

## **The Effect of Perceptions Regarding Festivals on Festival Loyalty: The Case of Ayder Kardan Adam Festival**

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**Abstract:**-Festivals contribute to cities, regional development in cities and their recognition and branding. Festivals which are organized regularly become traditional and thus, cities where these festivals are held become more popular and gain economic and social benefits. Also festivals are powerful instruments to attract tourists in low seasons, to raise awareness regarding destinations and create positive images regarding destinations. However, it is supported with much research that festival satisfaction is an important factor on festival loyalty. With this regard, the aim of this research is to determine the relationships between perceptions of festival participants, their perceived value, satisfaction and festival loyalty in the context of the Ayder Kardan Adam Festival. For this purpose, face to face surveys have been conducted with 219 festival participants who participate in the 9th Kardanadam Festival at Ayder, Rize. First, validity and reliability tests were conducted and then correlation and regression analyses were conducted. According to results of the analyses, statistically significant relationships between the perceptions of the participants regarding Ayder Kardan Adam Festival, the perceived festival value, satisfaction and festival loyalty. These findings can contribute to the researchers' and practitioners' understanding of festival participants' behaviours and designing future festivals more effectively.

**Keywords:** *Rize, Ayder, Kardan Adam Festival, Festival Tourism.*

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Tourism activities consist of units with different types and contents. Activity tourism is an activity based on tourism culture which has been gaining popularity in recent years. This tourism type contributes to tourism and development of the underdeveloped regions where such activities are held. (Getz et.al, 2001). The festivals which are considered to be touristic activities and to be significant touristic attractions have positive effects on the image of the region and the word-of-mouth advertising of the region where the activities are held (Giritlioğlu et. al., 2015). Festivals, which are as old as the history of humanity, are social facts almost available in all cultures across the world. When its historical process is considered, it is seen that they have been generally religion oriented. The festivals held for the Egyptian deities, the Gods of Ancient Greece and Olympic games are good examples for the religion oriented festivals. The Romans who spent almost half of the year on entertainment activities exhibited the closest festival examples to the ones held in modern times. In middle ages, festivals were seen as a means of escaping the pressure of the church. The fact that the old have transferred their cultural values to new generations and their contribution to the formation of new culture has been replaced by the culture and art-oriented festivals (Yıldırım, 2010). There have been many definitions in the literature regarding festivals. Chacko and Schaffer (1993) define festivals as social activities expressing social norms and values of societies. In a broader definition, festival is defined as a series of exhibition and activity held periodically or for once, which announce its time of organisation, its place, subjects and participants considering art, culture, science, economic activities, product or period (Atak, 2009). Festivals are the activities offering enjoyment to visitors, attracting visitors to some certain locations and generating demand for the hospitality establishments in the region where the festival is held (Litvin and Fetter, 2006, p. 41). Festivals have been among the most rapidly growing types of tourism and gaining more and more popularity across the world (Anıl, 2012, p. 255). Festivals in today's world not only contribute to the development of national and international tourism, but also to the development of domestic tourism. Festivals also offer new opportunities to visitors and social benefits such as helping visitors gain insight regarding the visited regions, getting to know about different culture and meeting with the people with different life styles (Gül, et. al., 2013, p. 214). Festivals which move away visitors from their daily routines are also the kind of activities which may have important effects with regards to development of domestic tourism. With this regard, many touristic destinations aim to increase the economic and social development by organising new festivals considering individuals' entertainment and

