

Evaluation of local people's perceptions, satisfaction, and support for tourism regarding the Şanlıurfa culture route festival

Şanlıurfa kültür yolu festivaline yönelik yerel halkın algı, memnuniyet ve turizm desteğinin değerlendirilmesi

Ahmet Erdem¹ 

¹ Assist. Prof. Dr, Harran University,
Şanlıurfa, Türkiye,
ahmeterdem@harran.edu.tr

ORCID: 0000-0001-8120-3958

Abstract

This study aims to determine the participants' perceptions, satisfaction, and support for tourism regarding the Şanlıurfa Culture Route Festival. The participants' perceptions of the festival's social, individual, economic, and touristic benefits significantly influence their satisfaction levels. Among these, perceived economic and personal benefits impact festival satisfaction the most. Furthermore, participants' satisfaction with the festival substantially affects their support for tourism development. Accordingly, the positive perception of the benefits associated with the festival influences satisfaction levels, and high satisfaction levels directly impact tourism development support in the destination. Analysing the averages of the responses given by participants to the scales, it is found that the festival helps alleviate daily stress, contributes to the promotion of the region, provides social interaction opportunities for local people, increases the business volume of local enterprises and that the events organised during the festival are sufficient. Additionally, it has been observed that participants intend to attend the Culture Route Festival again and strongly support tourism development.

Keywords: Culture Route Festival, Festival Perception, Satisfaction, Tourism Support

Jel Codes: L83

Öz

Araştırmanın amacı, katılımcıların Şanlıurfa Kültür Yolu Festivaline yönelik algı, memnuniyet ve turizm desteğinin belirlenmesidir. Katılımcıların festivale yönelik algıladıkları sosyal, bireysel, ekonomik ve turistik yararları memnuniyetleri üzerinde etkilidir. Algılanan ekonomik ve bireysel yararlar festival memnuniyeti üzerinde etkisi en yüksek olan iki faktördür. Ayrıca katılımcıların festivale yönelik memnuniyetleri turizm gelişim desteğini önemli düzeyde etkilemektedir. Buna göre katılımcıların festivale ilişkin algıladıkları faydanın olumlu olması memnuniyet düzeyleri üzerinde etkili olmakta; memnuniyet düzeylerinin yüksek olması ise destinasyonda turizm gelişim desteğini doğrudan etkilemektedir. Katılımcıların ölçeklere ilişkin verdikleri cevapların ortalamalarına bakıldığında ise, festivalin günlük stresin atılmasını sağladığı, yörenin tanıtımına katkı sunduğu, yerel halka sosyal etkileşim fırsatı verdiği, yerel işletmelerin iş hacmini artırdığı ve festivalde düzenlenen etkinliklerin yeterli düzeyde olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bununla birlikte katılımcıların Kültür Yolu Festivaline yine gitmeyi düşündükleri ve turizmin gelişmesini güçlü bir şekilde destekledikleri bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kültür Yolu Festivali, Festival Algısı, Memnuniyet, Turizm Desteği

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Introduction

Festivals are significant tourism products for destinations. Through festivals, destinations can showcase their unique local culture and wealth globally. Festivals are opportunities for entertainment and celebration for societies and events with deep and meaningful symbols and values. In this context, cultural festivals held at destinations are often closely linked with ideology, social identity, history, and a series of explicit values the relevant community deems essential for survival (Sakitri, 2018). Festivals provide social benefits by offering opportunities for communities to reinforce their group identities and for participants to demonstrate their commitment to the common good (Bakas, Duxbury, Remoaldo & Matos, 2019). Festivals are platforms where people develop their perspectives, and differences and similarities emerge in a cultural context. In this context, festival themes and the gains people gain are necessary to construct a socially strong society (Şeyhanlıoğlu, 2023; Rosetti, 2024).

Cultural festivals, which present the general characteristics of destinations, are crucial in attracting visitors. Through such events, visitors can benefit from the destination's historical, social, and artistic resources (Altun, Kiraz & Saydam, 2024), impacting the destination economically, socially, and environmentally. Festival tourism, which is heavily supported by both central and local governments in many countries, reduces the seasonality of tourism (Kement, 2024). The participation of tourists in festivals increases expenditures on accommodation, food and beverage, and transportation, contributing to the local economy in various ways. Similarly, festivals create employment opportunities and contribute to the increase in tax revenues (Koçak, 2023). Destination management organisations leverage such events to attract tourists, foster development, promote the destination, enhance its image, stimulate economic growth, preserve cultural heritage, and increase social interaction (Intason, 2024). These events serve as a vital instrument to enhance the attractiveness and competitiveness of the destination.

