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Local Residents' Participation in Gastronomy Tourism Development: Testing the MOAG Model in Şanlıurfa

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Abstract

This study examines the level of local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development in Şanlıurfa, Türkiye, and the factors associated with participation within the framework of motivation, opportunity, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness (MOAG). A sequential mixed-methods design was employed, with the qualitative phase informing the quantitative phase. Seventeen semi-structured interviews with representatives of public institutions, civil society, businesses, academia, and the local community were analysed using content analysis. The themes identified during these interviews informed the contextual adaptation of the scale developed by Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, and Ingram [1] for use in Şanlıurfa. Of the 600 face-to-face questionnaires obtained through gender-based quota sampling, 14 responses identified as outliers through boxplot inspection were excluded, leaving 586 responses for subsequent quantitative analysis. The measurement structure was examined through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and the hypotheses were tested using separate simple linear regression analyses. All 17 stakeholders interviewed during the qualitative phase considered tourism development in Şanlıurfa feasible, while emphasising both the importance of securing local residents' support and the practical possibility of obtaining such support. Showcasing local products at risk of being forgotten, employment, and income-generating activities emerged as potential incentives for participation. The quantitative findings indicate that the overall MOAG score is a statistically significant positive predictor of the participation score (β = 0.455; R^2 = 0.207). Motivation (β = 0.473; R^2 = 0.223), ability (β = 0.360; R^2 = 0.130), and gastronomy tourism awareness (β = 0.326; R^2 = 0.107) were positively associated with participation, whereas the predictive relationship for opportunity was not statistically significant (β = 0.028; p = 0.502). The mean participation score was 3.72, and 93.3% of respondents wanted gastronomy tourism to be developed in Şanlıurfa. Taken together, these findings suggest that policies designed to encourage meaningful local participation should combine tangible economic benefits with accessible education, relevant training, and awareness-raising initiatives. Given the cross-sectional data and separate simple regression analyses, however, the findings should not be interpreted as evidence of causal effects.

Keywords: Gastronomy tourism, local residents' participation, MOAG model, Şanlıurfa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gastronomy tourism is closely associated with visitors' desire to discover, understand, and experience a destination's distinctive food and beverage culture. Local cuisine can enhance a destination's attractiveness and create economic and cultural opportunities for local producers, businesses, and communities [2]. The role of local cuisine in destination image and branding has also been discussed in the Turkish context [3]. The sustainable development of gastronomy tourism, however, depends not merely on the diversity of local products or the effectiveness of promotional activities. It is also important to understand how local residents perceive this development and the ways in which they can participate in the process.

Residents' attitudes towards tourism have commonly been examined through perceptions of tourism's economic, sociocultural, and environmental impacts and through support for tourism development [4–8]. Studies have also addressed local residents' knowledge, expectations, and attitudes in the context of gastronomy tourism [9–11]. Model-based research that directly examines and explains participation in gastronomy tourism development nevertheless remains an important area requiring further investigation. Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, and Ingram [1] applied the motivation–opportunity–ability (MOA) approach to participation in tourism development. The present study examines the MOAG model in Şanlıurfa by extending this framework to include gastronomy tourism awareness.

With its historical and cultural heritage and diverse local cuisine, Şanlıurfa provides a relevant setting for examining gastronomy tourism. Turkish culinary traditions have been examined as an integral part of social and cultural life [12]. In addition to well-known attractions such as Göbeklitepe, Balıklıgöl, and Halfeti, the local food and beverage culture of Şanlıurfa forms an important part of the city's established tourism identity. During the period in which this research was conducted, efforts were underway to develop gastronomy tourism in Şanlıurfa and to pursue recognition in the gastronomy category of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Translating this considerable potential into locally beneficial tourism development requires sustained attention to residents' knowledge, motivation, and practical opportunities for meaningful participation.

The aim of this study is to determine the level of local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development in Şanlıurfa and to examine its relationship with motivation, opportunity, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness. The following research questions guide the study:

1. How do tourism stakeholders in Şanlıurfa assess the city's gastronomy tourism potential and local residents' participation in its development?
2. To what extent does the MOAG framework predict local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development?
3. How are motivation, opportunity, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness associated with participation?

