DEVELOPMENT OF A VEGAN-FRIENDLY DESTINATION - THE CASE OF DIDIM

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ABSTRACT

Development of a Vegan-Friendly Destination– The Case of Didim

Veganism has been gaining increasing attention recently, and therefore vegan travel and tourism are also on the rise. Despite this trend, the existing literature generally does not focus on tourism destination development that takes into consideration the needs of vegan tourists. Hence, this study investigates the development of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination under two research questions: (1) what are the aspects of a vegan-friendly destination, and (2) how is a vegan-friendly destination developed. This study mainly contributes to the destination development literature, but it also provides supportive contributions to the field of event management and food-based tourism. To achieve these, both online and on-site interviews are conducted with tourism professionals and local business owners, volunteers, members of non-governmental associations, as well as residents from the Didim area. As part of this qualitative study, snowball and judgmental sampling methods were adopted to reach the most representative group of individuals with the purpose of coming up with useful and scientifically meaningful answers to the research questions. The findings point out the aspects of a vegan-friendly destination, which include adherence to the vegan philosophy, the cuisine, addressing the needs of vegan visitors, abolishing, or reducing animal exploitations, social aspects and a favourable attitude of the local people. The development of a vegan-friendly destination in Didim is found to centre on the organization of educational activities and research, on the declaration of vegan-friendliness and on the introduction of vegan-friendly events, including festivals and vegan markets. The process on which this initiative is based, and the role of the various stakeholders is also discussed.

ÖZET

Vegan Dostu Destinasyon Geliştirme – Didim Örneği

Veganlık son zamanlarda yükseliş gösteren bir ilgi görüyor ve bundan dolayı da vegan seyahat ve turizm de yükseliştedir. Bu eğilime rağmen, mevcut literatür vegan turistlerin ihtiyaçlarını dikkate alan turizm destinasyon geliştirmeye genellikle odaklanmamaktadır. Bu sebeple, bu çalışma Didim'in vegan dostu bir destinasyon olarak geliştirilmesini iki araştırma sorusu altında incelemektedir: (1) vegan dostu bir destinasyonun özellikleri nelerdir ve (2) vegan dostu bir destinasyon nasıl geliştirilir. Bu çalışma temel olarak destinasyon geliştirme literatürüne katkı sağlar fakat aynı zamanda etkinlik yönetimi ve gıda temelli turizm alanlarına da destekleyici katkılar sağlamaktadır. Bunları gerçekleştirmek için turizm profesyonelleri ve yerel işletme sahipleri, gönüllüler, sivil toplum kuruluşu üyeleri ve Didim yöresi sakinleri ile hem çevrimiçi hem de yerinde görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu nitel çalışmanın bir parçası olarak, kartopu ve yargısal örnekleme yöntemler araştırma sorularına faydalı ve bilimsel olarak anlamlı cevaplar sağlayabilmek amacıyla en temsili birey grubuna ulaşmak için benimsenmiştir. Bulgular, vegan dostu bir destinasyonun vegan felsefesine bağlılığı, mutfağı, vegan ziyaretçilerin ihtiyaçlarını karşılaması, hayvan sömürüsünü ortadan kaldırması veya azaltması, sosyal yönleri ve yerel halkın olumlu tutumunu içeren yönlerine işaret etmektedir. Didim'de vegan dostu bir destinasyonun geliştirilmesi eğitim faaliyetleri ve araştırmaların düzenlenmesine, vegan dostluluğunun ilanına ve vegan marketleri ile vegan festivalleri de kapsayan vegan dostu etkinliklerin tanıtımına odaklandığı görülmüştür. Bu girişimin dayandığı süreç ve çeşitli paydaşların rolü de tartışılmıştır.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research background

The core focus of this study concerns the development of a vegan-friendly destination. The research analyses the process that took place in 2016 and 2017, when Didim announced itself as a vegan-friendly destination, following the example of Barcelona (Altaş, 2017). The development of a vegan-friendly destination is examined within a sustainable tourism perspective with the aim of getting insights into the vegan tourism and vegan-friendly destination phenomenon.

The tourism sector is regarded as one the fastest growing industries that contributes to financial and social advancement all around the world. The international tourist arrivals reached up to 1.5 travellers in 2019 (The United Nations World Tourism Organization, 2021) before the decrease caused by the Covid-19 crisis. Furthermore, tourism has an influential role on society, the economy, and the environment (Cohen, 1978). These three areas of tourism impact are also known as the three pillars of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987), and need to be considered for a more sustainable tourism activity. An increasing concern for sustainability has transformed tourism from being an activity solely focused on a sun-sea-sand triangle to a more inclusive and responsible endeavour that extends to other types of tourism enjoyment. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (n.d.) defines sustainable tourism as that which takes its current and future social, environmental, and economic effects fully into consideration, and cares about the needs of the visitors, the sector, the environment, and the host populations. Academic studies analyse a variety of tourism types that are closer to this ideal definition of sustainable

tourism because of how they are practiced. For example, pro-poor tourism aims to solve the issues related to poverty, mainly in rural areas (Gascón, 2015), and ecotourism is considered sustainable if it minimizes the environmental impacts in the concerned area (Dodds, 2009).

As veganism highlights the importance of the ecological and socio-cultural environment in addition to supporting reasonable consumption and production, it is accepted as an approach that is significantly important for the emergence of a more economically sustainable tourism (Dilek & Dilek, 2020). In its most basic sense, veganism, which is the emergence point of vegan travel, is described as a philosophy and way of living that is based on avoiding — as far as is possible and practicable — all kinds of exploitation and cruelty to animals aligned with the elimination of the use of products either partially or fully coming from animals for food, clothes, or other aims (The Vegan Society, 1988).

Although there is no universally accepted definition for vegan tourism, it can be identified as a type of tourism that excludes any kind of human and animal exploitation before, during and after travelling. Sanz Planas (2018) came up with a comprehensive definition for vegan tourism by combining the definitions of tourism and veganism and referred to vegan tourism as the "activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment, while excluding all forms of exploitation of, and cruelty to, animals for food or any other purpose" (Sanz Planas, 2018, p. 8). Thus, this type of tourism is thought to change the way that travellers arrive at the destination, what they eat, wear, and how they get entertained. As the avoidance of animal products from one's diet and clothing are essential to a vegan lifestyle, this lifestyle may be continued while travelling. To exemplify, Li, Liu, Cai and Scott (2020) studied the vegan tours organised in China, which provide vegan

meals and events designed for the tourists' needs. These tours are strictly tied to vegan expectations, in addition to encouraging ritual sense, slow pace, and engagement among participants (Li et al., 2020). In line with the definition of veganism by the Vegan Society (1988), vegans avoid using animals for entertainment purposes, which includes riding animals such as horses or camels, visiting aquariums or zoos, etc. Entertainment activities in this type of tourism consist of non-exploitative ones. As people have started to be more concerned about environmental issues and animal welfare in recent years, it has also impacted the growth of the vegan population.

In parallel, veganism has started to permeate tourism and its development. As the number of vegans has risen recently, cities try to provide opportunities for vegan visitors. Vegan-friendly destination development can be considered as a kind of sustainable destination development as the emphasis is on preserving the environment and benefiting the community, which includes both human and non-human animals. Indeed, Barcelona in Spain is famous for its quirky architecture, tapas, streets, and beaches, and hosts a variety of vegan and vegetarian spots (Vegan Food & Living, 2017, May 3). It is possible to come up with different examples from the world like Tel Aviv, which has 400 vegan and vegetarian restaurants, and which is described as the plant-based capital of the world (Independent UK, 2017, November 6).

When it comes to the literature on vegan travel or vegan tourism, there are not many studies that have been conducted on the subject. A study by Kojic (2020) assesses the environmental benefits of veganism by focusing on the KAB (Knowledge – Attitude - Behavior) model. Another research on the subject examines the relationship between veganism and sustainable tourism (Pathan, 2021). Some

other studies are available such as that of Li et al. (2020), which gives insights about vegan tours taking place in China. Another investigation is that of Kansanen (2013), which aims to determine the constraints that a vegan traveller can encounter. Also, as an example from Turkey, Altaş (2017) published a study that assesses veganism and vegetarianism in detail and compares the case of Turkey with other places from the world. However, most of the literature considers the perspective of the tourist and his/her experience while the development of vegan tourism at the destination is largely ignored. While there is no sufficient literature about vegan tourism in general, the most salient research gaps relate to the fact that there is no universally accepted definition of vegan tourism/tourist, and there are no criteria to follow for the purpose of developing a place as vegan friendly.

1.2 Aims and objectives

Veganism is gaining more popularity day by day because people have recently become more concerned about ethical consumption, both in relation to the environment and the treatment of animals (Livekindly, n.d.). Individuals are increasingly choosing ethical and responsible consumption options, including sustainable, waste-free or vegan alternatives. Although veganism is not spread in Turkey as in other countries, some interest is gathered around the vegan-friendly destination concept in places such as Didim. Generally, meals in Turkey are made with sheep, goat, beef, and lamb, so it can be said that vegetarianism and veganism are not so widespread in the country (Altaş, 2017). However, a recent interest in the topic can be seen around specific initiatives, and this represents an opportunity to reflect on the potential to develop in Turkey destinations that are vegan-friendly, thus addressing the needs of vegan travellers. Therefore, the current research aims to

analyse the development of a vegan-friendly destination in Didim. It aims to better understand and explore the factors that influence the development of a vegan-friendly tourist destination based on the involvement of both local and non-local actors, and the aspects of the location that will be taken into consideration to label an area as a vegan-friendly destination.

As there are few and non-comprehensive studies on vegan tourism and vegan-friendly destination development, this research aims to contribute to the literature on destination development by providing a better understanding on the topic. This academic study will add to the existing body of knowledge by enhancing the awareness, perception and background about the vegan tourism concept and the development process of a vegan-friendly destination. In addition, the investigation also enriches the existing knowledge on food-based and event management tourism, since a critical part of the Didim initiative encompasses the introduction of a vegan event and the development of vegan food options at the destination. This research will also be useful to planners and destination managers who would like to apply a vegan-friendly destination concept in their location. In summary, the two fundamental aims of this study are to identify what makes a vegan-friendly destination and how a vegan-friendly destination is developed based on the factors that are identified from previous example cases.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Veganism

2.1.1 Roots and evolution of veganism

In its most general sense, veganism can be identified as a kind of practice that involves precluding the utilisation of any animals. More specifically, the Vegan Society UK defines veganism as a philosophy and way of life that excludes any kind of exploitation and cruelty to animals for food, dressing and any other purposes, and also promotes the improvement and utilisation of animal-free goods for the sake of the environment, humans and animals (The Vegan Society, 1988). In dietary aspects, it means eliminating from a person's diet all products coming wholly or partially from animals.

Based on some estimations, the total number of vegans in the world equals to about 79 million (Meyer, 2021, January 17). The Vegan Society (2019) announced that the number of vegans in Great Britain has quadrupled between 2014 and 2019, which means that in 2019, there were over 600,000 people (1.16% of the whole population in the United Kingdom) that are following a vegan lifestyle. According to a study conducted by a vegan supermarket brand called Veganz, the vegan population has also doubled between 2016 and 2020 in Germany (Vegnews, 2020, November 12). This boom can be somehow linked to the fact that 2019 was announced as the Year of the Vegan (O'Neill, 2020, August 7).

Based on history, veganism is considered as a stricter way of vegetarianism. The word vegetarian has been used since approximately the beginning of the 19th century. The term previously meant a vegetable regimen or diet (Rod, 2008). The

roots of vegetarianism go back to the Indus Valley Civilization (Bajpai, 2011; Spencer, 1996; Tähtinen, 1976). It was established as a significant movement in the UK and the US in the 19th century (Gregory, 2007). The Vegetarian Society was founded in 1847 in the United Kingdom.

According to Proverbs 12:10, Old Testament, about 950 BCE, King Solomon is reported to have said that a righteous man regards the life of his beast (Barwick, 2015). Also, in Greco- Roman times, the daily diet of people consisted of fruits, vegetables, and cereals. The gladiators and warriors were mostly following a vegetarian diet (Longo, Spiezia, Maffuli & Denaro, 2008). Furthermore, Plato quotes that the gods created certain trees, plants, and seeds to replenish our bodies, and a meat-free lifestyle has been favoured in certain religions like Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Sikhism (Livekindly, n.d.). Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the central figure in Sikh scripture, built a variety of animal shelters and took weak and injured animals into care for rehabilitation, returning them later to their natural habitat (Viva UK, n.d.). The members of Jainism are allowed to consume only fruits and plants, and their core values are based on 'ahimsa' (focusing on the purity of deed, word, and thought) and co-existence among all creatures harmoniously (Mehta, 2016, October 26). Also, Buddhism is known as closely connected to a vegetarian diet (Kansanen, 2013).

Today, veganism is supported by many organisations worldwide. There are different voluntary associations, societies, and collaborative networks that aim to raise awareness about animal rights. These organisations are not limited to what will be listed down below, but these are some of the most well-known ones:

- The Vegan Society UK is the oldest among vegan groups internationally, and was established in 1944, and it owns several offshoots that advocate and

encourage a vegan lifestyle. (The Vegan Society, n.d.a). In addition, the Vegetarian Society is a British charitable initiative that is committed to raising the vegetarian population, advocating for meatless diets, etc. (Davis, 2011, July 28).

- Another such organisation is PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), which is one of the most well-known animal rights collectives at the international level, having more than 2 million members (Vegan Souls, n.d.). It was established in 1980 in the United States (Schwartz & Begley, 2002; Pacheco & Francione, 1985).
- Another example is the ProVeg UK initiative, which is a food awareness organisation that has a leading role internationally since it is active in four continents (ProVeg UK, n.d.).
- Additionally, Animal Save Movement was founded in 2010 (Animal Save Turkey, n.d.) and it is currently functioning actively in Turkey, especially in Istanbul, İzmir and Ankara.

2.1.2 Veganism as culture, consumption, and lifestyle

Veganism can be considered from the perspective of being an individual diet and a means to achieve a healthier lifestyle (Nordström, Coff, Jönsson, Nordenfelt & Görman, 2013). Food, in addition to being a survival necessity, is a cultural dimension that changes depending on the traditions and habits of a nation. Culture, identity and race are important to comprehend the complex methods that people use to decide about their choices of food (Reddy & van Dam, 2020). How people cook and eat their foods has frequently a symbolic aspect and it also identifies the ways in which migrants preserve their multicultural communities (D'Sylva & Beagan, 2011).

Each society has different traditions related to their food, which it aims to protect. However, these traditional lifestyles can be adapted to new ways of living and eating through the influence of a changing era and contemporary lifestyles. Also, new food customs can develop via acculturation (Kittler & Sucher, 2008), which is a process of getting educated about and associated with language, beliefs, traditions, mannerism, values and eating patterns of another country (Mody, 2007). Thus, veganism and eating patterns can be fostered, and adopted as a cultural value in different locations.

Veganism, as different from a plant-based lifestyle, is not only about eating but also applies its philosophy to other areas, including clothing, entertainment, transportation, cosmetic usage, animal testing. The main lifestyle of vegans is outlined below:

- Foods: In terms of eating, vegans avoid all animal-derived products. These are not only limited to meat, chicken, and fish, but also cover cheese, milk, yoghurt, honey, eggs, butter. The elimination of these foods, in addition to being related to environmental health concerns, is also connected to having responsible and ethical attitudes towards consumption habits. In Britannica (2016, May 17), ethical consumerism relates not only to the purchase of products but also to the process that is used to generate those products. Sorum (2020) defines ethical consumerism concept as a type of consumer activism that is based on the ability of consumers to direct supply through their purchase choices – also described as dollar voting. This concept can be applied via positive buying in which ethical products are preferred, or moral boycott, which refers to abstaining from purchasing products from companies considered unethical (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). For example, some vegans also avoid the consumption of palm oil due to the destruction to the wildlife and homes to animals for palm oil production (The

Vegan Society, n.d.c). In addition, vegans are also concerned about products that use animal labour in their production, such as coconuts, whose collection is often made by monkeys (The Green Vegans, n.d.). Also, some vegans may not consume certain products due to the environmental footprint of those foods, like almonds and cacao (Hamilton, 2020, January 27). Vegans eat a variety of non-animal-based products, while cooking or buying the veganized versions of animal-based recipes is not inaccessible anymore. Some brands produce dairy alternatives mostly made up of soy as well as meat and egg substitutes for vegans.

- Clothing: Vegans exclude the use of animals from what they wear. This implies the avoidance of leather and fur as well as any other materials that are produced from animals. In addition, vegans do not use products like glue or covering/ packaging materials that are produced from animal parts. Moreover, it is very important for vegans and sustainable livers to use any product for a long time without wasting it and even sometimes recycling it.
- Entertainment: Vegans avoid free-time activities that can be engaged with the use of animals such as circuses, zoos, aquariums, horse riding, dolphin parks, animal fighting, etc. All these practices are avoided in a vegan lifestyle due to a sensitivity to animal exploitation and mistreatment. For example, in China, a polar bear hotel was established, which led to criticism among animal rights activists (Miridul, 2021).
- Transportation: Vegans are usually concerned about the environment and prefer to use environmentally friendly transportation vehicles like bicycles.
- Consumption of animal testing-free products: This issue is very sensitive for vegans although other individuals can also reject it. Animals can be used for

testing personal-care products and medicine. Although some people do not follow a vegan lifestyle, they take into consideration buying cruelty-free (not animal tested) products. These products may also be frequently used at tourism facilities, and thus offering alternatives that have not been tested on animals at hotels may encourage vegan guests to stay. In addition, cruelty-free brands can often be used longer and recycled to promote a more sustainable lifestyle. The use of products that can be used longer and recycled are preferred, so that a more sustainable lifestyle is also promoted. For example, some of the cruelty-free brands are also labelled with a sustainable label, and these brands take into consideration ingredients, sustainable packaging, and the policies of the company (Rose, 2021, June 28). This is not only protecting the environment, but it may also contribute to the local population as local producers may sell hand-made personal care products. Most of these local producers do not practice animal testing and use natural ingredients to manufacture the products that cannot be consumed as quickly as mass produced industrialized products. Using these products in hotels may have a positive impact on the environment since they discourage over-consumption. Additionally, such initiatives may also attract tourists that adhere to a vegan philosophy.