Cultural festivals enable visitors to relive traditional stories and experience the history, culture, and lifestyles (Deng, Ruan & Zhang, 2023). Additionally, by offering new entertainment opportunities and diversifying social life for the local population, they support community well-being (Çavuş & Baki, 2020). In this regard, well-planned and organised festivals can be an attractive alternative for locals to spend leisure time (Li, Kim & Lee, 2021). Festivals allow visitors to observe entertainment activities and participate in these festivities alongside the local population. Consequently, festivals maximise social interaction and participation between locals and visitors through leisure activities and entertainment (Akbaba & Aydın, 2022). Interactions between locals and guests/visitors are fundamental elements of the tourism experience. Local festivals are considered crucial to festival tourism (Yozukmaz, Bertan & Alkaya, 2020).

Festivals, once used as an element to diversify tourism products, have recently become tourist attractions in their own right. They contribute to the overall appeal and competitiveness of destinations. Festivals organised in regions that are disadvantaged in natural tourism attractions are essential in attracting tourists to these regions. While festivals contribute to the diversification of tourism, they also solve the problem of short seasons arising from seasonality and the distribution of tourist demand in a more balanced way throughout the country (Paslı & Turpcu, 2019). In this respect, it can be said that festivals have social, economic, and political dimensions built upon the societal impacts of time and space. Creating an impact that spreads throughout the destination strengthens its image (Andersson & Getz, 2007). Additionally, festivals have the potential to revive local culture and reposition the city as a tourism hub (Supriono, Iqbal, Kusumawati & Fahmi, 2023). Positive perceptions towards the festival, festival satisfaction and the perceived value of the festival are among the factors that positively affect the tourists' sense of belonging to the destination. In this context, it can be said that the positive effects of festivals should be considered in developing a sense of belonging to a destination (Demirci, Yılmazdoğan & Düşmezkalender, 2020). The main aim of the festival organisers is to ensure participant satisfaction. Participants leaving the festival satisfied will contribute to promoting the festival and the region where it is held. This will increase interest in the festival, help increase the number of participants in the coming years and ensure the festival's sustainability (Saçlı, 2020).

This study examines the local community's perceptions, satisfaction, and tourism support regarding the Culture Route Festival, implemented by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey and held in Şanlıurfa from May 25 to June 2, 2024. The research expands the existing literature on interactions between cultural festivals, tourism, and local communities. At the same time, the study holds unique value as it is the first research conducted on the Culture Route Festival. The research offers recommendations to relevant stakeholders such as local communities, the public, and the private sectors by providing practical insights. An interdisciplinary approach has been adopted by considering the festival's cultural, sociological, economic, and touristic aspects. This approach allows the utilisation of

tools from various academic disciplines in the examination of the Culture Route Festival. Moreover, the research is of particular importance in assessing whether the festival contributes to local and national cultural heritage and whether it has the potential to become a part of enduring cultural values in the long term. Lastly, the Culture Route Festival has been organised regularly in various formats since 2021 and is planned to be held in the future. Academic studies on this festival will provide critical insights for the organisers. The results obtained will contribute to the planning of future festivals. In this context, examining the contribution of the Culture Route Festival to the preservation and promotion of local cultural values and the development of tourism is among the factors that enhance the significance of the research.

Culture route festival (CRF)

The Culture Route Festival (CRF) was first held in Turkey in 2021. This festival is organised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye to enhance the country's global brand value and promote its cultural heritage and arts. The Culture Route Festival (CRF) began with the Istanbul Beyoğlu Culture Route Festival in October 2021. Subsequently, in 2022, it was held in five different cities, including the Ankara Capital CRF, Çanakkale Troy CRF, Diyarbakır Sur CRF, and Konya Mystic Music Festival. In 2023, the Turkey Culture Route Festivals expanded to include Nevşehir Cappadocia Balloon and CRF, Erzurum Palandöken CRF, Trabzon Sumela CRF, İzmir Ephesus CRF, Gaziantep GastroAntep CRF, and Antalya CRF, thus being organised in a total of 11 different cities (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2024).

The Culture Route Festival, held in 2024, will occur in 16 cities over eight months. The 2024 CRF commenced in Adana with the Orange Blossom Carnival from April 13-21, 2024. Subsequently, the festival, held in Şanlıurfa from May 25 to June 2, 2024, featured numerous activities in areas such as exhibitions, gastronomy, concerts, talks, theatre, workshops, opera and ballet performances, and children's events. The 2024 festivals are scheduled as follows: June 1-9 in Bursa, June 8-16 in Samsun, June 22-30 in Trabzon, June 29-July 7 in Van, August 3-11 in Nevşehir, August 17-25 in Erzurum, August 31-September 8 in Çanakkale, September 14-22 in Gaziantep, September 21-29 in Ankara, September 21-29 in Konya, September 28-October 6 in Istanbul, October 12-20 in Diyarbakır, October 26-November 3 in İzmir, and November 2-10 in Antalya. Information about the festivals is shared on the website kulturyolufestivali.com (Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2024).

