual. Moreover, when comments employed similar expressions to describe the characteristics of food and beverage businesses, a unified code was assigned for the respective feature. No redundant coding was applied within the same comment. Consequently, each feature assessed in the result section was derived from the interpretation of a single individual.

The data for this study were gathered from the relevant social media network between May 1<sup>st</sup> and May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The data collection process is outlined in the following steps (see Table 2).

Step	Actions
1	Searched for the keyword <i>vegan</i> in the city of <i>Antalya</i> on TripAdvisor. Found results for 343 businesses with relevant reviews.
2	Excluded businesses other than hotels, restaurants/cafes, and facilities outside the Antalya Region due to a system error.
3	Individually accessed the review pages of the remaining 269 businesses and re-searched the <i>vegan</i> keyword. Some businesses had no relevant reviews.
4	Copied and compiled reviews from 205 food and beverage businesses (98 hotels and 107 restaurants/cafes) into a single file, resulting in a total of 746 comments.
5	Reviewed each comment and isolated comments (444) where the author consumed <i>vegan</i> food or beverages, or at least one person in their group (family/friend/partner) did.

Table 2. Steps of the data collection process

### 3.2) VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In this research, researchers conducted open coding by transforming the shared comments into codes. To ensure the validity of the research, a peer confirmation method was employed, and three faculty members confirmed the coding process. Additionally, to assess the research's reliability, tourism experts also examined the codes related to visitor comments, categorizing them as *Agreement* or *Disagreement*. These two categories underwent

the Kappa test, a recognized inter-rater reliability measure. According to Şencan (2005), Kappa values between 0.40 and 0.75 are considered reasonable and indicate agreement. Our Kappa analysis, performed using the MAXQDA 2018 qualitative data analysis program, yielded a Kappa Confidence Coefficient (KGC) value of 0.79, which, according to Şencan (2005), signifies a reliable level of agreement.

### 4. RESULTS

<https://doi.org/10.33776/et.v15i1.8252>

Received 24 April 2024; Received in revised form 29 October 2024; Accepted 7 November 2024

Within the scope of this research, each comment recorded as a dataset was examined to assess satisfaction and dissatisfaction. A total of 444 comments that indicated satisfaction or dissatisfaction with vegan food and beverages were included in the evaluation and interpretation. The research results are presented in two main sections: First, an assessment of EDM based on the comments, and second, an overview of the positive and negative aspects of food and beverage businesses from the perspective of vegan tourists.

#### 4.1) EVALUATION BASED ON THE EXPECTANCY-DISCONFIRMATION MODEL

In this study, researchers considered the expectation variable in the model as the consistent desire to find diverse and high-quality vegan food and beverages. Employing EDM, researchers categorized each comment into two groups: *positive disconfirmation* for comments that exceeded

expectations and *negative disconfirmation* for comments that fell short of expectations, based on whether the stated expectation was met or not. Comments that exceeded expectations were coded as satisfaction, while those that fell short were coded as dissatisfaction. Subsequently, the behaviors of vegan tourists that can influence potential tourists' decisions were identified, as presented in Figure 2.

Initially, statements expressing positive and negative expectations of vegan tourists were segregated. Positive fulfillment of expectations included phrases like "delicious vegan food" (259 reviews) and "a wide variety of vegan options" (169 reviews), while unmet expectations were expressed in statements such as "limited vegan choices" (58 reviews) and "unsatisfying vegan food" (16 reviews), which reflected satisfaction and dissatisfaction rates.



Figure 2. Expectancy-Disconfirmation Model reflection of the study

According to Figure 2, out of the 444 reviews analyzed, 184 only conveyed satisfaction, while 114 recommended the business to both satisfied and

potential vegan tourists. Of the satisfied reviewers, 67 stressed their intention to revisit, with 24 using expressions that combined both recommendations

and intentions to revisit. Among those expressing dissatisfaction, a majority (38 comments) only conveyed dissatisfaction without any other messages, while eight individuals both expressed dissatisfaction and indicated they would not revisit.

Seven individuals, dissatisfied with their experience, warned potential vegan tourists against choosing the establishment. Only two commenters combined warnings with statements of not revisiting.