As such, veganism can become part of a person's identity and way of life and may also be shaped by other individuals' behaviours and perceptions (Lindquist, 2013). Veganism can help people gain different individual and social identities through social processes, such as recipe sharing, exemplary behaviour, guidance concerning a vegan lifestyle, etc. (Christopher, Bartowski & Haverda, 2018). Such acts may not only impact the creation of an individual identity in terms of lifestyle choices but also promote social interaction among like-minded people. In addition,

veganism can also influence personal expenditures as in many cases vegan products are less costly than their animal-based alternatives (Sous Vide Guy, 2020).

There are some labels and trademarks that facilitate the identification of vegan products and their safe consumption. For example, the V- label is a trademark that is given to products that are suitable for vegan and vegetarian consumption. This label was introduced at the first European Vegetarian Congress in 1985 and has achieved recognition at the international level. Since 2008, the rights of the trademark have been managed by V- Label GmbH in Switzerland, an institution that also controls that the products that use the label have meet four requirements (European Vegetarian Union, n.d.). Products are regarded as vegan if they do not come from animal origins, do not include animal-based ingredients, processing aids, or substances (European Vegetarian Union, n.d.). According to V-Label Europe (n.d.), in Switzerland 97% of vegans and 50% of vegetarians notice the label.

2.1.3 Motivations and factors affecting the adoption of veganism

The main reasons that motivate people to become vegan may be categorised as concern for their own health, for the environment and for animal rights (Puuronen, 2008). Greenebaum (2012) also groups these reasons under three main categories: ethical, environmental and health related. Health-motivated vegans follow a plant-based diet with the purpose of losing weight or to improve their physical health (Greeneebaum, 2012). Indeed, Ben (2019) found that 17.4% of the participants (over 12,000) in their study became vegan for health reasons.

In contrast, an environmentally driven vegan takes into consideration the environmental impact of the meat sector (Greenebaum, 2012). According to the research by Cooper (2018), two thirds of vegans are motivated by their concern for

the environment. Since animal farming is found to be more damaging and resource-wasteful when compared with plant-based food production (Beardsworth & Keil 1993; Tilman & Clark, 2014), people's dietary choices may be motivated by the drive to minimise the negative impact of food production (Fox & Ward, 2008).

Finally, an ethically motivated individual may foster a vegan lifestyle for ethical, moral, and political causes (Greenebaum, 2012). In particular, support for animal rights is considered one of the main reasons for adopting a vegan lifestyle (Kansanen, 2013). Other than the food production sector, animal exploitation can also be seen in the tourism and entertainment sector at zoos, aquatic parks, circuses, etc. In addition, wildlife animals are also exposed because of human consumption habits. For example, deforestation eradicates the natural habitat of animals, putting whole species in risk of extinction (Nicol, 2022). Thus, an ethically motivated vegan fosters a lifestyle that is formulated around a philosophy of rights of animals and is value-laden to a vegan community (Greenebaum, 2012).

There are also several factors that facilitate the acceptance of veganism. These include personal and sociocultural factors (Kansanen, 2013). Personal factors consist of wages, occupation, level of education, ethnicity, place of residence, religious values, awareness concerning health and nutrition, and physiological features (Kittler & Sucher, 1989). Salary is influential in dietary habits in terms of purchasing power. People who have a relatively low income cannot afford to purchase all food supplies, while there are more options for high- income individuals (Kittler & Sucher, 1989). Occupation may also limit or affect dietary habits, since an individual who has more time can pay more attention to nutritional issues (Kansanen, 2013). On the other hand, a person who has limited time looks for ease and convenience in food consumption (Kittler & Sucher, 1989). Also, different ethnic

groups have a traditional way of eating, which shapes their dietary habits. The place of residence also impacts dietary habits because there may be differences between rural and urban residents even if they have the same income (Kittler & Sucher, 1989). Religion can constrain what its followers are allowed to eat (Kittler & Sucher, 1989). Health and nutritional awareness also shape people's dietary habits (Conner & Armitage, 2002). Physiological factors like age, gender, and health status influence how people eat (Kittler & Sucher, 2008).

Socio-cultural factors can include norms and rules in a society as well as food advertisements and labelling, food production, distribution systems, etc. (Kansanen, 2013). According to Conner and Armitage (2002), food can be recognized as a determinant of status. Also, society may accept some foods as superior to others. For example, in a social sense, some people see meat as having physical power, and men tend to be regarded as more manly if they eat meat (Shanker, 2016).

2.1.4 Impacts of veganism

The vegan lifestyle can have some impacts on the way of life of the community, as highlighted in the literature. A vegan lifestyle can be influential on the environment in terms of its impact on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, use of natural resources, influence on the protection of biodiversity, reduction of deforestation, and support of a more sustainable understanding of consumption.

First, food production based on animals is heavy on greenhouse gas emissions and thus contributes greatly to climate change (Ghahari & Mcadam, 2018). On the other hand, according to a study conducted by Kolbe (2020), vegan recipes result in a 10% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions in comparison to vegetarian recipes and 65 % reduction compared to recipes that have a high meat content.

Secondly, the use of natural resources and the protection of biodiversity are important to assess the impacts of daily diets on the environment. Research has acknowledged that production of meat and other animal-based products requires more land, water, and other natural resources, in comparison to plant-based agriculture (Dopelt, Radon & Davidovitch, 2019; Kojic, 2020; Ghahari & Mcadam, 2018; Reynolds, Buckley, Weinstein & Boland, 2014; Scarborough et al., 2014; Walsh, 2013). On the other hand, livestock plays a leading role in reducing biodiversity (Steinfeld et al., 2006), while animal farming has a significant impact on the deterioration of tropical rainforests (Ghahari & Mcadam, 2018; Gibbs et al., 2015). Researchers have discovered that reducing meat and dairy consumption from a diet can decrease someone's carbon footprint coming from food consumption by almost 73% (Petter, 2020, September 24). Furthermore, according to research, vegan diets consume the lowest amount of water, which allows a decrease in water usage by 50% (Hornberger, 2020, November 19).

In addition to its impacts on the environment, veganism can be influential also on society, especially affecting the economy and the livelihood of the local population. According to some research, a reduction in the consumption of animal-based products would provide savings to society and improve the health and prosperity of individuals (Annemans & Schepers, 2018; Massey, 2020, October 31; Shepon, Eshel, Moor & Milo, 2018). Moreover, fostering a vegan lifestyle encourages a cultural change in consumption habits, which positively impacts the sustainability of a society (Parker, 2018, July 19). In support of the vegan philosophy, a sustainability approach that is morally consistent should aim to generate the wellbeing for all, including nonhuman sentient life.

Furthermore, individuals that have a positive attitude for organic products generally have healthier habits, including vegetables and fruits-based diet with a lower amount of meat (Christensen, Denver, & Bøye Olsen, 2019), which is important to benefit the local population and to create social benefits within a sustainability perspective. Since vegans want to know where the ingredients and products that they consume come from, they are usually keen on organic and locally sourced products. Local populations can benefit from the production, sales and marketing of both organic and vegan products, some of which may only grow under specific climatic conditions. Veganism can also be connected to other movements, such as farmer's markets, which are occasional events held by communities that have an interest in seasonal and local food (Getz & Page, 2016a). Farmers and earth markets support the meeting of customers and small-scale farmers, encourage seasonal and local food production, and foster the creation of community meeting points where rural and urban citizens come together, eat, drink and celebrate in unison (Slow Food, 2020).

In conclusion, veganism is seen in the literature as a source of positive impacts in the community, as a way of mitigating climate change, greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation, as a basis for reducing the use of natural resources and as a means of increasing biodiversity. Thus, in addition to being accepted as environmentally friendly, a vegan lifestyle is regarded by some as healing although this idea may be opposed by other health professionals. For example, Neal Barnard, president of the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, asserts that a plant-based can have optimal impacts throughout the healing process by helping the body for the regulation levels of inflammation (Ionescu, 2022). In contrast, according to a review conducted by the American College of Nutrition in 2013,

milk protein is found to be more effective in supporting muscle-protein synthesis than soy protein (Bucklin, 2017, January 3).

2.1.5 Places that support veganism

Some places are more vegan-friendly with many vegan options available. Those places can be more friendly towards vegans than others due to their vegan population, the number of vegan-friendly restaurants, the range of vegan-friendly accommodation, the existence of vegan-friendly events, etc. (Sanz Planas, 2018). As an example, Berlin is named as a vegan and vegetarian capital due to the high number of vegan/vegetarian restaurants, and the high number of vegans among its population (Espinosa, 2016, May 21). Moreover, according to HappyCow (HappyCow, n.d.), an application via which people can find vegan, vegetarian, or vegan-friendly restaurants and stores located in 183 countries, the best vegan cities are listed as Berlin, Warsaw, and London due to the number of vegans, vegetarian, and vegan-friendly restaurants as well as the number of vegan hotels and the availability of vegan tours (Sanz Planas, 2018; HappyCow, 2022, November). Some other cities that are identified as vegan-friendly include San Francisco (USA), Chennai (India), Austin/Texas (USA), Taipei (Taiwan), São Paulo (Brazil), New York/Brooklyn (USA), Singapore, Barcelona (Spain), and Chiang Mai (Thailand) (Altaş, 2017; Warkentin, 2017; Vegan Motivation, n.d).

In Turkey, vegan eating patterns are not as developed as in other countries (Altaş, 2017). Nevertheless, a huge misconception about the Turkish food is that it is a meat-based, monotone and usually rich-in spice cuisine; but most common foods in the Turkish cuisine are prepared with vegetables and beans, in addition to being flavoured with olive oil (Polat, 2015 April 30). Also, there are some emerging

initiatives in the country that focus on vegan lifestyle and food-practices. For example, in 2016 Didim, a coastal town in the Aegean part of the country, declared itself as a vegan-friendly city, following the example of Barcelona (Altaş, 2017). Turkey's first vegan and vegetarian festival took place in Didim in 2017. Since then, some other vegan events, such as picnics, have been organised in different cities in Turkey with the purpose of explaining veganism to non-vegans, doing yoga collaboratively, sharing vegan foods and exchanging opinions (Altaş, 2017). When it comes to vegan restaurants and shops, Turkey has a variety of them especially in Istanbul, such as Veganarsist, Limonita, Kem Kum Egyptian restaurant, Community Kitchen, Rulo, Vegan Dukkan, Vegan Bakkal, etc, which are also listed in the HappyCow application. The growing awareness of veganism in Turkey, as indicated by the growing number of vegan gatherings and the increase in the number of books/movies about veganism prepared for the public, creates a potential to develop offerings for vegan and vegetarian consumers. This is also an opportunity that may be addressed through tourism and the creation of vegan-friendly destinations.

2.2 Vegan tourism and events

2.2.1 Vegan tourism

Vegan tourism is a recent phenomenon that is not well-known. Recent research has attempted to define it and to describe this new emerging market. For example, Sanz Planas (2018) defines vegan tourism as people’s activities to travel and accommodate in places out of their usual environment while at the same time eliminating all kinds of animal exploitation and cruelty for food or other purposes. Dilek & Dilek (2020) define vegan tourists as people who apply the vegan life philosophy by prioritizing sustainability without exploiting animals while travelling. Also, Sanz Planas (2018)

includes vegan tourism as being part of sports or health tourism when it is combined with yoga or fitness activities at vegan-friendly festivals or resorts; of responsible travel when it emphasises the creation of benefits for local citizens and then for visitors; and enotourism (or wine tourism), and cruise tourism when it is carried out within the framework of these activities (Sanz Planas, 2018). It is thought that people who follow vegan-lifestyles, prefer vegan-friendly cities which are aligned with their life perceptions among destination options (Altaş & Acar, 2017).

Sanz Planas (2018) categorises vegan travellers as luxurious vegans, vegans with spiritual requirements, eco-friendly vegans, city-break vegans, and vegan volunteers. Luxurious vegans seek hotels that have spa and wellness spaces to relax and are interested in their bodies, whereas spiritual travellers choose to take care of their minds and aim to get a spiritual benefit (Sanz Planas, 2018). Eco-friendly vegans want to obtain both spiritual benefits and be connected to the environment, while city break vegans look for cities that are seen as vegan-friendly places. Lastly, the volunteer vegans are mostly interested in volunteering at animal sanctuaries or other similar places (Sanz Planas, 2018).

Vegan tourism can be facilitated through vegan-related travel applications, vegan/vegetarian hotels, and vegan-friendly travel agencies. A study by Tural (2018) highlights a roadmap prepared about vegan travel agencies and tour guides for vegan individuals. For example, HappyCow is seen as a useful vegan application and website in which many vegan, vegan-friendly or vegetarian restaurants and shops can be found (HappyCow, 2018, February). It is possible to put reviews and upload photos in addition to recommending new businesses in the app (Sanz Planas, 2018). In addition to HappyCow, there are other applications that aim to facilitate experiences. Sanz Planas (2018) lists some of them. For example, Veganized helps

people discover a variety of vegan recipes, and Barcelona Veg Friendly has been designed specifically to identify vegan establishments and restaurants in Barcelona (Sanz Planas, 2018). Other applications include Is It Vegan?, which identifies vegan products through the use of a barcode scanning, and Veganook's, which delivers vegan food in Barcelona (Sanz Planas, 2018). As well as applications that provide information about restaurants and shops around the destination, some applications help travellers find accommodation facilities and food options at different touristic venues. For example, Vegvisits, a website, allows travellers to look for veg-friendly holiday rentals globally, based on accommodation, type of property, kitchen equipment, the lifestyle of the host people, etc. (PETA, 2016, July 22). Additionally, Air Vegan is an application designed for airport passengers. It aims to inform the app users about vegan food options in airports and their terminals (EcoBnb, 2020, January 15). Also, an application called Vegan Passport by the Vegan Society helps tourists travel around the world to enjoy local foods without sacrificing their vegan beliefs (The Vegan Society, n.d.b).

In line with the rise in the number of individuals who are vegans/vegetarians, there has been an increase in the number of vegan/vegetarian hotels (Dilek, 2018). Although the concept of vegan hotel is not widely known, some hotels have started to pay attention to this issue. According to Dilek (2018), there are 334 vegan/vegetarian hotels in Europe, while this number is 91 in Asia, 83 in North America, 20 in South America, 7 in Oceania and 5 in Africa (Dilek, 2018; Veggie Hotels, 2018). In addition, different travel companies specialise in offering services to vegan/vegetarian travellers, including Vegan River Cruises, Vegan Travel Club, Vegan Catering Berlin, Veg jaunts and journeys, Super Vegan Travel, Enjoy Vegan, Vegan Peasant Catering, and Celtic Dream Tours (Dilek, 2018; Sanz Planas, 2018).

2.2.2 Event management and vegan events

The event industry is a flourishing area that combines leisure, business, and tourism (Getz & Page, 2016b; Mair & Laing, 2012). Events can vary from conferences, seminars and workshops to festivals, and they can be organized around specific themes. As an example, food festivals can be defined as popular and food-centred organizations that can influence local development more broadly, having a contribution on this development's sustainability in addition to rising food security (Andersson & Lundberg, 2013; Briones Alonso, Cockx & Swinnen, 2018).

Both visitors and residents can profit from these events (Folgado-Fernández, Di-Clemente & Hernández-Mogollón, 2019; Ossowska, Janiszewska, Kwiatkowski & Kloskowski, 2023). In an economic sense, Egresi and Kara (2014) emphasize that travellers attending local, small festivals spend money and have an impact on local economies. Also, these events can provide benefits for business initiators who may test and exhibit products and use the festival as a platform for the initial accessibility to the market (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018). While events are organized with the aim of receiving economic benefits, they have also started to foster the function of solving societal matters, such as sustainability (Preuss, 2013; Tölkes & Butzmann, 2018). An example is that of green events that are the representation of a new event kind, usually funded and arranged by local governments with the purpose of motivating visitors and permanent residents towards more sustainable actions (Mair & Laing, 2013; Tölkes & Butzmann, 2018). From a social point of view, a local festival can be represented as a tool to accelerate social sustainability (De Jong & Varley, 2018).

Similarly, vegan events can be thought as activities that are organized for the purpose of creating awareness and promoting veganism (Bertella, 2018). Also,

people who follow a vegan or vegetarian lifestyle may feel isolated or disconnected from some social cycles or networks, especially when their friends do not know much about veganism. In such conditions, they must explain themselves and their values constantly, or they may find it hard to obtain goods and services fit for vegan consumption. Thus, the social wellbeing of vegans can flourish in social gatherings and supportive atmospheres (Maurer, 2002). Vegan social and cultural networks can help individuals obtain the needed support to sustain their lifestyle (Cherry, 2006). Through networks and events, people who have similar values and opinions can come together and feel part of a community.

Some noteworthy events are organized to support vegans and veganism worldwide. For example, the World Vegan Month is celebrated every November to appraise the growth of veganism, to reflect on what has been achieved, and to underline the accessibility and benefit of a vegan lifestyle (The Vegan Society, n.d.d). In addition, November the 1st is accepted as the World Vegan Day. On this day, many activities are organised worldwide to show the benefits of veganism for human beings and for the environment (Clark, 2016). The first Vegan Day was held on the 1st of November 1994 (Clark, 2016). Since then, many celebrations and festivals have been organised throughout the world (Clark, 2016). Another well-known event is the Veganuary initiative, a yearly challenge initiated by a UK non-profit organisation that motivates people internationally to attempt to become vegan during the month of January, thus encouraging the dissemination of the vegan lifestyle (Veganuary, n.d.). The organisation invites people from all around the world to take part in this challenge. For example, in the year 2021, the number of people who participated exceeded 500,000, and more than 825 vegan products and menu options were offered (Veganuary, n.d.).

Some well-known examples of vegan and vegetarian festivals worldwide are given below.

- The Phuket Vegetarian Festival: This festival, which is organised by Chinese citizens whose ancestors came from the Hokkien Province in China, has a purpose of showing respect to the Nine Emperor Gods and reinforcing Chinese identity (Chaopreecha, 2019). This festival is also based on the belief that abstaining from meat and the use of certain stimulants will help individuals obtain good health and peace of mind (Hotels.com, n.d.). The Vegetarian Festival was promoted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand in the 1990s as a touristic activity when tourism started to grow in Phuket, and has become a well-known event (Chaopreecha, 2019). This festival has been altered by the development of the tourism sector, which has decreased the role of religion and increased economic-based motives (Chaopreecha, 2019).
- Irish Vegan Festival: This is a yearly event, which is organized by Farplace Animal Rescue, and which is held two times a year, in April and in June (Tasteatlas, n.d.a.). Its aim is to encourage a vegan diet, animal welfare, and a sustainable lifestyle. Its profits are reportedly donated to a charity for the furthering of its activities in nurturing rescued animals (Tasteatlas, n.d.b.).
- UK Vegan Festivals: The number of vegan festivals that took place in the UK only in 2017 is more than 80 (Sanz Planas,2018). These events vary in size attracting between 500 and 15,000 visitors, with the largest, the London Festival, having over 30 stalls (Sanz Planas, 2018). Among these, the Glasgow Vegan Festival has become prominent since the city was named as the most vegan-friendly city by PETA in 2013, with its 13 vegan restaurants and 12 vegetarian restaurants (PETA, 2018, August 8; Sanz Planas, 2018). Also, another well-

known UK festival is the Vegfest (Vegfest Scotland), which is organised in Scotland (Sanz Planas, 2018).