The present research makes three interconnected contributions to the literature on community participation and gastronomy tourism. First, it examines the MOAG model in Şanlıurfa, extending the MOA approach considered in tourism by Hung et al. [1] through the addition of gastronomy tourism awareness. Second, it uses themes from stakeholder interviews to adapt the measurement instrument to the local context and incorporate gastronomy-specific elements into the quantitative phase. Third, it considers qualitative and quantitative findings together to compare how factors associated with participation appear in stakeholder accounts and survey data. These contributions should be understood as findings from the Şanlıurfa context, rather than as proof of the model's universal validity.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Local residents' participation in tourism development differs from general support for tourism: it requires consideration of residents' willingness to contribute, the conditions that enable such contributions, and the capacities needed to take part. The Motivation–Opportunity–Ability (MOA) approach proposes that behaviour cannot be explained by individual willingness alone; motivation, opportunities that enable behaviour, and the knowledge and skills required should be considered together. The MOA framework has been examined and applied across a variety of behavioural research fields [13, 14], and scholars have discussed how constraints in one component may limit behaviour even when other components are present [15].

In tourism, Hung, Sirakaya-Turk, and Ingram [1] adapted the MOA approach to community participation and tested an integrated model combining motivation, opportunity, and ability to explain local residents' participation in tourism development. Although their findings supported some of the model's relationships, they do not imply that MOA components will be equally explanatory in every context. Factors influencing individual participation in community-based tourism have also been examined by Kayat [16]. Research on heritage management and community participation further suggests

that participation may depend not only on individual willingness but also on access to decision-making processes and the quality of participation [17, 18].

In this study, motivation refers to the expectations and benefits that may encourage local residents to participate in gastronomy tourism; opportunity refers to the institutional and social conditions that make participation possible; and ability refers to the knowledge, skills, and resources required to contribute. This conceptualisation moves beyond explanations that reduce residents' attitudes towards tourism to perceptions of economic benefits alone and also considers the conditions under which participation can occur. Nevertheless, residents' attitudes, their perceptions of tourism impacts, and their reported support for development have often been examined at different conceptual and analytical levels. Reviews of residents' attitudes towards tourism likewise show that these attitudes have been addressed through a range of theoretical approaches [8, 19]. Accordingly, self-reported participation scores in this study should not be equated with actual community participation or decision-making power.

Gastronomy tourism involves not only making local food and beverage culture part of the visitor experience but also local production, cultural transmission, and destination identity. Therefore, in explaining participation in gastronomy tourism development, it is useful to examine not only general motivations and skills but also local residents' knowledge and awareness of gastronomy tourism and the touristic value of local cuisine. In this study, gastronomy tourism awareness refers to residents' knowledge and awareness of the scope of gastronomy tourism, the tourism value of local products and culinary culture, and the relationship between such development and the local community.

Adding the gastronomy tourism awareness dimension to the established MOA framework does not constitute a new theory intended to replace the original approach; rather, it is a model extension intended for the specific context of gastronomy tourism. Awareness may be associated with residents' motivation to participate, as well as with their ability to recognise available opportunities or assess their own capabilities. The awareness component should therefore not be assumed, without further empirical testing, to be entirely independent of the three established MOA components. The contribution of this study lies in including gastronomy tourism awareness as a separate dimension in the measurement model and examining its relationship with participation scores in the Şanlıurfa sample. Replication using data from other destinations and different community settings is needed to assess whether this additional dimension is sufficiently distinct at both conceptual and empirical levels.

The research model treats motivation, potential opportunities, existing abilities, and gastronomy tourism awareness as variables associated with the participation score. The expectation that each of these four components would be positively associated with local residents' participation is based on the following theoretical and contextual rationale.

