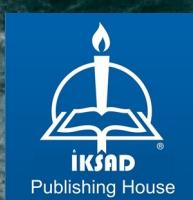




MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION OF ADVENTURE TOURISM PARTICIPANTS: THE CASE OF RAFTING

Hakan DEMİRAY

Editor: Dr. Lecturer Kübra KIRAÇ DEMİRAY

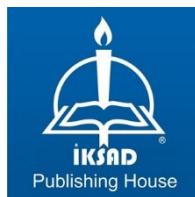


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Editor: Dr. Kübra KIRAÇ DEMİRAY

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PREFACE

In the tourism sector, *motivation*—shaped by the push and pull factors influencing tourists' travel decisions—and *satisfaction*, which plays a vital role in destination choice, tourism product consumption, revisiting the same destination, recommending it to others, and maintaining long-term relationships, are essential concepts that need to be explored within the context of tourist behaviour.

This study examines the concepts of motivation and satisfaction within the framework of *adventure tourism*, focusing specifically on rafting tourism, which has gained significant popularity in recent years. The main purpose of this research is to provide guidance and practical insights for rafting businesses offering services to rafting participants. It is expected that the findings of this study will not only benefit the rafting companies operating along the Melen River in Cumayeri District of Düzce Province, where the research was conducted, but also other rafting enterprises across Turkey.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurettin AYAZ, for his continuous guidance, encouragement, and support throughout this study. I am also deeply thankful to the members of my thesis jury, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Fatih TÜRKmen and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bayram AKAY, for their valuable contributions and constructive feedback.

Hakan Demiray

CONTENTS

PREFACE	i
CONTENTS	ii
RESEARCH TOPIC	5
PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY.....	5
RESEARCH METHOD.....	6
Research Hypotheses / Problem	6
POPULATION AND SAMPLE	8
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED.....	9
INTRODUCTION	9
CHAPTER ONE.....	11
TOURIST MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION.....	11
1.1. The Concept of Motivation	11
1.2. The Importance of Motivation.....	11
1.3. Tourist Motivation.....	12
1.4. The Concept of Satisfaction	13
1.4.1. Physical Environment Conditions	15
1.4.3. Perceived Value.....	16
1.5. The Importance of Satisfaction	16
1.6. Tourist Satisfaction.....	17

CHAPTER TWO.....	18
ALTERNATIVE TOURISM, ADVENTURE TOURISM, AND RAFTING TOURISM	18
2.1. Alternative Tourism	18
2.2. Adventure Tourism.....	21
2.3. Adventure Tourists.....	25
2.4. Rafting Tourism	25
2.5. Rafting Tourism in Turkey.....	31
CHAPTER THREE.....	33
RESEARCH ON THE MOTIVATIONS AND SATISFACTION OF RAFTING TOURISTS	33
3.1. Research Area.....	33
3.2. Analysis of Research Data.....	34
3.3. Research Findings	36
3.3.1. Descriptive Information on Research Participants	36
3.3.2. Factor Analysis of Rafting Participants' Motivation	40
3.3.3. Factor Analysis of Rafting Participants' Satisfaction	42
3.3.4. Comparison of Rafting Participants' Motivations Based on Descriptive Characteristics.....	45
3.3.5. Comparison of Rafting Participants' Satisfaction According to Descriptive Characteristics.....	50
3.3.6. Correlation Analysis Regarding the Motivation and Satisfaction of Rafting Tourists.....	56

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	60
REFERENCES	63
APPENDICES.....	72
CURRICULUM VITAE	79

RESEARCH TOPIC

As a form of alternative tourism, rafting is classified among extreme sports and has become a highly popular activity worldwide due to its ability to provide participants with intense feelings of adrenaline and excitement. The fact that this activity is practiced in many parts of the world is clear evidence of its widespread appeal. However, there are still many aspects regarding the motivational drivers that lead people to participate in rafting and their satisfaction levels that remain unexplained, indicating a gap in the literature. Fulker and Turner (2000) emphasize that understanding the needs, motivations, and expectations of participants before and after rafting experiences represents an important research question within the adventure tourism market.

Based on this perspective, this thesis focuses on examining the motivations and satisfaction levels of rafting tourists who visit rafting businesses and demand services, specifically within the context of Turkey.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Rafting is a competitive sport that involves navigating downstream river currents using an inflatable boat. Due to its highly challenging and risky nature, as well as the significant level of teamwork it requires, it is classified as an extreme sport. At the same time, rafting is practiced as a highly popular recreational activity in many countries around the world (<https://www.topsports.com>). By its nature, rafting is not an activity that can be performed anywhere or at any time; participants must travel to specific destinations during certain seasons to engage in rafting activities. However, understanding the motivational factors that drive tourists to participate in rafting, as well as their satisfaction levels after the activity, remains an area that requires further explanation.

The aim of this research is to identify the motivational factors and satisfaction levels of individuals participating in rafting tourism, to analyze the connection between these two variables, and to offer practical guidance for tourism professionals, particularly within the scope of adventure-based tourism activities. Additionally, this study aims to support local authorities and rafting businesses in Turkey that seek to promote rafting activities within their regions, while contributing to the tourism literature due to the limited number of studies conducted on this topic.

RESEARCH METHOD

This thesis is designed as a quantitative study aimed at understanding the motivations and satisfaction levels of rafting tourists, as well as identifying the relationship between these two factors.

In the research process, secondary data were obtained from a review of the literature, while primary data were collected through questionnaires administered to rafting participants. The questionnaire used in the study (Appendix-1) was adapted from the studies of Sato et al. (2018) and Jamal et al. (2019) and finalized based on expert opinions from academic professionals.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections:

- The first section included demographic questions (gender, marital status, age, education level, monthly income, and status) and other variables such as the number of times the respondent had participated in rafting and the main factors influencing their participation. These were measured using a categorical scale.

- The second section assessed participants' motivation levels, and the third section evaluated their satisfaction levels, both of which were measured using an interval scale designed as a five-point Likert scale: "1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Somewhat Agree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly Agree."

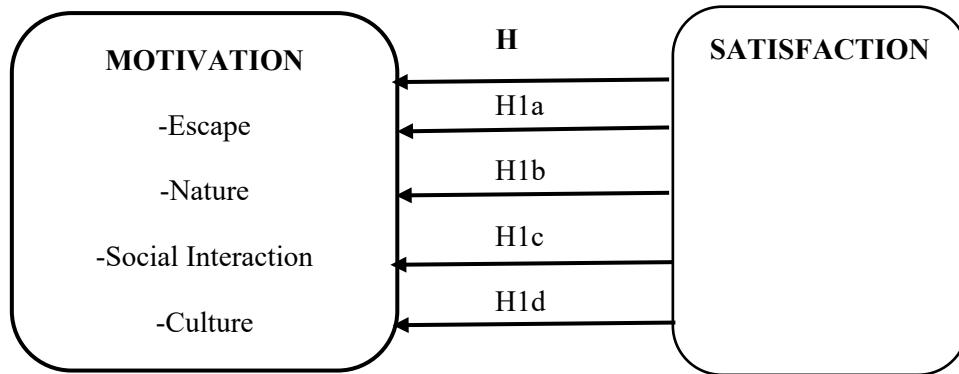
- The data were collected during November and December 2021 using a convenience sampling method and a face-to-face questionnaire technique conducted with rafting participants.

Research Hypotheses / Problem

Within the scope of sustainable tourism, alternative tourism carried out with small groups instead of mass tourism conducted with large groups has become a recommended approach. In this context, rafting tourism, which is carried out in small groups, can be considered as an important type of tourism. Scientific research on this type of tourism is seen as valuable outputs for its development in Turkey.

In this thesis, rafting tourism is addressed from the perspective of rafting tourists, aiming to create an understanding regarding the motivations and satisfaction of participants, and to inform rafting businesses about their customers. Within this framework, the research problem has been determined as "determining the relationship between the motivations and satisfaction of rafting tourists."

Within the scope of the research problem, the research model and hypotheses were established as shown in Figure 1 below.



H1: There is a significant relationship between rafting tourists' motivations and their satisfaction.

H1a: There is a significant relationship between rafting tourists' escape motivation and their satisfaction.

H1b: There is a significant relationship between rafting tourists' nature motivation and their satisfaction.

H1c: There is a significant relationship between rafting tourists' social interaction motivation and their satisfaction.

H1d: There is a significant relationship between rafting tourists' cultural motivation and their satisfaction.

In addition to the hypotheses above, the following research questions are posed to determine whether there are significant differences between rafting tourists' demographic and other characteristics and their motivations and satisfaction:

Are there significant differences between rafting tourists' demographic (gender, marital status, age, education level, income level, occupation) and other characteristics (number of participations in rafting, factors influencing participation) and their motivations?

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

For this research, the population size was defined as the 121,898 domestic tourists who visited Düzce province as of 2019. Based on accessibility, time, and cost constraints, the sample size was determined using Table 1: Sample Size Table developed by Sekaran (2003), applying a $\pm 5\%$ margin of error and a Z value of 1.96. Accordingly, the sample size was calculated as 384 rafting participants. However, the study was ultimately conducted with 400 participants.

Table 1: Sample Size Table for a Given Population

N	S	N	S	N	S
10	10	220	140	1.200	291
15	14	230	144	1.300	297
20	19	240	148	1.400	302
25	24	250	152	1.500	306
30	28	260	155	1.600	310
35	32	270	159	1.700	313
40	36	280	162	1.800	317
45	40	290	165	1.900	320
50	44	300	169	2.000	322
55	48	320	175	2.200	327
60	52	330	181	2.400	331
65	56	340	186	2.600	335
70	59	360	191	2.800	338
75	63	400	196	3.000	341
80	66	420	201	3.500	346
85	70	440	205	4.000	351
90	73	460	210	4.500	354
95	76	480	214	5.000	357
100	80	500	217	6.000	361
110	86	550	226	7.000	364
120	92	600	234	8.000	367
130	97	650	242	9.000	368
140	103	700	248	10.000	370
150	108	750	254	15.000	375
160	113	800	260	20.000	377
170	118	850	265	30.000	379
180	123	900	269	40.000	380
190	127	950	274	50.000	381
200	132	1.000	278	75.000	382
210	136	1.100	285	100.000	384

Source: Sekaran, 2003

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

This thesis study, which aims to develop an understanding of the motivations and satisfaction levels of rafting tourists, is subject to the following limitations and challenges:

The research is limited to the motivation and satisfaction scales designed for rafting tourists.

The study is limited to the opinions collected via questionnaires administered to participants who visited Düzce province for rafting during the period of November–December 2021, using a convenience sampling method.

The main challenges encountered during data collection were as follows:

The prolonged closure of rafting businesses due to the Covid-19 pandemic,

A decrease in customer turnout, as people tended to avoid crowded environments,

Water shortages and reduced river flow in rafting areas caused by an unusually dry summer season,

The reluctance of some rafting participants to complete the questionnaire.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, adventure activities have gained significant attention as a research field among scholars in tourism, sociology, psychology, and related academic disciplines. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in understanding the personality traits, sense of responsibility, lifestyle, and behaviors of individuals who participate in rafting, which is one of the most prominent forms of adventure tourism (Filho, 2014; Jamal, 2019).

Rafting is a water-based sport performed using inflatable boats known as rafts on fast-flowing rivers. The main objective of the activity is to steer the raft between rocks and obstacles using paddles without capsizing. Typically carried out in teams of four to six participants, rafting requires maintaining control over the raft on turbulent waters. Routes are categorized into six levels of difficulty, ranging from Grade 1 to Grade VI (Bektaş et al., 2012). The growing popularity

of rafting is largely attributed to the excitement of engaging with nature and the revitalizing adventure experience it offers (Jamal et al., 2019: 11).

As a group-based activity appealing to well-educated and affluent individuals across all age groups, rafting attracts not only young people and singles but also families with children in secondary or higher education. It is considered a popular adventure activity, particularly among thrill-seekers, adventurers, and those seeking entertainment. Moreover, due to its physical demands and need for a certain level of skill, rafting has the potential to develop as a serious recreational activity. Its capacity to provide stress relief and enjoyment makes it especially attractive to participants (McKay, 2014).

Motivation, often defined as a psychological state aimed at achieving satisfaction, is a widely accepted theory within the framework of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. It plays a key role in explaining tourist behavior and is commonly analyzed through push and pull factors. These factors include the desire to escape daily routines, relaxation, social interaction, self-discovery, prestige, strengthening family bonds, facilitating social connections, cultural learning, and educational pursuits (Jaapar et al., 2017)

Tourist satisfaction, which reflects the extent to which tourists' experiences meet or exceed their expectations, is considered a crucial concept in tourism studies. Satisfaction is evaluated based on comparing actual experiences with initial expectations and assessing the services consumed during the visit (Sukiman et al., 2013).