- Didim and Istanbul Vegfest: Didim held in 2017 Turkey's first vegan and vegetarian festival, the Vegfest. This event was thereafter also organised in Istanbul as International Istanbul Vegfest, held since 2018. It was sponsored by V-Label and partnered by different animal rights collectives (Hongur, 2019, November 5; International İstanbul Vegfest, 2021).

2. 3 Sustainable destination development

2.3.1 Aspects of sustainable destination development

The tourism industry has had a great and irreparable impact on a variety of destinations, and as the demand for new destinations keeps rising, a persistent pressure for development occurs (Curtain & Busby, 1999). Thus, the concept of sustainable development was introduced by the World Commission on Environment and Development via the Brundtland Reports (Brundtland,1987), and thereafter extended to tourism. As such, sustainable tourism is defined as development that cares for the present generation's needs without sacrificing the ability of the next generations to meet what they require (Curtain & Busby, 1987). Sustainable development promotes the management of all environmental resources in a way that ensures that they remain available for the next generations and minimises the use of non-renewable resources, which need to be kept at a naturally regenerative level (Curtain & Busby,1999). Various definitions of sustainable development based on different frameworks are available (Roxas, Riviera & Gutierrez, 2020). For example, it is defined as development that supports the long-lasting human need for satisfaction and quality of life (Mensah, 2019). Ivars-Baidal, Vera-Rebollo, Perles-

Ribes, Femenia-Serra and Celdrán-Bernabeu (2021) use an environmental and economic framework and argue that a sustainable city is the one living within the limitations of its nature, a society that realises the boundaries of growth and seeks other ways of growing while at the same time preserving the natural environmental stock. Tourism development that focuses on a sustainability perspective pays attention to keeping the negative effects of tourism at a minimum level while widening its benefits to the whole population (Alvarez, 2014).

For more than 20 years, sustainable tourism development has become accepted worldwide as a preferable and politically relevant approach for development in tourism (Sharpley, 2003). However, Hall (2019) proposes that the basic difficulty for the sustainable development of tourism is transforming from a growth mindset to a mentality that focuses on achieving prosperity through tourism within the environmental limits. This perspective regards both the social and environmental sides of sustainable development as essential. The benefits of sustainable initiatives and hospitality can vary from economic support (Dempsey, Bramley, Power, & Brown, 2011) to the improvement in infrastructure and facilities (Briassoulis, 2002). Nevertheless, the tourism sector should support these initiatives and companies should do their best to reduce the environmental effects of their businesses (Zolfani, Sedaghat, Maknoon, & Zavadskas, 2015). If a destination wants to succeed in sustainable tourism development, then the acts of its integral companies must be compatible with and hold up to this aim (Zolfani et al., 2015).

Indeed, being more sustainable and responsible is an enduring motto in the sector (Budeanu, Miller, Moscardo & Ooi, 2016). In general, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism are used interchangeably but they are slightly different in essence. Responsible tourism refers to actions and behaviours that individuals,

businesses and tourism destinations have with the aim of creating a sustainable tourism sector, whereas sustainable tourism is the broader goal (Mihalic, 2016). Sustainable tourism, refers to the aim to be achieved, and requires that the influence of tourism activities is kept at a minimum with the aim of maintaining environmental, social, cultural, and economic sustainability (Bhuiyan, Siwar & Ismail, 2016). These include supporting conservation activities by returning part of the earnings to the area that is protected, minimizing the negative effects of tourism on the host population, decreasing the negative impacts of tourism on customs/culture/traditions, and maximizing the economic benefits obtained by the host community because of tourism development (Dumbraveanu, 2007; Mathew, 2022).

Sustainable tourism needs to focus on education, preparation, information, and local control (Dumbraveanu, 2007; Edgell, 2016). Sustainable development is a continuing process that requires frequent checks of effects and the introduction of mandatory inhibitory and/or corrective actions when necessary (Nowacki, Kowalczyk-Anioł, Królikowska, Pstrocka-Rak, & Awedyk, 2018). This type of tourism should also sustain tourist satisfaction at a high level and make sure that tourists have a meaningful experience, also increasing their awareness regarding sustainability and encouraging responsible tourism practices amongst visitors (The United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.). Tourism companies must have a goal to implement sustainability viewpoints in their businesses if the whole destination is to follow the principles of sustainable development (Dwyer, Edwards, Mistilis, Roman & Scott, 2009; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Thus, sustainable development needs to focus on economic activities in the long run, offering fairly

divided socio-economic opportunities to all stakeholders, and making a contribution to poverty alleviation (The United Nations World Tourism Organization, n.d.).

In addition, tourism may sometimes be vulnerable to unprecedented events, crises, and unexpected changes, like the Covid- 19 pandemic, which the world has been fighting against since the beginning of 2020. Because of this pandemic, most touristic locations had to stop their operations, owing to quarantine measures, travel prohibitions, cancelled reservations and local logistics (Orîndaru et al., 2021). Therefore, to compensate for what has been lost, changes or new actions may be needed during the post-Covid era. The message of the OECD on this issue argues that rebuilding tourism is a primary concern, but a more sustainable and resilient tourism in the future is a must (OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (Covid-19), 2020). Accordingly, the development of alternative tourism forms that foster sustainability emerges as an essential concern in the current post-pandemic climate (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). Within this perspective, the development of vegan-friendly tourism destinations may fit within this urge for more sustainable tourism forms.

2.3.2 Stakeholders' involvement in tourism development and collaborative planning

For the benefits of tourism to emerge and for the negative impacts to be minimised, planning and following a long-term perspective are essential. Stakeholders should be involved at each step of successful planning strategies, both development and implementation (Beritelli, Bieger, Reinhold, & Laesser, 2015; Formica & Kothari, 2008; Komppula, 2014; Simpson, 2001). Therefore, destinations can adopt healthier arrangements through collaboration in order to develop better products (Fyall, Garrod & Wang, 2012). Collaboration has been regarded as an effective tool to

promote attempts in developing a more sustainable tourism (Graci, 2013). Inter-organisational relations can be enhanced thanks to a successful collaboration, which also ensures a greater agent participation, creates feasible solutions to issues, and eases the application of common decisions (Wondirad, Tolkach & King, 2020). A stakeholder collaborative planning approach will encourage a more widespread support for tourism initiatives (Waligo, Clarke, & Hawkins, 2013).) Collective beneficial partnering is vital to plan tourism actions (Hwang & Stuart, 2017; Murphy, 1988).

Collaboration can be formed on a voluntary base (grassroots) or with a legal entity's help, and it may span through various geographic levels like community, state, region and nation (Selin, 1999). Collaboration is viewed by Gray (1989) as a process by which all sides who perceive different angles of an issue can constructively discover their differences and look for solutions that go beyond their own bounded approach of what is possible. Collaboration can help stakeholders succeed and bring about many benefits like avoidance of future costs, ensuring political legitimacy, improving the policies' coordination, and value addition to stakeholders (Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; Chen, Huang & Bao, 2016). Beritelli et al. (2015) argue that the competitiveness and sustainability of a destination cannot succeed unless stakeholders are engaged and support tourism activities.

Therefore, participation that is informed and results in healthy partnering among various stakeholders is required (Hatipoglu, Aktan, Duzel, Kocabas & Sen, 2016; Simpson, 2001). This is not only effective for the emergence of cooperative union and solidarity, but it is also the given right of community members to be involved in tourism businesses. The tourism industry involves a variety of stakeholders and sectors, and each of these cannot work isolated (Graci, 2013).

Hence, collaboration and continual integrated planning is vital for preserving spaces that may have natural, cultural or historical values (Jamal & Stronza, 2009). UNESCO (2016) highlights that tourism stakeholders are responsible for preserving shared natural and cultural heritage and for sustainable development by aligning with proper tourism administration.

The number and composition of the stakeholders differ for various tourism contexts (Getz & Timur, 2005; Hall, 2007; Perkins, Khoo & Arcodia, 2022). Hence, it is essential to realize which stakeholders are interested in taking part and leading tourism and take their different perspectives into consideration (Dodds, 2007). These collaborating stakeholders should include local residents, governments, academicians, local and regional organizations, industry representatives and associations (Muangasame & McKercher, 2015). The United Nations World Tourism Organization separates the stakeholders of sustainable tourism development as the tourism sector, environmental support and government/host population (Turker, Alaeddinoglu & Can, 2016). Turker et al. (2016) remark that the most important responsibility in sustainable tourism development and managing the other stakeholders belongs to local authorities, since they are regarded as the most powerful stakeholders with their roles of preservation of heritage constructions and sustainable tourism planning. Indeed, Butler (2010) proposes that destinations that aim for the promotion of sustainable tourism tend to achieve more if an effective local governance exists (Chili & Xulu, 2015). In contrast, tourism enterprises are deemed to hold responsibilities for preserving heritage buildings through the renovation and restoration of their facilities (Turker et al., 2016). Local citizens are responsible for the preservation of the local culture, helping to maintain this culture for the future of their society and for a more competitive tourism activity (Turker et

al., 2016). Hatipoglu, Aktan, Duzel, Kocabas and Sen (2016) state that informed involvement of every stakeholder, including permanent residents, is an essential condition for sustainable tourism development. According to this view, residents are positioned better in perceiving what their community needs and in knowing how tourism should be improved in their area (Spencer, 2010).

As local people can provide information about the destination for planners, and they also get financial and social benefits from sustainable tourism development, so the host community is one of the main stakeholders. Richards and Hall (2000) state that if local people are not included from the first step of the tourism initiative, it would be more difficult to encourage them at a later level. Therefore, it is assumed that a higher level of involvement of the host population in planning and developing tourism is a vital precondition for sustainable tourism (Hatipoglu, Alvarez & Ertuna, 2016). The local population's involvement is defined by the extent to which community members can share their opinions, participate in an activity, program, project, decision, and policy making process (Bagul & Bahar, 2009).

The host population's participation includes social, institutional, and cultural dimensions (Gani, Awang, Samdin & Mohd, 2012). Flora (2000) suggests that the social dimension provides the context, which derives into policies in which management is instilled, institutions and their rules are created to support partnering in the management of the destination. Such an institutionalization refers to a system, including rules which govern relations between members (Cottrell, Vaske & When, 2005). Thus, the institutional dimension describes how participation is led, mediated, or reinforced by the administration (Gani et al., 2012; Obradović, Tešin, Božović & Milošević, 2021). Cultural dimensions refer to individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and

norms (Chen, Dai, Liu, Liu, Jia, 2021). These three dimensions may provide insight about the role of local involvement in sustainable tourism initiatives.

Local involvement in decision making represents an approach that helps build a sense of belonging, which is necessary for well-being in general and to encourage sustainable development (Gani et al., 2012). The involvement of local people in developing tourism activities encourages more appropriate decisions to be formulated and leads to a greater level of motivation of the locals to take part in the tourism initiative (Li, 2006). Participation of the locals will also provide tourism planners with knowledge about the probable outcome of any proposed development, the views that the local community hold and whether any fears can be alleviated by developing an appropriate management strategy (Kamata, 2022; Sonmez & Sirakaya 2002). This situation will not only create a happy and healthier community but also will encourage broader participation in civic issues in a general sense, which leads to the creation of more active and concerned residents (Wilson, 2003). In addition to these benefits to the locals, the participation of the community in the development of tourism results in an effective environmental stewardship based on indigenous, scientific and local information, economic advancement, social empowerment, the preservation of cultural heritage and the formation of interpretive experiences for tourists that are cross-culturally meaningful (Sangkakorn & Suwannarat, 2013).

Other benefits of local participation can involve the reduction in poverty in an area and the just distribution of the advantages of tourism among all members of the community (Alvarez, 2014). It can be inferred that local people who are encouraged to take part in tourism initiatives may have a chance to be employed and to earn for their lives. Alvarez (2014) examines tourism as a tool for development and she concludes that development that includes not only economic but also social

dimensions may also encourage the social and cultural advancement in a community. Focusing on the inclusion of the locals and on the engagement of the remaining stakeholders during the process of making decisions about tourism actions is favoured by a sustainability perspective (Hawkins & Mann, 2007).

However, the institutional context may be a barrier impeding the participation of the local community (Hatipoglu, Alvarez & Ertuna, 2016). As such, developing countries are exposed to severe problems of planning, strategic and operational competencies that are required to succeed in sustainable development (McCool, 2014, October 9). In many cases, when such institutional barriers exist, the host community is unable to totally take part in the development process, which leads to the lion's share of tourism revenues being taken away from the tourism region (Alvarez, 2014; Liu, 2003).

2.3.3 Local community's attitudes towards tourism development

As discussed above, the local community is an essential stakeholder and should be involved in any tourism development project. The literature also points to the need to assess the reactions, supportiveness, or attitudes of the local people towards tourism products and development actions (Gursoy, Ouyang, Nunkoo & Wei, 2019). For example, some local people may regard tourism as causing changes in the community and as alienating local citizens from their culture (Besculides, Lee & McCormick, 2002). Some of the causes that lead to a strong negative attitude of locals against tourism include traffic-related issues, littering and congestion (Andereck, Valentine, Knopf & Vogt, 2005; Bhat & Mishra, 2021).

Caliskan and Ozer (2014) also examine the attitudes of permanent residents towards tourism in Kuşadası. Based on the results of their study, women are seen as

being more positive towards tourism development in comparison to men due to increased job opportunities that they can find after tourism develops, which leads to them having a better social status in the community (Caliskan & Ozer, 2014). Their investigation also indicates demographic differences regarding the perception of environmental problems like the rate of crime, society culture, schools, recreation zones, and quality and quantity of parks. The results of the study indicate that, in the case of Kuşadası, the happiness of residents is impacted positively by factors that support family life, whereas economic conditions derived from tourism are found to be unsatisfactory in this destination (Caliskan & Ozer, 2014). In contrast, a study by Obradović and Stojanović (2021) shows that residents carry a positive attitude toward sustainable tourism development in the Graver River Gorge in Valjevo, Serbia, since tourism development is going through its first phase and unwanted tourism effects are not totally apparent. Permanent residents who were surveyed also show an interest in being involved in tourism development at this location and in taking part in decision-making (Obradović & Stojanović, 2021). Results also point out that the local population do not feel disturbed or irritated with tourism and they consider that their quality of life would be enhanced since the area would receive financial benefits (Obradović & Stojanović, 2021). Furthermore, citizens agree that tourism should conserve the environment and be well-planned, and that the satisfaction of residents should be guaranteed while community participation is being maximized (Obradović & Stojanović, 2021).

How a vegan-friendly destination can be developed aligned with the contribution of different stakeholders from both the local and non-local communities, which is the focus of this study, is a topic in need of research. In addition, the topic of what constitutes a vegan-friendly destination is a subject that requires

investigation. Since vegan tourism and vegan-friendly destinations are new subject matters that have not been sufficiently discussed in the literature, it is necessary to find examples of other types of destination developments that can guide this investigation. The literature on this issue will be reviewed next.

2.3.4 Destination development around specific themes

Different kinds of destinations that focus on specific aspects or a certain theme are being developed around the world. These usually are recognized with a label that is obtained when the destination is developed according to clearly set principles. For instance, halal tourism, which is becoming one of the fastest growing sectors of the international tourism industry (Kamin, 2019, January 1), may be shown as an example of a tourism development that needs to be based on a specific set of criteria.

2.3.4.1 Halal tourist destinations

Halal tourism is accepted as an umbrella that includes tourism products and services that are made up of halal food, halal airlines, and halal or Shariah-compliant hotels (Mansouri, 2014). Indeed, halal tourism, which has some common aspects with vegetarian/vegan tourism, has a clear connection with religious beliefs regarding consuming foods during a vacation (Abbasian, 2021). Ahmed and Akbaba (2020) define halal tourism as the type of tourism which consists of activities of Muslim or non-Muslim individuals who are tied to Sharia law, and who use only halal goods and services when staying in places other than their usual living or working environment for more than a year and/or religious purposes. Furthermore, Battour and Ismail (2016) define the halal tourism concept as a tourism product or action that is allowed for use or engagement by Muslim individuals, and which is based on

Islamic teachings. Motivations to travel for halal tourism may include religious purposes, and visitors can be both Muslim and non-Muslim. The places that are relevant to halal tourism followers include restaurants that follow certain food preparation criteria, hotels that do not offer alcohol and provide separate swimming pools and spas for men and women (Ahmed & Akbaba, 2020). Also, the destinations that are preferred are the locations where halal products and activities are offered (Ahmed & Akbaba, 2020).

When it comes to the attributes that a halal-friendly destination needs to have, these are usually according to the Islamic law, which is also known as Sharia (Battour, Battor & Bhatti 2014). The main issues concern whether halal foods are served, places are pork and alcohol-free, separate male and female spa and gym facilities exist, and praying rooms are available (Battour et al., 2014; Jafari & Scott, 2014). Stephenson (2014) has come up with a classification of halal-friendly destinations' attributes that include tangible and intangible characteristics. These encompass issues like staff uniforms that are within the Islamic accepted dress-code, human resource management that is practiced within a certain ethical understanding, marketing and promotions that adhere to the Islamic philosophy, and existence or lack of certain public facilities at the destination, such as not offering nightclub, casino and gambling services (Stephenson, 2014). Another point relates to the accommodation facilities that exclude adult television channels, as well as decorations, paintings and pictures that include nude themes (Henderson, 2010; Oktadiana, Pearce & Chon, 2016).