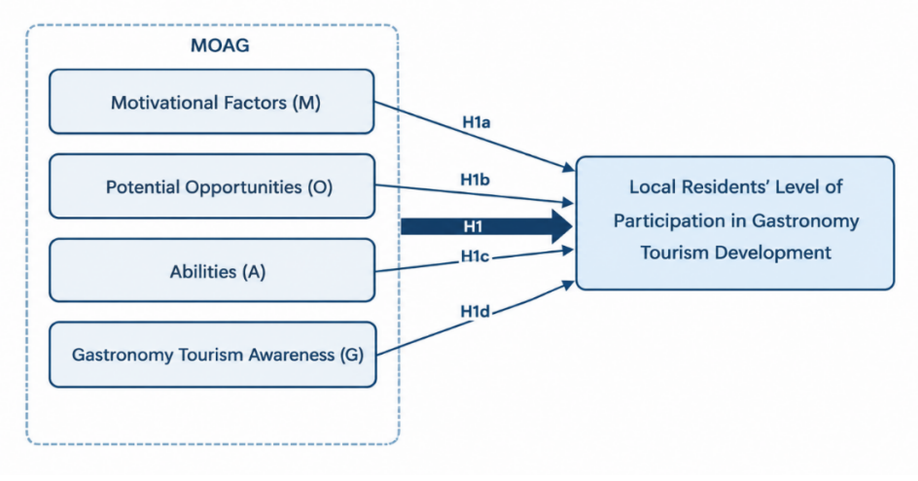


Figure 1. *MOAG Research Model*

Note. The MOA framework was extended to include gastronomy tourism awareness, based on Hung et al. [1]. The bold arrow represents the relationship between the overall MOAG construct and participation (H1), while the thin arrows represent the separate relationships of the four components (H1a–H1d). The diagram was redrawn for the present article from the doctoral dissertation completed by Eraslan in 2024 [24].

Motivation concerns the role of expectations and perceived benefits in directing behaviour [20] and has been examined among factors affecting individual participation in community-based tourism [16]; a positive relationship between motivation and participation was therefore expected (H1a). With regard to opportunity, research has emphasised access to decision-making processes and the existence of conditions that enable participation [17, 18, 21]; accordingly, a positive relationship was expected (H1b). Ability concerns the knowledge, skills, and self-efficacy required for participation [22, 23], and was expected to be positively associated with participation (H1c). Since gastronomy tourism awareness refers to residents' awareness of the scope of gastronomy tourism and the touristic value of local cuisine, individuals with greater awareness may be more inclined to participate in development (H1d). This expectation arises from the proposed extension

of the model to gastronomy tourism and is not directly based on prior empirical findings. The expectation that the overall MOAG score would positively predict participation (H1) builds on the MOA framework tested by Hung et al. [1].

The research model is presented in Figure 1, and the corresponding hypotheses are stated immediately below the figure for clarity and consistency with the analytical design.

Because the hypotheses were tested through separate simple linear regression analyses, the resulting coefficients represent bivariate predictive relationships between each dimension and the reported participation score. They should not be interpreted as independent effects estimated after controlling for the other dimensions, or as a ranking of their relative importance.

H1: There is a positive and significant relationship between the MOAG score and local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development.

H1a: Motivation positively and significantly predicts the participation score.

H1b: The potential opportunity score positively and significantly predicts the participation score.

H1c: The ability score positively and significantly predicts the participation score.

H1d: Gastronomy tourism awareness positively and significantly predicts the participation score.

3. METHOD

The study used a sequential mixed-methods design in which qualitative findings informed the adaptation of the quantitative data collection instrument. First, interviews were conducted with tourism stakeholders in Şanlıurfa; themes from these interviews were used to adapt questionnaire items based on the scale developed by Hung et al. [1] to the local context. In the second phase, survey data were used to examine participation levels and the MOAG dimensions. The quantitative phase followed a cross-sectional, predictive-correlational design and therefore assessed statistical associations rather than causal intervention effects.

The qualitative phase elicited stakeholder views on Şanlıurfa's gastronomy tourism potential and local residents' participation in its development. The semi-structured interview guide, prepared in light of the literature and expert opinions, consisted of eight open-ended questions. Relevant representatives of local government were selected purposively, while tourism businesses and local residents were selected with attention to maximum variation. The qualitative research covered central Şanlıurfa, the city's central districts, and Halfeti district, providing geographical and institutional variation in the stakeholder perspectives.