Literature review

Social benefit

Festivals can generally be defined as events held within a specific timeframe and centred around a particular theme. Unlike other events, festivals characteristically emphasise a community's cultural identity and play a significant role in shaping the sense of the relevant destination (Altun et al., 2024). The hedonistic atmosphere of festivals is a significant factor that attracts tourists' attention (Intason, 2024). In this context, linking festivals with tourism as a strategy for promoting economic development improves the lives of the local population and strengthens social cohesion within communities (Bakas et al., 2019).

A study on the International Orange Blossom Carnival (Adana, Türkiye) found that the festival is perceived to provide social, individual, economic, urban, and touristic benefits to the local community. Among these, perceptions of social and individual benefits are the two most influential factors affecting satisfaction with the festival (Yıldırım, Karaca & Çakıcı, 2016). Saçlı (2020) determined that there is a positive relationship between the participants' cultural interaction levels and festival satisfaction. Duman, Ercan and Yaprak (2021) concluded that perceived social benefit affects satisfaction. Similarly, another study indicated that the perceived social benefits of festivals impacted satisfaction (Tokatlı, 2019). The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₁: The perception of social benefit significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

Tourist benefit

Touristic benefit is related to the adequacy levels of the activities and promotions organised during the festival and their impact on the number of tourists. Cultural events typically draw tourists who expect a distinct experience with authentic culture and tradition (Intason, 2024). Festivals have a positive and significant impact on the tourist experience. Events organised at the regional level stimulate tourism, and this mobility contributes economically to the region (Özer & Çavuşoğlu 2014). Another positive effect of festivals on the regions where they are held is the effect on tourists' destination satisfaction and word-of-mouth marketing behaviours about the destination. It is seen that tourists' destination

satisfaction levels increase due to the festivals they attend, and this satisfaction contributes to the promotion of the destination (Giritlioğlu, Olcay & Özekici, 2015). The experience during the festival has a positive and significant impact on revisit intention and satisfaction (Supriono et al., 2023). The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₂: The perception of tourist benefits significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

Individual benefit

Individual benefits include providing alternative activities for participants to spend their time enjoyably, helping to alleviate the effects of daily stress, enhancing collaborations, and contributing to developing knowledge about the relevant culture. Perceived economic and personal benefits were found to positively affect quality of life and support for festival development. In particular, the perceived individual benefits of festivals strongly affect support for festival development (Türkmen, 2020). Participants gain individual benefits such as entertainment and personal development through festivals, and at the same time, they identify with the festival's external meanings and cultural values. This shows that festivals create meaningful effects on participants both at individual and cultural levels (Morgan, 2007). Tokatlı (2019) stated that festivals' perceived personal and economic benefits impact satisfaction. Similarly, another study indicates that the most influential factor in visitors' perceptions is the overall benefits, followed by personal gains (Gül, Erdem & Gül, 2013). The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₃: There is a significant and positive effect of the perception of individual benefit on satisfaction.

Economic benefit

Altun, Kiraz, and Saydam (2024) argue that festivals significantly contribute to the local economy by attracting tourists, boosting sales for local businesses, and promoting the preservation of traditional cuisine, ultimately fostering economic growth in the region. They also underscore the significant role of festivals in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. Cultural festivals enhance the region's attractiveness and surrounding destinations, positively impacting the area (Supriono et al., 2023). Güneş (2022) states that festivals positively and negatively impact the hosting region from economic, social, and cultural perspectives. However, it is emphasised that festivals driven by commercial interests often highlight positive economic effects while overlooking negative consequences. A study evaluating participants' spending intentions during a festival indicates that participants intend to spend three times more money (Pereira, Jerónimo, Sempiterno, Lopes da Costa, Dias & António, 2021). Increased tourism revenues and significant contributions to the local economy result from longer overnight stays and rising accommodation prices during festivals and events (Litvin et al., 2013). In this context, perceived economic benefits of festivals affect satisfaction. The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₄: There is a significant and positive effect of the perception of economic benefit on satisfaction.

Urban benefit

While culture-themed festivals are Turkey's most frequently organised themed festivals, business-themed festivals stand out as the least organised activities (Giritlioğlu et al., 2015). Nowadays, festivals have often become a quick way to promote tourist attractions, and one of the factors that affect the overall satisfaction with the festival is the perceived urban benefit (Esu & Arrey, 2009). It has been found that the perceived social benefits and positive impacts of festivals have a positive effect on urban pride among the local population (Alagöz & Taş, 2022). Sunny Lee, Arcodia, and Jeonglyeol Lee (2012) identify five dimensions among the reasons participants engage in multicultural festivals: family bonding, escape, cultural discovery, socialisation, and curiosity. Cultural discovery has been the most common reason visitors participate in multicultural festivals. Another study highlights leisure performance and musician interaction as the most dominant motivational themes (Chiya, 2024). Festivals have many benefits, just like cultural route organisations. While they positively contribute to economic development, they provide financial input to businesses. They promote the city as a tourist attraction centre. They contribute to the understanding of the city by tourists who come as cultural ambassadors. They ensure that the city's stakeholders collaborate. They also ensure that media and promotion are constantly increased (Gül & Şeyhanlioğlu, 2021; Dalgın, Kara, & Çeken, 2023). The research conducted by Paşlı and Turpçu (2019) reveals that the cultural benefits of the festival, the adequacy of service before and during the service, the festival perception and the infrastructure effects have a positive, albeit weak, effect on participant satisfaction. These factors are considered essential elements that contribute to the overall satisfaction level of the festival experience. The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₅: The perception of urban benefits significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