2.3.4.2 Cittaslow and slow food tourist destinations

Another example of well-defined destination development refers to the Cittaslow movement, which has given rise to slow tourism and has grown into an internationally recognized network. The Cittaslow movement was born in 1999 in Greve, a small town in Tuscany, Italy, under the leadership of its mayor. The aim was to create a way of life that focuses on enhancing the quality and decreasing the pace of daily living (CittaSlow International Network, 2012, January 2). Municipalities that take part in this organization aim to turn back to times that were simpler, seeking to restore a way of life that has been forgotten (Cittaslow International Network, 2012, January 2). They foster the slow and healthy passing of seasons, respect towards the health of citizens, concern about the authenticity of food and products, the return of conventional crafts and arts and protection of historical areas and monuments (CittaSlow International Network, 2012, January 2). Thanks to slow trade or slow tourism, a resistance for quick visits and trade activities is encouraged. Accordingly, a slow town is defined by its resistance to getting homogenised, its respect for local differences, and its ability to allow its residents to have a lifestyle that is quieter, healthier and more environmentally friendly (CittaSlow International Network, 2012, January 2). The attributes of a slow city consist of experiences and motivations, sustainable development, and organisational framework (Werner, Griese & Bosse, 2020).

To be part of this network, cities need to have less than 50,000 residents, while also showing environmental and infrastructural policies, facilities, and technology for the quality of the urban surroundings, production that is autochthonous, awareness and hospitality (Robinson, Heitmann & Dieke, 2011). Other criteria for inclusion encompass issues such as the recognition of the relevance

of public health, production and availability of healthy food and products, preservation and promotion of local resources, traditions, local identity and heritage, enhancement of sustainable local development, maintenance of traditional local handicrafts, support for the environmental and economic advancement of the towns (Presenza, Abbate & Micera, 2015). Cittaslow certification is assigned to cities that accept to operate in line with the goal of enhancing the quality of life of its residents and visitors, and to share experiences, good ideas and knowledge within the Cittaslow network, both nationally and internationally (Miele, 2008). The Cittaslow Charter includes 60 goals and policies, of which 25 are mandatory and of which at least 50% must be met by the towns before being admitted to the network (Hatipoglu, 2015). Another obligatory practice is to support the activities of the Slow Food movement (Article 9 of the Charter). Cittaslow is a relatively new phenomenon in Turkey, with Seferihisar in Izmir being chartered as the first Slow City in Turkey in 2009, followed by Akyaka in Muğla, Gökçeada in Çanakkale, Yenipazar in Aydın, and Taraklı in Sakarya (Hatipoglu, 2015).

In contrast to the Cittaslow example, the development of vegan-friendly destinations is not bounded by specifically set, worldwide acknowledged criteria. However, one more similar example from which we may draw information about the need for specific characteristics can be the case of slow food destinations. The slow food philosophy focuses on creating a world where foods that are good for people, health and the planet can be accessed and enjoyed by everybody, and the interconnected principles of this philosophy consist of good, clean, and fair food (Slow Food, n.d.). Promoting eco-gastronomy is the fundamental profile of the Slow Food movement (Nilsson, Svärd, Widarsson & Wirell, 2011). Preserving gastronomic customs and biological diversity, promoting the network building

among producers that are small-scale and between customers and producers, and advancing the knowledge of consumers about taste, nutrition, food and the environment are three main action fields of the Slow Food movement (Malatesta, Weiner & Yang, 2005; Parkins & Craig, 2006; Petrini, 2001). Forne and Jamal (2020, p.227) regard slow food tourism as "an ethical microtrend for the Anthropocene" connected to the guiding principles that are based on participative processes which are slow, sustainable, and democratic.

2.3.4.3 Wellness tourist destinations

Another example can be wellness tourism, which serves guests who have some unique lifestyle patterns as is the case for vegan tourism. Wellness tourism is defined as travelling with the purpose of sustaining or improving one's individual wellbeing (Global Wellness Institute, n.d.). It can also be described as regarding the sustenance of well-being as the main goal to travel, in addition to improving the well-being at destinations that offer goods and services for that goal (Smith & Kelly, 2006). Dini and Penacelli (2021) have compiled a variety of components that wellness destinations offer, including spirituality, culture, spas, hot springs, services to care for body and mind, natural environment, eno-gastronomy, medical tourism, sports and events. The motivating reasons for wellness tourists include managing, sustaining, or enhancing one's health and wellbeing. Visitors can also be motivated by the wish for prevention of diseases, healthy living, authentic experiences, stress reduction, managing poor lifestyle habits, etc. (Global Wellness Institute, n.d.). Damijanic and Šergo (2013) emphasize the push and pull factors for wellness travellers. Their research indicates that the causes to travel and income, gender and education level are related (Damijanic and Šergo, 2013). The scholars (Damijanic

and Šergo, 2013) highlight how wellness travellers are specifically attracted to wellness destinations that are famous for their cultural and natural resources. Local flora and fauna, in addition to well-known local places, are some of the factors that initially draw tourists' attention to visit a destination and make them come back (Lim, Kim, & Lee,2016). Lee, Lee, and Cheng (2019) point out to a variety of wellness activities and choices, which consist of intellectual wellness opportunities, such as educational seminars, spiritual wellness, natural medicine, nutritional and dietary options, that hotels ought to serve to certain tourist groups.

The adjectives that help to describe wellness activities in these destinations can be listed as proactive, non-invasive, voluntary, and non-medical (Global Wellness Institute, 2018, November). Wellness visitors can be separated into two groups as primary wellness traveller, who is mainly motivated by wellness, and secondary wellness traveller, who aims to sustain wellness while travelling and taking part in wellness experiences throughout a business or a leisure trip (Global Wellness Institute, n.d.). Moreover, each wellness destination has its unique attributes that attract travellers like local culture, food, natural assets, etc., to be promoted and marketed as an attractive tourism product.

2.3.4.4 Food-based destination development

Another stream of research that may provide some insights into the development of a vegan-friendly tourist destination is that of gastronomy or food-based destination development. Indeed, gastronomy may contribute to the identity and branding of certain destinations (Suna & Alvarez, 2021). As such, a destination development that is focused on gastronomy should not only include high quality restaurants and food production centres but should also highlight cultural food-related aspects of their

identity (Suna & Alvarez, 2021; Lai, Khoo-Lattimore & Wang, 2018). Local foods have a potential to make destinations more competitive and facilitate sustainable tourism by increasing the focus of development on local food and resources (Andersson, Mossberg, & Therkelsen, 2017; Okumus, Okumus, & McKercher, 2007). Andersson et al. (2017) emphasize that local food can provide economic benefits in tourism, reduce food miles as an environmental opportunity, and create positive influences for the sense of cultural belonging of residents. In summary, local food can enhance the financial, socio-cultural, and environmental sustainability of the destination (Stalmirska, 2021).

Food-based or gastronomic tourism attracts tourists to the place not only because of its restaurants, but also its local markets or festivals (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2019). Food-based destination development provides opportunities for tourists to participate in festivals, cooking and tasting events, to visit gastronomy museums, congresses and fairs, all of which constitute attractive aspects of the destination (Ryu & Jang, 2006; Tekeli & Kırıcı Tekeli, 2020). Therefore, food-based destination development is generally intrinsically inter-related to event management, as festivals and other activities are organized to promote local gastronomy and increase awareness about local food products (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2019). Such destination development practices that are based on food-related aspects of the place can therefore provide an example for vegan-friendly destinations concerning the use of events to create awareness.

Using the above examples of development of a destination based on specific themes as a foundation, this research aims to analyse the example of the development of a vegan-friendly destination. Specific initiatives related to veganism and vegan/vegetarian destination development are discussed next.

2.3.5 Vegan/vegetarian-friendly destination development

The vegan-friendly destination development based on the philosophy of sustainable tourism development and veganism will be explained in this section. The first self-declared vegan-friendly city was Barcelona in 2016 (Barcelona City Tour, 2016, November 2), followed by Didim, Turkey, in 2017 (Daily Sabah, 2017, April 19). The self-declaration of Barcelona as a "veg-friendly, friend of vegan and vegetarian culture" came into existence after one left-wing party of the city proposed the idea to the Municipality (Jones, 2016, March 23). The initiative was intended to produce a vegan guide of Barcelona and to promote veganism/vegetarianism by setting up an area designed for vegan or vegetarian businesses (Jones, 2016, March 23). The proposal stated that the title veggie-friendly would consist of some tangible footsteps to foster vegan tourism, in addition to other schemes to motivate permanent citizens to accept a meatless diet, with the aim of slowing down climate change and enhancing residents' health (Jones, 2016, March 23). As part of this idea, a Meat Free Mondays campaign was planned (Jones, 2016, March 23). In addition, Barcelona boasts a variety of vegan restaurants, nightlife, adventure, shopping alternatives and accommodation options that can be aligned with the needs of vegan customers (Veggies Abroad, 2022, November 7). The vegan-friendly city initiative (Jones, 2016, March 23; Sanz Planas, 2018) was launched in 2017 through a Veggie World event that attracted 5,000 visitors and 70 fair stands (Veggie World, 2018 March as cited in Sanz Planas, 2018). This image of Barcelona promoted via the event can be helpful in increasing the attractiveness of Spain as a vegan hotspot.

Another example of vegan/vegetarian-friendly destination development is the case of Turin, dubbed as the first vegetarian city in Italy (Forster, 2016, December 11). This initiative consists of the creation of over 30 restaurants and shops that offer

vegan and vegetarian food, the highest amount in Italy for a city the size of Turin (Forster, 2016, December 11). A list of vegan-friendly restaurants is offered by the official tourism site of the city (L'Agenzia di Viaggi, 2017, July). Moreover, the progression of the area as one of the best locations in Italy for vegans is emphasised (Sanz Planas, 2018; Forster, 2016, December 11). Additionally, stakeholders involved in this initiative highlight the environmental benefits of transitioning to vegetarian-based gastronomy with lower meat consumption (Forster, 2016, December 11). Vegetarian and vegan options are currently easily found in the city, with most bars supporting soya milk macchiatos and cappuccinos, and vegan pastries being found throughout (Forster, 2016, December 11).

In addition to these relatively popular locations, some insights can be provided about other international destinations with regards to their vegan friendliness and touristic attractiveness. For example, according to HappyCow, London was ranked as the most vegan-friendly city exceeding 180 vegan restaurants (McKeever, 2019, December 2). Furthermore, 19 organic health shops and 48 supplement stores complement the offerings for vegans and vegetarians around the city (Dodhiya, 2021, January 13). Another example of a vegan friendly city is Portland in the US (Butler, 2019). The city held in 2019 its 15th annual Vegfest, with a program that included motivational speakers, cooking shows, documentaries and films related to health, food sampling, and availability of vegan clothes and cookbooks for purchase (Butler, 2019).

In this study, vegan-friendly destination development is regarded as a part of sustainable tourism development as it also focuses on environmental protection, as well as social and economic inclusivity. There is no formal network or association to arrange activities related to vegan tourism and to develop destinations based on

specific requirements, in contrast to the Cittaslow model. There have been attempts in different locations to encourage vegan shops, restaurants, etc. However, planning a whole destination based on the needs of vegan tourists requires dedication, knowledge, expertise, capital, and so on. Vegan- friendliness of a specific destination may be dependent on various features. For example, the HappyCow app includes a list of the top 10 most vegan-friendly cities (HappyCow, 2022, November) internationally based on the number of vegan restaurants in a 5-mile radius, the number of restaurants that offer vegan/vegetarian/vegan options in the same 5-mile radius, and the impression of the list authors of the general vegan-friendliness of the destination (HappyCow, 2018, July 3).

Although there may not be a shared code to declare a place as vegan-friendly, which is one of the gaps that this study aims to address, and to assess its suitability for vegan-friendly destination development, some aspects specific to a vegan tourism and tourist can be observed. According to Oxford (2019, April 23), vegan tourism consists of designing packages that fit the needs, ideologies, and preferences of a vegan traveller. These include the food offered, the ethical choices made and the adherence to the vegan movement phenomenon (Oxford, 2019, April 23). Vegan travel as a niche tourism type is becoming larger and is being connected to responsible travel (Oxford, 2019, April 23). Thus, although most cities have a variety of options to serve vegan tourists, there is a need to expand these services, including lodges and food alternatives, in tourist destinations (Oxford, 2019, April 23).

Therefore, this research investigates how a vegan -friendly destination can be developed in a potential area. For this purpose, the case of Didim, Turkey, which declared itself vegan-friendly in 2017 (Altaş, 2017; Tiraj, 2021, April 1) is examined, as explained in the methodology section in chapter 4.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

3.1 Research questions

The research carried out by examining the case of Didim, Turkey aims to answer the following questions:

- What makes a vegan-friendly destination?
- How is a vegan-friendly destination developed?

3.2 Conceptual model

Although different cities have tried to combine a vegan-friendly city image with other different features, it is not possible to find a specific source or list that covers the requirements or fundamental aspects that an existing or a potential vegan-friendly destination needs to own. Due to this fact, this study aims to examine how the development of a vegan-friendly destination may take place, with the aim to better comprehend the topic. The main areas of exploration are based, in line with the above research questions, on the aspects of a vegan-friendly destination and its development process based on the literature, as explained in chapter 2.

The conceptual model below (refer to Figure 1) is accordingly developed to illustrate the different aspects of the development of a vegan-friendly tourist destination. The first part of the model focuses on identifying the various features of a vegan-friendly destination. As stated before, in the literature, neither the aspects of a vegan-friendly destination nor a universal definition of such tourism or destination have been determined. In order to understand what aspects a vegan-friendly destination should include, the traits of veganism as a lifestyle including

consumption of food, clothing, entertainment, transportation and other products and services (Christoper et al., 2018; Lindquist, 2013; Miridul, 2021), were taken into account. In addition, examples pertaining to the development of destinations based on specific concepts, such as halal destinations (Stephenson, 2014) or slow food destinations (Slow Food, n.d.) are considered. Consequently, these aspects of a vegan-friendly destination are initially defined as including the availability of specific food and cuisine, availability of restaurants serving vegan food, provision of certain services, like transportation and entertainment opportunities that are free of animal exploitation, facilities like hotels, local shops, offering vegan-friendly options. Furthermore, consistent with the examples of halal (Abbasian, 2021), Cittaslow (Cittaslow International Network, 2012, January 2), and wellness destinations (Smith & Kelly, 2006) that promote values and philosophy consistent with a given lifestyle, the promotion of culture and traditions that fit within the vegan philosophy is also included in the conceptual model as an aspect of a vegan-friendly destination.

The second part relates to how a vegan-friendly destination is developed based on what has been done, who has been involved. The literature on sustainable destination development gives some indication of the most important issues for the development of a vegan-friendly destination. Based on the sustainable destination development literature, effective local governance (Chili & Xulu, 2015), and having various stakeholders involved in this developmental initiative (Hatipoglu, Aktan, Duzel, Kocabas and Sen, 2016) are regarded as important areas. In addition, the example of other cities, such as Barcelona, who tried to support their identity as vegan friendly via specific activities and events, are taken into consideration (Sanz Planas, 2018). In line with the existing literature, the development of a vegan-

friendly destination is theorized to include issues related to the stakeholders involved and their roles, the process used to implement this development and the supporting activities and events carried out as part of this development.

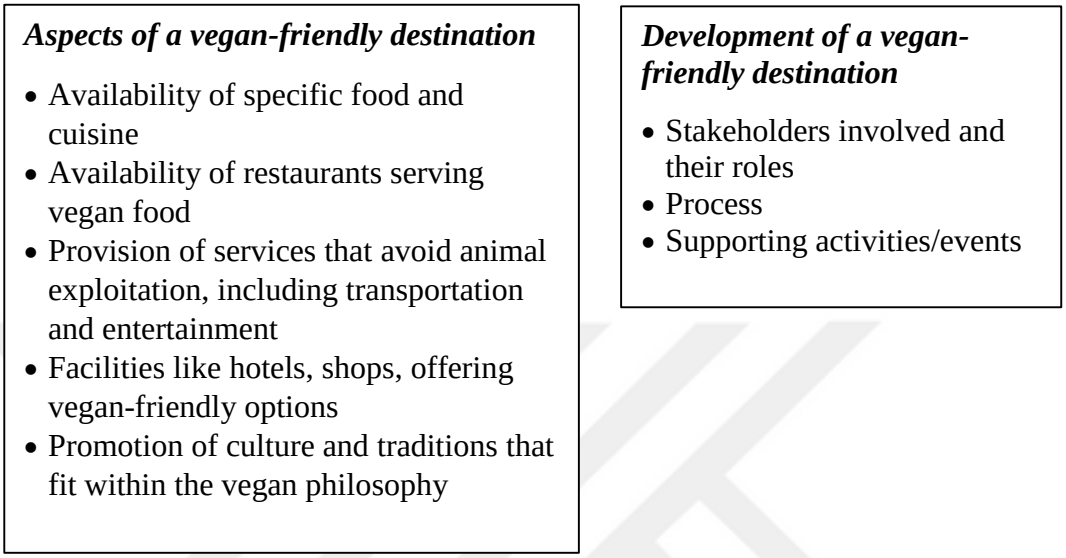


Figure 1. Conceptual model

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

This study aims to explore the development of a vegan-friendly destination, taking into consideration the case of Didim, Turkey. For this purpose and based on the conceptual model explained before, the study investigates what makes a vegan-friendly destination and how a vegan-friendly destination is developed.

Although vegan tourism is becoming popular worldwide, it is not very well-known in Turkey. Moreover, there are few studies that have been conducted on this topic. Therefore, this study fills the research gaps by conducting a qualitative study that helps the researcher to understand the phenomenon under scrutiny and come up with guiding answers for upcoming works and projects.

4.2 Didim as a case study

Didim is a town in the Aydın province, in the Aegean Sea peninsula. In previous historical times, Didim and Milet were linked by a sacred way that was occupied with sculptures (Altaş, 2017). Didim is an international touristic hub with its unique historical statues, ruins and coastal areas (Altaş, 2017). It is one of the few regions in the world that is beneficial for asthma patients because of its geographical location and low moisture (Altaş, 2017). Akbuk, Yalikoy, Akköy and Yeniköy, are neighbouring rural settlements around Didim (Nudrali, 2007). The city's tourism growth has been fuelled by its access to metropolitan Izmir and its closeness to Izmir Adnan Menderes Airport, which is 165 km away, and to Bodrum-Gulluk Airport, which is 87 km away from the town (Nudrali, 2007). In addition to these attractive

aspects of Didim, available vegan or vegan-friendly eating alternatives are additional benefits of the place. Not only in Didim, but in the whole Aegean region, a Mediterranean diet that involves vegetables and olive oil- based meals is dominant (Batu & Batu, 2018). Olives and countless kinds of herbs are important elements in Aegean cuisine (Batu & Batu, 2018). The availability of these options in the region favours vegan gastronomy, while these foods may also be attractive to non-vegan travellers. As eating is one of the inevitable components of a vacation, the experience that is provided through gastronomy increases the attractiveness of the destination (Crotts & Kivela, 2006). Additionally, gastronomy can become a marketing tool helping promote a destination (Kansanen, 2013).