Of the 17 interviewees, three were academics, three represented public institutions (two municipalities and one representative of the Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism), four represented civil society organisations, five were tourism business operators, and two were local residents. Fifteen participants were men and two were women. To protect confidentiality, participants were identified using codes K1–K17. Interviews were conducted face to face and lasted approximately 45 minutes on average. Where participants granted permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and the recordings were used to prepare detailed interview notes; where permission was withheld, the researcher relied solely on contemporaneous written notes. The data were analysed using content analysis, with related concepts grouped into themes [25, 26]. Additional qualitative reliability procedures, such as independent recoding by a second analyst, formal inter-coder agreement calculations, or participant member checking, were not reported as having been undertaken; this limitation is considered in interpreting the findings.

The quantitative target population comprised people aged 18 years and over living in Şanlıurfa. The city's population in 2022 was 2,170,110. Assuming a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the minimum sample size was calculated as 384 [27]. The sample was recruited using gender-based quota sampling. A total of 600 questionnaires were collected in September–October 2023. Fourteen responses identified as outliers using boxplot-based inspection were excluded according to the study's analytical procedure, and the final analyses therefore used 586 completed questionnaires. Because probability sampling was not used beyond the gender quota, the sample should not be assumed to represent the entire population of Şanlıurfa.

The questionnaire consisted of statements concerning factors thought to influence participation, statements measuring participation levels, and sociodemographic questions. Drawing on the 24-item scale developed by Hung et al. [1] and themes emerging from the qualitative interviews, the items were adapted into a 33-item instrument. Forty experts were consulted to assess the clarity and comprehensibility of the questionnaire statements, and their wording was revised in response to this consultation where necessary. In a pilot study with 100 participants conducted in March–April 2023, Cronbach's alpha was reported as 0.92 for the MOAG scale and 0.91 for the participation scale. As the pilot coefficients differed from those obtained in the main sample, the main-sample results were evaluated separately and cautiously.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 22.0 and AMOS 24.0. Distribution was examined using skewness and kurtosis coefficients [28]. Exploratory factor analysis was conducted using principal components extraction and varimax rotation, with 0.45 adopted as the minimum factor loading. Confirmatory factor analysis was then conducted using maximum likelihood estimation. Model fit was evaluated using χ^2/df, RMSEA, SRMR, CFI, GFI, NFI, TLI, and AGFI [29].

Composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted (AVE), and the Fornell–Larcker criterion [30] were used to assess convergent and discriminant validity. Hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 significance level using separate simple linear regression analyses for each independent variable. These coefficients consequently describe relationships within separate models and cannot legitimately be interpreted as independent effects after adjustment for the remaining model dimensions.

4. RESULTS

All 17 participants responded positively to the question, "Can tourism be developed in Şanlıurfa?" K2 (academic) emphasised the city's potential for historical, cultural, and faith tourism, as well as its wide variety of food and beverages. K13 (tourism business operator) noted that tourism could be advanced by developing gastronomy tours. Participants identified historical, cultural, faith, gastronomy, winter, thermal, river-and-lake, and water-sports tourism as areas with development potential. All stakeholders considered local residents' support important to the development of gastronomy tourism and believed that such support could be secured. These results reflect the views of a purposively selected sample of 17 people and cannot be generalised to all residents of Şanlıurfa.

Themes derived from interview questions about motivations that could encourage participation, opportunities that could increase it, and abilities that should be supported are summarised in Table 1. Showcasing products at risk of being forgotten, employment, and income-generating activities were grouped under motivation. Assigning responsibilities, opportunities to convert production into sales, communication, and incentives were grouped under opportunity. Encouragement, providing information, and raising awareness were grouped under ability. Education, public–private collaboration, and promotion were included among factors affecting participation. These themes informed the adaptation of the questionnaire items to the local context.