	Number of Comments	% in Total		Number of Comments	% in Total
Satisfaction	184	41,4	Dissatisfaction	38	8,6
Satisfaction + Recommendation	114	25,7	Dissatisfaction + Intention not to revisit	8	1,8
Satisfaction + Revisiting Intention	67	15	Dissatisfaction + Cautionary Message	7	1,6
Satisfaction + Revisiting Intention + Recommendation	24	5,4	Dissatisfaction + Cautionary Message + Intention not to revisit	2	0,5
<b>Total Satisfaction</b>	<b>389</b>	<b>87,5</b>	<b>Total Dissatisfaction</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>12,5</b>

Table 3. Percentage distribution of satisfaction/dissatisfaction statements

When examining the percentage distribution of the comments in detail, 87.5% (389 comments) expressed satisfaction, while about 31% of these satisfied comments recommended the place to other

potential tourists. Dissatisfaction was evident in only 12.5% of the reviews, and approximately 2.1% of these dissatisfied reviewers cautioned other users against selecting the business.

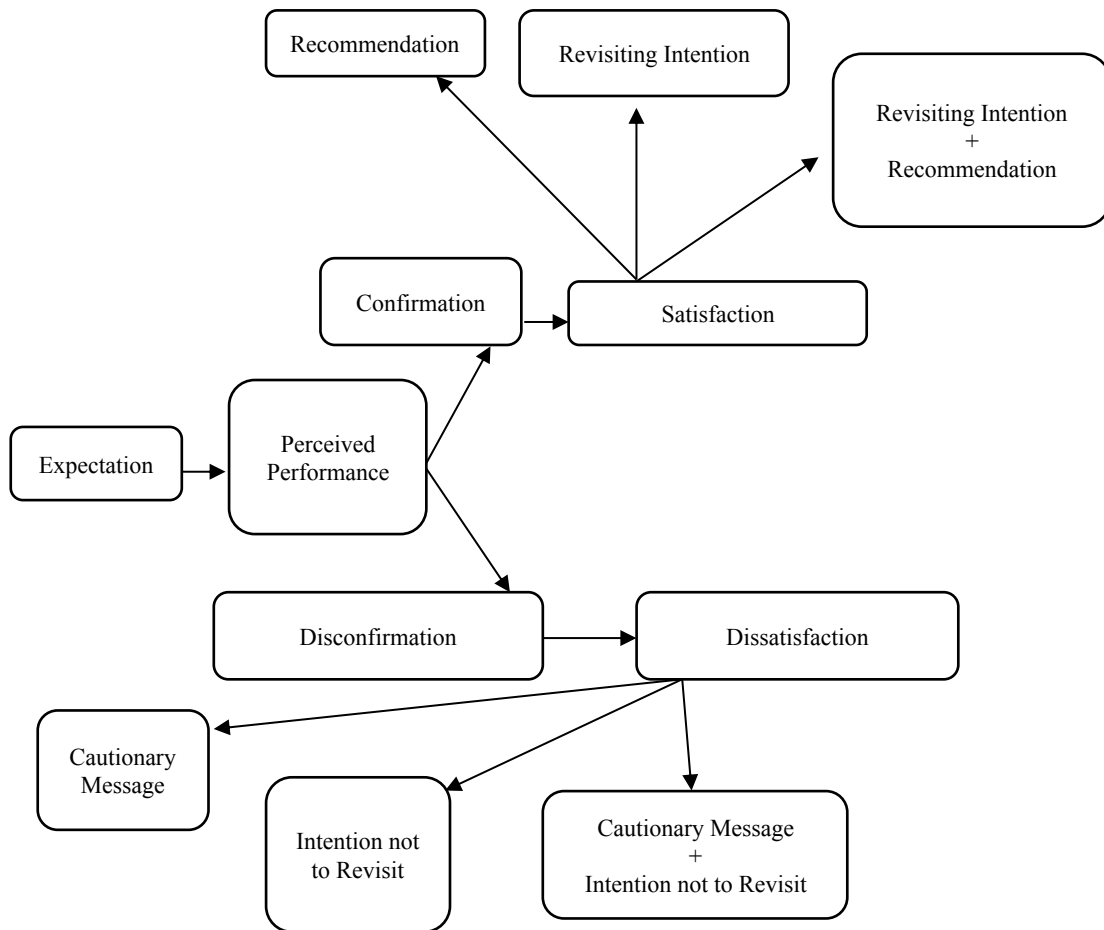


Figure 3. The final model of the study

The model presented in Figure 3 developed through an extensive analysis of TripAdvisor reviews from vegan and vegetarian tourists, applies the expectation-disconfirmation paradigm to vegan tourists' perceptions of food and beverage establishments. It suggests that vegan tourists arrive with expectations about vegan-friendly dining options' availability, quality, and service. Their actual experience, or perceived performance, is then compared to these expectations. When perceived performance meets or exceeds expectations,

satisfaction occurs, leading to intentions to revisit and recommend the establishment, thus fostering positive word-of-mouth. However, when perceived performance falls short, dissatisfaction results, potentially leading to negative perceptions and discouraging future visits. The model underscores the importance of managing expectations in the vegan tourism sector, showing that meeting or exceeding expectations promotes positive consumer behavior, while unmet expectations can harm the reputation of vegan-friendly businesses.