Didim has chosen to act on its potential and declare itself as vegan-friendly, also pursuing initiatives and instituting procedures during the municipality that are in accordance with the vegan philosophy (Tiraj, 2021, April 1). Following an official declaration of vegan-friendliness (Altaş, 2017), the first Vegfest in Turkey was held in 2017 (Aydın Şafak, 2018, February 15). Thus, Didim was chosen as the case for this study since it may provide some insights about the process of development of a vegan friendly destination and the aspects of the destination that need to be taken into account. Additionally, the case of Didim may give relevant information that can be used to promote the development of vegan tourism in other destinations in Turkey, such as Seferihisar in Izmir, which is seen as an innovative destination since it became the first Cittaslow city in Turkey (Altaş, 2017).

4.3 Sampling methodology and data collection

The researcher first examined the available information related to Didim and the initiative to declare the city as a vegan-friendly destination. For this purposes,

secondary sources of information, including academic articles from un/published theses, book chapters, journal articles, etc, some web sites like those of The Vegan Society, Happycow, Veggie Hotels, V-label, Veganuary, and news bulletins from newspaper like the Guardian, New York Times, Independent, Daily News, Hürriyet Daily, were examined.

Subsequently, interviews from key stakeholders were conducted to obtain more detailed information that could be garnered via secondary sources. Since the questions demand the contribution of all stakeholders in the community, semi-structured interviews were conducted not only with local authorities, but also non-governmental organisations, restaurants, hotels and other tourism businesses, such as shops. A combination of judgmental and snowball sampling was used by accessing first those stakeholders that have been involved in the Didim vegan-friendly destination development initiative, including interested parties from the municipality and non-governmental organisations that are knowledgeable of the topic because of their professional involvement on what has been done in the area. These were met online. The interviewees were asked to refer to other individuals who could provide further insights, so that snowball sampling was also employed.

To increase the amount of feedback obtained, the researcher travelled to Didim in July 2022 and spent 3 days doing research on site, collecting data via both observation and interviews with residents and tourism businesses (refer to Table 1 for a complete list of respondents). Therefore, the lifestyle of the Didim residents, the issues concerning local management, business actors, tourism components, and the overall perception about the vegan-friendly initiative and the Vegfest were observed by visiting local shops, restaurants, taking photos to see the tourists' flow, the facilities, and their vegan-friendly approaches.

Table 1. List of Interview Respondents

Participant	**Online/Face-to-face**	**Stakeholder Roles**	**Residence**
Participant 1	Online	Volunteer	Out of Didim
Participant 2	Online	Animal rights activist, Vegfest speaker and workshop leader	Out of Didim
Participant 3	Online	Leader of tourism association and a stakeholder of the organizing committee	Didim
Participant 4	Online	Vegfest workshop leader	Out of Didim
Participant 5	Online	Vegan lawyer, animal rights activist, and Vegfest stakeholder	Out of Didim
Participant 6	Online	Vegan lawyer, animal rights activist, and Vegfest stakeholder	Out of Didim
Participant 7	Online	Leader of an animal rights association, vegan lawyer, animal rights activist, and Vegfest stakeholder	Out of Didim
Participant 8	Online	Leader of vegan association and organizer of Vegfest	Out of Didim
Participant 9	Online	Participant in the Vegfest	Out of Didim
Participant 10	Online and face-to-face	Owner of hotel, leader of tourism association and member of the Didim City Council	Didim
Participant 11	Face-to-face	Hotel employee Didim resident	Didim
Participant 12	Face-to-face	Didim resident	Didim
Participant 13	Face-to-face	Souvenir seller	Didim
Participant 14	Face-to-face	Restaurant employee and stakeholder of Vegfest	Didim
Participant 15	Face-to-face	Restaurant employee and Didim resident	Didim
Participant 16	Face-to-face	Leader of hotel and tourism trade association	Didim

With the help of prior contacts, some initial on-site interviews were set-up, while others were arranged upon arrival. Meanwhile, the general outlook of Didim, tourists' profile and attractions were observed during the on-site visit. The first 9 interviews between February and April were online whereas 5 more interviews were completed face-to-face in Didim. One of the respondents was interviewed both online and in the area. The interviews lasted between 15 to 60 minutes depending on the background and the availability of the respondent.

In addition, efforts were made to reach respondents at the destination that have not been directly involved in the vegan-friendly destination development, to ensure that different points of view are obtained. To make sure that data collected through interviews is both reliable and representative, different actors from a variety of social groups, like the tourism sector (hotels, restaurants, cafes), locals, voluntary associations and local societies were selected. The semi-structured interviews were carried out in Turkish (see Appendix A for a copy of the interview guideline). Permission for recording the meetings was asked and when obtained the interview was recorded; otherwise, notes were taken.

4.4 Data analysis

The data thus collected and transcribed was analysed through the use of both content analysis and ethnographic summary. First content analysis was used to extract the themes, which were then categorised to get a better idea about the main issues relevant to this case. The analysis of the transcripts was made with the help of MAXQDA version 20 program. In addition, following a content analysis methodology, the frequencies of the themes are also taken into consideration to understand the relative importance of the various topics. Thus, the content analysis provides a detailed examination of the ideas/themes mentioned by the participants,

their frequencies, and their division into relevant categories based on similarities and mutuality.

The data obtained was also analysed using ethnographic summary, which is the collection of ideas, feedback, and quotations both from the interviews in a more narrative way. This summary aims to explore further details, considering the specific context, in order to answer the two questions on which this study is based; that is, the development of a vegan-friendly destination and the aspects that make such a place.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study applies qualitative inductive research to analyse the case of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination. In this chapter, the general case of Didim is first discussed, followed by the findings from the content analysis and those derived from the ethnographic summary.

5.1 Initial description of the case

The initiative to establish Didim as vegan friendly was initiated by the municipality during a meeting with Hüseyin Baraner, a tourism professional. From the early stages, the municipality cooperated with the Didim Tourism Infrastructure Association (DITAB), the Tourism Research Association (ITURAD), and The Turkish Vegan Society (Altas, 2017; Erdal, 2016). Thanks to the online conversations made with Didim associations, the researcher learnt that Hüseyin Baraner offered the idea that Didim's identity can fit within the vegan-friendly destination concepts; this opinion was thought to be based on his observations of current practices abroad and existing trends, like the increasing popularity of veganism in Germany. The mayor welcomed this suggestion. After this meeting, DITAB members got in contact with Emin Çapa, an economist and a presenter, who was active in the Turkish Vegan Society (TVD) back then. He used his network and helped DITAB to meet with TVD to discuss and develop this idea. Although the development of Didim as vegan-friendly was implemented by these main stakeholders, locals including hotel owners, restaurant employees, coffee shop owners etc. and voluntary associations also played a role, especially in the

organization of the vegan-friendly festival, which is the most visible output of this developmental initiative, and in facilitating advertising and promotion of the initiative.

The establishment of Didim as a vegan-friendly city, the proposal of regulations for the area that benefit vegan individuals, the increased awareness of local officials and the growing attractiveness of Didim for vegan tourists are considered benefits of this initiative (Altaş, 2017). As mentioned in the local news, the Didim Municipality started to progress towards a more animal-friendly state by pursuing initiatives like ceasing the use of fireworks and banning phaetons in the district (Tiraj, 2021, April 1). In addition, the Didim municipality made a decision to protect the animals in its area, instituting procedures that avoid sending animals to laboratories and becoming the first animal testing-free municipality in Turkey (Tiraj, 2021, April 1).

Another important aspect of the initiative to become vegan-friendly is the establishment of a vegan festival in Didim. The first Vegfest in Turkey, held in 2017, has been instrumental to promote the destination as a culturally rich, vegan-friendly place and to increase its visibility and attractiveness (Hurriyet, 2016, August 3). The organisers of this event were inspired by Barcelona's example (Hurriyet, 2016, August 3). An agreement between the Turkish Vegan and Vegetarians Association and the Municipality was made, while the Didim Tourism Infrastructure Association (DITAB) and the Tourism Research Association (ITURAD) also collaborated in the organisation of this event (Altaş, 2017; Erdal, 2016, August 3).

The first vegan festival in Didim was held in April 2017 around the Apollo Temple, while a festival street was also established (Aydın Şafak, 2018, February 15). Some entertainment activities, live presentations of cooks and sport contents

were offered. Activities for the children were also included to encourage their interest in the environment, their love of animals and their awareness of a healthy lifestyle (NTV, 2017, April 18). The event was offered free of charge to all (Vegan Gazete, 2020, January 28). It was aiming to help the area to take its first steps to becoming a vegan destination. The event could not be organized in 2020 due to the pandemic. In 2021, the festival took place online as part of the International Istanbul Vegfest, and was resumed as an on-site activity in Kadıköy in 2022; thus the last Vegfest to be organized in Didim was held in 2019.

More detailed information about the initiative and other activities that were carried out as part of the Didim vegan-friendly destination initiative were obtained via the analysis of the data derived from the interviews. This is discussed in the following sections.

5.2 Content analysis findings and discussion

Content analysis is conducted with the purpose of identifying the themes that emerged from what was mentioned throughout the interviews, in addition to the frequencies of these themes. This analysis helped the researcher to code interviewees' answers into the list of themes.

5.2.1 Themes and categories

Based on the frequencies of the categories and themes, it can be inferred (refer to Appendix B) that the most highlighted categories consecutively in order of importance are: 'positive impacts of Vegfest', 'aspects of a vegan-friendly destination', 'process of developing a vegan-friendly destination', 'stakeholder involvement and stakeholder roles in the festival', 'collaborative decision-making in

the festival', 'feedback and suggestions about Vegfest', 'tourism potential of Didim', 'availability of vegan-friendly services (restaurants, hotels…)', ' weaknesses and suggestions about Didim's vegan-friendly initiative', ' tourism pull factors', 'tourists' profile', and 'marketing of Didim as vegan-friendly'. These categories have been frequently touched upon by participants, which indicates their significance to answer the research questions. For example, the first most mentioned category is 'positive impacts of Vegfest', and this category is mentioned regarding the contribution of the vegan-friendly festival to the local economy and the community, and its ability to create awareness about veganism, as well as help shape the vegan-friendly identity of Didim. These may not be directly related to the required aspects of a vegan-friendly destination or the development process. However, these aforementioned categories indicate that Vegfest, which is organized to raise awareness about a vegan-friendly lifestyle and to promote Didim, is an essential component of Didim's vegan-friendly identity with its positive impacts on strengthening Didim as a destination.

Another very frequently mentioned category, 'aspects of a vegan-friendly destination', is vital in answering one of our two research questions. In this category, participants generally give their opinions about the appropriateness of Didim's local cuisine to the vegan-friendly identity, the needs of vegan visitors, the abolition of animal exploitation, social and natural aspects of Didim, etc. Among these, respondents mostly remark on the suitability of Didim's cuisine for veganism, which shows that a suitable cuisine may matter for a destination to develop as vegan friendly. In addition to cuisine, other aspects of a vegan-friendly destination like animal right issues, the uniqueness of Didim as vegan-friendly, natural, and social life aspects of the area, etc., are mentioned. For example, addressing the needs of

vegans as an aspect of a vegan-friendly destination is usually mentioned and has a great significance because it proves how ready and applicable a destination is to integrate with the vegan philosophy.

In addition to ‘positive aspects of Vegfest’ and ‘aspects of a vegan-friendly destination’ as most highlighted categories, ‘process of developing a vegan-friendly destination’ is another category that covers the opinions of participants about the effectiveness of the process, the benefits obtained, and the impact of specific aspects of the initiative, like educational activities, festival organization, etc. In addition, the stakeholders involved in the process, the decisions taken after agreeing upon the vegan-friendly initiative, etc., are mentioned. In this category, most participants talked about the educational activities and research like workshops in the festivals, trainings to teach the local community about vegan-friendly services. As one of the most highlighted items in the research, we can infer that the integration of such practices into a city’s identity has an importance to develop it as vegan-friendly, following Didim’s case. Also, ‘collaborative decision-making in the festival’, ‘feedback and suggestions about Vegfest’, ‘tourism potential of Didim’, ‘availability of vegan-friendly services (restaurants, hotels…)’, and ‘weaknesses and suggestions about Didim’s vegan-friendly initiative’ have been commented under this category, indicating their significance. For instance, including a variety of actors in the development process is regarded as important by most respondents, as is the availability of vegan options at the festival.

On the other hand, ‘tourism pull factors’, ‘tourists’ profile’ and ‘marketing of Didim as vegan-friendly’ are the least frequently mentioned categories, which indicates that these are not so relevant when developing a vegan-friendly destination.

However, the lack of knowledge or interest of respondents about these points may also have affected their being less mentioned during the interviews.

The most repeated items include ‘social awareness about veganism has risen thanks to Vegfest’ and ‘the overall impact of Vegfest has been good’. This is followed by other themes related to what makes a vegan friendly destination, such as ‘Didim’s cuisine as an aspect of vegan-friendliness’, ‘addressing the needs of vegans’, ‘abolishing/reducing animal exploitation’, ‘social-life aspects of Didim as a suitable vegan-friendly city’, ‘Didim’s internal (individual) characteristics’, ‘Didim’s natural aspects to be vegan-friendly’, and ‘Didim is not special regarding vegan-friendliness’, ‘protection of animal rights and freedoms’, and ‘Didim as animal-friendly’. These show which aspects of the initiative are considered most important by the respondents. For example, the most repeated item about social awareness points out that Vegfest has been influential in creating consciousness about veganism among residents of Didim.

Other themes having high frequencies mention the existence of collaboration while preparing for the festival and taking opinions of possible festival participants. Another frequently repeated item refers to the ‘individual roles in the Vegfest and vegan-friendly initiative’. This theme highlights the involvement of different stakeholders like Didim Turizm Altyapı Hizmet Birliği (DİTAB), animal rights associations, volunteers, and tourism professionals.

When it comes to the availability of vegan-friendly services, the most highlighted themes refer to the un/availability of vegan options. Regarding the frequencies of tourism pull factors as one of the highlighted phenomena, natural pull factors, highlighting the position of Altınkum area for sea and sun tourism and the impact of good weather conditions in Didim for tourism are the most mentioned

themes. Also, another category that came up during the research refers to ‘educational activities and research.’ As such, some respondents mention research carried out to learn more about vegan lifestyle and other aspects that should be integrated into a vegan-friendly destination development process. Another theme, ‘addressing the needs of vegans’, refers to the awareness level of both public and private actors to provide services for vegan and vegetarian visitors. This is also an aspect that a vegan-friendly destination should have because if the needs of vegans are known to the local community, it is easier to manage service-related practices, satisfy guests and strengthen the place’s vegan-friendly identity.

‘Integrating stakeholders’ refers to who was involved in the initiative and the organization of the Vegfest. Also, the theme about residents’ training is mentioned rarely. Some participants from voluntary organizations remark on the limited familiarity of locals about a vegan lifestyle. Only one participant from the organizing committee of a local association mentions that a detailed training program for locals to make them aware of veganism, the requirements of the festival, etc., was provided. Similarly, not many positive comments are obtained related to the theme ‘activities around vegan friendly concept’, and those who mention this issue defend the idea that not many activities in addition to Vegfest were organized to complement the vegan-friendly initiative.

A complete list of themes and their frequencies, as well as the categories in which they are included can be seen in Appendix B.

5.2.2 Discussion on aggregated dimensions

Following the identification of themes and their categorization, aggregated dimensions are obtained. Three main aggregated dimensions are identified:

‘Awareness, attitudes, and expectations’, ‘Becoming a vegan-friendly destination’ and ‘Stakeholder’s collaboration in sustainable development’. These are discussed below and also shown in Appendix C.

5.2.2.1 Awareness, attitudes, and expectations

When identifying the aggregated dimensions, the first aspect that comes up is the way in which Didim’s initiative to become a vegan-friendly destination has led to increased awareness and a change in attitude. This also has brought forth certain expectations related to what it means for a destination to be vegan friendly.

In Didim, people, in general, are aware of what a vegan lifestyle is all about in its most basic sense, and this may be a consequence of the vegan-friendly initiative. For example, P3 mentions that many women among the residents accepted veganism as their lifestyle and modified their eating habits from vegetarianism into veganism. Also, some respondents state that “Didim is known for veganism.” (P10).

Newspaper writings, articles and magazine news are available about Didim as the only example of a vegan-friendly city that organizes a festival with this concept in Turkey. However, during the on-site observation, the researcher understood that although generally local people know that a vegan festival is held, they are not totally aware of the vegan-friendly identity of their hometown.

The festival as an initiative of the municipality is constantly mentioned by the respondents, who state that the festival was marketed thanks to advertising tools near the festival venue and to social media channels. During the interviews respondents comment on the subject of how people learnt about the vegan-friendly initiative of Didim and the Vegfest. P1, a volunteer not living in Didim, for example, mentions that she was aware of this process since the beginning thanks to social media. About

this awareness, P10, a hotelier, says: “Especially, people from abroad come to the area consciously”.

Nevertheless, some of the local people mention that they were not initially aware of the festival, such as P12, a preschool teacher, a Didim resident and a visitor of Vegfest 2022, who was not in Didim when the initial festivals were held. Also, P14, an accountant at a restaurant, claims not to know that Didim was declared vegan-friendly in 2017, although she was aware that the festival has been held for three years.

Moreover, Didim positions itself as the first vegan-friendly destination in Turkey and animal testing- free municipality. This also seems to impact the expectations of stakeholders in terms of the number of vegan-friendly restaurants, hotels, shops, and facilities. For instance, P11 mentions that she could not find vegan dairy alternatives in any supermarket. Nevertheless, in support of these expectations, the availability of locally produced natural products may be mentioned. The on-site observation shows the availability of food products from the Aegean region, such as dried Aydın figs, Datça almonds, chickpeas, and olive oil that are locally produced and naturally vegan, and which are offered to customers in local shops, restaurants, hotels and at common market chains. Some local products are also produced especially for vegan visitors coming to Vegfest and sold at local hotels. In support, P10 mentions that he sells locally sourced olive oil to his hotel customers. However, such examples are limited and Didim’s transformation after the implementation of the vegan-friendly initiative may not meet all the stakeholders’ expectations. Yet, some of the respondents comment on the rate of growth of veganism, which has become more visible in Didim.