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cultural interests (Gürsoy, et. al, 2004, p. 171). With this regard, the use of local festivals for developing tourism has been gaining popularity across the world. In some cases, traditional cultural or religious activities are reanimated as tourism activities or designed so. In some other cases, new festivals are organised and improved to attract more visitors to a touristic destination (Felsenstein and Fleischer, 2003, p. 385). In recent years, festivals have started to be used as a means of contribution to economic and social targets and to development of rural regions and increasing its sustainability (Dredge and Whitford 2011, p. 487). Besides, festivals can be powerful factors on raising awareness regarding a certain region, attracting more visitors to a certain destination especially in off-season and positive image and advertising (Özdemir 2008, p. 39). When relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the studies carried out in the field of festival tourism focused on three areas. The first of these is the studies focusing on the socio-cultural and economic effects (Yıldız and Polat, 2016; Öztürk and Yumuk, 2016; Özkan et al., 2015; Cole and Chancellor, 2008; Gursoy et. al., 2004). The second field is the studies focusing on the motivations of the participants (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Duran et. al., 2014; Lee and Lee, 2001; Lee et. al., 2004; Thompson and Schofield, 2009; Yuan et. al., 2005; Yolal et. al., 2009; Bayrak, 2011; Yolal et. al., 2015). Another issue which has been most commonly investigated within the scope of festival is visitor satisfaction and their behavioural intentions (Akhoondnejad, 2016; Anil, 2012; Anwar and Sohaıl, 2004; Bourdeau et. al., 2001; Bruwer, 2012; Choo et. al., 2016; Jung and Kim, 2014, Tayfun and Arslan, 2013). In this study, the satisfaction levels and behavioural intentions of visitors is examined under a general framework as “the intention to revisit and recommend”

One of the factors which significantly increase visitor satisfaction is the festival site. The festival site consists of festival program, details of the activities and the qualities of the services delivered during the festival (Özdemir and Çulha, 2009, p. 370). The content of the festival program, the planning stage of the festival activities in advance have significant roles on the success of the festival. The quality of a festival program is closely related to the diversity of the festival activities, the availability of a financial sponsor, concurrence, the amount of experience in festival organisation, flexibility of the festival and the connection between the festival and traditional culture and tourism activities. The most basic aim of a festival program is the continuity of the festival, promotion related activities and providing its sustainability (Yan et. al., 2012, p. 655-658).

The activity which is subject to this study is Kardan Adam Festival (Snowman Festival) annually held in Ayder Yaylası which is a popular touristic destination in Çamlıhemşin, a county in the province of Rize. In this festival, which is held by Çamlıhemşin Doğa Sporları İhtisas Kulübü Derneği (ÇADOKS), the following activities are presented; skiathlon, biathlon championship, snowman making, tug of war, wood whipsawing, egg-and-spoon race, sack race, dance with balloon, tubed kayaking, snowshoe walking, lazboard, snowboard, snow rafting, folk dance, firework displays, torchlight procession, concerts in which local artists perform and etc. Those who rank in the competitions are given presents. Ayder Yaylası is located in 1200 meter altitude, and it can attract a lot of visitors in spite of the dense snowfall. Kardan Adam Festival which has been held for 9th time this year between January 30-31, 2016 is a regional organisation. Ayder Kardan Adam festival offers the opportunity for visitors' interactions in cooperation among local governor and Çamlıhemşin Doğa Sporları Kulübü. The most basic aim of the organisation is to introduce the natural beauties and tourism potential of Çamlıhemşin and to diversify the touristic activities in the region. Basic aim of this study is to reveal the relationship among the perceptions regarding the festival organisation, the perceived value of the festival, the satisfaction felt regarding the festival and the loyalty to festival organisation under the light of the findings obtained from this festival. The festival which is held regularly every year contributes to the economic and social wellbeing of the local people as well as increasing the image of the destination and promoting tourism in the region. The researcher attempted to identify the perceptions of the participants regarding the festival held in Ayder. Identification of the perceptions of the participants plays a significant role in finding of the shortages and in increasing the number visitors to the region. Sharing the obtained findings of the study with the local governors is expected to contribute to the longevity of the festival. Ayder Kardan Adam Festival, which has been gaining more popularity with the participation of more and more people every year, has been playing the most important role in the introduction of the region. Revealing the perceptions of the visitors regarding the festival and revealing the relationships among these variables are very vital in identification of the shortages in the festival organisation through the eyes of the visitors, overcoming these deficiencies and better planning of the festival. In this study, the term of festival is discussed primarily, and then the place and significance of festival tourism in regional development and the satisfaction levels of the visitors to the festival and their behavioural intentions are discussed in the study. In the following section of the study, research findings and discussions regarding the perceptions of the visitors to 9th Ayder Kardan Adam Festival are presented, and then results and relevant suggestions are provided.