The principal focus of this thesis is to analyze the driving factors behind individuals' participation in rafting activities and to assess their satisfaction levels, aiming to build an academic understanding of these aspects. In line with this objective, the first chapter focuses on tourist motivation and satisfaction, the second chapter examines adventure tourism and rafting tourism, and the third chapter presents the analysis of survey data collected from rafting participants regarding their motivations and satisfaction levels.

CHAPTER ONE

TOURIST MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION

1.1. The Concept of Motivation

Also referred to as “drive” or “incentive,” motivation is generally defined as the effort exerted by individuals to achieve a specific goal in line with their own desires and needs. However, for an effort to be considered as motivation, it must be associated with the possibility of success, possess a value, and be oriented toward achievement and reward (<https://sozluk.gov.tr>; Kılıç et al., 2007). Motivation, which is associated with the internal drives that mobilize an individual toward a goal, is considered the force that enables individuals to reach their objectives (Kartal, 2021).

Defined as a driving force that stimulates and activates individuals toward their goals (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2007), motivation can also be described as the arousal of a need or desire that pushes individuals to pursue certain goals (<https://www.ukessays.com>). It is also viewed as a psychological state wherein individuals are directed toward satisfaction or seek to achieve a certain level of fulfilment (Jang & Wu, 2006).

Three main criteria are identified for individuals to be motivated in a particular context: valuing the expected outcome, demonstrating appropriate behaviours to achieve the desired result, recognizing that such behaviours are necessary, and believing in their own ability to exhibit these behaviours in pursuit of the goal (Lee, 2007). Additionally, it is generally accepted that individuals’ motivations are shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

Intrinsic motivation refers to engagement in activities that are inherently enjoyable or interesting, such as learning, exploring potential abilities, or participating in activities purely for personal satisfaction without any expectation of external rewards. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by external rewards such as praise, fame, or financial gain. Furthermore, it is believed that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can encourage customers to participate in value co-creation processes with a company (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002; Palma et al., 2019).

1.2. The Importance of Motivation

Motivation, which is thought to be shaped by both intrinsic and extrinsic drives that guide an individual’s desires and needs without conflicting with their social environment, is considered to play a significant role in shaping human behaviour. Intrinsic motivation refers to situations where individuals

engage in activities for their own well-being or personal satisfaction, rather than for external rewards such as participating in a sport because they find it enjoyable or solving a puzzle because they find it stimulating. Conversely, extrinsic motivation is associated with taking action to obtain a reward or avoid punishment, such as studying to achieve high grades or cleaning one's home to avoid social embarrassment (Aydin, 2017).

In professional life, motivation is regarded as a significant force that influences job satisfaction, productive work, and enhanced performance. It is shaped by intrinsic factors such as personality and the nature of the work itself, and extrinsic factors such as salary, rewards, and additional benefits (Aslan & Doğan, 2020).

In the field of tourism, motivation plays an important role in tourists' destination selection decisions. Motivation is considered a key factor influencing individuals' decisions to travel for various reasons such as relaxation, curiosity, experience, or adventure. It also supports their perception of the destination and contributes to increasing their knowledge on specific subjects (<https://www.cram.com>).

1.3. Tourist Motivation

Tourist motivation is considered one of the key elements in understanding tourists' decision-making behaviour and is fundamentally shaped around the question of "Why do people travel?" It is believed to play a critical role in predicting future travel behaviour (<https://www.ukessays.com>). According to Pearce et al. (1998), tourist motivation can be described as "the global integrative network of biological and cultural forces that give value and direction to a tourist's travel choices, behaviours, and experiences".

In explaining why people travel, researchers often refer to push and pull motivations. Push motivation is described as an internal force that increases the desire to travel, while pull motivation is an external factor that creates the desire to travel. It is generally assumed that push motivation arises temporarily before pull motivation (Dann, 1981). According to Dann (1977), push motivations are shaped around concepts such as anomie (the desire to overcome the isolation inherent in daily life) and ego enhancement (the need for recognition achieved through the status gained by travel).

Crompton (1979) is recognized as one of the first researchers to classify push and pull motivations in the tourism literature. According to Crompton (1979), push motivations include factors such as escape, self-exploration, relaxation, prestige, regression, kinship enhancement, and social interaction, whereas pull motivations are associated with cultural novelty and

educational opportunities. PSHE (2013) identifies push motivations as factors like social interaction, respect, prestige, escape, relaxation, health, and other personal reasons, while pull motivations are linked to aspects such as climate, safety, political conditions, economic conditions, trends, and service quality. In a study focused on museum visitors, Eero (2013) categorized visitor motivations into four groups: social interaction, escape-relaxation, learning, and prestige/self-esteem. The study found that learning potential was the highest-rated motivation, with visitors primarily motivated by a desire to pursue personal interests, experience new and different things, gain knowledge about art and culture, and satisfy their curiosity. In general, across many academic studies, common push factors include the search for knowledge, relaxation, and family togetherness, while common pull factors include the natural and historical environment, price, facilities, safety, and ease of access (Kazak, 2000; Kim et al., 2003; Jang & Wu, 2006; Xu & Chan, 2016; Eero, 2013; Harman, 2014).

In addition to push and pull factors, tourist motivations are also associated with psychological factors (such as escape, prestige, and self-actualization), physical factors (such as rest, relaxation, medical treatment, and health), sociodemographic factors (such as age, education, and income), and sociological factors (such as kinship ties, social interaction, visiting friends, meeting new people, seeking novelty, discovering new cultures, seeking adventure and nightlife, and the search for knowledge) (Tsourgiannis et al., 2015).

1.4. The Concept of Satisfaction

Commonly associated with the presence of positive emotions, satisfaction is examined alongside concepts such as joy, happiness, meaningful life experiences, and personal achievements. Especially in the context of increasing market competition and developments in marketing, businesses have begun to place greater emphasis on customer satisfaction to provide better service and maintain their economic sustainability. It is widely accepted that both the physical infrastructure of a business and the performance of its employees directly affect customer satisfaction (Fatima et al., 2020).

Since the 1980s, particularly in developed countries, businesses have increasingly focused on customer satisfaction—also referred to as customer delight—as it directly influences profitability, market share, and growth rates. Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is determined by the gap between the customer's expectations and the actual product or service provided, which also directly affects customer loyalty (Eroğlu, 2005).

Satisfaction, which represents the maximum level of pleasure experienced by customers, is influenced by factors such as the quality of goods and services offered, social influences, and internal factors within the business itself. As competition intensifies, customers have become more demanding from the perspective of businesses. The ability of a business to meet customer expectations across various service areas increases customer satisfaction and, consequently, customer loyalty (Kumar, 2021).

It is a widely held view that the most significant benefit of customer satisfaction to a business is customer loyalty. Additional benefits of customer satisfaction include increased sales of products and services, heightened demand for all the business's offerings, enhancement of the company's image, and long-term customer retention (Çatı & Koçoğlu, 2008).

Customer satisfaction, which is of vital importance for businesses, is considered to consist of two fundamental components: Outcome-based satisfaction, which refers to the final state experienced after consumption, and process-based satisfaction, which involves the evaluative and psychological factors influenced by the customer's perceptions (Grigoroudis & Siskos, 2009).

Definitions of customer satisfaction based on these outcome and process perspectives, as proposed by various researchers, are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Definitions Related to Customer Satisfaction

Approach Type	Definition of Customer Satisfaction	Author
Outcome-Based Approach	An evaluation made by the customer as a result of their expectations being fully met regarding the purchased product or service.	Howard & Sheth (1969)
	An emotional response to the experience associated with specific purchased products or services, the retail outlet, moral behavior patterns, and the overall market.	Westbook & Reilly (1983)
	The evaluation by the customer of the perceived performance and cost of the received product or service compared to its expected performance.	Churchill & Suprenant (1982)
Process-Based Approach	An evaluation that produces an outcome at least as satisfactory as the consumption experience itself.	Hunt (1977)
	An evaluation of whether the selected alternatives are supported by consistency with prior beliefs.	Engel & Blackwell (1982)
	An evaluation made by the consumer regarding the difference between their expectations before purchasing a product or service and the perceived performance after consumption.	Tse & Wilton (1988)

Source: Adapted from Bakır (2018: 12).

Customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction is defined as the perception formed by the customer toward a product or service purchased from, or to be purchased from, a business. Therefore, it is possible for different customers purchasing the same product or service to experience different levels of satisfaction. Satisfaction consists of both cognitive and emotional dimensions. Since emotional dimensions are directly related to attitudes and values that influence satisfaction, they may sometimes take precedence over cognitive dimensions. However, in financial matters, cognitive aspects may outweigh emotional factors (Banar & Ekergil, 2010).

To ensure customer satisfaction, which is of critical importance for businesses, certain key practices should be followed:

- maintaining regular communication with customers,
- creating a sense of closeness,
- collecting feedback regarding purchased products,
- recognizing and understanding customers,
- attracting customer attention through personalized campaigns,
- adopting a serious and attentive attitude toward customers,
- and offering promotions (Burcuoğlu, 2011).

Although customer satisfaction is generally regarded as the result of interactions between the business and the customer, it is understood that satisfaction can span a broad spectrum of factors, including expectations, product quality, product features, performance, consistency, durability, reliability, aesthetics, and service capability (Öz, 2011). Factors affecting customer satisfaction are generally structured around physical environment conditions, employee interaction, and perceived value.

1.4.1. Physical Environment Conditions

The creation of artificial environments by businesses to deliver their products and services to customers is referred to as the physical environment, and it is emphasized that the features of this environment can influence customers' consumption behaviour and contribute to the overall image of the business (Artuğer & Şahin, 2020). Within the framework of consumer psychology, the physical environment is gaining increasing attention in terms of attracting and satisfying customers. It is argued that the physical surroundings of a business play a critical role in shaping the customer's first impression of the business, and that environmental elements—whether consciously or unconsciously perceived during the customer's visit—can significantly influence their behavioural intentions (Adzoyi & Klutse, 2015). Variations in the physical environment are believed to have both direct and indirect effects on customer satisfaction (Bitner, 1990). It is also suggested that

the physical environment can influence customers' purchase or non-purchase decisions, with elements such as colour, lighting, proximity, and the number of visual features affecting customers' visual perceptions. Moreover, the cleanliness of the physical environment and the quality of materials used are believed to have a direct impact on customers (Ariffin et al., 2012). Considering the relationship between purchasing behaviour and customer satisfaction, the physical environment is thought to influence customer satisfaction, even if indirectly (Anderson & Sin, 2020).

1.4.2. Employee Interaction

Customers' initial impressions of a business often begin with the attitude and behaviour of the staff responsible for providing products or services. Therefore, the behaviour demonstrated by employees plays a significant role in shaping the overall image of the business (Koçbek, 2005). Since employees generally serve as a bridge between the customer and the business, it is inevitable that the quality of communication established between employees and customers will affect the business in every aspect (Paulin et al., 2000). At the core of this interaction lies the feeling of trust. If customers do not trust the employee, this can negatively affect both their purchase decisions and their likelihood of repeat purchases (Tüzün & Devrani, 2008). This is because employees serve as the showcase, representative, brand ambassador, and even a sales driver and efficiency factor of the business (Bakır, 2018).

1.4.3. Perceived Value

Perceived value, which holds strategic importance in the field of marketing, is an evaluation shaped by the consideration of what is received versus what is given in exchange for a product or service (Türkmendağ & Koroğlu, 2018). The perceived value that a customer forms prior to purchasing a product or service, as well as the benefits obtained after the purchase, significantly influence their future purchasing behaviors (Eskiler & Altunışık, 2015). Since perceived value varies depending on the customer, time, and culture, it is considered quite difficult to measure accurately (Altunel & Günlü, 2015). Nevertheless, in an environment of increasing competition among businesses, perceived value plays a critical role in encouraging repeat purchase behaviour (Özbek, 2016, p. 69).

1.5. The Importance of Satisfaction

Retaining customers who are dissatisfied with the products and services offered by a business is highly challenging and represents a serious threat to the company's brand image. Therefore, ensuring customer satisfaction is essential both for retaining existing customers and attracting new ones. Customer

satisfaction must be taken seriously, as it directly affects repeat purchases, brand protection in competitive markets, the reduction of customer attrition, the prevention of negative word-of-mouth, and the high costs associated with acquiring new customers (<https://www.questionpro.com>).

Customer satisfaction is based on the comparison between the expectations of the customer and the service received, as well as the evaluation of how the service could be improved. In today's highly competitive environment, businesses must develop new strategies to address the constantly evolving desires, expectations, and needs of their customers, making customer satisfaction a critical factor for business success and sustainability (Mutlubaş & Soybali, 2017).