In terms of attitude change, the research points to the differences among individuals depending on their role and engagement with Didim. For example, P2, an animal rights activist comments: “I think nothing really has changed. The only change after the festival is the signing of the agreement with the Deneye Hayır Derneği to be an animal testing-free municipality.” On the other hand, P3, who was part of the vegan –friendly initiative organising committee is more positive: “We have become an animal-friendly city. I think it is one of the most important consequences of this initiative.” Also, P5 says:

> I think that even the fact that the municipality has adopted the word vegan is a big step, and this was the first example in Turkey. Also, there were non-vegan products at the festival area in the first years because there were also tables/stands prepared by the local people. Not much or a big awareness existed, but it improved in time.

5.2.2.2 Becoming a vegan-friendly destination

Although there is a generally accepted definition of veganism formulated by the Vegan Society, this does not extend to all aspects of a destination. Some of these requirements are mentioned by the respondents during the interviews, and they come out as an important aggregated dimension of this research. Thus, a vegan friendly destination is suggested as that which provides sufficient vegan alternatives in terms of food and shopping, facilities, activities, and leisure, etc. Didim in this sense is still mentioned as lacking in many aspects, such as consumption based on pre-packaged (non-local) goods transported from outside Didim. Other remaining non-vegan practices include animal-sourced elements, including horse racing events that are accepted as a part of the culture, and the use of fireworks beyond the municipality’s control.

Additionally, the research also underlines the fact that actions around the city's vegan-friendliness and vegan tourism are very limited. For example, P11 explains that other than the festival organisation no other action has been carried out to promote veganism and facilitate the lives of vegan tourists. In addition, the on-site visit determines that there are no specific routes, applications, guidelines or maps designed for vegan visitors. Nevertheless, some restaurants and hotels have added vegan options into their portfolio and menus. Also, some respondents mention some initiatives, such as a food chain and restaurant being in the process of eliminating goat milk and producing vegan ice-cream. This process is explained as being due to the vegan-friendly initiative and as being important in terms of marketing effort for the place. Some respondents also mention the fact that educational activities were made for the local people as part of the initiative and that this helped them understand what is and is not vegan.

The promotional materials/ communications concerning Didim as a vegan tourism destinations were also examined. Additionally, some of the respondents gave suggestions to better promote Didim as a vegan-friendly destination. According to P1, a volunteer and a participant out of Didim: "Applications, guides, websites, and maps can be used to identify vegan-friendly locations." These can be used as effective tools to raise awareness of individuals about vegan-friendly services in Didim and to facilitate the experience of vegan visitors. Also, another suggestion is received from P4, a workshop leader at Vegfest 2019 and a vegan activist: "The fest speeches can be more productive if they can be accessed by different groups at the festival area, which means that the purpose of the festival can be better met."

5.2.2.3 Stakeholders collaboration in sustainable development

This aggregated dimension stresses the notion that different actors behave collaboratively for the development of Didim as a sustainable and vegan-friendly destination. For example, P4 mentions that voluntary organisations from different cities, student clubs and initiatives collaborated with the municipality. Also, the support of universities and societies is touched upon by P3. Nevertheless, such collaboration seems to have decreased over time, and the last festival in 2022 was organized with the only contribution of the municipality, as opposed to previous years where other associations had been involved.

The issues that are part of the aggregated dimensions are discussed in more detail in the next section, and ethnographic summary techniques are used to support the findings.

5.3 Ethnographic summary findings and discussion

Ethnographic summary is used to describe the results obtained, supporting the findings with relevant quotations. The findings are discussed in terms of specific topics that came up during the interviews.

5.3.1 Factors that support or hinder Didim as a vegan-friendly destination

Didim is a tourist destination beyond its identity as vegan-friendly. Many of its characteristics are mentioned as helping Didim to position itself as a preferred holiday and visiting spot. In this sense, both natural and cultural resources are mentioned by the respondents during the interviews. For example, P16 cites the potential for windsurf, while other respondents mention the attractiveness of its sea and beaches.

Cultural resources are also brought up. “Didim has a mythological history and is an old Greek village”, says P10. Similarly, P1 remarks: “Didim has been a city of culture for me.” The Apollon Temple is also mentioned as an important pull factor for tourists to visit Didim. In addition to the temple, also Yoran Mübadele Anı ve Kültür Evi are also some of the other available attractions, which draw considerable attention from visitors, especially history and culture enthusiasts (see Figure 2). In this sense, the Apollon Temple, with its historic value and as the location where the first vegan festival was held, helped raise the reputation of Didim.



Figure 2. Apollon Temple Didim (left) and the Mübadele Anı ve Kültür Evi (right). Source: Pictures taken by Ceren İlayda Başol

Other attributes of the destination are also mentioned as supporting its character as a vegan-friendly destination. For example, P10 says: “It is an Aegean town, very rich regarding vegetables. People from 65 countries reside. It is one of the fastest developing regions of the Aegean Region. Its weather is very good.” Moreover, the geography and climate of Didim are believed to make it easier to cultivate plant-based foods and to attract potential tourists. P4 says: “The fact that it is located on the Aegean Sea, food culture is very suitable.” Other respondents

discuss the place's gastronomy and lifestyle. For example, P1: "The fact that Didim represents itself as vegan-friendly is very suitable for its resources. Lifestyle, gastronomy, eating styles, and suitability for slow living."

The on-site visit provided the chance to see some food and plant varieties that Didim could market and promote. However, instead of acting locally, the offerings are standardised, and similar products are sold mostly. This is also counter to sustainability as not all ingredients and products are locally sourced, but they are transported from other places, which adds to the degradation of natural resources. P10 mentions the popularity and significance of figs and olives in Didim. Also, P16 explains that traditional products, like Ottoman sherbet, can be offered for example in minibars of the hotels to guests instead of French beverages. This respondent, when he was asked about the suitability of Didim for vegan-friendliness, suggested the marketing of these products as they are traditional and local, which would also help differentiate the destination.

Some interviewees mention other activities in support of the vegan-friendly destination concept. P3 says: "We tried to introduce the area with Thales Meetings, Lavanta Festival and sportive activities like marathons." All these activities, although they are not directly linked to vegan-friendliness, are significant for Didim's reputation as a tourist destination and to create its local identity. Also, P10 mentions that Didim was going to hold an olive festival in September 2022.

Alternative tourism types are also present or have a potential to exist, like health, gastronomy and wildlife tourism, which fit with the identity of Didim since its geographic and other certain aspects make it suitable to conduct these. P1 mentions the gastronomic tourism potential of Didim by saying "I was not regarding tourism in Didim as gastronomic tourism before Vegfest. Since Vegfest, in addition

to cultural tourism, my awareness of the existence of gastronomic tourism has risen." As gastronomic elements are integrated with plant-based or vegan eating, Didim's natural resources and local foods make veganism easier to implement. This is also mentioned as relevant to the concept of slow living, which is considered by some of the respondents as complementary to the vegan-friendly philosophy. Thus, P9, says: "Cittaslow and vegan-friendly city concepts can merge in the future."

Nevertheless, some respondents also point to factors that hinder Didim's sustainability and its potential identity as a vegan-friendly destination. These aspects include the city's infrastructure, tourism image, education, health services, energy usage, environmental cleanliness, etc. For example, P16, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, states: "In a district where the infrastructure is poor, and the number of rooms is insufficient, 15 more years are needed to reach modern tourism." P16 also remarks on the lack of infrastructure, installation, and employment of qualified personnel as the major problems in Didim, in addition to the existence of imbalanced migration and urbanisation. P15, a restaurant employee and local resident, also comments on the lack of development of Didim: "Although Didim is beautiful and has tried to develop for years, this could not succeed completely."

The on-site visit also enabled the researcher to observe the negative impacts of urbanisation and the increasing emphasis on construction, which deteriorates the originality and attractiveness of the city. Also, some respondents do not agree with the suitability of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination. P16, a hotelier and member of a trade association, highlights that Didim is more suitable for camping and windsurfing instead of being marketed as vegan friendly. P2 mentions that none of its attributes makes Didim more privileged for vegan-friendliness in comparison to other cities in Turkey.

5.3.2 Process of creating a vegan-friendly destination

The interviews also provide some information about how Didim began to develop as a vegan-friendly destination, which can deliver some insights useful for future initiatives.

The vegan-friendly destination development process is generally viewed in a positive light by the research participants. The respondents talk during the interviews about the declaration process for Didim to be considered a vegan-friendly destination. In this regard, the interviewees remark on the professionalism of both the declaration process and the organisation of the festival. On this subject, P6 says: "I think the process has been very professional."

This process started with information being provided by opinion leaders. Several respondents mention Emin Çapa, a well-known journalist who is also a member of the Turkish Vegan Association (TVD). For example, according to P3, "Emin Çapa, as a member of the TVD, was a supporter throughout the process." Also, P8 mentions that Emin Çapa gathered the local government and the Turkish Vegan Association (TVD). Hüseyin Baraner, a tourism professional from the Turkish Travel Agencies Association (TÜRSAB), is also mentioned as the person who offered the idea that vegan philosophy can fit in Didim.

The respondents also mention how the project started and was developed via collaboration. As P3 explains: "We started these initiatives by being in contact with the municipality. Actually, these are the tasks done by the municipality in order to form its vegan identity. We just support them as Didim Tourism and Infrastructure Association (DITAB)."

This initiative was developed via a protocol between the Didim Municipality and the Turkish Vegan and Vegetarian Society, who were also the main actors of the 2017 Vegfest. Also, other actions were planned as part of the initiative. As P8 says:

> As I know, the municipality signed a protocol with Deneye Hayır Derneği not to conduct any experiments on animals that were taken from the streets. In addition to the main stakeholders like the Didim Municipality, DITAB and TVD, there were other actors who supported the promotion of the Vegfest event and initiative.

Indeed, the organization of the Vegfest as a festival that would create awareness about veganism and the vegan-friendliness of Didim is an important part of the initiative. The next section will describe this part of the initiative in more detail.

5.3.3 The organization, the evolution, and the activities of the festival

Firstly, the aim of the Vegfest festival, its format and content are discussed. On the topic of formatting and content, P7 says:

> Whether the Vegfest should be an event only for vegans or open to everybody was talked about a lot. It was decided by both animal rights defenders and residents that it should be open to everybody. And this is a very beautiful process.

On the other hand, P4 mentions that it was a festival designed for vegans and that drawing attention of more non-vegan people could have been more effective as vegans are already familiar with what is offered in the festival.

The evolution of the festival and how it has improved over time is also discussed by the participants. For instance, P6 comments on how the festival has evolved and developed over time when it comes to its general delivery to visitors. In addition, some respondents (P5, P6, P9, and P10) generally mention the improvement that the Vegfest organisation underwent after the first years of the festival.

Additionally, the interviews and on-site visit provide information concerning activities that were added to the festival portfolio, like workshops, tale narrations at the festival area, etc. P2, P5, and P7 mention that workshops were arranged for adults and children. P2 mentions also that the workshops in the festival area had effects on participants, and she adds that one woman turned vegan thanks to a workshop that P2 led. P2 says:

> For children, it is not very possible to make such a decision in one day, but there were children who came to the same workshop the next day, who said that they had a lot of fun and thought of things that they had never thought of before because, for example, the fact that cows could play and run like dogs has never come to their minds.

The participants explain how these workshops were influential in shaping the perception of children towards animals and their similarities to other beings without forcing these kids to any radical changes or a sudden action. After these sessions, no child explained that they wanted to be vegan or vegetarian but P2 mentions that the same children wanted to join the workshops on the upcoming days.

In addition to these educating workshops, as another activity in the festival, P9 says: “We presented a tale that we veganized (adjusting the story to include animal-friendly language) with my story-narrator partner.” This can be seen as another way of conveying knowledge about animals and vegan philosophy.

Another issue that was discussed concerning the festival is that it brought forth cooperation from many different stakeholders. For example, P3 says: “Workshops were organised by encouraging local population and other participants to cooperate.” This is both important for stakeholder involvement and to increase collective power among actors. Thanks to social events like the vegan festival in Didim, a diverse group of individuals came together to achieve a common action for their hometown like providing education, preparing workshops, planning profit-

making activities that would benefit the local community, representing the identity and individual features of the region. To achieve these, a participatory approach was followed in which different actors were consulted and asked to participate in the event. Thus, the Vegfest event was carried out with the participation of sellers, restaurants, tourism and animal rights associations, the municipality, voluntary organizations, educational institutions, chefs, etc. For example, P3 from a tourism-related association and one of the members of the organizational committee touches upon the meetings with the municipality, voluntary organizations, business owners, etc. to decide on the content, format, and other steps to organize the festival. Stakeholders mention the influential role of the municipality during the data collection process, although its ability to collaborate with non-governmental associations was debated. For example, P16 does not believe that enough collaboration existed, while in contrast P7 says: "The contribution of the municipality regarding its contact with non-governmental organisations was very significant for this process." P2 also mentions that non-governmental associations outside of Didim were visited and asked to join. For example, P3 says: "The municipality contacted voluntary organisations from different cities, student clubs, and initiatives." Other stakeholders, such as universities and cooking associations, were involved in the Vegfest event. Soft volunteering is also mentioned, meaning that the stakeholder was not directly involved in the organization or planning committee, but contributed with their background and network remotely.

In addition, respondents highlight their role in the development of the Vegfest and the vegan-friendly initiative, which seems to have made them satisfied and proud of their collaborative efforts as a team. Indeed, collaboration is seen as part of the overall success. As P5 remarks: "We joined as Hayvanlara Adalet Derneği (HAD).

Even, we had a poster as Vegan Lawyers there". This group of people generally transferred their knowledge about legal issues on animal rights and other legally binding situations that require the judgment of a specialist. Another collaboration was carried out with a well-known national food and beverage establishment who introduced an ice cream alternative for vegans and helped a better representation of Didim's image through its sales.

On the other hand, the communication between different stakeholders in relation to the festival is seen by a few respondents as having some issues. P4 states: "One of the complaints was the fact that some organisations had the chance to be listened more about their opinions whereas some others were listened less." P1 also explains that communication problems between stakeholders led to a weak representation of the festival in the country.

The interviews also reveal the story about the split-up of the Didim Municipality and the Turkish Vegan and Vegetarian Society. P8 mentions that the Turkish Vegan and Vegetarian Society withdrew from the festival committee in the second year because it believed that the municipality was not meeting the requirements of a vegan-friendly destination. The same respondent touches upon these requirements like the removal of phaetons, adding vegan -friendly menus into the municipality events, putting vegan labels into municipality facilities, having more vegan options, educating hotel owners, permanent residents and local businesses about veganism, preparing a city map for visitors who will come to places serving vegan options, etc.

5.3.4 Educational and recreational initiatives

Another important aspect of the vegan-friendly initiative in Didim relates to what was done to educate the community and outside participants. Several preparatory and

education-focused steps were carried out. These include examining scientific studies on the topic, as well as providing education to participants to make them understand veganism. Furthermore, a book was published showing that many foods in the area and locals' eating habits are vegan, an endeavour that is mentioned by two hoteliers during the on-site data collection phase. In addition, P2 and P5 explain that workshops for visitors about recipes to prepare plant-based foods were held during Vegfest. Also, nutritionists gave information on the nutritional value of plant-based food. P7 further mentions workshops specifically designed for children during the festival. Another educational activity included the chance for visitors to taste food combined with vegan ingredients, providing a novel eating and learning experience.

An important part of the initiative also relates to the education of restaurants and their employees to better serve vegans. As P3 states: "We provided training for restaurants in the area to enable them to give a good service to our visitors. Creating vegan/vegan-friendly options together with awareness created thanks to this initiative were the main positive impacts for the festival". However, other respondents such as P2 disagree and state that it was as if no education was provided to the food sellers, who were totally unaware of the requirements for veganism. According to P2, in the festival area, a type of ice cream that included dairy milk was sold. P5 also mentions that there were non-vegans' items in stands in the first years of the Vegfest, while, in time, this problem has been reduced.

5.3.5 Availability of vegan-friendly services

Observing whether some vegan-friendly services are available in a place which positions itself as a vegan-friendly is important both for this research, which aims to explore the aspects of a vegan-friendly destination, and also to understand what a

vegan-friendly destination looks like when it comes to its characteristics. The on-site visit and the interviews helped explore the concept of the vegan-friendly destination and reflect on its necessary attributes. Although there is no institution or entity giving certificates or formal mottos to potential vegan-friendly destinations, the research suggests that stakeholders brainstorm and come up with an agreement concerning what kind of pathway and procedures need to be followed to become vegan-friendly. These aspects that are mentioned by interviewees are explained in the upcoming paragraphs.

Abolishing/ reducing animal exploitation has always been a significant issue for vegans. Based on the feedback from some participants it seems that respect to animal rights in addition to the abolishing of animal exploitation are vital to a city declared vegan friendly. P8 touches upon the fact that a vegan-friendly municipality improves itself by opposing animal exploitative actions. The same respondent also emphasises the importance of caring for animal rights and freedom at a maximum level. As explained by P8, within the scope of the initiative an agreement was made on the requirements that the Didim Municipality needed to complete for a vegan-friendly identity of the city. Also, the same participant states: "Dolphin shows and any activity involved in animal exploitation shouldn't exist in a vegan-friendly municipality." Furthermore, P10 says: "Didim residents, including the local government and other citizens, are against equestrian sport." Also, according to P6, P8 and P10, phaetons have been removed from Didim. Nevertheless, one of the interviewees remarks that camel-racing is still practised as a part of local culture. Also, there is a dolphin park still offering service in the area. Similarly, P2 remarks that "fireworks in the places beyond the municipality's control may continue to be used."

Determining what vegans need, is a question that is discussed during the interviews and on-site visit and can be accepted as a significant aspect of a vegan-friendly destination. The focus is on what is or should be practiced by service personnel (hotels, restaurants, shops, and local government) for vegan guests. Accordingly, P8 highlights that all precautions should be taken for vegans who will come to the area. About what is provided for vegan hotel guests, P11, a permanent resident and a hotel employee, says:

> Visitors come to our facility to meet their needs. As my workplace is very near to the festival area, we try to welcome our guests as much as we can. We had guests who accommodated, and we offered them some foods that vegans can eat. We tried to cater to them.