## II. METHOD

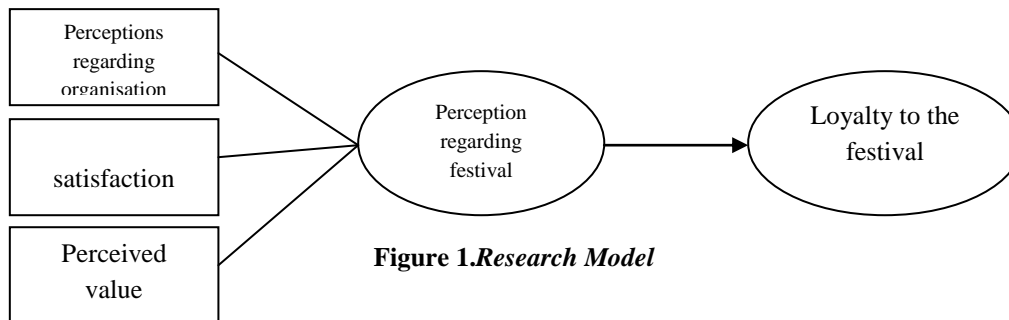
This study aimed to find out the relationships among the perceptions of the visitors regarding the Ayder Kardan Adam Festival held in Rize Ayder Yaylası in 2016, and the values perceived regarding the festival by

the visitors, visitors’ satisfaction levels and the loyalty levels of the visitors to the festival were also examined. The research hypotheses were designed as in the Table 1.

**Table 1. Research Hypotheses**

<b>Hypothesis 1</b>	There is a positive correlation between the perceptions of the visitors regarding the festival and the loyalty to the festival
<b>Hypothesis 2</b>	There is a positive correlation between the perceived value of the visitors from the festival and loyalty to the festival
<b>Hypothesis 3</b>	There is a positive correlation between the satisfaction levels of the visitors to the festival and loyalty to the festival
<b>Hypothesis 4</b>	Perceptions of visitors regarding the festival has a statistically significant effect on the loyalty to the festival

The research model has been formulated as follows;



**Figure 1. Research Model**

This study used questionnaire technique in data collection. The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from that of Yoon, Lee and Lee (2010). Face to face surveys were conducted to fill in the adapted questionnaire with the visitors visiting to the 9th Ayder Kardan Adam Festival for data collection. In the first part of the questionnaire used in this study to gather data, there are items in 5 Likert scale aiming to measure the perceptions of the visitors regarding the festival, the perceived value of the visitors regarding the festival and their satisfaction levels and their loyalty to the festival. In the second part of the questionnaire, there are items aiming to gather data regarding participants’ demographic knowledge. The theoretical population of the research consists of the visitors to the 9th Ayder Kardan Adam Festival between January 30-31 in 2016. However, as there was not an available clear figure of total visitors to the festival, convenience sampling method was used to gather data from those visiting the festival between January 30-31, 2016 as much as possible. Face to face surveys were conducted with the 234 volunteers between January 30-31, 2016.

All the questionnaires filled in through face to face surveys were all checked to see if they were accurately and completely filled in, to see if there was any miscoding and if the number of acceptable questionnaire was enough for an appropriate sample size (Yazıcıoğlu and Erdoğan, 2011, p.228). According to that, 15 of the questionnaire forms were excluded from the study as they were either incomplete or misfilled and the final number of questionnaire evaluated within the data analysis was 219. The data collected through the questionnaire were computerised and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for Windows 22.0 program was used in the analysis of the collected data. Regression and correlation analyses were conducted to reveal the relationships between the relevant variables to serve the aims of the study.

### III. FINDINGS

To test the reliability of the collected data within the scope of the study, Cronbach’s Alpha test was used. The reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.888 and the reliability of the data was found to be above 0.7 which is accepted to be the cutting value (Nunnally, 1978, p.245). The general information regarding the visitors of the festival in the study is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Findings regarding the general specifications of the participants.**

Variable	n	%	Variable	n	%	Variable	n	%			
<b>Age</b>	20 and below	85	38,8	<b>The city resided</b>	Ankara	6	2,7	<b>Frequency of the visit to the festival</b>	First time	60	27,4
	21-30	101	46,1		Denizli	7	3,2		2. time	22	10,0
	31-40	26	11,9		Erzincan	1	0,5		3. time	36	16,4
	41 and above	7	3,2		Eskişehir	1	0,5		4. time	20	9,1
<b>Gender</b>	female	113	51,6		İstanbul	23	10,5		5. time	21	9,6
	male	106	48,4		İzmir	5	2,3		6. time	14	6,4
<b>Status of graduation</b>	Primary school	19	8,7		Kayseri	1	0,5		7. time	8	3,7
	High school	97	44,3		Kocaeli	1	0,5		8. time	12	5,5
	Foundation degree	2	0,9		Ordu	1	0,5		9. time	26	11,9
	Undergraduate degree	98	44,7		Rize	153	69,9				
	Post graduate	3	1,4	Trabzon	20	9,1					