**4.2) PERCEIVED POSITIVE-NEGATIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE BUSINESSES**

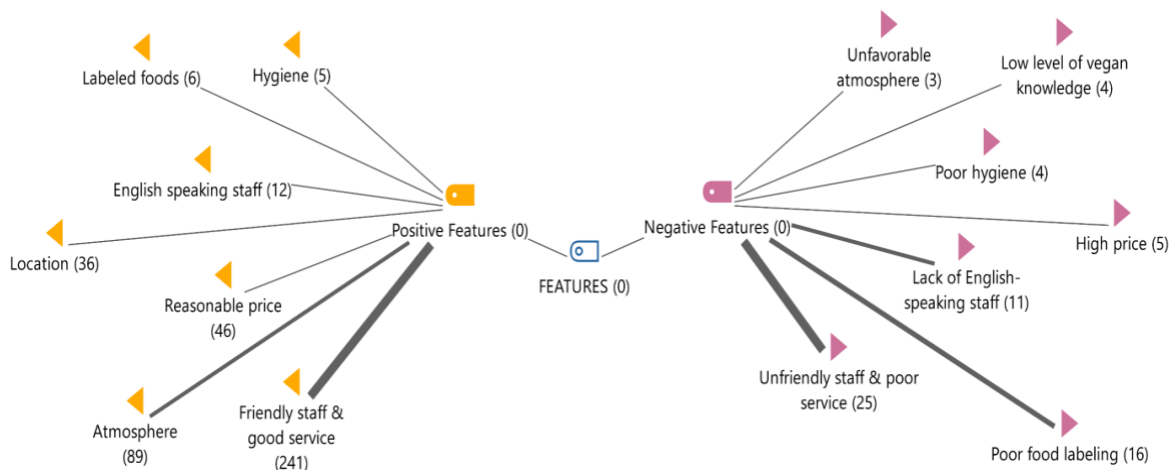


Figure 4. Perceived positive and negative features of the food & beverage businesses

Figure 4 illustrates that the number of positive characteristics emphasized by vegan tourists in their comments significantly outweighs the negative ones. Among the positive aspects, "friendly staff & good service" received the highest number of mentions (241 comments). Following closely were positive mentions about the establishment's atmosphere (89 reviews), affordable pricing (46 reviews), and location (36 reviews). Although the presence of English-speaking staff, hygiene, and the availability of vegan-labeled products were not frequently repeated, the absence of these features was highlighted more often among the negative aspects. The most frequently mentioned negative feature was "unfriendly staff & poor service," which can be contrasted with the most commonly cited positive characteristic. Other negative aspects included inadequate food labeling (16 comments) and staff members' inability to communicate in English (11 comments), respectively. Several issues were rarely mentioned but deemed significant as they were also emphasized in the positive aspects. These issues include high pricing, subpar hygiene, limited knowledge about veganism, and an unpleasant atmosphere.

## 5. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This research evaluates whether Antalya, one of Türkiye's most prominent tourist destinations with a

significant position in the global tourism market, is an appealing choice for vegan travelers within the framework of EDM. Additionally, it assesses the positive and negative attributes of the establishments providing food and beverage services to vegan tourists. The study's data was collected through a thorough examination of one of the most widely commented tourism-oriented social media platforms, Tripadvisor. For vegans who abstain from consuming animal-derived foods, the expectation of finding a variety of high-quality vegan food and beverages plays a pivotal role in selecting holiday destinations (Li *et al.*, 2021). Since traveling beyond their comfort zone can limit food and beverage options for vegans (Barrero Toral, 2016; Souza *et al.*, 2020), the research evaluated this expectation as a fixed factor in the model. Initially, 746 comments were individually scrutinized following various criteria-based eliminations. Among these comments, 444 comments expressing satisfaction or dissatisfaction were considered for the model test.