If we talk about the overall vegan experience of vegan volunteers who visited the area for the festival, they claim to be generally satisfied with the food and beverage services and eating facilities. P6 says: "There was a vegan section in restaurants' menus." During the observation fieldtrip, it was realized that having such a section in menus gives the visitor a freedom to choose and an opportunity not to discuss or tell the personnel what s/he can eat. In addition, P15, a restaurant worker, mentions that a separate menu is offered to their vegan guests in addition to the available service of vegan burger, cheese and falafel. That vegan friendly options are available to offer in some of the restaurants may help vegan and vegetarian visitors travel more conveniently and increase the visibility of those facilities as they serve more than one customer group.

The availability of vegan options in restaurants, hotels and shops was also observed during the on-site visit. One participant (P8), who is the leader of an NGO that is concerned with the vegan-friendly initiative, touches upon the need for more vegan-friendly options by saying: "A vegan-friendly municipality needs to take any kind of measures for vegans visiting the city and to offer vegan options in restaurants

and accommodation facilities as much as possible." As more facilities are potentially opened in the near future, businesses may introduce themselves and grow their reputation in addition to attracting vegan individuals or any person curious about tasting vegan friendly alternatives. Again, an employee of a national food chain, P14, explains that the idea of vegan ice cream production belongs to their founder, and that the rest of the team with this idea in mind thought about why no vegan ice cream was available in the market and about what could be used instead of dairy milk. During the fieldtrip, it was observed that the brand has already added their vegan ice-cream into its menus. As both dairy and plant-based ice-cream may be a preferable snack option, especially in hot summer days, marketing such a product can help the brand become more attractive to both domestic and international visitors.

Moreover, according to P10, who is a hotelier and member of the Didim Tourism Association: "There are 3-5 hotels suitable for vegans around." P10 also adds that vegan breakfast for guests is offered at the hotel he manages. Such breakfast was observed during the on-site research and was seen to consist of a variety of plant-based foods like home-made jam, fruits, leafy greens, olives, etc. The same participant also mentions that vegan cheese and salami are sold in some stores around. P6, a member of an animal rights society and a participant of Vegfest, says: "It was very easy to find vegan alternatives while going around Didim." Again, P6 adds that restaurant workers could offer something suitable when vegans identified themselves. As an observer, the researcher was also offered plant-based foods in some restaurants, like falafel, vegetarian burger and vegetable meals.

Next, some restaurants that serve vegan products use the vegan label, V-Label, which is a globally known and registered label for vegan and vegetarian

products. This could be observed during the on-site visit. Figure 3 shows a picture of an establishment that carries the V-Label.

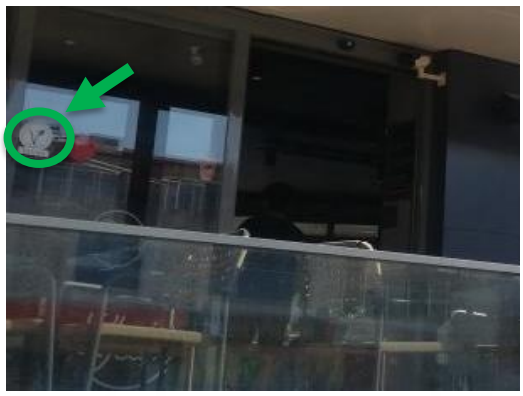


Figure 3. A coffee shop in Didim with its vegan label on the window
Source: Picture taken by Ceren İlayda Başol

Despite this information provided by some respondents, lack of vegan alternatives is one of the shortcomings that were observed during the on-site trip. Also, some local people interviewed during the visit, including taxi drivers and other residents, state that Didim, as a city, is not completely ready to be accepted as vegan friendly. According to these respondents, the city is only known for the festival, but few other supporting activities like hotel or restaurant services for vegans are available. Indeed, the researcher observed that some restaurants are successful at offering a service to vegans and vegetarians, but they are in minority. On this issue, one of the interviewees working at a food and beverage establishment says that through Vegfest, she learnt that there were many vegans in Didim but that they cannot find vegan alternatives. During the on-site trip, the researcher observed that although restaurant employees knew what veganism was, they could offer only traditional and daily foods, not specific to Didim or something original for the vegan lifestyle. Likewise, P11, a hotel employee, wanted to try vegan cheese after visiting Vegfest. However, she mentions that she could not find soya-cheese alternatives in

supermarkets, and the only option that she could access was not tasty at all. She states that "what is offered in terms of vegan travel experience is inadequate". The on-site visit also showed that an intense smell of Kokoreç (a meat cooked with the guts of sheep) is prevalent in various parts of the city, which is in contradiction with the attempts towards vegan-friendliness.

Didim is not only lacking vegan-friendly options but also restaurants. The inadequate number of vegan restaurants is mentioned several times by P2 and P5. P8 says: "Vegan options should be increased, and these options should be incentivized by the municipality." The researcher asked the interviewees about the more recent status of vegan-friendliness. P7, a lawyer and a leading member of an NGO mentions that they could find few vegan alternatives like soup and rice at a very high price. A pet-friendly hotel is also mentioned by P10 referring to the characteristics of the hotel that he runs although the respondent does not specify what the features of a pet-friendly hotel are.

5.3.6 Positive and negative impacts of the Vegfest and the vegan-friendly initiative

This study also looks at the impacts of the vegan-friendly initiative. Among the positive impacts, the ability to create awareness of the vegan-friendly destination development initiative via the festival is cited. P3 also mentions that education of individuals with the purpose of making them understand the vegan philosophy was made. Thus, as P3 states, "Our only purpose was not to entertain people for a few days and send them back." Furthermore, the introduction of local foods is mentioned as a positive aspect of the initiative. In addition, the educating angle of the festival as a place where people meet art, culture and history is emphasized.

The interviews and on-site conversations with the local people provide some information concerning the impacts of the festival on local life and economic well-

being. For example, P10 says: “Small businesses earn money. People come from İstanbul, Ankara, Bursa. Some of them come to see. Some of them come to make sales.” P15 says: “During the festival week for three days, our restaurant was at its full capacity.” Also, according to P4, “there have been increases in sales.” One of the restaurants near to the festival area was visited by the researcher, and the employees mentioned that they were highly satisfied with the monetary benefits of the festival because comparatively more people visited the place. Similarly, P14 says: “Our sales have increased after the vegan festival, and people visited our food establishments by mentioning our vegan ice-cream sales in the festival area.” The sales of souvenirs are also mentioned although they are described as being lower in 2022 in comparison to previous years. As P3 remarks, “being a vegan-friendly city benefits Didim both in terms of introduction and tourism”. P6 also mentions that Vegfest introduced the city and left money to the area. The researcher was able to observe that hotels are pre-booked for Vegfest. P10, a hotel owner says: “Some people have already done their hotel bookings before Vegfest 2022”. This situation is mostly related to the interest of tourists to attend Vegfest, and since during the festival time, many people responsible for holding the event come from other Turkish cities, there is a risk of full occupancy at nearby hotels.

In addition to positive economic impacts during the festival period there are also many complaints made by respondents about the high prices of products sold at Vegfest. For instance, P11 who was working at a hotel near the festival area says: “In Vegfest 2022, everything was sold at double the price.” This is a consistent criticism.

Additionally, the interviewees remark on the number of vegan-friendly facilities that increased thanks to the initiative and festival, as highlighted by P7. Some information is obtained from residents who have been living in Didim for a

considerable amount of time about what was unavailable before the initiative started and what is offered now in terms of vegan-friendly alternatives. For example, a respondent from the industry and a permanent resident in Didim says: “There was nothing five years ago.” On the other hand, some proponents of the initiative, such as P5, explain that the local government has improved Didim in a positive sense.

Nevertheless, this improvement is considered insufficient by some of the interviewees. To exemplify, P4 comments that she thinks this a good effort but inadequate and focused only on income. Most respondents think that in Didim, nothing remarkable about the vegan-friendly concept has been conducted except for the vegan festival to sustain the vegan-friendly title and improve the destination image accordingly. Conversations with local people reveal that they do not know that Didim is marketed as vegan-friendly because the efforts and the improvement are limited. They also state that the vegan-friendly initiative was limited to organizing a festival to strengthen the city image, without the support of other activities. P4 highlights the fact that she is not sure about whether this developmental initiative or Vegfest has caused a direct change either in people’s lives or in Didim overall. From a similar viewpoint, P8 is also uncertain about what has been done, changed, and developed in Didim after these initiative acts. She says: “Most of the radical changes did not occur in a short time.” P16, who is a hotel manager, repetitively highlights the fact that no great impacts of the development of Didim as vegan-friendly have been realised. Other respondents are even more negative about the vegan-friendly initiative. For example, P8 remarks: “I think what has been represented about the vegan-friendly municipality is nothing …but a shaky initiative”. By shaky initiative, the interviewee mentions that what was planned to be achieved thanks to this initiative was not the same to what was brought about at the end.

5.3.7 Attitude of the locals towards the initiative

The awareness and attitude of the local population towards vegan-friendliness that is aimed to be developed in Didim matters as they are the main actors that will support it and help its continuation. Based on the on-site observation and interviews, a certain level of local awareness is present. On that, P7 says: "This is very important for the socialization of the Mediterranean region." The respondent means that Didim being introduced as vegan-friendly and the Vegfest help it become more connected to other Mediterranean cities. Another participant comments that the locals are conscious about the initiative and conscious about the fundamental aspects of the vegan philosophy. As an example, an employee at a restaurant was observed during the on-site visit and seen providing a service that is in line with veganism while asking proper questions. This person also showed interest in learning more about the details of this research.

The attitude of locals towards Vegfest and the vegan-friendly initiative is observed during the visit and explained by the respondents in the interview. According to P6, "people who organized this process [the vegan friendly initiative] organized it very well although they were not vegan". The information obtained indicates that local people were mainly supportive and welcoming towards the idea of vegan-friendly destination development and the vegan festival. Also, P3 says: "The local population has embraced the vegan festival since the first day." Residents have tried to internalize this concept as a promotional action as much as possible. During the on-site visit the researcher observed that although local people touched upon some weaknesses or maybe mistakes of the initiative and festival, nobody mentioned their reluctance to contribute. Also, another respondent remarks that sometimes vegans, vegetarians, and animal rights advocates could be interpreted or

labelled negatively, and that the initiative and the Vegfest helped against this situation, with the local people more prone to accept veganism and welcome vegans.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This study centres on the question of which aspects need to exist to develop a vegan-friendly destination and explores this topic by looking at the case of Didim. The research examines this process from the perspective of sustainable tourism. This investigation reveals several interesting findings.

First, Didim is described in the study as not being special in terms of vegan-friendliness because there are not so many aspects that differentiate it from other Turkish cities or that make it more suitable to be declared or developed as vegan-friendly. This conclusion is important in the sense that it shows that vegan-friendly destination development may also be implemented in other Turkish cities. According to the findings, Didim is not the exception or unique as a vegan-friendly city, and other destinations can offer vegan-friendly tourism products if its resources and potential are planned and managed properly, and if such a vision is agreed among collaborating stakeholders in the area.

Looking at the suitability of Didim to position itself as vegan friendly, we can conclude that some resources, including natural aspects, cultural values, historical sites and eating patterns, can support the vegan philosophy and lifestyle. Nevertheless, these characteristics are not unique aspects that only exist in Didim, meaning that there are other Turkish destinations that own similar features, and would therefore be good candidates to become vegan-friendly. The research also determines that Didim has been able to establish and support many services and practices that are in line with vegan friendliness. Nevertheless, the study also highlights the fact that there are aspects that still need to be developed like increasing

vegan-friendly options in supermarkets, accommodation facilities and restaurants, training the local population and business owners about how to serve people demanding vegan options during the festival period and all year-round, etc.

The study examines the process and steps that have been followed to initiate and develop the vegan-friendly destination concept in Didim. The declaration of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination was a significant first step in starting this initiative, and it started with the gathering and brainstorming of different stakeholders from the public and private industry. From this meeting, a list of actions emerged, including the idea of holding events to integrate the vegan-friendly concept into the image of Didim. Other relevant actions encompassed education and training programs and other research activities related to the vegan philosophy.

Although the case of Didim can have an exemplary and initiator role, illustrating the development of a vegan-friendly destination, with the potential to extend it to other destinations, it also shows some failings and potential challenges. For example, the vegan-friendly development initiative has not had a huge impact on the destination in terms of increasing the number of vegan tourists and restaurant facilities, or in connection to achieving a much better level of treatment to the animals in the locality. Although the city was already implementing various initiatives to better the lives of street animals even before the vegan-friendly initiative started, the study shows that many of these measures are not implemented properly. While the municipality has declared certain practices, such as the prohibition to use fireworks in most areas and the complete abandoning of phaetons, according to the research participants, fireworks can still be used in areas of Didim beyond the municipality's control. In addition, animal racing events are still considered as part of the local culture and thus tolerated.

Another shortcoming of the development process of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination that was uncovered in the research is the lack of vegan gatherings other than the annual festival. Thus, supportive vegan-friendly events like conferences, meetings and other complementary events are in shortage. Therefore, if other destinations' planners consider applying this concept, they should consider supporting the development with other attractive organisations that may be held all year round, like educative (seminars, university symposiums, etc.) or social events (for example picnics for socialization and knowledge sharing).

Furthermore, according to the information gathered for this research, the provision of a vegan travel experience is still inadequate as remarked by many of the respondents. The vegan-friendliness initiative is seen as falling short in relation to creating vegan experiences, and issues related to vegan cooking techniques, local farming practices that support the vegan philosophy, etc., are lacking. Destinations which are interested in developing as vegan-friendly should also take these aspects into consideration and pay attention to intangible features that support the creation of vegan experiences.

In general, collaboration between stakeholders has been assessed as satisfactory by both local and non-local participants although a few communication problems occurred. The research highlights the need for such initiatives to be carried out within a broad participatory perspective and the inclusion of a comprehensive spectrum of stakeholders. Despite the presence of many parties in the initial stages of the development process, some stakeholders seem to have become disillusioned in the later stages, withdrawing from the initiative. Indeed, some respondents state that Didim has not been sufficiently developed in terms of its vegan-friendly identity,

while it is also interesting that many of the local people are not even aware of the developmental process of the city as a vegan-friendly destination.

6.1 Theoretical implications

This academic research supports the existing information on the topic of vegan friendly destinations by shedding light into the aspects that need to be considered to develop such a destination. The study identifies vegan philosophy as being included in all aspects of the development of the destination as the main characteristic that a vegan-friendly destination should include. This means that the values of a vegan lifestyle are supported at the societal and individual level, including advocating for attitudes and facilitating individual patterns of eating, use of clothing, access to entertainment that are approved by the vegan philosophy.

Based on this overall consideration, other facets refer to specific aspects of the place that need to be considered. In particular, one of these facets refers to the cuisine, which includes local plants and recipes that can be incorporated into a vegan-life style. This can be supported better when the destination possesses opportunities for local food production, is close to the cultivation areas, etc. Another aspect is related to banning or preventing animal exploitative behaviours, which should not only be regulated, but also made visible and implemented. Addressing the needs of vegans is another characteristic of a vegan-friendly destination that emerges from the experience in Didim. Accordingly, the destination should be mindful of the expectations of vegan travellers and facilitate these by encouraging hoteliers, restaurant owners, locals, and other citizens to deliver most satisfying memories and experiences for these tourists. Additionally, incorporating veganism into the social life aspects of a place is seen as a significant aspect of the development of a vegan-

friendly destination and this includes creating opportunities for socializing, learning, and exposure to different cultures.

In addition to the characteristics of the destination to support vegan-friendliness, the readiness and attitude of the locals towards such a positioning of the destination emerges as an important requirement of the vegan friendly destination. This is also derived from the fact that, as in the case of Didim, the application of the vegan-friendly concept at the destination is done by the locals. Therefore, according to this study, the locals embracing vegan-friendliness and working to develop their hometown's image in line with this concept are critical factors for implementation of a vegan-friendly initiative. Local acceptance and support for the implementation of the vegan-friendly concept may include supporting activities like festivals, seminars, and other social events, selling vegan-friendly products and services, backing the destination's marketing efforts and hosting, serving or trying to help vegan travellers obtain a satisfying holiday experience.

The research also provides insights into how a vegan-friendly destination can be developed. Based on the findings of this research, educational activities and research that is carried out at the start of the project are helpful in creating a powerful foundation to decide on what is needed and useful, and on how to proceed with the developmental initiative.

Also, the study provides information about the role of different stakeholders in this development process. A destination can be developed as vegan-friendly only with the collaborative efforts of different actors, including residents, the local government, non-governmental associations, universities, and other social entities. For example, in the case of Didim, this implementation was a municipality initiative at its core, but it was empowered by both local and non-local actors, etc. Thus, local

citizens supported the municipality event with their hand-made product sales at the festival area, which was important for the introduction of the concept to the local population and for obtaining broader representation. On the other hand, non-local actors were important because they shared their knowledge, networks and supported the organization of events such as the festival. Also, these non-local stakeholders were involved in the decision-making process for the declaration of Didim as vegan friendly, helping identify the aspects of the destination that needed to change. Therefore, the participation and collaboration of both local stakeholders and experts from outside of the destination is seen as a key to the development of a vegan-friendly destination.

Based on the findings of the research, the initial conceptual model has been revised as can be seen below (see Figure 4).