1.6. Tourist Satisfaction

Severt et al. (2007) define tourist satisfaction as the degree of fulfilment experienced by a tourist, based on their travel experience, regarding the features of a product or service that meets their travel-related needs and desires.

In the context of tourism, satisfaction is primarily a function of pre-travel expectations and post-travel experiences. When actual experiences exceed expectations, satisfaction occurs; when experiences fall short, dissatisfaction arises. Tourist satisfaction plays a key role as one of the most important sources of competitive advantage for destinations (Aliman et al., 2016).

Satisfaction is considered a critical factor for the successful marketing of destinations, as it influences destination selection, consumption of products and services, decisions to return, maintenance of long-term relationships, and the enhancement of the destination's reputation. Essentially, tourist satisfaction reflects the relationship between tourists' expectations (pre-travel expectations), shaped by prior knowledge and the image of the destination, and their actual experiences during their visit (post-travel experiences) (Bagri & Kala, 2015).

In a study conducted by Aliman et al. (2016), the antecedents of tourist satisfaction were examined using data collected from tourists visiting Langkawi Island, a well-known tourism destination in Malaysia. Variables such as perceived quality, destination image, costs and risks, perceived value, and a newly identified predictor called social security were analyzed in this context. Regression analysis revealed that destination image, tourist expectations, costs and risks, and social security all had a positive and significant impact on tourist satisfaction. The study concluded that social security was the most significant predictor of tourist satisfaction, followed by tourist expectations, destination image, and costs and risks.

CHAPTER TWO

ALTERNATIVE TOURISM, ADVENTURE TOURISM, AND RAFTING TOURISM

2.1. Alternative Tourism

Throughout history, people have continuously traveled for various reasons. With advancements in transportation, particularly, commercial travel has increased significantly. However, the earliest forms of travel that correspond to the modern definition of tourism can be traced back to Greek civilization, where journeys were undertaken for religious, sporting, and health-related purposes. After World War II, tourism emerged as an important economic sector in welfare societies due to its significant contribution to national economies (Koç, 2019). For example, in its 2017 report, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) stated that tourism accounts for 7% of global exports, and 1 in every 10 people employed worldwide works in the tourism industry (Karadağ & Kulualp, 2019).

Tourism refers to the temporary and short-term movements of people from their places of residence and work to other locations, as well as the activities they engage in at these destinations. In this respect, tourism is often seen as introducing a temporary population to areas in addition to the permanent local population. The Rural Recreation Research Advisory Group defines tourism as: “activities undertaken by people to explore and enjoy different places, requiring them to stay away from their homes for at least one night.” As a form of leisure activity, tourism differs from ordinary recreational activities primarily in terms of the extended time frame it typically involves (Heeley, 1980). Due to its complex nature, the tourism sector has been subject to various definitions and lacks a universally accepted definition. At its core, tourism involves people visiting different places, and in this sense, it is also considered an alternative form of export (Kim et al., 2006). In line with these transformations, diverse tourism activities have emerged in response to the changing needs, desires, and expectations of people, leading to an overall increase in tourism demand (Öztürk & Yazıcıoğlu, 2002).

With the sharp increase in tourism demand, various problems have emerged at destinations, including environmental degradation, cultural loss, pollution, overcrowding, changes in cultural behaviours, and negative economic effects such as price increases and rising rental costs. These problems have increasingly been associated with mass tourism, which involves tourism activities carried out with large groups.

Today, the tourism activity preferred by people dissatisfied with the environmental, social, and cultural impacts of mass tourism and supported by tourism organizations, countries, and tourists alike is referred to as alternative tourism. Unlike traditional tourism, people participating in this form of tourism can be considered "travellers" rather than typical tourists, as they seek new experiences rather than simply traveling for sightseeing, entertainment, or relaxation (Cohen, 1987). However, alternative tourism, which emerged as a reaction against mass tourism, has also brought about certain challenges. These challenges primarily include the loss of tourism revenues at the national or regional level and the comparative convenience offered by mass tourism: tourists in mass tourism do not need to make complex travel plans, their accommodations are pre-arranged, itineraries and attractions are organized in advance, they can easily shop in foreign regions despite language barriers, and prices are often more affordable (Butler, 1990).

Despite these drawbacks, there is a growing shift toward alternative tourism, as it provides countries with the opportunity to preserve their tourism products in their original form and prevent their degradation during tourist activities (Tapkı, 2020). Alternative tourism not only contributes to the conservation of tourism resources but also provides a competitive advantage to regions that cannot fully benefit from traditional tourism. It promotes the geographical and seasonal diversification of tourism activities, encourages the participation of local communities, and fosters the development of the concept of sustainability (Kavalcıoğlu, 2021). In this context, the distinguishing features between mass tourism and alternative tourism can be summarized as follows (Kavalcıoğlu, 2021; Yakut, 2019; Tapkı, 2020):

While mass tourism is large-scale, alternative tourism is typically small-scale.

Planning for mass tourism tends to be short-term, whereas alternative tourism planning generally focuses on the long term.

Tourist groups in mass tourism are generally larger compared to those in alternative tourism.

Mass tourism often requires substantial infrastructure and superstructure investments, while alternative tourism typically depends on more localized investments.

Mass tourism places more emphasis on scenery and aesthetics, whereas alternative tourism focuses on authentic and experiential activities.

In mass tourism, food and beverage establishments are expected to adhere to international standards and menus, whereas in alternative tourism, businesses offering local and regional products are preferred.

Charter flights are commonly used in mass tourism, while alternative tourism participants tend to use scheduled flights.

Tourists participating in alternative tourism are generally more willing to pay higher prices compared to those participating in mass tourism.

Mass tourism activities typically revolve around the sea-sand-sun trio, while alternative tourism emphasizes nature-based and environmentally friendly activities.

Mass tourism often leads to the destruction of historical sites and natural environments, whereas alternative tourism aims to preserve historical and natural resources.

It is recognized that alternative tourism, also referred to in various contexts as new tourism, eco-tourism, nature-based tourism, or sustainable tourism, emerged as a reaction not directly against traditional tourism itself, but against the ecological degradation and overcrowding caused by traditional tourism practices. As a result, people increasingly prefer alternative tourism models that are integrated with natural, social, and cultural values, and are accepted by both tourists and local communities (Sindiga, 1999). In this regard, various types of tourism have emerged and become associated with alternative tourism, including:

- Cultural Tourism
- Winter Tourism
- Gastronomy Tourism
- Health Tourism
- Religious Tourism
- Congress Tourism
- Highland Tourism
- Golf Tourism
- Cruise Tourism
- Medical Tourism
- Hunting Tourism
- Caving Tourism
- Botanical Tourism
- Yacht Tourism
- Diaspora Tourism
- Adventure Tourism

2.2. Adventure Tourism

In recent years, the search for outdoor adventure experiences has become increasingly popular within the tourism sector. As a result of this growing demand, activities such as trekking, white-water rafting, rock climbing, and mountaineering have seen significant growth worldwide. The main purpose of this type of tourism is to challenge participants by pushing their physical and mental limits, often by attempting obstacles that few people have encountered before. Extreme sports, which encompass intense physical and psychological challenges, offer a form of escape from daily life and can lead to profound personal experiences. Consequently, adventure tourism focuses on the interaction between physical and mental experiences, and the psychophysical impacts of this interaction, such as risk, joy, stress, and fear (Gyimothy & Mykletun, 2004). At the same time, adventure tourism refers to guided commercial tours that rely on the characteristics of natural terrain, often requiring specialized equipment, where participants may either actively use the equipment or simply participate as passengers, all in pursuit of an exciting outdoor experience (Buckley, 2007).

Adventure tourism has become a widely recognized and popular tourism category within the literature, with many authors attempting to describe its scope and activities. Muller and Cleaver (2000) associated adventure tourism with physically demanding experiential components, high levels of sensory stimulation, and physically invigorating, adrenaline-focused, somewhat risky activities, which offer numerous opportunities for assessment and reflection throughout the experience. Sung et al. (1997) defined adventure tourism as a phenomenon arising from participants' interaction with natural environments located outside their usual places of residence, inherently involving elements of risk. According to Yetim (2017), the potential benefits of adventure tourism can be categorized into four dimensions:

Psychological Dimension: Factors such as self-worth, personal confidence, perceived competence, the pursuit of excitement, realization of individual potential, overall well-being, and engagement in personal challenges.

Sociological Dimension: Elements including empathy, teamwork, interpersonal respect, effective communication, behavioural reinforcement, social bonding, and the establishment of group identity.

Educational Dimension: Covers aspects such as experiential outdoor learning, environmental awareness, education focused on conservation practices, problem-solving skills, value development, and acquisition of outdoor competencies.

Physical Dimension: Includes considerations related to maintaining a healthy lifestyle, developing physical abilities and strength, improving coordination, emotional release (catharsis), and balanced exercise routines.

Walle (1997) argued that adventure tourism, unlike other forms of tourism, is not dependent on destination features or specific purposes, but is shaped by people's motivation to seek excitement, risk, and uncertainty. He emphasized that adventurous behaviour typically involves thrilling and potentially dangerous activities, and that for an activity to be classified as adventure tourism, it must include risk-taking and uncertain outcomes. Similarly, Dickson and Dolnicar (2004) described perceived risk as an attractive and sought-after feature for potential adventure tourism consumers. Swarbrooke et al. (2003) argued that, while risk is a key determinant, an activity can only be classified as adventure tourism if it is associated with characteristics such as novelty, stimulation and excitement, escapism, uncertainty of outcomes, danger and risk, challenge, expectation of reward, desire for exploration, and experiencing mixed emotions.

Overall, adventure tourism stands out as a globally growing and evolving sector, consistently capturing the attention of tourists. Its growth and development are influenced by several distinctive features, which are illustrated in Figure 2.

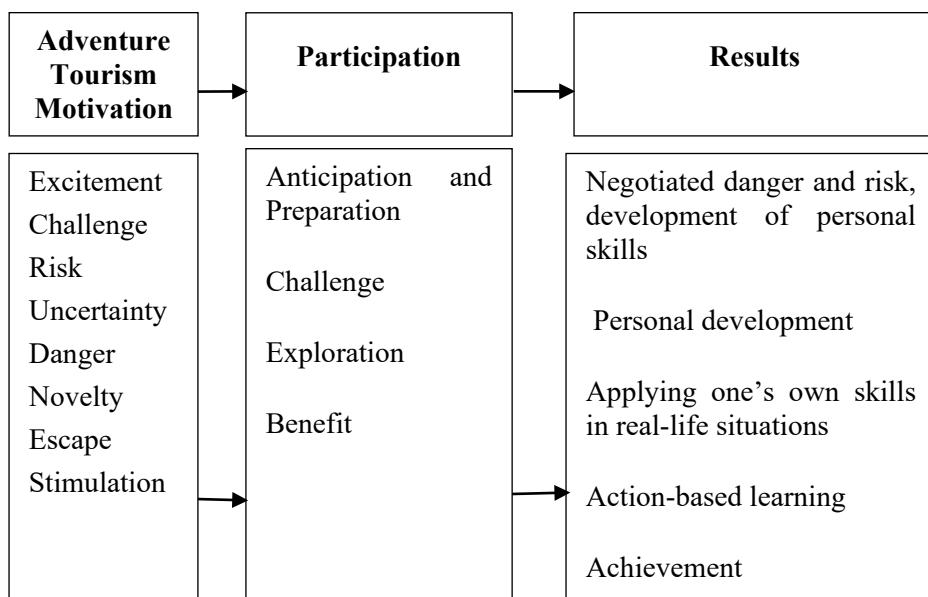


Figure 2: The Process of Involving Visitors in Adventure Tourism (Source: Page et al., 2005: 382)

Adventure tourism first emerged in the mid-1800s with activities such as mountaineering and white-water rafting. However, the ascent of Annapurna by Maurice Herzog in 1950, along with the successful climb of Mount Everest by Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, is considered the starting point of modern adventure tourism. Typical activities in adventure tours include climbing, caving, abseiling, sea kayaking, white-water canoeing, rafting, diving, snorkeling, skiing, snowboarding, surfing, sailing, ballooning, parachuting, paragliding, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling, and off-road driving with 4x4 vehicles under challenging natural conditions. These activities are further classified into two categories, as illustrated in Figure 3 (Buckley, 2007; <https://tourismnotes.com>):

Hard adventure activities, which involve high levels of risk, significant commitment, and advanced technical skills.

Soft adventure activities, which carry perceived risks but are associated with lower actual risk levels, minimal commitment, and require only basic beginner-level skills.