Satisfaction and Support for tourism development

Satisfaction refers to the positive feeling individuals experience when their expectations are met due to an event, service, or experience. In this sense, festival satisfaction reflects whether participants found their experience during the festival fulfilling. On the other hand, support for tourism development refers to residents' or visitors' positive attitudes and contributions toward developing a destination's tourism activities and infrastructure. This support is critical for the sustainability and growth of tourism activities in the destination. In particular, the support of the local community for future tourism-based projects is crucial for their success. It means satisfying visitors and ensuring profitable repeat visits to the destination for the same event or other activities (Esu & Arrey, 2009). Satisfaction with festivals is paramount in supporting tourism development in the relevant destination (Keleş, 2021).

Economic development and cultural enrichment in festivals, as well as understanding visitor motivation, satisfaction, behavioural intentions, and other related variables, are among the critical success factors of festivals. These elements are the essential components that directly affect the success and sustainability of festivals (Schofield & Thompson, 2007). It has been determined that festival participants' motivation perceptions positively affect their satisfaction perception levels, and their satisfaction perceptions positively affect their revisit tendency perception levels (Kahraman, Özdemir, & Saçlı, 2022). Song, Xing and Chathoth (2014) state that the performance and perceived impact of festivals affect the satisfaction level of participants, and participant satisfaction will encourage support for future festivals. Satisfaction with the festival is strongly associated with loyalty, which influences support for tourism development (Tanford & Jung, 2017). The following hypothesis was formed within the scope of relevant literature:

H₆: There is a significant and positive effect of satisfaction with the festival on support for tourism development.

Methodology

The study aims to determine participants' perceptions, satisfaction, and support for tourism regarding the Şanlıurfa Culture Route Festival. Data were collected through a survey method. Surveys were administered face-to-face by four surveyors who were undergraduate students in tourism programs. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling method. Convenience sampling is a non-random sampling method where the sample group is selected based on the researcher's population assessments. Before administering the survey, participants were asked whether they had attended any events related to the festival, and the survey was only applied to individuals who had participated in the events. Although there is no clear consensus in the literature about sample size, it is recommended that it be at least ten times the number of items in the model. The survey form included perceptions of the festival (5 dimensions, 22 items): social benefit (7 items), tourist benefit (4 items), individual benefit (4 items), economic benefit (3 items), and urban benefit (4 items); satisfaction (1 dimension, five items) (Yıldırım et al., 2016), and support for tourism development (1 dimension, five items) (Çelik & Rasoolimanesh, 2021). The survey form utilised a 5-point Likert scale with 32 statements. It can be stated that 320 questionnaires will be sufficient since there are 32 items on the scale. A total of 605 surveys were collected for the study. Data were analysed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The model of the study is presented in Figure 1.

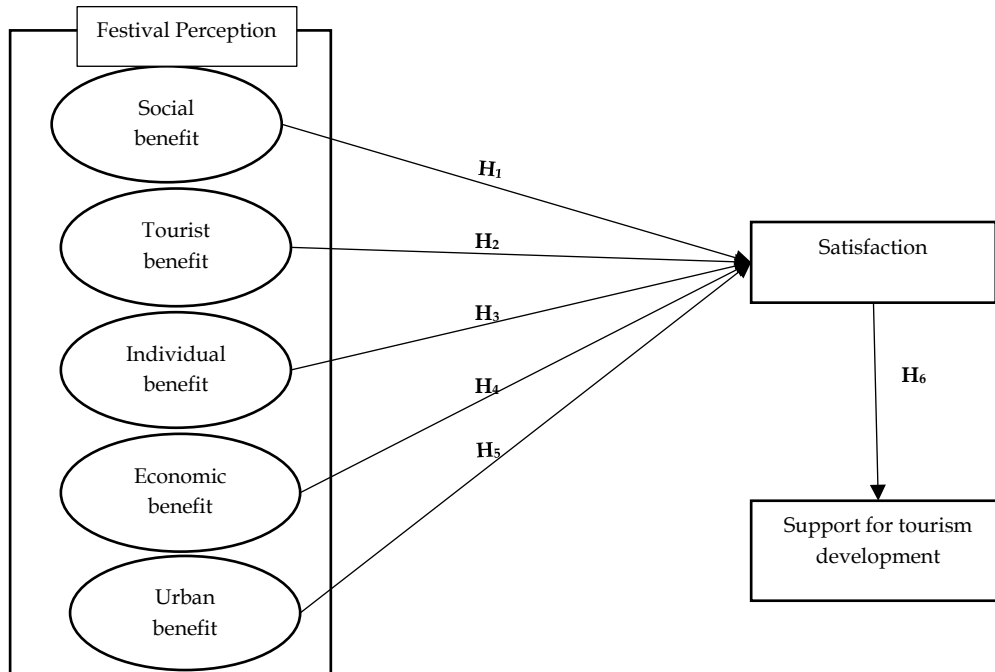


Figure 1: The Model of the Study

In examining the research model, festival perception (social, touristic, individual, economic, and urban benefits) has been identified as the independent variable, while satisfaction and support for tourism development are defined as the dependent variables. This framework analysed the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Hypotheses were developed based on the literature, and whether these hypotheses were supported or not was examined. The hypotheses formulated for testing in the study are as follows:

H₁: The perception of social benefit significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

H₂: The perception of tourist benefits significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

H₃: There is a significant and positive effect of the perception of individual benefit on satisfaction.

H₄: There is a significant and positive effect of the perception of economic benefit on satisfaction.

H₅: The perception of urban benefits significantly and positively affects satisfaction.

H₆: There is a significant and positive effect of satisfaction with the festival on support for tourism development.

Findings

A frequency analysis was conducted to determine the participants' demographic characteristics. According to the analysis, the majority of participants were male (53.4%), single (67.9%), belonged to the middle-income group (44.3%), had completed undergraduate education (62.5%), and were aged between 18-24 years (34.5%). Participants primarily followed the Şanlıurfa Culture Route Festival through social media accounts (65.0%) and generally attended 4-6 events during the festival (38.7%). Additionally, it was found that most participants had resided in Şanlıurfa for 2-5 years (35.2%).

Table 1: Demographic Findings

Gender	n	%	Marital Status	n	%
Male	323	53.4	Single	411	67.9
Female	282	46.6	Married	194	32.1
Income Status	n	%	Age	n	%
Low	178	29.4	18-24	209	34.5
Middle	268	44.3	25-31	92	15.2
High	159	26.3	32-38	130	21.5
Education Level	n	%	39-45	n	%
High School or Less	22	3.6	46-52	41	6.8
Associate Degree	65	10.7	53 and over	20	3.3
Bachelor's Degree	378	62.5	Number of Events Attended	n	%
Graduate Degree	140	23.1	1	75	12.4
Length of Residence	n	%	2-3	203	33.6
Less than 1 Year	83	13.7	4-6	234	38.7
2-5 Years	213	35.2	More than 7	93	15.4
6-9 Years	113	18.7	Event Follow-Up Source	n	%
10-13 Years	75	12.4	Social media	393	65.0
14 Years and Over	121	20.0	Websites	138	22.8
			Posters	64	10.6
			Other	10	1.7

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to test the construct validity of the scales used in the study. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy for the Festival Perception scale was 89%. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a Chi-Square value of 8350.834, which is significant at the 0.001 level. For the Satisfaction scale, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 85.3%, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity produced a Chi-Square value of 2496.028. The Support for Tourism Development scale had a KMO measure of 88.6%, with Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showing a Chi-Square value of 2244.656, significant at the 0.001 level. When determining the number of factors, eigenvalues that were more significant than one and factor loadings of at least 0.40 were considered. The Varimax rotation method was used as the rotation technique.

The Festival Perception scale was divided into five dimensions: social benefits, individual benefits, urban benefits, economic benefits, and tourist benefits. The Satisfaction and Support for Tourism Development scales were consolidated into single dimensions. The explained total variances of the scales were 67.951% for the Festival Perception scale, 77.766% for Satisfaction, and 75.095% for Support for Tourism Development. Following the exploratory factor analysis, a two-step approach was employed to assess the overall measurement quality and analyse the relationships within the research model. Confirmatory factor analysis was initially conducted to validate the scales derived from the exploratory factor analysis. Subsequently, structural equation modelling was applied to test the hypotheses proposed and illustrated in the model. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis conducted in the study are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Festival Perception	Standardised Loadings	AVE	CR	Alpha
Social Benefits		0.645	0.926	0.927
The festival provides opportunities for social interaction in the local community.	0.847			
The local community shows commitment to historical and cultural values.	0.836			
The festival contributes to the socio-cultural development of the local community.	0.824			
The festival helps preserve local culture.	0.734			
The festival aids in the improvement of the region's living standards.	0.869			
The Culture Road Festival reflects the culture of Şanlıurfa.	0.795			
The festival facilitates communication between the local community and different participants.	0.704			
Individual Benefits		0.666	0.888	0.890
The festival provided me with an enjoyable and entertaining experience.	0.693			
The festival helped me relieve daily stress.	0.869			
The festival increased my knowledge about the region's culture.	0.846			
The festival enhances cooperation among local organisations, businesses, and institutions.	0.848			
Urban Benefits		0.505	0.801	0.790
The festival positively impacts the region's image.	0.759			
The festival contributes to the promotion of the region.	0.812			
The festival allows local residents to showcase their skills and earn income.	0.624			
The festival provides economic resources for city projects.	0.629			
Economic Benefits		0.711	0.880	0.875
The festival increases the volume of business for local enterprises.	0.840			
During the festival, a more comprehensive range of goods and services are available in the city.	0.760			
The festival encourages businesses to develop new activities.	0.922			
Tourist Benefits		0.336	0.647	0.655
The events organised during the festival are of adequate quality.	0.640			
The promotions related to the festival are sufficient.	0.783			
The festival increases the number of domestic tourists visiting the city.	0.482			
The festival increases the number of international tourists visiting the city.	0.303			
*: The factor loadings in the scale are significant at the 0.001 level, N=605.				
Satisfaction		0.703	0.922	0.927
I am satisfied with the organisation of the festival.	0.812			
I think it was a good decision to attend the festival.	0.854			
I will speak positively about the festival to those around me.	0.844			
I am considering attending the Culture Road Festival again.	0.834			
I am generally satisfied with the festival.	0.850			
*: The factor loadings in the scale are significant at the 0.001 level, N=605.				
Support for Tourism Development		0.697	0.919	0.917
I strongly support the development of tourism.	0.828			
I make suggestions for the development of tourism.	0.872			
I support planning that promotes tourism development.	0.908			
I support the development of tourism projects.	0.877			
I would like to see more tourists in my city.	0.669			
*: The factor loadings in the scale are significant at the 0.001 level, N=605.				