The analysis of the perceived performance in meeting the expectation within the content of the comments revealed that 259 comments contained statements and expressions conveying the perception of "delicious vegan food," while 168 comments mentioned "plenty of vegan options." Sixteen reviewers emphasized that the food and beverages they consumed were tasteless, and 59 reviewers

complained about the scarcity of vegan options. These results indicated that the expectation was largely met. Applying these results to the model demonstrated high levels of satisfaction among tourists who consumed vegan food and beverages in this region. Within the comments, 184 used expressions of being "satisfied" exclusively, while 114 expressed satisfaction and recommended the place. Additionally, 67 reviews conveyed both satisfaction and an intention to revisit, and 24 comments exhibited satisfaction while also expressing an intention to revisit and recommend. These results are consistent with numerous previous studies (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Reza Jalilvand *et al.*, 2014; Allameh *et al.*, 2015; Mannan *et al.*, 2019; Kumar *et al.*, 2020; Nguyen Viet *et al.*, 2020; Seetanah *et al.*, 2020; Mancı, 2022) that have found positive relationships between satisfaction, loyalty, and revisit intentions across different countries, regions, and services. Moreover, the research's results are also in line with results from previous studies that have identified positive connections between satisfaction and recommendations (Hui *et al.*, 2007; Lee *et al.*, 2007; Altunel & Erkurt, 2015; Čaušević, 2020; Mancı, 2022). Regarding the model analysis in the study, there were 38 comments from tourists who were dissatisfied with the food and beverages they consumed, eight comments from individuals stating they were not satisfied and would not revisit the establishment, seven dissatisfaction comments warning others, and two comments warning other potential customers and those who decided not to revisit due to unmet expectations. As it is seen 55 feedback overall are included in the model. Sánchez-García & Currás-Pérez (2011) demonstrated in their comprehensive study examining the impact of dissatisfaction on tourists' behavior that negative word-of-mouth is a possible outcome. In another study, Lam-González *et al.* (2021) examined the sources of satisfaction,

concluding that tourists' dissatisfactions related to hygiene and crowds have a negative effect on their intention to revisit. However, in the study conducted by Serenko & Stach (2009), no direct relationship was found between positive or negative disconfirmation and customer loyalty and recommendation.

When examining the comments in terms of the emphasis placed by vegans on the characteristics of the establishments where they receive catering services, it becomes evident that friendly staff and good service (mentioned in 241 comments) are the most highlighted positive aspects. Additionally, the atmosphere (89 reviews), reasonable prices (46 reviews), good location (35 reviews), and staff members' ability to speak English (12 reviews) were positive aspects that satisfied consumers who purchased vegan food services. Among the statements regarding the characteristics of food and beverage businesses, positive ones significantly outnumber the negative ones. This aligns with studies showing that personnel behavior and the quality of service have a substantial impact on customer satisfaction (Chow *et al.*, 2007; Turkey & Sengul, 2014; Alhelalat *et al.*, 2017; Mensah & Mensah, 2018; Padma & Ahn, 2020). Similarly, the results of this study are consistent with studies indicating that the atmosphere of a food and beverage business positively affects customer satisfaction and loyalty (Ünal *et al.*, 2014; Najhan *et al.*, 2022; Özdemir Güzel & Dinçer, 2023). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Kement *et al.* (2021) and Christiarini & Lee (2021) found in their studies that restaurant atmosphere did not affect customers' intention to revisit and recommend the business. Conversely, among the most emphasized negative features were unfriendly staff and poor service (mentioned in 25 comments), followed by issues related to the inadequate labeling of vegan food (16 comments) and the absence of English-

speaking staff (11 comments). Similar to the problem of identifying vegan foods on buffets or menus, this study's findings align with those of Sünnetçioğlu *et al.* (2017), which highlighted menu content as one of the significant problems faced by vegans. Additionally, the results related to staff attitude and respect in this study are consistent with the results of the aforementioned study. The issue of high prices, mentioned in negative statements, also corresponds to the results of the study conducted by Ayyıldız & Sezgin (2021).