Table 1. *Themes and Codes Derived From the Interviews (n = 17)*

Theme	Codes
Tourism types with development potential	Historical, cultural, faith, gastronomy, winter, thermal, river/lake, and water-sports tourism
Factors affecting participation	Fostering tourism awareness, education, public-private sector cooperation, infrastructure and superstructure, promotion, oversight, community engagement, emotional solidarity, social change (economic impacts)
Motivation	Displaying products at risk of being forgotten, employment, income-generating activities, quality of life, perception of safety, addressing hygiene issues, recognition/reward systems
Opportunities	Assigning responsibilities, opportunities to sell one's own products, communication, incentives, having a say in management, tax exemptions, channels for expressing wishes, requests, and complaints, organizing exhibitions and meetings
Skills	Encouragement; providing information; raising awareness
Leading/supporting institutions	Local authorities; public institutions; NGOs; tourism businesses; local residents

Selected demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the 586 survey respondents are reported in Table 2; additional descriptive information is summarised in the accompanying text. Women accounted for 50.5% of survey participants, and 51% were married. The largest age group was 25–34 years (28.0%), and high-school graduates constituted the most common education group (41.8%). In terms of occupation, tradespeople (32.6%) and self-employed participants (17.4%) were prominent. The most common income bracket was TRY 8,507–12,000 (34.8%). A total of 61.9% reported having lived in Şanlıurfa for 16 years or longer, while 547 participants (93.3%) wanted gastronomy tourism to be developed in the city. This percentage reflects attitudes within the sample and should not be interpreted as a precise population-level estimate because quota sampling was used.

The exploratory factor analysis results are summarised in Table 3. Before this analysis, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin value was 0.858, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant (χ^2 = 5789.266; df = 276; $p < 0.001$). Nine items with factor loadings below 0.45 or cross-loadings were removed; the remaining 24 items formed five factors and explained 58.85% of the total variance. Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was reported as 0.88. It should be noted that the structure obtained in exploratory analysis was not retained unchanged in confirmatory analysis, where the number of items and model structure were revised.

In confirmatory factor analysis, the MOAG structure was tested using four factors and 20 items, and the reported composite reliability and convergent validity indicators are shown in Table 4; one item was removed from the ability dimension. Participation was assessed as a separate three-item construct. For the first-order model, the reported fit indices were χ^2 = 631.432, df = 157, χ^2/df = 4.022, RMSEA = 0.072, SRMR = 0.059, CFI = 0.901, GFI = 0.910, NFI = 0.873, TLI = 0.880, and AGFI = 0.879. Covariances between some error terms were specified to improve model fit. Because such modifications adapt the model to the data, the fit should be considered limited rather than strong. In the second-

order model treating MOAG as a higher-order construct formed by four dimensions, the reported values were χ^2/df = 3.890, RMSEA = 0.070, SRMR = 0.061, CFI = 0.904, GFI = 0.910, NFI = 0.876, TLI = 0.885, and AGFI = 0.882. The standardised paths to the higher-order construct were 0.83 for gastronomy tourism awareness, 0.82 for motivation, 0.48 for ability, and 0.12 for opportunity. Since NFI and TLI were below 0.90, the limitations of model fit should be explicitly acknowledged.

Table 2. *Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (n = 586)*

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Female	296	50,5
	Male	290	49,5
Age	18–24	137	23,4
	25–34	164	28,0
	35–44	130	22,2
	45–54	101	17,2
	55–64	45	7,7
	65 and over	9	1,5
Education	Primary education	66	11,3
	Secondary education–high school	245	41,8
	Associate degree	171	29,2
	Bachelor's degree	88	15,0
	Postgraduate	16	2,7
Monthly income (TRY)	8,506 and below	167	28,5
	8.507–12.000	204	34,8
	12.001–16.000	157	26,8
	16.001–20.000	23	3,9
	20,001 and above	35	6,0

Table 3. *Exploratory Factor Analysis Results*

Factor	Items	Eigenvalue	Explained variance (%)	Cronbach α
Motivation	9	4,801	20,003	0,89
Gastronomy tourism awareness	5	3,044	12,682	0,78
Potential opportunities	3	2,186	9,109	0,77
Existing Abilities	4	2,186	9,108	0,70
Participation level	3	1,908	7,948	0,65