Hard Adventure Activities	Soft Adventure Activities
Caving	Backpacking
Mountain climbing	Birdwatching
Rock climbing	Camping
Ice climbing	Canoeing
Trekking	Ecotourism
Skydiving	Fishing
	Hiking
	Horseback riding
	Hunting
	Orienteering
	Safaris
	Scuba diving
	Snorkeling
	Skiing
	Snowboarding
	Surfing

Figure 3 Adventure Tourism Activities (Source: <https://tourismnotes.com>)

Adventure tourism is recognized as one of the most rapidly expanding sectors within the tourism industry, attracting high-spending tourists, contributing to the development of local economies, and promoting

environmentally sustainable practices. The ongoing growth of this sector offers numerous potential benefits, including direct employment generation in areas such as transportation, accommodation, travel agencies, and tour operators, foreign currency earnings, support for local economies, improvement of local living standards, creation of new business opportunities, and the encouragement of both domestic and foreign investments (<https://tourismnotes.com>).

Adventure tourism stands out as a niche form of tourism, offering tourists physically demanding experiences combined with high levels of sensory stimulation, and it is steadily gaining popularity. This branch of tourism, which encompasses a diverse range of activities, is typically categorized into four fundamental types, as presented in Table 3.

- Land-based recreational activities,
- Aerial or air-oriented activities,
- Water-centric activities,
- Integrated adventure tourism.

Table 3: Traditional and Contemporary Adventure Tourism Activities

Land-Based	Water-Centric	Air-Oriented	Integrated (Land-Air-Water)
Backpacking			
Cycling			
Caving			
Climbing	Canoeing	Ballooning	Adventure races
Dog sledding	Canyoning	Bungee	Charity challenges
Hiking	Expedition cruising	jumping	Conservation tours
Hunting	Water skiing	Gliding	Cultural experiences
Horseback riding	Sailing	Hang gliding	Hedonistic experiences
Motorcycling	Scuba diving	Paragliding	Spiritual
Mountain biking	Snorkelling	Skydiving	enlightenment
Mountaineering	Surfing	Parachute air	Wildlife watching
Orienteering	Windsurfing	shows	tours
Skiing			
Snowmobiling			
Desert experiences			

Source: Garda (2011: 216).

2.3. Adventure Tourists

Adventure tourism, a growing sector within the tourism industry encompassing a wide variety of adventure activities, offers tourists an emotional experience by challenging the presence of risk as they engage in activities in natural environments using specialized equipment. A comprehensive understanding of tourists' desire for challenge can enhance their overall experience (Tsaur et al., 2013).

In his research examining the consumer profiles and travel behaviours of adventure tourists, Sung (2004) classified adventure travellers into six distinct categories:

- General Adventure Seekers
- Budget-Conscious Young Tourists
- Soft Adventure Participants
- Advanced Nature Enthusiasts
- Family-Oriented Vacationers
- Independent Active Travelers

The question of who adventure tourists are is often examined through the lens of Edgework Theory. This theory was developed to describe individuals who voluntarily negotiate “the boundary between sanity and insanity, and between life and death.” In psychology, it is associated with risky behaviours and voluntary risk-taking. Edgework Theory was first applied in the adventure tourism literature to explain why people choose to engage in activities such as bungee jumping—where individuals jump from high altitudes and are pulled back by an elastic rope—which are perceived as both thrilling and dangerous. Edgework Theory connects adventure tourists with those who enjoy living life on the edge and perceive part of the excitement and pleasure they derive from such activities as stemming from the inherent risks involved. It is based on the idea that adventure tourists voluntarily participate in activities they consider dangerous and that these activities push them beyond their normal skill levels or capacities in pursuit of success (Beckman et al., 2017).

2.4. Rafting Tourism

Considered one of the most prominent forms of water-based alternative tourism, particularly due to the element of excitement that defines adventure tourism, rafting originated in the 1950s as an activity focused on navigating rivers with steep gradients and high-water volumes using inflatable rafts. Since then, it has gained significant importance in tourism. In Turkey, rafting became popular following the Çoruh Festival held in 1990, and today it attracts

approximately 600,000 participants annually (Keleş et al., 2014; Jamal et al., 2019).

As a component of adventure tourism, rafting is a physically demanding activity that emphasizes challenge, tension, recreation, obsession, and the desire for achievement through interaction with natural elements. It requires participants to actively engage with natural conditions and obstacles. Rafting is characterized as an adventure activity involving inherent risks and difficulties (Arnould & Price, 1993).

The excitement experienced through interaction with nature and the activity itself are among the primary reasons for the popularity of rafting tourism. The perception of risk, which varies across different difficulty levels—from very low to extremely high—also contributes to the appeal of the sport. The activity, conducted on suitable rivers, is categorized into six difficulty levels, ranging from easy to extremely challenging (Jamal et al., 2019; Tirasatayapitak et al., 2014). These levels are determined by factors such as flow rate, river width, water volume, and drop height (Keleş et al., 2014). According to Akıllı (2004), the classifications are as follows:

Grade I: Small, easy passages.

Grade II: Steady water flow with relatively small rocks and waves; easy passage points.

Grade III: Limited visibility; large, regular waves and rocks make passage points more difficult.

Grade IV: Very difficult passage points, large waves, rocks, obstacles, significant drops, and whirlpools.

Grade V: High currents and water flow, steep inclines, consecutive drops, and extremely difficult and limited passages; often impossible to complete.

Grade VI: The highest level considered impossible to navigate.

In a typical rafting activity, teams of 4 to 6 participants use paddles to steer their rafts and attempt to overcome obstacles without capsizing. Beyond difficulty ratings, rafting activities also vary based on competition formats. According to Bektaş et al. (2012), the main types are:

Sprint: Teams compete against the clock.

Slalom: Each team completes two timed runs; the best time is recorded.

Downriver: Races lasting between 20 and 40 minutes, typically involving teams of 4 to 8 participants.

Given the challenging and dangerous nature of these activities, it is critical to observe safety precautions. According to Akilli (2004), essential safety measures include:

- Good swimming ability,
- Wearing life jackets,
- Wearing protective helmets,
- Participating in groups of at least 2 or 3 people,
- Using rafts appropriate to the nature of the tour,
- Basic first aid knowledge,
- Wearing clothing that does not become heavy or restrictive when wet,
- Attentively listening to pre-tour briefings,
- Staying calm and following instructions if the raft capsizes.

Due to the inherent risks of rafting, using appropriate equipment designed specifically for the activity is vital. Participants must be informed about required equipment prior to participation.

Raft: Rafts must meet specific standards. Since 1993, raft specifications have been regulated under Austrian law, and all rafts used in rafting activities must comply with these standards (Akilli, 2004):

- Non-slip seating areas approximately 60-70 cm wide,
- Non-rope foot holds to prevent slipping,
- A continuous safety rope around the outer perimeter,
- Proper lashing using mooring ropes and suitable materials,
- Self-bailing drainage channels and holes,
- Essential onboard equipment: first aid kit, thermal foil, breathing mask, spare paddle, air pump, waste container, evacuation plan, and participant list.

Rafts typically measure 3.65–4.25 meters in length and 2–2.5 meters in width. Constructed from rubber materials, the rafts consist of side and bottom tubes inflated with pressurized air. The floor should contain 1 cm-wide drainage holes (Gül, 2019).



Figure 1: Examples of Rafting Boats

Rafting Paddle: The paddle is one of the essential components of rafting activities, as it is necessary for steering the raft in the river. Therefore, the material used in the paddle's construction must be of high quality and durable. Typically, paddles measure between 1.50 and 1.60 meters in length and consist of three main parts: the T-grip, the shaft, and the blade.



Figure 2: Rafting Paddles

Life Jacket: The life jackets used must be capable of keeping participants afloat on the water's surface even in fast currents, in case the raft capsizes, or participants fall into the water. Wearing a life jacket is mandatory



Figure 3: Rafting Life Jacket

Neoprene Suit: Since rafting activities take place in rivers, the water is typically cold. Therefore, clothing used during rafting must primarily be

resistant to cold and water. Neoprene suits and booties should be worn. Special fabrics with an average thickness of 3.5 mm or 7 mm are recommended.



Figure 4: Examples of Neoprene Suits

Helmet: Wearing a helmet is mandatory to prevent serious injuries in case the participant's head hits rocks or the riverbed if the raft capsizes. The helmet must fit securely, and the safety straps should be properly fastened. Additionally, using brightly colored helmets is important for visibility and safety.



Figure 5: Examples of Rafting Helmets

Rafting is a recreational sport that involves traveling downstream using the current in an inflatable boat. Rivers used for rafting are classified by difficulty levels based on factors such as current speed, water turbulence, the presence and strength of whirlpools, and the presence of rocks along the route. The association of excitement in nature with danger makes rafting a key component of adventure tourism. The term “rafting,” which is associated with physical endurance and extreme risk, is derived from the word “raft”, referring to the specially manufactured inflatable boat that meets the required safety standards for rafting activities (Keleş et al., 2014).

In rafting, there are three main disciplines: sprint, slalom, and downriver racing. In sprint races, teams compete against the clock. Slalom races consist of two runs, and the best (fastest) time is recorded as the official result. Downriver races are organized in teams of 4 to 8 participants, depending on the river conditions. The total duration of downriver races varies between 20 and

40 minutes, depending on the condition of the rapids (obstacles) and the accessibility of the river. In the riverbed, rapids refer to natural obstacles where the flow of water is interrupted, creating turbulence, waves, sudden accelerations, and foamy water formations. These are areas where rocks or other obstructions block the water's path and disrupt the flow rate (Bektaş et al., 2012).

Given Turkey's rich natural resources, water sports have become prominent among tourism activities. The country possesses significant river resources suitable for water sports such as rafting, canoeing, and river kayaking. River sports, particularly rafting, are integrated into Turkey's archaeological, authentic, cultural, and historical assets, contributing to the country's tourism sector. Rafting, which first gained recognition in Turkey during the 1990 Çoruh Festival, has steadily increased in popularity and today stands as a key recreational activity for adrenaline enthusiasts. The main rivers in Turkey suitable for rafting include Çoruh River (Artvin), Köprüçay River (Antalya), Fırtına Creek (Rize), Altıparmak Creek (Artvin), Manavgat River (Antalya), Göksu River (Mersin), Dragon Creek (Mersin) and parts of the Dalaman River. Rafting has been practiced in Turkish rivers for over 15 years, with the annual number of participants estimated at approximately 600,000. This sport, which is based on the principle of working in harmony with nature without causing harm, involves resisting the flow of water. Rivers in Turkey can be classified based on difficulty criteria such as water volume, riverbed width, flow rate, and drop heights (Keleş et al., 2014: 811).

The reasons why white-water rafting has become such a successful and widely practiced activity within the adventure tourism sector can be summarized as follows (Buckley, 2009):

- Rafting is an exciting yet relatively safe activity. While customers are likely to get wet, be thrown around, and occasionally experience fear, the risk of serious injury is very low.
- Compared to other adventure tourism activities, rafting is easier for customers to learn and participate in. For example, even complete beginners can actively participate by paddling on a rafting boat.
- Rafting is relatively inexpensive compared to other adventure activities. In many countries, rafting tours—including meals, transportation, and all necessary equipment—are typically priced at less than \$100 per day.
- Rafting can be offered as a component of mixed tourism products in adventure tourism destinations.

Since ancient times, rivers have been areas of great attraction and aesthetic appeal, drawing interest as sites for experiencing natural beauty, fishing, and various recreational activities (Cooper, 2009). As a river-based activity, rafting serves both to fulfill tourists' need for interaction with nature and to provide a refreshing recreational experience. However, research focusing on tourist motivation and understanding tourists' experiences related to rafting remains limited (Wu & Liang, 2011).

Although there has been a significant increase in adventure-themed travel in recent years, it is suggested that participants often choose not to engage in these activities again due to low satisfaction levels. In rafting activities, elements such as nature, excitement, and social interaction emerge as primary motivational factors, while aesthetic appeal stands out as a key factor contributing to high satisfaction. Furthermore, studies have shown a positive relationship between participants' motivation and their satisfaction in rafting experiences. In this context, it is expected that activity operators should identify the factors that enhance the rafting experience to achieve higher participant satisfaction (Samat et al., 2016). Additionally, regarding customer satisfaction in rafting tourism products, factors such as harmony with nature, self-renewal, community, and hedonism are highlighted as having a positive influence (Setiawan et al., 2019).