According to the Table 2, it is seen that participants are mostly above the age of 30. It can be suggested under the light of this finding that relatively young people participate in the festival. When the status of the participants was investigated, majority of them were found to be graduates of high school and university. When this was considered and those who continued their education were considered, it could be suggested that education status of the participants visiting the festival was high. When the fact that the great majority of the visitors to the festival came from Trabzon and Rize which was the city where the festival was organized, was considered, the importance of the geographical location of such festivals could be understood better. However, it can also be suggested that the participation rate from other provinces close to Rize where this festival was organized could be suggested to be quite low. When the visiting frequency rate of the visitors was considered, it can be suggested that the festival is repeatedly visited. Moreover, it could be suggested that there is a mass of visitors visiting the festival since the time when it first started. Table 3 presents the statements measuring the perceptions of the participants regarding the organisation of the festival, regarding the perceived value of the participants regarding the festival, their satisfaction levels and their loyalty levels regarding the festival. The replies given to these statements suggest that the perceptions of the participants regarding the festival were generally positive. However, some shortages were also suggested by the participants of the study such as the prices of food and drink, the prices of souvenir, hygiene of the toilets in the festival site, facilities for car parking, the location of the festival site and the effectivity of the signboards regarding the festival program. The detailed information regarding these statements is seen in Table 3.

**Table 3: Findings regarding the items**

Items	Arithmetic mean	Standard Deviation
<b>Perceptions regarding the organisation</b>		
There was enough resources where I could get information before the festival	3,76	0,74
The leaflets regarding the festival were well-prepared	2,48	0,75
There were appropriate signboards regarding the place and the content of the festival.	2,16	0,71
There were various activities in the festival	4,66	0,63
There was various souvenirs available to buy	4,23	0,67
There were delicious foods	4,75	0,56
Car parking areas were enough	1,96	0,55
Recreation sites were well-prepared	3,07	0,74
The festival was quite enjoyable	4,66	0,65
The souvenirs were of good quality	3,76	0,66

The food diversity was good	4,45	0,69
The toilets were hygienic	2,67	0,61
The services delivered by the festival staff were good	4,40	0,64
The festival was managed well	4,21	0,70
The prices of the souvenirs were reasonable	2,01	1,04
The prices for food were reasonable	1,90	0,95
<b>Perceived value</b>		
The festival was worth spending (money, time, energy)	4,69	0,62
The festival was better than I expected	4,68	0,63
When compared to other festivals, Kardan Adam festival was quite nice	4,57	0,77
<b>Satisfaction</b>		
I was generally satisfied with the festival	4,74	0,54
I was happy when I left the festival	4,75	0,55
I felt I did something good by participating the festival	4,56	0,61
<b>Festival Loyalty</b>		
I will mention about good things regarding the festival	4,75	0,53
I will keep participating the festival	4,66	0,73
I suggest this festival to my friends and people around me	4,79	0,54

Correlation analysis was conducted to find out the relations between the perceptions of the participants regarding the festival organisation (OA), the perceived value of the festival (FAD) and the satisfaction levels of the participants from the festival (MEM) and festival loyalty (DS) and to identify the directions of any possible relationships. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.

<b>Table4. Findings regarding the correlation analysis</b>						
	<b>x</b>	<b>s.s.</b>	<b>OA</b>	<b>FAD</b>	<b>MEM</b>	<b>FS</b>
<b>OA</b>	3,52	0,312	-			
<b>FAD</b>	4,64	0,614	,615**	-		
<b>MEM</b>	4,68	0,482	,641**	,804**	-	
<b>FS</b>	4,73	0,548	,576**	,916**	,821**	-
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).						