Table 4. *Composite Reliability and Average Variance Extracted for the Measurement Model*

Factor	Items	Standardised loading range	CR	AVE
Gastronomy tourism awareness	5	0,64–0,70	0,79	0,44
Motivation	9	0,53–0,76	0,89	0,48
Potential opportunities	3	0,50–0,88	0,79	0,58
Existing Abilities	3	0,63–0,71	0,71	0,45

Note: CR and AVE were recalculated from standardised factor loadings (λ) using CR = $(\Sigma\lambda)^2$ / [$(\Sigma\lambda)^2$ + $\Sigma(1 - \lambda^2)$] and AVE = $\Sigma\lambda^2$ / n. Participation was treated as a separate three-item scale and is therefore not included in the table.

AVE values calculated from standardised factor loadings were below 0.50 for gastronomy tourism awareness (0.44), motivation (0.48), and ability (0.45); however, composite reliability exceeded 0.70 for all dimensions. Fornell and Larcker [30] noted that convergent validity may still be considered adequate when AVE is below 0.50 if composite reliability exceeds 0.60. Accordingly, convergent validity was limited but acceptable. For discriminant validity, the square roots of AVE (0.66–0.76) exceeded the highest inter-factor correlation (0.57), meeting the Fornell–Larcker criterion. In the main sample, Cronbach's alpha was 0.65 for the participation scale and 0.70 for the ability dimension.

The mean scores were 3.60 for gastronomy tourism awareness, 3.66 for motivation, 3.67 for opportunity, 3.72 for ability, and 3.72 for participation. The mean participation score was above the midpoint of the five-point Likert response scale, suggesting a relatively positive stated inclination towards participation among the respondents in the analysed sample. The highest-scoring item was "I provide help/resources for the development of gastronomy tourism" (3.79), whereas the lowest-scoring item was "I believe gastronomy tourism can be developed in Şanlıurfa" (3.52).

The relationship between each independent variable and the participation score was tested using a separate simple linear regression analysis (Table 5). The MOAG score explained 20.7% of the variance in participation. Among the dimensions, motivation had the largest predictive coefficient (β = 0.473; R^2 = 0.223), followed by ability (β = 0.360; R^2 = 0.130) and gastronomy tourism awareness (β = 0.326; R^2 = 0.107). The coefficient for opportunity was not statistically significant (β = 0.028; p = 0.502). Because each dimension was tested in a separate model, these coefficients do not represent relative importance estimates controlling for the other dimensions.

Table 5. *Regression Results for Participation (Dependent Variable: Participation in Gastronomy Tourism Development)*

Independent variable	β	t	p	R^2	F	Result
MOAG (H1)	0,455	12,362	< 0,001	0,207	152,82	Supported
Motivation (H1a)	0,473	12,960	< 0,001	0,223	167,96	Supported
Potential opportunities (H1b)	0,028	0,671	0,502	0,001	0,451	Not supported
Existing Abilities (H1c)	0,360	9,338	< 0,001	0,130	87,198	Supported
Gastronomy tourism awareness (H1d)	0,326	8,347	< 0,001	0,107	69,674	Supported

The main hypothesis concerning the overall MOAG score, together with the sub-hypotheses concerning motivation, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness, was supported by the corresponding separate regression analyses. In contrast, the hypothesised positive relationship involving the opportunity dimension was not supported at the prespecified level of statistical significance. Accordingly, these results should be interpreted specifically in the context of the available Şanlıurfa sample, the operational measurement instruments, and the study's cross-sectional design.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study examined local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development in Şanlıurfa through the MOAG framework, comprising motivation, opportunity, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness. The mean participation score of 3.72 and the finding that 93.3% of participants wanted gastronomy tourism to be developed indicate that a positive desire for such development was widespread within the sample.

The statistically significant positive association between the overall MOAG score and self-reported participation (β = 0.455; R^2 = 0.207) suggests that considering the model components collectively provides a potentially useful explanatory approach for understanding residents' reported participation in the Şanlıurfa sample. Residents' attitudes towards tourism have been discussed through various theoretical approaches [19]. This study contributes to that discussion with findings from a specific destination and in the context of gastronomy tourism. Further testing of the MOAG approach in different destinations and samples is important for assessing its explanatory value and transferability across contexts.