2.5. Rafting Tourism in Turkey

Turkey is considered one of the most suitable countries for river tourism, encompassing activities such as rafting, canoeing, and river kayaking. In this regard, it is important to further develop the existing potential and promote these activities in a way that appeals to a broader audience. Moreover, several locations rich in historical, archaeological, cultural, and authentic values, which do not require large-scale investments, are emphasized as key rafting destinations. Attention is drawn to the following sites (<https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr>):

- Çoruh River
- Köprüçay River
- Manavgat River
- Dim River
- Adana-Feke-Göksu River
- Zamanti Stream

Parts of the Euphrates River

TÜRSAB (2006) identifies rivers such as the Çoruh, Köprüçay, Manavgat, Dalaman, and Melen Rivers as significant areas for rafting tourism in Turkey, thanks to their strong currents. However, it also notes that

the sector faces challenges due to dam construction, unlicensed tours creating unfair competition, and rafting activities conducted by untrained guides.

Bektaş et al. (2012) emphasize the importance of course planning for the development of rafting in the Eastern Black Sea Region, the placement of visual targets at locations where spectators can observe athletic movements and techniques to make the sport more engaging and promoting the raft-orienteering discipline on national television channels.

Keleş et al. (2014) draw attention to the natural and cultural assets surrounding Antalya, which is considered a significant destination at the European level. They particularly highlight the strategic importance of designating the rafting area on the Köprüçay River as a landmark (focus and density point). In this context, they stress the need for organizing the Köprüçay area in a way that preserves its natural structure and character, developing spatial planning that benefits local communities, maintaining a sustainable balance between ecological protection and responsible use and implementing participatory, cooperative, and responsible management strategies involving area managers, operators, residents, and visitors.

Koç (2019), focusing on Köprülü Canyon in Antalya, highlights the importance of conducting cultural studies to support rafting tourism development, improving infrastructure and facilities, promoting rafting as part of sports tourism through social media marketing, attracting quality customers beyond the local vicinity, establishing collaborations with municipalities and tour operators, making investments that do not harm the natural environment, performing regular maintenance and cleaning in rafting areas and enforcing legal regulations and supervision in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Canoe and Rafting Federation.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH ON THE MOTIVATIONS AND SATISFACTION OF RAFTING TOURISTS

In this part of the study, statistical analyses and findings related to the motivation and satisfaction of rafting participants are presented.

3.1. Research Area

Located within the province of Düzce, the Büyük Melen River, which passes through Dokuzdeğirmen Village in the Cumayeri District, is considered the third most important rafting destination in Turkey with its 13 km course. Situated just 3 km from the Cumayeri town center, Dokuzdeğirmen Village derives its name from the nine watermills built on the Melen River, and it has become a prominent destination preferred for professional rafting and canoeing throughout the year (<https://duzce.ktb.gov.tr>). As of 2022, a total of 10 rafting companies operate in this destination, providing services to rafting participants (Figure 1).

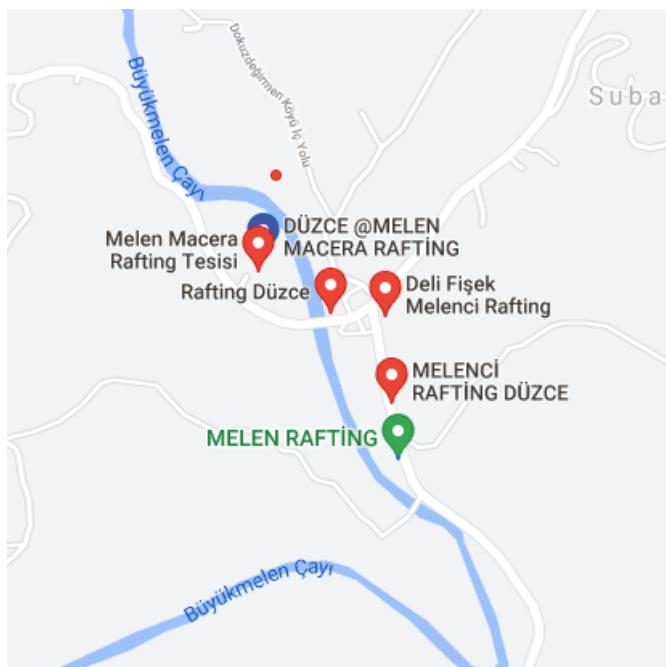


Figure 4: Rafting Operators on the Büyük Melen River
(Source: <https://www.google.com>)

3.2. Analysis of Research Data

In this study, the data collected through the questionnaire method were first transferred to a computer to create a database. Subsequently, to determine which statistical tests should be used in the analysis, the normality distribution of the data was examined. In assessing normality, the Skewness and Kurtosis values presented in Table 4, along with the Q-Q Plot Distribution of the scales (Figure 3 and Figure 4), were taken as the basis.

Table 4: Skewness and Kurtosis Test Results

Scale Name	n	Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
						Statistic	Standard Error	Statistic	Standard Error
Motivation	400	1,43	5,00	3,95	0,72	-0,424	0,122	-0,252	0,243
Satisfaction	400	1,88	5,00	3,99	0,54	-0,977	0,122	1,611	0,243

As shown in Table 4, the skewness coefficient for the motivation scale was calculated as -0.424, and the kurtosis coefficient as -0.252. For the satisfaction scale, the skewness coefficient was found to be -0.977 and the kurtosis coefficient 1.611. According to Meyers (2013), in the context of normality distribution, when skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of (-3) to (+3), it is acceptable to use parametric tests in research analyses.

Based on these results, it was decided to apply the Independent Samples t-Test for two-group variables (gender and marital status); and the One-Way ANOVA for multi-group variables (age, education level, monthly income, occupation, number of rafting participations, and the factors influencing participation in rafting), accompanied by the Tukey (HSD) test for post-hoc analysis. In addition, Pearson correlation analysis was chosen for testing the research hypotheses.

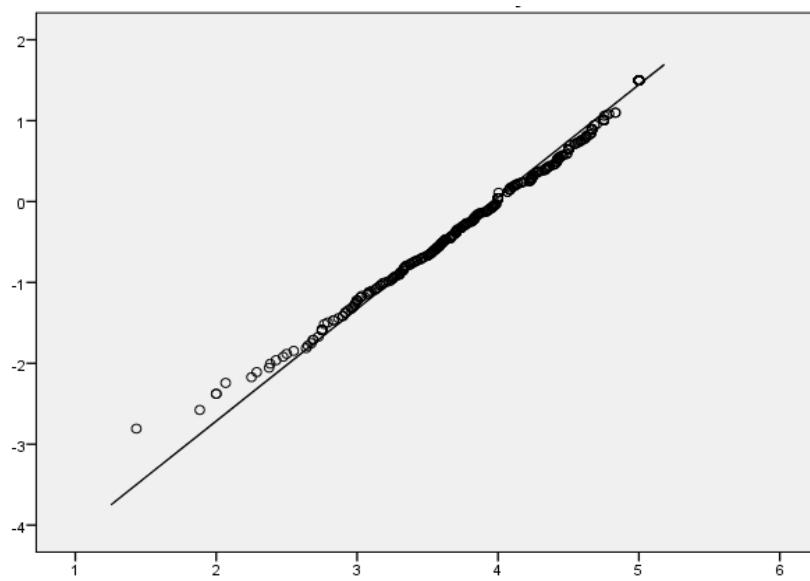


Figure 5: Motivation Q-Q Pilot Distribution

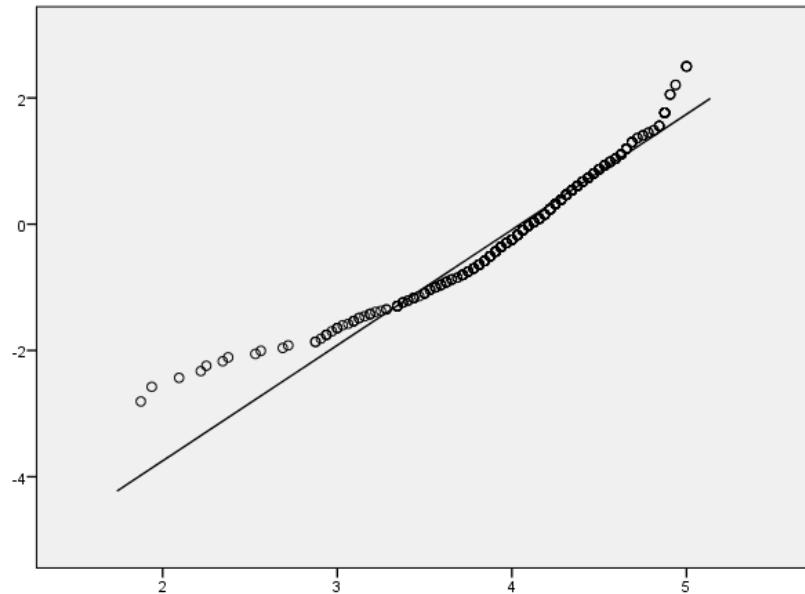


Figure 6: Satisfaction Q-Q Pilot Distribution

3.3. Research Findings

3.3.1. Descriptive Information on Research Participants

To develop an understanding of the motivations and satisfaction of rafting tourists, descriptive information regarding the demographic characteristics (gender, marital status, age, education level, monthly income, occupation) and other relevant features (number of rafting participations, factors influencing participation in rafting) of the 400 participants involved in this study is presented below.

Table 5: Descriptive Information on Participants' Gender Variable

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	137	34,2
	Male	263	65,8
Total		400	100

As shown in Table 5, 137 participants (34.2%) were female, while 265 participants (65.8%) were male. Based on this information, it can be stated that male participants engage in rafting activities more frequently than female participants.

Table 6: Descriptive Information on Participants' Marital Status Variable

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Marital Status	Single	288	72.0
	Married	112	28,0
Total		400	100

According to the results presented in Table 6, 288 participants (72.0%) were single, while 112 participants (28.0%) were married. Based on these results, it can be concluded that rafting activities are generally preferred by single individuals.

Table 7: Descriptive Information on Participants' Age Variable

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Age	18-25 years	204	51,0
	26-33 years	61	15,2
	34-41 years	58	14,5
	42-49 years	53	13,3
	50 years and over	24	6,0
Total		400	100

When the data on participants' ages presented in Table 7 were examined, it was observed that the largest group consisted of participants in the 18–25 age range, defined as the young age group, with 204 participants (51.0%). The smallest participation was recorded in the 50 years and over category, with 24 participants (6.0%). Additionally, 61 participants (15.2%) were in the 26–33 age range, 58 participants (14.5%) in the 34–41 age range, and 53 participants (13.3%) in the 42–49 age range. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that participation in rafting activities decreases with age, and that younger individuals tend to show greater interest in such activities.

Table 8: Descriptive Information on Participants' Education Level

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Education Level	Primary School	20	5,0
	Secondary School	65	16,3
	Associate degree	57	14,2
	Bachelor's Degree	258	64,5
	Total	400	100

When examining the results regarding the education levels of rafting participants in Table 8, it is observed that the largest group consists of participants with a bachelor's degree, totaling 258 participants (64.5%). The group with the lowest participation comprises those with primary school education, with 20 participants (5.0%). Additionally, 65 participants (16.3%) hold a secondary school education, while 57 participants

(14.2%) have an associate degree. Based on these results, it can be inferred that there is a positive correlation between higher education levels and participation in rafting activities. Furthermore, it can be concluded that rafting tends to appeal more to individuals with higher levels of education.

Table 9: Descriptive Information on Participants' Monthly Income Level

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Monthly Income	0-3000 TL	197	49,3
	3001-4000 TL	39	9,8
	4001-5000 TL	35	8,6
	5001-6000 TL	34	8,5
	6001 TL and over	95	23,8
Total		400	100

When examining the monthly income levels of rafting participants presented in Table 9, it is observed that 197 participants (49.3%) have a monthly income between 0 and 3000 TL. Participants with a monthly income between 5001 and 6000 TL, totaling 34 individuals (8.5%), represent the smallest group. Additionally, 39 participants (9.8%) have a monthly income between 3001 and 4000 TL, while 95 participants (23.8%) have a monthly income of 6001 TL and over. Based on these results, it can be interpreted that rafting activities are primarily preferred by students or individuals with monthly incomes between 0–3000 TL, and by those earning 6001 TL and over.

Table 10: Descriptive Information on Participants' Occupation Variable

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Occupation	Worker	34	8,5
	Civil Servant	58	14,5
	Businessperson	17	4,3
	Tradesperson	26	6,5
	Self-employed	41	10,2
	Housewife	14	3,5
	Retired	8	2,0
	Student	202	50,5
Total		400	100

As shown in Table 10, 202 participants (50.5%) were students, while only 8 participants (2.0%) were retired. Additionally, 58 participants (14.5%) were civil servants, 41 participants (10.2%) were self-employed, 26 participants (6.5%) were tradespeople, 17 participants (4.2%) were businesspeople, and 14 participants (3.5%) were housewives. Based on this information, it can be concluded that rafting is an activity predominantly preferred by students.