The reliability of the scales used in the study is presented through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). As shown in Table 2, all scales have Cronbach's Alpha values greater than 0.70 and CR values greater than 0.60. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for the scales are also greater than 0.50. The Composite Reliability (CR) measures the internal consistency of a factor, with values exceeding 0.70 being desirable. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) measures the similarity among the items of a factor, with values exceeding 0.50 being preferred (Nunnally, 1970). The fit statistics for the measurement model from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Goodness of Fit Reference Values and Results for the Model

Goodness of Fit	Reference Values		Overall Model
	Good Fit Indices	Acceptable Fit Indices	
X ² /df	0 ≤ X ² /df ≤ 2	2 < X ² /df ≤ 5	3.141
RMSEA	0 ≤ RMSEA ≤ 0.06	0.06 < RMSEA ≤ 0.08	0.060
NFI	0.96 ≤ NFI ≤ 1.00	0.90 ≤ NFI < 0.96	0.911
CFI	0.90 ≤ CFI ≤ 0.95	0.95 < CFI < 1.00	0.938
IFI	0.90 ≤ IFI ≤ 0.95	0.95 < IFI < 1.00	0.938
RFI	0.90 ≤ RFI ≤ 0.95	0.90 < RFI < 1.00	0.899
RMR	0 ≤ RMR ≤ 0.05	0.05 < RMR ≤ 0.08	0.052

Source: Schermelleh-Engel vd., 2003; Tabachnick & Fidel, 2006.

Table 3 shows that the results related to the model fall within the range of good fit or acceptable fit values, indicating that the model is valid. The results of testing the hypotheses proposed in the study are presented in Table 4. Except for hypothesis H5, all other hypotheses have been accepted.

Table 4: SEM Results

Structural Path	Standardised Regression Weight (β)	Critical Ratio (C.R.)	R ²	p	Hypotheses	Hypothesis Results
SB>S	0.119	2.314		0.021	H1	Accepted
TB>S	0.104	-2.665		0.008	H2	Accepted
IB>S	0.225	4.061	0.610	***	H3	Accepted
EB>S	0.532	10.859		***	H4	Accepted
UB>S	-.010	-.232		0.816	H5	Rejected
S>TDS	0.945	22.331	0.892	***	H6	Accepted

SB: Social Benefit; TB: Tourist Benefit, IB: Individual Benefit, EB: Economic Benefit, UB: Urban Benefit S: Satisfaction; TDS: Tourism Development Support

The structural model developed during the research process and the obtained coefficients are illustrated in Figure 2. According to the analysis results, the variance explanation ratio for satisfaction is 61% (R² = 0.61). This indicates that the festival perception explains 61% of the variance in festival satisfaction. The variance explanation ratio for the support of tourism development variable is 94%, explained by the satisfaction variable. The high explanation ratios for satisfaction and support for tourism development variables indicate a robust model fit. Examining the beta coefficients reveals that the economic benefits variable has the most significant impact on satisfaction. Following this, the individual benefits variable is identified as having the second highest effect on satisfaction.

- A one-unit increase in the economic benefits variable leads to an increase of 0.532 in satisfaction.
- A one-unit increase in the individual benefits variable leads to an increase of 0.225 in satisfaction.
- A one-unit increase in the social benefits variable leads to an increase of 0.119 in satisfaction.
- A one-unit increase in the tourist benefits variable leads to an increase of 0.104 in satisfaction.
- Additionally, a one-unit increase in satisfaction leads to a 0.945 increase in support for tourism development.