Among the dimensions, motivation had the largest standardised coefficient (β = 0.473; R^2 = 0.223), suggesting that participation scores may be associated with residents' expectations and perceived benefits. The emphasis in the qualitative interviews on showcasing local products at risk of being forgotten, employment, and income-generating activities provides contextual support for this interpretation. The relationship between residents' support for tourism and their perceptions of its economic and social consequences has long been discussed in the tourism-attitudes literature [4, 31].

In light of these findings, initiatives could be developed to increase the economic value of local products and strengthen the position of local producers in the gastronomy tourism value chain in Şanlıurfa. Sales and promotional channels could be created to help producers present their products to visitors; local producers and entrepreneurs could be included in gastronomy events; and local products could be linked to the supply chains of restaurants and accommodation businesses. Supporting women entrepreneurs in the production, presentation, and marketing of local products is another option for enhancing local economic participation. Such initiatives may make the potential economic and social benefits of gastronomy tourism more visible to residents. However, because the present study did not directly test the effects of these interventions on participation, they should be regarded as policy recommendations consistent with the findings rather than proven outcomes.

The positive relationships of ability (β = 0.360; R^2 = 0.130) and gastronomy tourism awareness (β = 0.326; R^2 = 0.107) with participation suggest that participation may not be explained by willingness alone. Contributing to gastronomy tourism may require knowledge of local products and dishes, preparation and presentation skills, communication with visitors, and the ability to convey the cultural meaning of food. Literature on community-based tourism planning likewise indicates that participation should be considered alongside collaboration and the meaningful involvement of local actors [1, 22].

The positive relationship between gastronomy tourism awareness and participation indicates that this dimension merits examination in the Şanlıurfa sample. However, the finding does not directly demonstrate mechanisms through which awareness increases motivation, develops ability, or helps residents recognise opportunities; these relationships were not tested in the present regression analyses. In practice, universities, vocational education institutions, local authorities, and

industry representatives could jointly organise training on preparing and presenting local dishes, food safety and hygiene, promoting local products, transmitting gastronomic heritage, and communicating with visitors. Activities could also help residents learn about gastronomy tourism, the expectations of gastronomy tourists, and the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism. Supporting residents' ability to recognise, preserve, and communicate their culinary culture to visitors may be considered as a way of encouraging participation.

Local authorities could therefore develop joint training and awareness programmes with universities, vocational education institutions, tourism businesses, and relevant professional organisations. Training should not be limited to professional skills for tourism employees; it should also help local residents understand local production, the preservation of culinary culture, the promotion of gastronomic values, and sustainable resource use. The effects of training and awareness initiatives could be examined in future studies through pre- and post-intervention measures or comparative research designs.

The finding that opportunity did not significantly predict participation (β = 0.028; p = 0.502) indicates that no statistically significant relationship was identified between opportunity scores and participation scores for the measures and sample used. This should not be interpreted as meaning that opportunities are unimportant to local residents or that institutional participation mechanisms are unnecessary. Community participation is related not only to individual willingness but also to access to decision-making processes and the quality of participation. Meaningful differences may exist between being consulted and having decision-making power [1, 18].

One possible explanation for the non-significant result is that the opportunity dimension was measured with three items and may not have adequately distinguished between different conditions, such as institutional representation, access to meetings, financial support, and access to markets. Another possibility is that the opportunities stakeholders hoped could become available in the future differed substantively from respondents' perceptions of opportunities that were already available at the time of the survey. These explanations were not tested in the present analyses and should therefore be treated as possibilities for future research rather than established causes of the finding.

This result highlights the need to examine mechanisms through which local residents can participate in the planning and management of gastronomy tourism. Local representatives could be included in advisory boards concerned with gastronomy tourism; platforms could be established for residents to communicate their views regularly; and feedback could be provided on how those views are considered in planning decisions. Residents should be viewed not merely as a group to be consulted but as stakeholders who can contribute to the preservation of local culinary culture, the promotion of local products, and the planning of gastronomy tourism activities. The non-significant result for opportunity does not justify abandoning participation channels; rather, it calls for renewed examination of their scope, accessibility, and meaning for local residents.