Table 11: Information on Participants' Number of Rafting Activity Participations

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Number-of-Rafting Participations	First Time	222	55,5
	Second Time	76	19,0
	Third Time	32	8,0
	More than Three Times	70	17,5
Total		400	100

When examining the results presented in Table 11, it was found that 222 participants (55.5%) participated in rafting activities for the first time, while the smallest group consisted of 32 participants (8.0%), who participated for the third time. Additionally, 76 participants (19.0%) participated for the second time, and 70 participants (17.5%) participated in rafting more than three times. Based on these results, it can be suggested that rafting is generally preferred as a one-time experience, particularly among students.

Table 12: Information on Factors Influencing Participants' Rafting Participation

Variable	Group	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Factor Influencing Participation in Rafting	Family	64	16,0
	Social media	75	18,7
	Promotional Brochures	51	12,8
	Websites	23	5,8
	Personal Choice	60	15,0
Total		400	100

As seen in Table 12, the most influential factor in participation in rafting activities was identified as friends, with 127 participants (31.7%) indicating this factor. The least influential factor was reported as websites, confirmed by 23 participants (5.8%). In addition, 75 participants (18.7%) stated that social media influenced their participation, while 64 participants (16.0%) mentioned their families, 60 participants (15.0%) indicated their personal choice, and 51 participants (12.8%) referred to promotional brochures as influencing factors in their decision to participate in rafting activities.

3.3.2. Factor Analysis of Rafting Participants' Motivation

To reveal the motivations of rafting participants and to test the hypotheses proposed in this study, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted. In this context, to determine whether the motivation scale data were suitable for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were applied, and the results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13: Validity Analysis Results of the Motivation Scale

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0,845
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	4171,428
	df	105
	Sig.	0,000

As shown in Table 13, the KMO value of the motivation scale dataset was found to be 0.845, with a significance value of 0.000, indicating the dataset's suitability for factor analysis. According to Field (2000), a KMO value greater than 0.50 is considered sufficient to accept the validity of the scale. The reliability coefficient (α) for the motivation scale was calculated as 0.882. In this context, Kline (2005) emphasizes that a reliability coefficient of 0.70 or higher is required for scales used in reliability studies. Based on these validity and reliability results for the motivation scale, the factor analysis identified four sub-dimensions: escape, nature, social interaction, and culture, as presented in Table 14.

Table 14: Factor Analysis of Rafting Participants' Motivations

Factor	\bar{x}	s. sd.	Factor Loading	Variance Explained (%)
Escape-Excitement	4,32	0,71		23,851
Refreshing my mind	4,29	0,89	0,805	
Escaping from daily life	4,26	0,94	0,792	
Participating in exciting activities	4,49	0,74	0,755	
Escaping from a hectic life	4,18	0,97	0,748	
Feeling excitement from rafting	4,39	0,81	0,739	
Nature	4,08	0,88		19,717
Experiencing wildlife	3,89	1,16	0,854	
Being alone with nature	4,08	1,03	0,830	
Watching the scenery	4,05	1,01	0,777	
Breathing fresh air	4,29	0,89	0,602	
Social Interaction	3,70	1,22		16,694
Meeting new people	3,52	1,47	0,918	
Interacting with foreigners	3,56	1,44	0,905	
Hanging out with friends	4,02	1,24	0,673	
Culture	3,71	1,12		15,724
Learning about different cultures	3,76	1,27	0,848	
Meeting local people	3,48	1,37	0,842	
Tasting local food	3,90	1,13	0,827	
Total Variance Explained				75,986

Based on the factor analysis results presented in Table 14, the total variance explained by the four dimensions of rafting participants' motivations was determined as 75.9% (escape-excitement motivation: 23.8%; nature motivation: 19.7%; social interaction motivation: 16.6%; culture motivation: 15.7%). According to Büyüköztürk (2007), the explained variance in factor analysis should be at least 0.40, and factor loadings should be 0.45 or higher for each item.

Considering the mean scores presented in Table 14, the highest mean in the escape-excitement motivation sub-dimension was $\bar{x}=4.49$ for the item "participating in exciting activities", followed by $\bar{x}=4.39$ for "feeling excitement from rafting". The lowest mean in the escape-excitement motivation was found to be $\bar{x}=4.18$ for "escaping from a hectic life". The overall mean of the escape motivation sub-dimension ($\bar{x}=4.32$) indicates that escape motivation, closely related to the feeling of excitement, was the most significant factor driving participants to engage in rafting activities.

Regarding the nature motivation sub-dimension, the highest means were recorded for "breathing fresh air" ($\bar{x}=4.29$) and "being alone with nature" ($\bar{x}=4.08$). "Experiencing wildlife" received the lowest acceptance with a mean of $\bar{x}=3.89$, suggesting that participants prioritized being in direct contact with nature.

In the social interaction motivation sub-dimension, the item "hanging out with friends" stood out with a mean of $\bar{x}=4.02$, while in the culture motivation sub-dimension, "tasting local foods" emerged as the most prominent item with a mean of $\bar{x}=3.90$.

3.3.3. Factor Analysis of Rafting Participants' Satisfaction

To determine the satisfaction levels of rafting participants and to test the hypotheses proposed in the study, explanatory factor analysis was conducted. In this context, the suitability of the satisfaction scale data for factor analysis was first assessed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results of these tests are presented in Table 15.

Table 15: Validity Analysis Results of the Motivation Scale

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0,917
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	
Approx. Chi-Square	9467,152
df	496
Sig.	0,000

When Table 15 is examined, the KMO value for the satisfaction scale was found to be 0.917, with a significance level of 0.000. According to Field (2000), since the KMO value exceeds 0.50, the data were deemed suitable for factor analysis. Additionally, the reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) for the satisfaction scale was calculated as 0.932. As noted by Kalaycı (2017), a Cronbach's Alpha value between $0.60 \leq \alpha < 0.80$ indicates that a scale can be considered reliable. Based on these validity and reliability results, the factor analysis was performed, and the sub-dimensions presented in Table 16 were identified.

Table 16. Factor Analysis Related to Rafting Participants' Satisfaction

Factor	<i>x̄</i>	s. d.	Factor Loading	Variance Explained (%)
Instructor	4,18	0,61		22,471
The instructor at the rafting company was solution oriented.	4,18	0,85	0,803	
The instructor was friendly and patient.	4,14	0,83	0,769	
The instructor provided the necessary safety information prior to the activity.	4,20	0,77	0,758	
The instructor was ready at the scheduled time.	4,20	0,78	0,758	
The instructor responded promptly to arising problems.	4,25	0,81	0,719	
The instructor informed me about possible difficulties.	4,22	0,74	0,716	
The instructor's attitude encouraged me.	4,14	0,83	0,692	
The instructor answered customers' questions prior to the activity.	4,24	0,79	0,676	
The instructor was more motivating than I expected.	4,14	0,84	0,668	
I was satisfied with the instructor's attitude.	4,05	0,84	0,662	
The instructor was more solution oriented than I expected.	4,09	0,86	0,633	

The instructor distributed the equipment completely.	4,24	0,81	0,626	
The instructor was sensitive about ensuring safety measures.	4,25	0,76	0,533	
Communication	4,04	0,83		17,977
The website of the rafting company that I accessed to research the activity was informative.	4,00	1,00	0,840	
The brochures of the rafting company that I used to research the activity were informative.	4,04	0,99	0,837	
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity motivated/encouraged me to participate in the activity.	3,98	1,07	0,828	
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were patient.	4,08	0,95	0,823	
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were informative.	4,15	0,94	0,822	
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity influenced my decision to participate.	3,91	1,14	0,817	
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were polite.	4,09	0,97	0,788	
I found the brochures and/or website prepared by the rafting company informative.	4,07	0,94	0,611	
Activity	4,05	0,72		16,816
The river where the rafting activity took place was suitable for the activity.	4,13	0,89	,803	
The river where the rafting activity took place was clean.	4,15	0,91	,800	
Safety measures were taken in the area where the rafting activity took place.	4,15	0,89	,756	
The rafting activity was safer than I expected.	4,12	0,86	,747	

The equipment used in the rafting activity was new.	3,86	1,03	,699	
Precautions suitable for the weather conditions were taken in the area where the rafting activity took place.	4,20	0,91	,698	
The rafting area was easily accessible.	3,86	1,17	,659	
The rafting activity was more exciting than I expected.	4,34	0,77	,648	
The rafting activity was cheaper than I expected.	3,68	1,24	,534	
Duration	3,15	0,61		5,166
The rafting activity lasted shorter than I expected.	3,24	1,46	-,901	
The rafting activity lasted longer than I expected.	3,05	1,15	,874	
Total Variance Explained				62,67

As a result of the factor analysis conducted within the scope of the scale used to measure the satisfaction levels of rafting participants, four sub-dimensions were identified, as presented in Table 15. The total variance explained by these four sub-dimensions was determined as 62.6% (instructor satisfaction: 22.4%; communication satisfaction: 17.9%; activity satisfaction: 16.8%; duration satisfaction: 5.1%). Similar to the motivation scale, since the total variance explanation rate exceeds 0.40 and all factor loadings are above 0.45, as recommended by Büyüköztürk (2007), the explanatory factor analysis was considered appropriate.

3.3.4. Comparison of Rafting Participants' Motivations Based on Descriptive Characteristics

Within the scope of this thesis, comparisons were conducted to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the motivations of rafting participants (Table 17) and their descriptive characteristics. For two-group variables (such as gender and marital status), the Independent Samples t-Test was applied. For variables with more than two categories (such as age, education level, monthly income, occupation, number of rafting participations,

and the factor influencing participation), the results of the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey (HSD) post-hoc test were taken as the basis.

Table 17. Motivations of Rafting Tourists

Statements	n	\bar{x}	s.d.
Participating in exciting activities	400	4,498	0,74
Feeling excitement from rafting	400	4,393	0,81
Refreshing my mind	400	4,298	0,89
Breathing fresh air	400	4,293	0,89
Getting away from daily life	400	4,263	0,94
Escaping from a busy life	400	4,185	0,97
Being alone with nature	400	4,088	1,03
Enjoying the scenery	400	4,053	1,01
Hanging out with friends	400	4,023	1,24
Tasting local food	400	3,903	1,13
Experiencing wildlife	400	3,895	1,16
Discovering different cultures	400	3,765	1,27
Interacting with foreigners	400	3,565	1,44
Meeting new people	400	3,528	1,47
Meeting local people	400	3,485	1,37

Table 18. Comparison of Motivations According to Gender

Dimension	Gender	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	t	p
Motivation	Female	137	3,93	0,68	-0,495	0,621
	Male	263	3,97	0,73		

*(p<0,05)

According to the findings presented in Table 18, no statistically significant difference was found in the motivation dimension based on the gender of the rafting tourists ($p = 0.621$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 19. Comparison of Motivations According to Marital Status

Dimension	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	t	p
Motivation	Single	288	4,03	0,71	3,328	0,001*
	Married	112	3,77	0,71		

***(p<0,05)**

According to the findings presented in Table 19, a statistically significant difference was found in the motivation dimension based on the marital status of rafting tourists ($p = 0.001$; $p < 0.05$). This difference indicates that the motivation levels of single tourists ($\bar{x} = 4.03$) are higher than those of married tourists ($\bar{x} = 3.77$).

Table 1: Comparison of Motivations According to Age Group

Dimension	Age Group	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	18-25 years	204	4,00	0,70	0,740	0,565	
	26-33 years	61	3,98	0,68			
	34-41 years	58	3,89	0,73			
	42-49 years	53	3,91	0,80			
	50 years and over	24	3,77	0,76			

***(p<0,05)**

According to the findings presented in Table 20, no statistically significant difference was found in the motivation dimension based on the age of the rafting tourists ($p = 0.740$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 21. Comparison of Motivations According to Education Level

Dimension	Education Level	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	Primary school (a)	20	3,71	0,89	3,667	0,012*	a-d
	Secondary school (b)	65	3,82	0,74			b-d
	Associate degree (c)	57	3,80	0,84			c-d
	Bachelor's degree (d)	258	4,04	0,65			

*(p<0,05)

According to the results presented in Table 21, it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference in the motivation dimension based on the education level of rafting tourists ($p = 0.001$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the results of the Tukey test, this difference emerged between bachelor's degree holders ($\bar{x} = 4.04$) and those with primary school ($\bar{x} = 3.71$), secondary school ($\bar{x} = 3.82$), and associate degree education ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). In this context, it can be interpreted that tourists with a bachelor's degree have higher rafting motivation compared to those in other education groups.