This research adds to the increasing literature on vegan tourism and expectancy disconfirmation theory (EDT) by exploring the satisfaction of vegan travelers and their experiences in a popular Mediterranean tourism destination, Antalya. Despite the vast studies on customer satisfaction and loyalty in the tourism industry, very little research is currently available that focuses on the expectations and experiences of vegan tourists. Moreover, previous research on the application of EDT in the tourism context is fairly general in its orientation, with very few studies investigating its appropriateness for niche markets, such as vegan tourism. To this end, this research employs a novel methodological approach to examine the expectations, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions of vegan travelers using a large dataset of user-generated content (UGC) from TripAdvisor. Unlike many prior studies which are based on small-scale qualitative data, this study offers quantitative findings from a large sample, thus providing a more general picture of the experiences of vegan tourists. Thus, the study identifies key service attributes that lead to the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of vegan tourists through the systematic categorization of positive and negative reviews to enhance destination competitiveness and hospitality management of niche tourism markets. Furthermore, the findings of the study contribute to the application of expectancy-

disconfirmation theory in the tourism context by explaining how service quality, labeling, staff knowledge, and pricing influence the satisfaction of vegan tourists.

Building upon these contributions, this study also confirms results from prior research in both the tourism and food & beverage sectors, reinforcing the idea that meeting the expectations of vegan tourists yields positive outcomes, such as positive word-of-mouth, recommendations, and intentions to revisit. Future research could delve deeper into the travel motivations of different dietary groups, offering valuable insights into destination choices among this tourist demographic. Also, for businesses aiming to cater to vegan tourists, the results of the study revealed that ensuring their employees are knowledgeable about this dietary preference, clearly labeling vegan food and beverages on their menus, and setting more reasonable prices for vegan foods compared to the general trend can have a significant impact on the satisfaction of this type of tourist.

Businesses in the tourism sector in Antalya can benefit from these discoveries to elevate their offerings for vegan travelers significantly by enhancing the identification of vegan meal options, educating their staff on vegan requirements, and improving their language proficiency in English to boost guest satisfaction levels noticeably, as well as incorporating actionable insights for marketing strategies targeting vegan tourists by highlighting warm and welcoming staff members, exceptional service delivery, and creating a positive ambiance, in promotional materials to draw in more vegan explorers, ultimately tailoring services to cater specifically to the unique preferences of vegan visitors. Including a range of plant-based choices and making sure labels are easy to understand, along with giving details about the ingredients, can improve how customers feel about their experience overall.

The results of this research indicate that vegan tourists visiting Antalya exhibit a high level of satisfaction with businesses that offer vegan food and beverages. Moreover, highly satisfied tourists tend to recommend these restaurants to other tourists through social media platforms, suggesting a sense of loyalty to these establishments, as supported by this study's results. It can be speculated that individuals with a high level of satisfaction develop a sense of loyalty to businesses, which is also confirmed by the results of this study.

In summary, the vegan/vegetarian tourist comments analyzed in this study highlight the significance of English-speaking staff, quality service, and genuinely friendly personnel. Additionally, clearly labeling vegan and vegetarian food and beverages can address one of the key challenges. This study underscores the importance of maintaining high satisfaction levels among tourist groups with diverse consumption habits, contributing to service quality in the tourism sector and the longevity of businesses. To enhance the satisfaction of vegan visitors in Antalya, it is important for businesses to uphold cleanliness standards and have knowledgeable staff who are well-informed about veganism, as well as deliver exceptional service. Also, educating staff about vegan requirements and enabling them to communicate proficiently in English can greatly enhance customer satisfaction. Moreover, broadening the range of vegan dishes in restaurants and hotels by utilizing top-notch locally sourced ingredients is key to meeting and surpassing the demands of vegan guests. Featuring innovative plant-based meals can offer a memorable dining adventure that attracts local and global visitors alike. It is vital to label vegan dishes on menus and buffets as it empowers vegan travelers to make well-informed decisions while fostering trust and minimizing the risk of disappointing dining

encounters. Furthermore, highlighting the wellness and eco-friendly advantages of veganism through tailored efforts can draw in more vegan travelers, underscoring the importance of using organic and sustainable ingredients to boost a location's reputation as a welcoming destination for vegans.

## 6. LIMITATIONS

The use of only one social media platform for data collection and the evaluation of comments related to only one destination are the most significant limitations of this study. Therefore, in future research, sharing the study's results with a broader range of destinations, utilizing comments from various platforms, and conducting individual interviews and surveys could offer a more comprehensive perspective. Furthermore, this study solely assessed the perspectives of vegan tourists who received services, resulting in a one-sided viewpoint. Obtaining more objective results could be feasible by utilizing extensive datasets that encompass feedback to which service providers can respond.

## DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

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