Gastronomy festivals, local-product promotion days, cooking competitions, culinary workshops, and producer–consumer meetings could be developed to promote and preserve Şanlıurfa's gastronomic assets. These events could support local residents' interest in gastronomy while enabling producers to promote their products and interact directly with visitors. Tourism businesses could contribute by using local ingredients and traditional recipes, offering authentic experiences that reflect local culinary culture, and collaborating with residents. Recruitment practices that improve access to jobs for local residents, stronger local sourcing, and partnerships with local producers at gastronomy events could also be considered. Repurposing unused or underutilised buildings for gastronomy tourism may be another option, provided that suitability, conservation principles, and economic sustainability are taken into account.

To support the sustainability of gastronomy tourism, local authorities and relevant institutions could work to preserve local culinary culture, support the production of local products, and monitor the impacts of gastronomy tourism. Developing tourism infrastructure, improving transport and visitor services, and planning gastronomy events should take account of the protection of local resources and the destination's carrying capacity. Awareness-raising initiatives on sustainability could be linked to the preservation of gastronomic heritage and the long-term viability of tourism activities. Joint initiatives among local authorities, producers, businesses, and educational institutions could also promote Şanlıurfa's gastronomic assets nationally and internationally. Activities related to international initiatives such as the UNESCO Creative Cities Network should be planned in line with the current application status and applicable criteria.

Taken together, the mixed-methods findings show broad consistency between qualitative participants' view that tourism development is feasible and local support is important, and the relatively positive participation scores in the quantitative phase. The qualitative emphasis on showcasing local products at risk of being forgotten, employment, and income-generating activities is conceptually consistent with the positive association between motivation and participation in the quantitative analysis. Emphasis on information and awareness can likewise be considered alongside the results for ability and gastronomy tourism awareness.

Several limitations should be considered. The study was conducted cross-sectionally in a single destination, and quantitative data were collected through a self-report questionnaire. Gender-based quota sampling does not support a claim that the sample was probabilistic or fully representative of Şanlıurfa's population. The qualitative sample was weighted towards stakeholders, and most participants were men, which may have limited the diversity of perspectives.

The absence of additional qualitative reliability procedures, such as a second coder or member checking, should also be considered when interpreting the qualitative findings.

Future research could broaden the opportunity dimension by examining institutional participation, access to decision-making, financial support, and market access separately. The conceptual distinctiveness of gastronomy tourism awareness from the other MOA components could be tested in different samples. Multiple regression or an appropriate structural model could help examine relationships when the components are considered simultaneously. Replication studies in different destinations would allow researchers to assess the contextual sensitivity and transferability of the MOAG model. Studies involving gastronomy tourists, tourism businesses, and local producers in addition to residents could provide a more comprehensive understanding of different stakeholders' expectations regarding participation. Monitoring the outcomes of training, promotional, and participation initiatives could also help identify which interventions are most closely associated with local residents' participation.

In conclusion, the present study provides a detailed examination of a context-specific extension of the MOA approach through the addition of gastronomy tourism awareness as an explicit dimension in Şanlıurfa. The findings indicate a positive relationship between the MOAG score and participation; among the subdimensions, motivation, ability, and gastronomy tourism awareness were positively associated with participation, whereas opportunity was not a significant predictor. These results suggest that local residents' participation in gastronomy tourism development can be considered in relation to economic expectations, knowledge and skills, and awareness of gastronomy tourism. To support participation sustainably, however, initiatives should also consider strengthening residents' access to decision-making processes, links between local production and tourism, and collaboration among stakeholders. A stronger assessment of the MOAG model's theoretical and measurement properties will require replication in different samples and analyses that consider the dimensions simultaneously.

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Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the study. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version and accept responsibility for the integrity of the work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Data Availability

Requests to access the anonymised study data should be directed to the corresponding author.

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