Table 22. Comparison of Motivations According to Income Level

Dimension	Income Level	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	0-3000 TL	197	3,9	0,75	1,042	0,385	
	3001-4000 TL	39	3,96	0,80			
	4001-5000 TL	35	3,92	0,70			
	5001-6000 TL	34	3,77	0,70			
	6001 TL and over	95	4,06	0,64			

*(p<0,05)

According to the results presented in Table 22, no statistically significant difference was found in the motivation dimension based on the income levels of rafting tourists ($p = 0.385$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 23. Comparison of Motivations According to Occupation

Dimension	Occupation	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	Worker (a)	34	3,82	0,93	3,154	0,003*	a-e b-e c-f d-e
	Civil Servant (b)	58	3,81	0,64			
	Businessperson (c)	17	4,01	0,58			
	Tradesperson (d)	26	3,75	0,67			
	Self-employed (e)	41	4,24	0,70			
	Housewife (f)	14	3,43	0,70			
	Retired (g)	8	3,85	0,62			
	Student (h)	202	4,02	0,69			

*($p < 0,05$)

According to the results presented in Table 23, a statistically significant difference was found in the motivation dimension based on the occupations of the rafting tourists ($p = 0.003$; $p < 0.05$). Based on the results of the Tukey test, the differences were observed between self-employed participants ($\bar{x} = 4.24$) and workers ($\bar{x} = 3.82$), civil servants ($\bar{x} = 3.81$), and tradespeople ($\bar{x} = 3.75$), as well as between businesspeople ($\bar{x} = 4.01$) and housewives ($\bar{x} = 3.43$). In this context, it can be concluded that self-employed participants and businesspeople were more motivated to participate in rafting activities compared to other occupational groups.

Table 24. Comparison of Motivations According to Number of Rafting Participations

Dimension	Number of Rafting Participations	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	First Time (a)	222	3,84	0,77	4,857	0,002*	a-c a-d
	Second Time (b)	76	4,01	0,60			
	Third Time (c)	32	4,24	0,45			
	More than Three Times (d)	70	4,11	0,69			

*($p < 0,05$)

In the comparison of rafting tourists' motivations according to their number of participations (Table 24), it can be stated that there is a statistically significant difference in the motivation dimension ($p = 0.002$; $p < 0.05$). According to the results of the Tukey test, the differences were observed between first-time participants ($\bar{x} = 3.84$) and those who participated three times ($\bar{x} = 4.24$), as well as those who participated more than three times ($\bar{x} = 4.11$). Based on these findings, it may be suggested that motivation tends to increase as the number of rafting participations rises.

Table 25. Comparison of Motivations According to the Factor Influencing Participation in Rafting

Dimension	Factor Influencing Participation	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Motivation	Friends (a)	127	4,02	0,68	2,813	0,016*	a-b
	Family (b)	64	3,66	0,77			
	Social media(c)	75	4,01	0,74			
	Promotional Brochures (d)	51	4,06	0,67			b-c
	Websites (e)	23	4,03	0,73			
	Personal Choice (f)	60	3,94	0,69			b-d

***(p<0,05)**

In the comparison of rafting tourists' motivations based on the factor influencing their participation (Table 25), a statistically significant difference was identified in the motivation dimension ($p = 0.016$; $p < 0.05$). According to the results of the Tukey test, the differences were found between the "family" response ($\bar{x} = 3.66$) and the responses of "friends" ($\bar{x} = 4.02$), "social media" ($\bar{x} = 4.01$), and "promotional brochures" ($\bar{x} = 4.06$). Based on these results, it may be suggested that friends, promotional brochures, and social media are influential factors in motivating participation in rafting activities.

3.3.5. Comparison of Rafting Participants' Satisfaction According to Descriptive Characteristics

In this study, comparisons were made to determine whether there were statistically significant differences between the satisfaction levels of rafting participants (Table 26) and their descriptive characteristics. Similar to the motivation comparisons, the Independent Samples t-Test was applied for two-

group variables (such as gender and marital status). For variables with more than two categories (such as age, education level, monthly income, occupation, number of rafting participations, and the factor influencing participation), the analysis was based on the results of the One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Tukey (HSD) post-hoc test.

Table 26. Satisfaction Levels of Rafting Participants

Statements	N	\bar{x}	s.d.
The rafting activity was more exciting than I expected.	400	4,343	0,77
The instructor was attentive to ensuring safety measures.	400	4,258	0,76
The instructor responded promptly to arising problems.	400	4,258	0,81
The instructor distributed the equipment completely.	400	4,245	0,81
The instructor answered customers' questions before the activity.	400	4,243	0,79
The instructor informed me about potential difficulties.	400	4,223	0,74
The instructor was ready at the scheduled time.	400	4,205	0,78
Precautions suitable for the weather conditions were taken in the area where the rafting activity took place.	400	4,205	0,91
The instructor provided the necessary safety information prior to the activity.	400	4,200	0,77
The instructor was solution oriented.	400	4,180	0,85
The river where the activity took place was clean.	400	4,158	0,91
The staff I spoke to before the activity were informative.	400	4,155	0,94
Safety measures were taken in the activity area.	400	4,145	0,89
The instructor's attitude encouraged me.	400	4,145	0,83
The instructor was friendly and patient.	400	4,145	0,83
The instructor was more motivating than I expected.	400	4,145	0,84
The river was suitable for rafting.	400	4,130	0,89

The rafting activity was safer than I expected.	400	4,123	0,86
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were polite.	400	4,098	0,97
The instructor was more solution oriented than I expected.	400	4,095	0,86
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were patient.	400	4,088	0,95
I found the brochures and/or website prepared by the company informative.	400	4,073	0,94
I was satisfied with the instructor's attitude.	400	4,050	0,84
The brochures I used to research the company were informative.	400	4,040	0,99
The website I visited to research the company was informative.	400	4,003	1,00
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity motivated/encouraged me to participate in the activity.	400	3,980	1,07
The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity influenced my decision to participate.	400	3,913	1,14
The equipment used in the rafting activity was new.	400	3,868	1,03
The rafting area was easily accessible.	400	3,860	1,17
The rafting activity was cheaper than I expected.	400	3,683	1,24
The rafting activity lasted shorter than I expected.	400	3,248	1,46

Table 27. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Gender

Dimension	Gender	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	t	p
Satisfaction	Female	137	4,12	0,45	2,022	0,044*
	Male	263	4,00	0,58		

*(p<0,05)

In the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels according to gender (Table 27), a statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.044$; $p < 0.05$). Within this context, it can be interpreted that female tourists ($\bar{x} = 4.12$) were more satisfied with the rafting activity compared to male tourists ($\bar{x} = 4.00$).

Table 28. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Marital Status

Dimension	Marital Status	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	t	p
Satisfaction	Single	288	4,04	0,56	-0,114	0,909
	Married	112	4,05	0,48		

$*(p<0,05)$

According to the findings presented in Table 28, no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension based on the marital status of rafting tourists ($p = 0.909$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 29. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Age

Dimension	Age Group	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	18-25 years	204	4,04	0,54	0,222	0,926	
	26-33 years	61	4,01	0,51			
	34-41 years	58	4,06	0,55			
	42-49 years	53	4,03	0,62			
	50 years and over	24	4,13	0,48			

$*(p<0,05)$

According to the findings presented in Table 29, no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension based on the age of the rafting tourists ($p = 0.926$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 30. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Education Level tukey?

Dimension	Education Level	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	Primary School	20	3,77	0,82	2,458	0,063	
	Secondary School	65	3,99	0,51			
	Associate degree	57	4,02	0,61			
	Bachelor's Degree	258	4,09	0,50			

*(p<0,05)

According to the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels based on education level (Table 30), no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.063$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 31. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Income Level

Dimension	Income Level	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	0-3000 TL	197	4,05	0,52	1,160	0,328	
	3001-4000 TL	39	4,12	0,62			
	4001-5000 TL	35	4,09	0,46			
	5001-6000 TL	34	3,87	0,60			
	6001 TL and over	95	4,02	0,57			

*(p<0,05)

According to the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels based on income level (Table 31), no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.328$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 32. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Occupation

Dimension	Occupation	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	Worker (a)	34	4,01	0,62	4,045	0,000*	a-d
	Civil Servant (b)	58	4,06	0,42			b-d
	Businessperson (c)	17	4,15	0,48			c-d
	Tradesperson (d)	26	3,55	0,65			d-e
	Self-employed (e)	41	4,13	0,54			d-g
	Housewife (f)	14	4,07	0,45			d-h
	Retired (g)	8	4,38	0,40			
	Student (h)	202	4,07	0,53			

*(p<0,05)

In the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels according to occupation (Table 32), a statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.000$; $p < 0.05$). According to the results of the Tukey test, the differences were observed between tradespeople ($\bar{x} = 3.55$) and workers ($\bar{x} = 4.01$), civil servants ($\bar{x} = 4.06$), businesspeople ($\bar{x} = 4.15$), self-employed participants ($\bar{x} = 4.13$), retirees ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), and students ($\bar{x} = 4.07$). Based on these results, it may be suggested that retirees and self-employed participants (such as doctors, lawyers, etc.) were the most satisfied occupational groups in relation to the rafting activity.

Table 33. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to Number of Rafting Participations

Dimension	Number of Participations	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	First Time	222	4,00	0,53	1,170	0,321	
	Second Time	76	4,08	0,58			
	Third Time	32	4,14	0,44			
	More than three times	70	4,10	0,57			

*(p<0,05)

In the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels according to their number of participations (Table 33), no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.321$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 34. Comparison of Satisfaction Levels According to the Factor Influencing Participation in Rafting

Dimension	Factor Influencing Participation	n	\bar{x}	s.d.	F	p	Tukey
Satisfaction	Friends	127	4,04	0,53	0,120	0,988	
	Family	64	4,01	0,53			
	Social media	75	4,06	0,58			
	Promotional Brochures	51	4,04	0,54			
	Websites	23	4,02	0,53			
	Personal choice	60	4,07	0,55			

^{*}($p < 0,05$)

In the comparison of rafting tourists' satisfaction levels according to the factor influencing their participation (Table 34), no statistically significant difference was found in the satisfaction dimension ($p = 0.988$; $p > 0.05$).

3.3.6. Correlation Analysis Regarding the Motivation and Satisfaction of Rafting Tourists

To determine whether there is a relationship between the motivations and satisfaction levels of rafting participants, and to test the hypotheses proposed within the scope of this thesis, a correlation analysis was conducted.

Correlation analysis, which is considered a statistical technique used to measure the direction and strength of the relationship between two variables, is interpreted based on the correlation coefficient (r), which takes a value between -1 and +1. According to Ural and Kılıç (2006), a correlation coefficient (r) between 0.00 and 0.29 indicates a "low" relationship, between 0.30 and 0.69 indicates a "moderate" relationship, and 0.70 or above indicates a "strong" relationship.

Table 35. Correlation Analysis Between Rafting Participants' Motivation and Satisfaction

		Motivation	Excitement/Escape	Nature	Social Interaction	Culture	Satisfaction
Motivation	r	1					
	p						
Excitement/Escape	r	0,636**	1				
	p	0,000					
Nature	r	0,729**	0,588**	1			
	p	0,000	0,000				
Social Interaction	r	0,759**	0,295**	0,273**	1		
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000			
Culture	r	0,761**	0,211**	0,411**	0,455**	1	
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000		
Satisfaction	r	0,305**	0,303**	0,215**	0,189**	0,214**	1
	p	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	0,000	

p<0,01

The results of the correlation analysis conducted to determine the relationship between rafting participants' motivations (escape, nature, social interaction, culture) and their satisfaction levels, based on the data obtained in this study, are presented in Table 35. In the analysis process, satisfaction was treated as the dependent variable, while motivation and its sub-dimensions—escape, nature, social interaction, and culture—were treated as independent variables. The analysis was performed at a 0.01 significance level.

According to the results in Table 35:

The correlation coefficient (r) between rafting participants' overall motivation and satisfaction was found to be 0.305, indicating a moderate ($0.30 < r < 0.69$) positive linear relationship. This result supports and confirms the **H1** hypothesis proposed in the study.