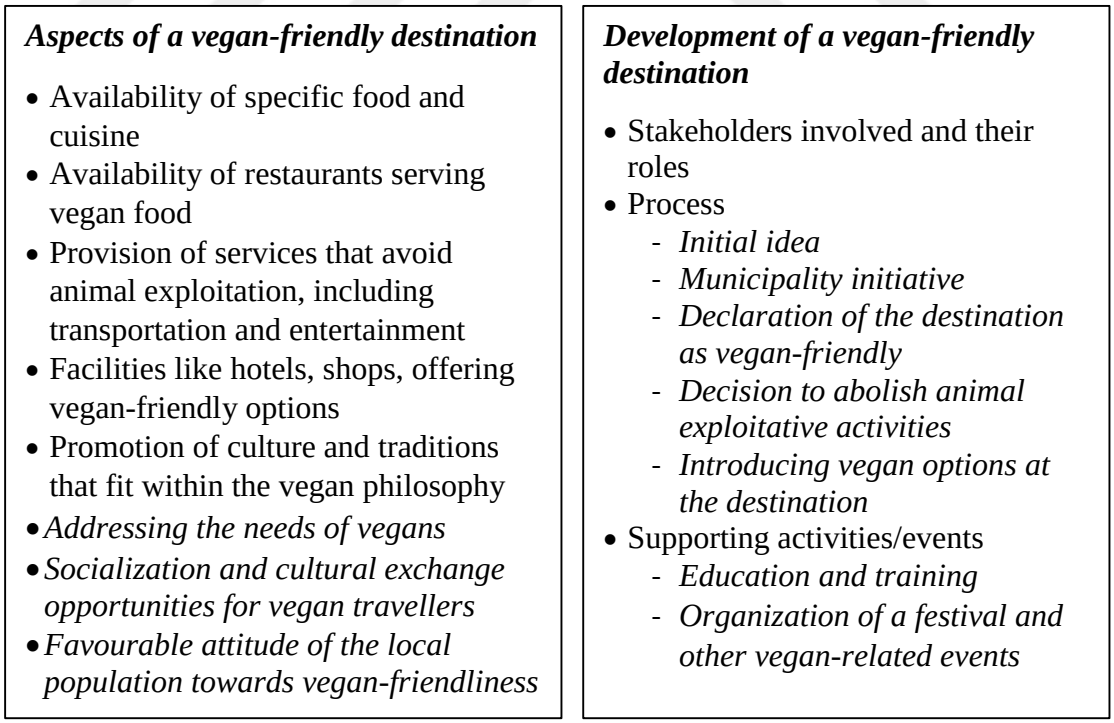


Figure 4. Revised conceptual model
Note: Aspects of the destination and the development that are added to the conceptual model after the research are shown in italics

The model is refined, and some aspects that make a vegan-friendly destination are added. As in the original model, the aspects of the vegan friendly destination include availability of specific food and cuisine; availability of restaurants serving vegan food; provision of services that avoid animal exploitation including transportation and entertainment; facilities like hotels, shops offering vegan-friendly options; and promotion of culture and traditions that fit within the vegan philosophy. In addition, based on the findings of the research, stress is added to the fact that a vegan destination needs to address the needs of vegan travellers. Furthermore, socialization and cultural exchange are added to the conceptual model to reflect the importance of social interaction and of incorporating the vegan philosophy in social aspects of the destination. Also, the research points to the critical role of the local population and their attitude towards their city being vegan-friendly, so that a favourable attitude of the community is also included as an important characteristic that makes a vegan-friendly destination.

The second part of the conceptual model also includes the main dimensions of stakeholders involved and their roles, process and supporting activities/events, as in the initial model. However, the research is able to provide more detail into some of these facets of the development of a vegan-friendly destination. As such, in our final model, the process of development of a vegan-friendly destination starts with an initial idea from an opinion leader and develops via the initiative of the Municipality, which is seen as essential, leading to a significant contribution from the municipality in all phases of the development. Nevertheless, the importance of the Municipality observed in this research may be due to the particular institutional context of tourism in Turkey, where destination management organizations are generally lacking, and where the Municipality generally undertakes a large role in the development of local

tourism, especially in smaller cities (Hatipoglu, Alvarez & Ertuna, 2016). As the process of development unfolds, a major part of this process refers to the declaration of the destination as vegan-friendly, as an essential step in the development of the destination. This is followed by specific decisions and regulations to eliminate animal exploitation in the area, as well as by the introduction of vegan options at the destination to cater for vegan tourists. Also, while the initial conceptual model only mentioned supporting activities and events, the current research adds more specifics. For example, the role of education and training of the locals and the sector is brought forth in the model since it is seen as essential to developing a successful vegan-friendly destination. Other actions that are seen as essential to develop a vegan friendly destination include festivals and events to introduce the destination as vegan, and increase the awareness of the vegan-friendly identity.

This revised conceptual model provides a contribution to the scarce literature on vegan tourism and vegan-friendly destination development and a guideline that can be used by subsequent initiatives.

6.2 Practical implications

This study may also be useful to planners and destination managers who plan to develop their cities as vegan-friendly destinations. More destinations may want to attract vegan travellers and become vegan-friendly for a variety of purposes including social, economic, and environmental benefits. This study provides some insights based on the knowledge obtained from Didim and identifies both positive experiences and areas that need to be addressed.

One of the conclusions of the study highlights the fact that the initiative mainly focuses on the vegan-friendly festival. Since this is the most visible outcome

of the vegan-friendly initiative many people around Turkey as well as the locals are aware of it. However, this is seen as a weakness of the initiative and an area that needs to be dealt with. Therefore, the research points to the suggestion that Didim's vegan-friendliness identity should be communicated better to different audiences. In support of this recommendation, Didim's image as vegan-friendly should be supported with other events and activities.

Another issue refers to the fact that a limited portion of the local population was involved, and many residents are not aware of the initiative. This indicates that the marketing of the project to the local citizens was not very effective, so that the local population mostly knows only about the festival. In order to increase local interest in the initiative and overall awareness, trainings can be intensified and offered to more people both via physical and non-physical channels. Also, locals can show a higher interest if they know this will bring their community well-being and benefits beyond monetary gains so that they need to be informed about these potential advantages in more details.

Connected to this issue is the non-existence of a professional marketing strategy to take on the role of promoting the destination and its vegan-friendly identity. Developing such a strategy with the help of more professional support can be suggested to city planners and destination managers as a first step in the initiative to become a vegan-friendly destination.

Further, the research points to the lack of implementation of existing regulations that concern the abolition of exploitative behaviours towards animals and other vegan-related concerns. These problems can only be overcome through a collaborative approach that focuses on the specific problems and potential solutions. The stakeholders should decide on the applicability of these regulations and

collaborate to select which pathway should be followed to practically implement them. Indeed, the vegan-friendly project started as a major collaborative effort, although some stakeholders became disillusioned later on. As the initiative is under the major control of the Municipality, there is also the risk that political will may affect it. Thus, there is a need for an institutional structure that can unite different stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as residents, to create diversity of opinions and less dependency on the political will of a single body. The lack of a destination management organization that may help the leading of Didim at a more systematic level is observed as a key problem. Therefore, before a major development initiative, such as the vegan-friendly destination project, is undertaken, the establishment of a destination management organization is recommended.

6.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for further research

Even though the study can provide important insights concerning the topic of vegan-friendly destination development, this research is not without some limitations.

First, a major limitation refers to the fact that Didim is a newly developed destination regarding its vegan-friendly identity. Therefore, the changes and aspects of the destination that are observed are mostly newly emerged. That is, the investigation of a long-lasting and more established vegan-friendly destination would have provided more in-depth information. Nevertheless, given that vegan-friendly destination development is a new phenomenon, no such destination was available, although investigating such a place and its development may be a fruitful topic for future research.

Second, the research is limited by the selection of certain respondents. Participants were selected in terms of their knowledge of the topic and ability to

provide information on the subject. Nevertheless, many were involved in the initiative and therefore did not have an objective perspective. The fact that the researcher is also vegan may have increased the subjectivity of the research.

Additionally, although the contribution of the municipality for Didim's declaration as vegan-friendly and the organisation of Vegfest has been very significant and they should have been interviewed to understand the situation from their side, they were not part of the respondents in the research. The researcher tried to reach and interview individuals from the Municipality on several occasions but was not successful. Therefore, information concerning the role of the Municipality was obtained from other stakeholders, rather than from the Municipality itself. Further research on the subject should involve a more diverse group of participants, also including the municipality and residents in higher numbers.

In addition, many of the participants seemed to have only information or be concerned with the organization of the Vegfest rather than the overall project. This is also because the festival was the main outcome of the initiative. Therefore, it was difficult for the researcher to isolate the information that referred to the overall initiative and to get the research participants to comment on other aspects of the development of Didim as a vegan-friendly destination.

Lastly, the results of this study are based on the findings of interviews that are only conducted specific to the case of Didim. Different practices and conclusions could have arisen if this study were conducted in a different place, meaning that the generalizability of this study's findings may be restricted for other cases. Hence, it is important to note that studies in other places and with different questions should be carried out to understand the development of a vegan-friendly destination in various contexts.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE

1. Are you from the area and how long have you been living/ working in Didim? / Bu bölgeden misiniz ve ne kadar süredir Didim'de yaşıyorsunuz/çalışıyorsunuz?
2. How do you see tourism in Didim? What kind of tourists come to Didim? / Didim'deki turizmi nasıl değerlendirirsiniz? Didim'e ne tür turistler geliyor?
3. Were you aware that Didim was declared a vegan-friendly city in 2017? / Didim'in 2017'de vegan dostu şehir ilan edildiğinden haberdar mıydınız?
4. How was the decision to make Didim a vegan-friendly city and organize a vegan festival taken? By whom? / Didim'i vegan dostu bir şehir yapmak ve vegan festivali organize etmeye nasil karar verdiniz? Kimlerle, kim tarafından?
5. What happened after the decision was made? What was the process? / Karar alındıktan sonra neler oldu? Süreç nasıldı?
6. Who was involved in the effort and how? Was there a collaborative effort during the process of developing Didim into a vegan-friendly city and organizing the festival? / Girişime kim ve nasıl dahil oldu? Didim'i vegan dostu şehre dönüştürme ve festivali organize etme sürecinde işbirlikçi bir çaba mevcut muydu?
7. What was your role? / Sizin rolünüz neydi?
8. What aspects of Didim were developed/changed? What was done? / Didim'in hangi özellikleri geliştirildi/değişti? Ne yapıldı?
9. Which aspects do you think make Didim relevant to become a vegan-friendly city? / Didimin hangi ozelliklerinin onu bir vegan dostu şehir yapma konusunda uygun kıldığını düşünüyorsunuz?

10. Can you give a general evaluation of the vegan-friendly initiative? / Vegan-dostu girişimi hakkında genel bir değerlendirme yapabilir misiniz?
11. Are you happy with the development of Didim as a vegan- friendly city? What do you think are the impacts of this development? / Didimin vegan dostu bir şehir olarak geliştirilmesinden memnun musunuz? Bu geliştirmenin etkilerinin ne olduğunu düşünüyorsunuz?

APPENDIX B

CATEGORIES, THEMES AND PERCENTAGES

CATEGORIES & THEMES	**TOTAL**
POSITIVE IMPACTS OF VEGFEST	**115**
Social awareness about veganism has risen thanks to Vegfest	34
The overall impact of Vegfest has been good	33
Festival guest list	15
Contribution of the festival to tourism	14
Financial benefits of the festival have been pleasing	5
Increased vegan-friendly facilities	3
Restaurant & souvenir sales at Vegfest	3
Aiming to festival targeted vegans	3
After Vegfest the municipality's changed attitude towards veganism	1
Connecting with other vegans	1
Local food introduced as a purpose of the festival	1
Not just entertainment as a purpose of the festival	1
Festival as cultural as a purpose of the festival	1
ASPECTS OF A VEGAN-FRIENDLY DESTINATION	**105**
Didim's cuisine as an aspect of vegan-friendliness	22
Addressing the needs of vegans	20
Abolishing/reducing animal exploitation	17
Social life aspects of Didim as a suitable vegan-friendly city	13
Didim's natural aspects to be vegan-friendly	9
Didim is not special regarding vegan-friendliness	7
Protection of animal rights and freedoms	6
Veganism as a philosophy	6
Didim’s internal (individual characteristics)	3
Didim as animal-friendly	2
PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A VEGAN-FRIENDLY DESTINATION	**86**
Educational activities and research	18
Municipality’s initiative	14
Festival activities & Organization of the festival	14
Declaration of Didim as vegan-friendly	12
Initial idea	9
Activities around the vegan-friendly concept	8
Stakeholders involved in Didim’s vegan-friendly initiative	5
Decision to abolish fireworks	2
Abundant vegan options at festival	2
Positive development of Didim as vegan-friendly	1
The festival is improving	1

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND STAKEHOLDER ROLES IN THE FESTIVAL	**69**
Individual roles in Vegfest and the vegan-friendly initiative	24
Many voluntary organizations got involved in the festival	15
Integrating stakeholders	11
Roles of the organizing committee members	8
Support/awareness of locals	6
TVD withdrew from the festival committee in the second year.	3
Roles of local businesses at Vegfest	2
COLLABORATIVE DECISION-MAKING IN THE FESTIVAL	**55**
A collaboration existed during festival preparations.	25
Each stakeholder's opinion was cared for	22
Lack of collaborative decision-making	4
Agreement between stakeholders about the festival format	2
Decision-making among organizers was collaborative	2
FEEDBACK AND SUGGESTIONS ABOUT VEGFEST	**46**
Shortcomings of the festival	16
Feedback of festival participants about the training for residents	11
High prices at Vegfest	4
Lack of profits from the festival	3
Non-vegan, animal-based products sold	3
Adult-based festival	3
Easier for high-budget municipalities to organize the festival	2
The festival's changed name and structure	2
No-post festival statistics	1
Suggestion to invite international cooks and cooking associations	1
TOURISM POTENTIAL OF DİDİM	**40**
Problems and weaknesses for tourism	10
Alternative tourism types	8
Tourism development	6
Many accommodation options	4
Effects of the pandemic	3
Seasonal tourism	3
Diverse resident profile	2
Limited accommodation	2
Cittaslow	1
Tourism receipts	1
AVAILABILITY OF VEGAN-FRIENDLY SERVICES (RESTAURANTS, HOTELS...)	**39**
Vegan options in restaurants, hotels, shops	16
No vegan options before	16
Vegan menus in restaurants	7

WEAKNESSES AND SUGGESTIONS OF DIDIM'S VEGAN-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE	**37**
Low impact of vegan-friendly development	12
Distrust for the actions of municipalities like kid/animal-friendly municipality	6
Vegan gatherings are needed	5
Regional actions are needed	4
Animal exploitation measures are not implemented	4
Time needed for the vegan-friendly city concept	2
Inadequate vegan travel experience	2
Beyond the Municipality's control	1
Shaky initiative	1
TOURISM PULL FACTORS	**33**
Natural pull factors of Didim	24
Cultural/historical pull factors of Didim	6
Didim's offerings for families and the British	2
The reasonable prices are a determinant to prefer Didim	1
TOURISTS' PROFILE	**29**
Domestic tourists	15
International tourists	12
Tourists' profile	2
MARKETING OF DIDIM AS VEGAN-FRIENDLY	**25**
Suitability for the festival	8
Promotional materials/communications	7
Awareness of Didim as vegan-friendly	5
Promotion of Didim	4
Advertising of the vegan-friendly municipality	1

APPENDIX C

AGGREGATED DIMENSIONS

1st order categories – respondent-driven terms/concepts	**2nd order themes**	**Aggregated dimensions**
Social awareness about veganism	Awareness	Awareness
Non-vegan, animal-based products sold	Lack of awareness	Awareness
Shortcomings of the festival	Lack of awareness	Awareness
Adult-based festival	Lack of awareness	Awareness
Financial benefits	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
The overall impact of Vegfest has been good	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
No vegan options before	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
Contribution of the festival to tourism	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
Increased vegan-friendly facilities	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
Restaurant and souvenir sales increased at Vegfest	Positive impacts of Vegfest	Awareness
Lack of profits from the festival	Negative outputs of the festival	Awareness
Local food introduced as a purpose of the festival	Aim of the festival	Awareness
Not just entertainment as a purpose of the festival	Aim of the festival	Awareness
Festival as cultural as a purpose of the festival	Aim of the festival	Awareness
Aiming to festival targeted vegans	Aim of the festival	Awareness
Positive participant feedback about the festival guest list	Positive participatory attitudes	Attitudes
Feedback of festival participants about the training for residents	Negative participatory attitudes	Attitudes
High prices at Vegfest	Negative attitudes	Attitudes
After Vegfest the municipality's changed attitude towards veganism	Changing attitudes	Attitudes
The festival's changed name and structure	Changing attitudes	Attitudes
Connecting with other vegans	Socializing attitudes	Attitudes
No post-festival statistics	Expectations	Expectations
Suggestion to invite international cooks and cooking associations	Expectations	Expectations
Didim's cuisine as an aspect of vegan-friendliness	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Abundant vegan options at festival	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Vegan options at restaurants, hotels, shops	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Vegan menus in restaurants	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Positive development of Didim as vegan-friendly	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
The festival is improving	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Social life aspects of Didim as a suitable vegan-friendly city	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Didim is not special regarding its vegan-friendliness	Social factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Addressing the needs of vegans	Individual needs	Becoming vegan-friendly

Natural pull factors of Didim Cultural/historical pull factors of Didim Didim's offerings for families and the British The reasonable prices are a determinant to prefer Didim	Pull factors	Becoming vegan-friendly
Domestic tourists International tourists	Tourist profile	Becoming vegan-friendly
Problems and weaknesses for tourism Alternative tourism types Tourism development Many accommodations option Seasonal tourism Diverse resident profile Limited accommodation Cittaslow Tourism receipts	Tourism potential of Didim	Becoming vegan-friendly
Didim's internal(individual) characteristics	Internal characteristics	Becoming vegan-friendly
Didim's natural to be vegan-friendly	Natural characteristics	Becoming vegan-friendly
Abolishing/reducing animal exploitation	Harmony with animal rights	Becoming vegan-friendly
Protection of animal rights and freedom	Harmony with animal rights	Becoming vegan-friendly
Didim as animal-friendly even before the Vegfest	Didim's image towards animals	Becoming vegan-friendly
Veganism as a philosophy	Connection with vegan philosophy	Becoming vegan-friendly
Initial idea	Opinion leader of vegan-friendly initiative	Becoming vegan-friendly
Declaration of Didim as vegan-friendly	Local authority	Becoming vegan-friendly
Municipality initiative	Local authority	Becoming vegan-friendly
Festival activities and organization of the festival	Festival organization	Becoming vegan-friendly
Educational activities and research	Educational and recreational initiatives	Becoming vegan-friendly
Activities around the vegan-friendly concept	Educational and recreational initiatives	Becoming vegan-friendly
Suitability for the festival Promotional materials/communications Awareness of Didim as vegan-friendly Promotion of Didim Advertising of the vegan-friendly municipality	Marketing of Didim as vegan-friendly	Becoming vegan-friendly
Individual roles in Vegfest and the vegan-friendly initiative Roles of the organizing committee members TVD withdrew from the festival committee in the second year	Roles of individual initiatives	Stakeholder's Collaboration in Sustainable Development
Many voluntary organizations got involved in the festival	Partnerships	Stakeholder's Collaboration in Sustainable Development
Easier for high-budget municipalities to organize the festival	Budgeting	Stakeholder's Collaboration in Sustainable Development

Support/awareness of locals	Participatory local involvement	Stakeholder's Collaboration in Sustainable Development
Roles of local businesses at Vegfest	Participatory local business contribution	Stakeholder's Collaboration in Sustainable Development

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