According to the correlation analysis, it was seen that there was a positive and statistically significant relationship between the perceptions of the participants regarding the 9th Ayder Kardan Adam Festival, the perceived value of the festival, the satisfaction levels of the participants from the festival and festival loyalty. According to that, as the positive perceptions regarding the festival organisation, the perceived value regarding the festival and the satisfaction levels from the festival increase, it can be suggested that the festival loyalty will also increase. Following the correlation analysis, regression analysis was conducted to find out if the perceptions of the participants regarding the festival organisation, the perceived value from the festival and the satisfaction levels from the festival had a positive effect on the festival loyalty, if there were, the extend of it.

The results regarding the regression analysis are presented in Table 5.

<b>Table5. The findings regarding the regression analysis</b>							
<b>Variable</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>StandardError</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>p</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>VIF</b>
Invariant (FS)	0,578	0,166		3,473	0,001		
OA	-0,070	0,060	-0,040	-1,171	0,243	0,560	1,784
FAD	0,658	0,039	0,737	16,792	0,000	0,337	2,969
MEM	0,288	0,051	0,254	5,623	0,000	0,319	3,134
R= ,928	R <sup>2</sup> = ,860	ΔR <sup>2</sup> = ,859	Durbin-Watson= 1,753				
F= 442,041	p< 0,001						

According to the results of the regression analysis, it was seen that the model established to predict the festival loyalty was meaningful ( $p < 0,001$ ). According to that, it was found that the perceptions of the festival participants had effects on the festival loyalty ( $r = 0,928$ ); and 85.9% of the festival loyalty could be explained with the total of the perceptions regarding the organisation, the satisfaction felt from the festival and the perceived value from the festival. Whereas the perceptions regarding the festival organisation had effect on the festival satisfaction, this effect was found to be insignificant. Besides, it was seen that the biggest contribution in explaining the festival loyalty was done by the perceived value from the festival. Following the analyses conducted in the study, the hypotheses suggested in this study were accepted.

#### IV. DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between perceptions of the participants in the 9th Kardan Adam Festival regarding the organisation, the perceived value of the participants in the festival and their satisfaction levels and their loyalty levels to the festival and the effects of these variables on the festival loyalty. This study contributes to the relevant literature in explaining the relationships between the perceptions of the festival participants and festival loyalty. Festivals are very important in introducing local cultures, developing local people and increasing socio-economic interactions. It can also be suggested that the sustainability and traditionalizing of the festivals have great effect on efficient introduction of local culture, improving socio-economic interaction between local people and those coming from different locations. Positive perceptions and satisfaction levels of the participants regarding the festival are very important in the sustainability and traditionalizing of festivals. The findings of the study suggest that the great majority of the festival participants are 30 or below 30. With this regard, the diversities and expectations of X, Y and Z generations should be considered in making arrangements and programs regarding festivals. Considering this, necessary revisions and arrangements can be made in the content of the program. The search for diversity and the interest in participating unique experiences which have become clearer in recent years may necessitate the use of regional products and diversity of such products which bring local culture into the forefront.

It was also seen in the study that most of the visitors participating in the festival were mostly from Rize, Trabzon and İstanbul. Whereas the participation of the people living in Rize province is important, there is also a need for more attempts to encourage and sustain more visits from the neighbouring cities of Rize to advertise the festival in these provinces and to attract more visitors. When the average values of the statements received from the participants were examined, it was found out that the visitors had generally positive perceptions regarding the festival. In addition to that, it was found that visitors did not have positive perceptions of the prices of food-drink, the prices of souvenirs, the hygiene of the toilets, the efficiency of the car parking, the availability of the signboards informing about the festival site and the content of the festival program. According to that, such issues should be revised and participants' expectations should be taken into consideration as the organisation is planned. It was found in the study that there has been a statistically positive relationship between the perceptions of the participants regarding the festival organisation, the perceived value from the festival, participants' satisfaction levels and festival loyalty. With this regard, the findings of this study were found to be similar to those of Özdemir and Çulha (2009) and Yoon et. al.(2010). It was also found that the perceptions regarding the festival organisation, the perceived value from the festival and visitors' satisfaction levels had high effects on the festival loyalty and that 85.9% of the festival loyalty could be explained with these perceptions. With this regard, the festival organizers and local governors should regularly examine the content of festivals, the perceptions of visitors of festivals, the satisfaction levels of visitors and their loyalty to festivals. Under the light of these examinations, relevant revisions and arrangements should be done to increase festival loyalty. Thus, the festival could be improved with the help of the loyal visitors to the festival.

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