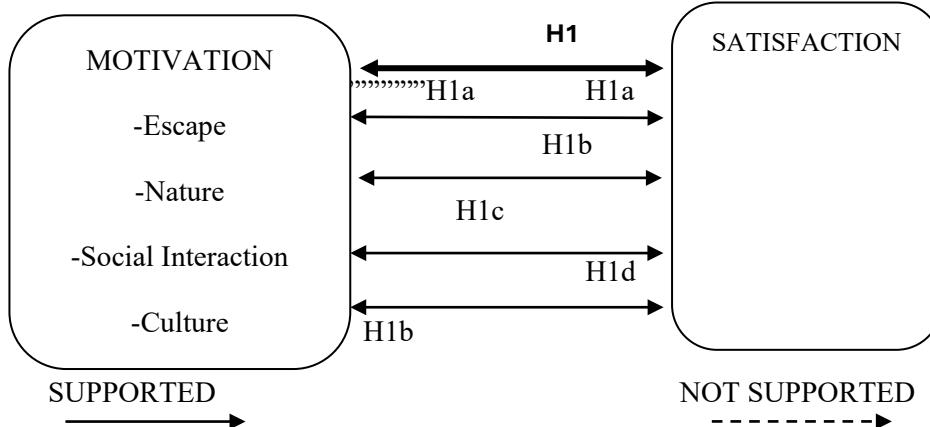
The correlation coefficient (r) between participants' escape motivation and satisfaction was found to be 0.303, indicating a moderate ($0.30 < r < 0.69$) positive linear relationship. Therefore, the **H1a** hypothesis was accepted.

The correlation coefficient (r) between participants' nature motivation and satisfaction was calculated as 0.215, indicating a low ($0.00 < r < 0.29$) positive linear relationship. Consequently, the **H1b** hypothesis was accepted.

The correlation coefficient (r) between participants' social interaction motivation and satisfaction was found to be 0.189, also indicating a low ($0.00 < r < 0.29$) positive linear relationship. Thus, the **H1c** hypothesis was accepted.

The correlation coefficient (r) between participants' cultural motivation and satisfaction was calculated as 0.214, indicating a low ($0.00 < r < 0.29$) positive linear relationship. Accordingly, the **H1d** hypothesis was accepted.

These results suggest that while the overall motivation and escape motivations have a moderate positive effect on satisfaction, nature, social interaction, and cultural motivations show weaker but still positive associations with satisfaction.



The findings of this study indicate that there is a positive relationship between the motivations and satisfaction levels of tourists participating in rafting tourism. The research results are consistent with the study conducted by Beckman et al. (2017), which found that excitement and nature-based motivations among 690 rafting participants on the Ocoee River in Tennessee led to positive emotional responses toward the adventure activity and promoted positive behavioral intentions related to destination attachment. Similarly, the results confirm the findings of Williams and Soutar (2009), who identified that customer satisfaction within the adventure tourism environment had a strong influence on behavioral intentions, based on data collected from 400 participants in an adventure tour in Australia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Special interest travel, which focuses on a particular theme, activity, or event, has been rapidly growing in the tourism market and increasing in importance. In particular, participation in the special interest segment by adventure tourists has been on the rise, with an increasing number of sports enthusiasts, health-conscious individuals, and participants concerned about environmental issues and the conservation of wildlife and other natural resources (Sung, 2004). It is estimated that adventure tourism activities, which predominantly take place outdoors and in natural environments, account for more than one-fourth of all travel and that this rate will increase by more than 50% by 2050 (Beckman et al., 2017).

The aim of this thesis was to understand the decision-making and planning processes of tourists participating in rafting activities—considered a key component of adventure tourism—by examining their motivations, analyzing their experiences during the activity, and identifying their overall satisfaction levels. Based on frequency analyses, difference tests, and correlation analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

In terms of demographic characteristics, it was found that rafting tourists were predominantly male (65.8%), single (72.0%), aged 18–25 (51.0%), held a bachelor's degree (49.3%), had a monthly income between 0–3,000 TL (64.5%), and were mostly students (50.5%). Additionally, the majority were first-time participants in rafting activities (55.5%) and reported that their friends influenced their participation (31.7%).

Rafting tourists' motivations were shaped primarily around the sub-dimensions of escape–excitement, nature, social interaction, and culture. The escape–excitement sub-dimension centered on statements such as “refreshing my mind, getting away from daily life, participating in exciting activities, escaping from a busy life, and feeling excitement from rafting.” The nature dimension was associated with “experiencing wildlife, being alone with nature, enjoying the scenery, and breathing fresh air.” The social interaction dimension included “meeting new people, interacting with foreigners, and spending time with friends,” while the cultural dimension involved “getting to know different cultures, meeting local people, and tasting local food.”

The satisfaction levels of rafting tourists were primarily shaped by four sub-dimensions: instructor, communication, activity, and duration. Instructor satisfaction was associated with factors such as “the instructor being solution-oriented, friendly and patient, providing necessary safety information before the activity, being prepared at the scheduled time, responding to problems

promptly, informing about potential difficulties, encouraging participants, answering questions, being motivating, distributing equipment completely, and ensuring safety measures.” Communication satisfaction focused on “the informativeness of the company’s website and brochures, as well as the helpfulness, patience, and informativeness of the staff contacted before the activity.” Activity satisfaction involved “the suitability and cleanliness of the river, safety measures in place, use of new equipment, favorable weather conditions, accessibility of the area, perceived excitement, and affordability.” Duration satisfaction related to whether the activity lasted shorter or longer than expected.

In the comparison of rafting tourists' demographic and other characteristics with their motivations, significant differences were identified in terms of marital status, education level, occupation, number of participations, and the factor influencing participation. It was determined that single participants, those with a bachelor's degree, self-employed individuals (such as doctors, lawyers, accountants), those participating for the third time, and those influenced by promotional brochures had higher motivation levels.

In terms of satisfaction, significant differences were observed based on gender and occupation. It was found that female tourists and self-employed participants (doctors, lawyers, accountants, etc.) reported higher levels of satisfaction following the rafting activity.

A moderate relationship ($r = 0.305$) was found between rafting tourists' motivation and satisfaction levels. This result suggests that motivation plays an important role in tourist behavior and contributes significantly to satisfaction. Furthermore, a moderate relationship was observed between escape-excitement motivation and satisfaction ($r = 0.302$), while nature motivation ($r = 0.215$), social interaction motivation ($r = 0.189$), and cultural motivation ($r = 0.214$) showed low-level relationships. These findings are consistent with the relevant literature (Williams and Soutar, 2009; Beckman et al., 2017), which emphasizes excitement and nature as the key themes highlighting rafting activities.

Based on these research findings, the following recommendations can be made for rafting companies regarding tourist motivation and satisfaction:

Rafting company managers and staff should be informed about tourist motivations and satisfaction through training programs, seminars, and workshops.

Visual and textual themes that can highlight motivation and satisfaction should be used in promotional brochures.

As rafting is a high-risk adventure activity due to constantly changing river and climate conditions, companies should prefer licensed and professionally trained instructors to ensure customer satisfaction. Properly maintained equipment meeting industry standards should be used.

Before the activity, companies should adequately inform customers about the rafting journey, provide suitable equipment, and take necessary safety precautions.

Companies should continuously monitor and assess risks and develop action plans to manage and minimize these risks.

After the rafting activity, companies may introduce local food and entertainment activities to enhance overall tourist satisfaction within the local cultural context.

This study examined rafting tourists' motivations and satisfaction levels from the perspective of domestic tourists and established a conceptual framework. The findings are expected to guide not only rafting companies but also local authorities aiming to promote rafting activities in their regions. Future studies may explore the motivations and satisfaction of foreign tourists and develop alternative insights accordingly.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey Form

Dear Participant,

This study aims to develop an understanding of the motivations and satisfaction of customers of rafting enterprises. In line with this objective, the opinions of you, our valued participants, are of great importance to us. The responses you provide will be used solely for the purposes of this research and will not be used for any other purpose.

We sincerely thank you for taking a few minutes of your time to answer the questions below.

Hakan DEMİRAY

Karabük University, Graduate School of Education
Department of Tourism Management

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nurettin AYAZ

Karabük University, Safranbolu Faculty of Tourism
Department of Tourism Management

PART 1: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Gender?		Marital Status?	
Female	()	Single	()
Male	()	Married	()
Age?		Level of Education?	
18-25	()	Primary School	()
26-33	()	Secondary School	()
34-41	()	Associate degree	()
42-49	()	Bachelor's Degree	()
50 and over	()		
Monthly Income?		Occupation?	
0-3000TL	()	Worker	()
3001-4000 TL	()	Civil Servant	()
4001-5000 TL	()	Businessperson	()
5001-6000 TL	()	Tradesperson	()
6000 TL and over	()	Self-employed	()

73 | MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION OF ADVENTURE TOURISM
PARTICIPANTS: THE CASE OF RAFTING

		Housewife Retired Student	() () () ()
How many times have you participated in a rafting activity?		What was the most influential factor in your participation in the rafting activity?	
First	()	Friends	()
Second	()	Family	()
Third	()	Social Media	()
More than Three Times	()	Promotional Brochures	()
		Websites	()
		Personal Interest	()

PART 2: MOTIVATION SCALE

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
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Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your reasons for participating in the rafting activity.

1	Meeting new people	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2	Interacting with foreigners	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3	Hanging out with friends	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4	Escaping from a hectic life	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5	Escaping from daily life	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6	Refreshing my mind	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
7	Participating in exciting activities	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
8	Feeling excitement from rafting	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9	Being alone with nature	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10	Experiencing wildlife	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11	Watching the scenery	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12	Breathing fresh air	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13	Tasting local food	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
14	Meeting local people	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
15	Learning about different cultures	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

PART 2: SATISFACTION SCALE

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree(2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
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Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding your satisfaction with the rafting activity.

1	The rafting area was easily accessible.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
2	The river where the rafting activity took place was suitable for the activity.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
3	The river where the rafting activity took place was clean.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4	The equipment used in the rafting activity was clean.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
5	Safety measures were taken in the area where the rafting activity took place	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
6	Precautions suitable for the weather conditions were taken in the area where the rafting activity took place.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
7	The rafting activity was cheaper than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
8	The rafting activity was safer than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
9	The rafting activity was more exciting than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
10	The staff I spoke to before the activity were informative.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
11	The instructor was friendly and patient.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
12	The instructor was more motivating than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
13	The instructor was more solution oriented than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

14	The rafting activity lasted shorter than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
15	The rafting activity lasted longer than I expected.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
16	I was satisfied with the instructor's attitude.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
17	The instructor's attitude encouraged me.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
18	The instructor informed me about possible difficulties.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
19	The instructor was friendly and patient.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
20	The instructor was ready at the scheduled time.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
21	The instructor provided the necessary safety information prior to the activity.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
22	The instructor at the rafting company was solution oriented.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
23	The instructor answered customers' questions prior to the activity.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
24	The instructor responded promptly to arising problems.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
25	The instructor distributed the equipment completely.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
26	The instructor was sensitive about ensuring safety measures.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
27	I received satisfactory answers to my questions about service pricing at the rafting facility.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
28	I found the brochures and/or websites prepared by the rafting company informative.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
29	The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were polite.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
30	The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were patient.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
31	The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity were informative.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

77 | MOTIVATION AND SATISFACTION OF ADVENTURE TOURISM
PARTICIPANTS: THE CASE OF RAFTING

32	The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity motivated/encouraged me to participate in this activity.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
33	The staff I spoke to via the contact numbers before the activity influenced my decision to participate.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
34	The website of the rafting company that I accessed to research the activity was informative.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
35	The brochures of the rafting company that I used to research the activity was informative	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

We sincerely thank you for your participation in this survey.

Appendix 2: Ethics Committee Approval



T.C.
KARABÜK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL ve BEŞERİ BİLİMLER ARAŞTIRMALARI ETİK KURULU
KARARLARI

TOPLANTI TARİHİ : 10.11.2021

TOPLANTI NO : 2021/10

Karabük Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu toplantı过的 ve aşağıdaki kararı almıştır.

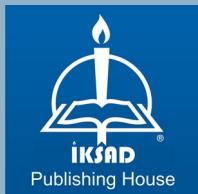
Karar 18:

26/10/2021 tarihli Doç. Dr. Nurettin AYAZ'ın Etik Kurul form ve ekleri görüşüldü.

Karabük Üniversitesi Öğretim Üyesi Doç. Dr. Nurettin AYAZ danışmanlığında yürütülen **“Rafting İşletmeleri Ziyaretçilerinin Müşteri Memnuniyeti Üzerine Bir İnceleme”** konulu çalışma kapsamında uygulanmak üzere ekte sunulan çalışmanın etik kurallara uygunluğu oy birliği ile kabul edilmiştir.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Hakan Demiray was born on May 12, 1991, in Ankara, Türkiye. He completed his associate degree education in the Department of Tourism and Hotel Management at Karadeniz Technical University, Maçka Vocational School, in 2015. He continued his education at the undergraduate level through the Vertical Transfer Examination (DGS) and graduated in 2017 from Gaziosmanpaşa University, Zile Dinçerler School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management. He has professional experience in the tourism sector, having worked in both travel agencies and hotel management. He is currently employed as an executive assistant in a company operating in the fields of marketing and supply chain management. With the aim of pursuing and advancing an academic career, he began his academic journey with his thesis entitled "*Motivation and Satisfaction of Adventure Tourism Participants: The Case of Rafting.*"



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