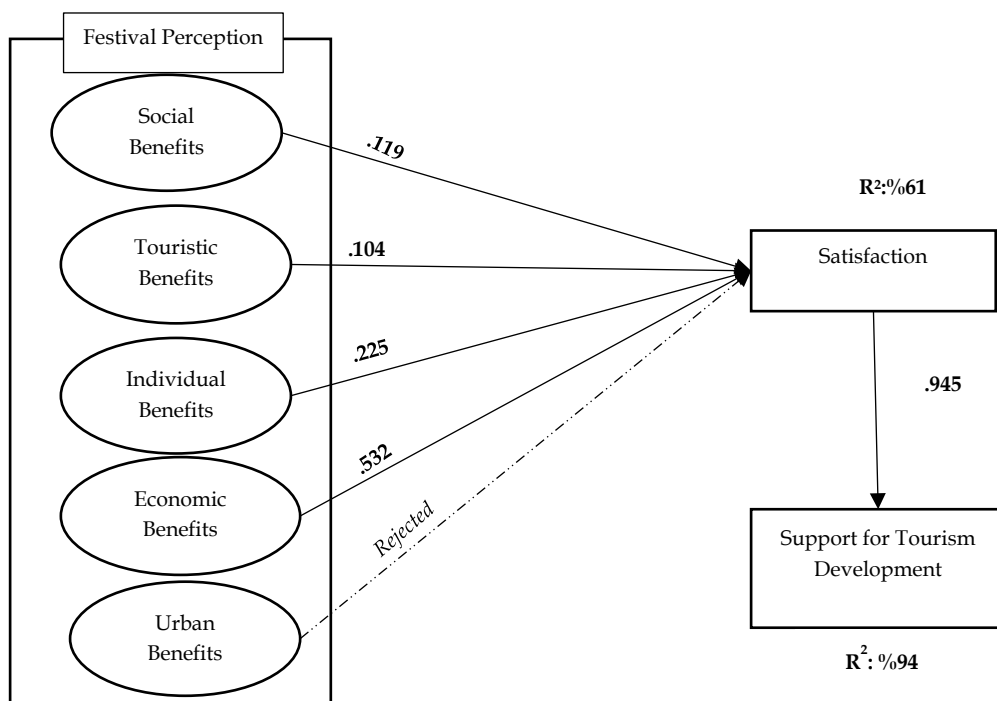


Figure 2: Structural Model Developed During the Research Process

Finally, the participant means scores for the scales used in the research are presented in Table 5. Within the Festival Perception scale, the factors with the highest mean scores are as follows: individual benefits (\bar{x} : 4.15), urban benefits (\bar{x} : 4.14), social benefits (\bar{x} : 4.02), economic benefits (\bar{x} : 3.98), and tourist benefits (\bar{x} : 3.76). Additionally, high levels of participation were observed for the scales of supporting tourism development (\bar{x} : 4.20) and satisfaction (\bar{x} : 4.08).

Table 5: Mean Scores for Scales

	\bar{x}		\bar{x}
Social Benefits	4.02	Touristic Benefits	3.76
The festival facilitates communication between the local community and various participants.	4.09	The events organised at the festival are sufficient.	4.03
The Culture Road Festival reflects the culture of Şanlıurfa.	3.99	The promotions related to the festival are adequate.	3.88
The festival helps improve the living standards of the region.	4.03	The festival increases the number of domestic tourists coming to the city.	3.57
The festival contributes to the preservation of local culture.	3.83	The festival increases the number of international tourists coming to the city.	3.55
The festival contributes to the socio-cultural development of the local community.	4.08	Individual Benefits	4.15
The local community is seen as valuing historical and cultural assets.	3.96	The festival provided me with a pleasant time.	4.16
The festival provides opportunities for social interaction in the local community.	4.15	The festival helped me relieve my daily stress.	4.18
Urban Benefits	4.14	The festival increased my knowledge about the region's culture.	4.08
The festival positively influences the region's image.	4.23	The festival enhances collaboration (between local organisations, businesses, and institutions).	4.17
The festival contributes to the promotion of the region.	4.30	Economic Benefits	3.98
The festival allows local people to showcase their skills and earn income.	3.90	The festival increases the volume of business for local enterprises.	4.02
The festival provides economic resources for city projects (infrastructure, superstructure, etc.).	4.13	A more comprehensive range of goods and services is available in the city during the festival.	3.94
Satisfaction	4.08	The festival encourages businesses to create new activities.	3.98
I am satisfied with the organisation of the festival.	4.09	Support for Tourism Development	4.20
I believe attending the festival was a good decision.	4.06	I strongly support the development of tourism.	4.21
I will speak positively about the festival to others.	4.10	I make suggestions for the development of tourism.	4.12
I am considering attending the Culture Road Festival again.	4.12	I support planning that promotes tourism development.	4.10
Overall, I am satisfied with the festival.	4.02	I support the development of tourism projects.	4.16
		I would like to see more tourists in my city.	4.38

Regarding item averages within the scale, the highest average item in the personal benefits factor is "The festival helped me relieve daily stress." The highest average item for the urban benefits factor is "The festival contributes to the promotion of the region." Within the social benefits factor, the item with the highest average is "The festival provides local people with opportunities for social interaction." The highest average item for the economic benefits factor is "The festival increases the business volume of local businesses." Within the tourist benefits factor, the highest average item is "The events organised at the festival are at an adequate level." In the satisfaction factor, the item "I am considering attending the Culture Road Festival again" stands out, and for the tourism development support factor, the item "I strongly support the development of tourism" is prominent.

Discussion and conclusion

The significance of festivals is rapidly expanding globally, with authorities organising various culture-themed festivals to enhance the attractiveness of destinations (Anil, 2012). It has been noted that residents actively participate in these events at the destination where festivals are held (Sakitri, 2018). In this regard, festivals positively impact the socialisation of local communities and contribute to tourism (Çavuş & Baki, 2020). This study analysed participants' perceptions of the Şanlıurfa Cultural Road Festival, their satisfaction, and their support for developing tourism activities in the city.

Festivals have the potential to offer numerous opportunities for sustainable local economic development. However, creating a successful and sustainable festival may require the support of residents and stakeholders. Festivals are effective catalysts for solidifying local development and promoting urban renewal (Li, Kim, & Lee, 2021). When local communities perceive festivals as successful, it positively influences their development and sustainability (Sert, 2017). One of the reasons for their widespread use in urban development is their flexibility (Richards & Leal Londoño, 2022). They can be tailored to reflect the culture of the region in which they are held. In the era of the experience economy, where tourists seek enjoyable and new or different experiences (Supriono et al., 2023), destination managers are pressured to be more responsive and plan more effectively. Festivals are highly effective tools for enhancing destination image, revitalising the economy, culture, and traditions,

fostering community pride, raising funds for special, social, or charitable projects, and providing opportunities for communities to engage in the fine arts (Anil, 2012).

Participants perceived that the festival's social, tourist, individual, and economic benefits influenced their satisfaction with the event. Notably, economic and individual benefits have the most significant impact on festival satisfaction. It has been observed that participants are three times more likely to spend money during the festival (Pereira et al., 2021). In this context, festivals are a crucial revenue-enhancing factor for businesses benefiting economically from tourism in the region. The seasonal nature of festivals, with their spatial and temporal limitations, tends to encourage participants to spend more. Additionally, the individual benefits of festivals also positively affect participants' satisfaction. Festivals significantly impact the experience, and the tourist experience during the festival positively affects the intention to revisit (Supriono et al., 2023). Participants have had the opportunity to engage in various activities during the festival, including exhibitions, concerts, discussions, theatre, opera, and ballet. This has allowed participants to socialise more outside their daily routines. The festival has allowed participants to enjoy fun times in the city, relieve daily stress, and increase their knowledge of the local culture. Festivals provide economic, social, and cultural benefits to the communities in which they occur and contribute to event tourism and destination marketing (Tanford & Jung, 2017). In a study conducted similar to the results obtained within the scope of the research, it is emphasised that social, cultural, individual and urban benefits are practical on festival satisfaction (Alan & Kızılcıoğlu, 2020). Saatçi & Türkmen (2020) found that the quality of life and economic and personal benefits created by the festival did not positively affect festival satisfaction.

Participants' satisfaction levels with the festival substantially impact the support for tourism development in the destination. Tourism activities, particularly those that occur in the region, have positively affected the local population's standard of living. For instance, infrastructure and superstructure activities related to organising various events, such as festivals, contribute to the economic and social welfare of the region. The findings of this study support this situation. The positive perception of the benefits of the festival by the local population influences their satisfaction levels, and high levels of satisfaction directly affect the support for tourism development in the destination. Li, Wan, and Uysal (2020) have found that the local population's support for festival development is positively influenced by the perceived socio-cultural benefits of festivals and satisfaction, supporting these findings. In a similar study, Akkoç (2024) emphasises that the socio-economic impacts that emerge with the activities have a significant and positive effect on the support of the local people for tourism. Moreover, another study supports these findings by showing that the perceived satisfaction of the local population with the festival has a significant and positive effect on public support for the development of festivals in the region (Saatçi & Türkmen, 2020).

Finally, examining the average responses provided by participants regarding the scales reveals that the festival helps alleviate daily stress, contributes to the promotion of the region, provides social interaction opportunities for the local community, increases the business volume of local enterprises and that the events organised during the festival are of an adequate level. Additionally, it has been found that participants are considering attending the Culture Road Festival again and strongly supporting tourism development.

As a suggestion for future research, similar studies could be conducted on Culture Road Festivals held in different cities, allowing for a comparison with the findings of this study. Furthermore, this research was designed based on the positive aspects of festivals. Therefore, future studies could evaluate festivals' positive and negative aspects, providing a more comprehensive perspective.

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