

THE IMPACT OF GASTRONOMY ENTERPRISES MANAGERS' PARTICIPATION IN TOURISM ACTIVITIES ON JOB SATISFACTION AND PROFESSIONAL EXPECTATIONS

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Abstract: Tourism events play a key role in destination marketing, enhancing regional promotion and increasing visitor inflows. This study investigates the extent to which gastronomy enterprises in Bishkek engage with tourism events. A survey was conducted with 851 enterprise managers. Results reveal strong interest in events abroad and in Bishkek, but limited engagement with other domestic events. Strengthening the quality and frequency of tourism events and fostering sectoral involvement are recommended. This study aims to examine the impact of gastronomy enterprises (GE) managers' participation in tourism activities on their job satisfaction (JS) and professional expectations (PE), focusing on GE operating in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. A quantitative survey was conducted with 851 GE managers in Bishkek. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from validated scales, and analyzed with descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and multiple regression. Findings revealed that GE managers actively follow tourism events held abroad and in Bishkek but show limited engagement in events across Kyrgyzstan. Regression results indicated that participation in tourism activities significantly affects JS and PE ($R^2 = 0.725$, $p < 0.001$), with a positive correlation between JS and PE ($r = 0.221$, $p < 0.05$). This underscores the role of tourism events in enhancing managerial motivation and engagement. Participation in tourism activities contributes positively to GE managers' JS and PE, highlighting the importance of encouraging greater sectoral involvement in domestic and international events. Integrating tourism activities into human resource and professional development strategies may foster more sustainable and competitive enterprises.

Keywords: tourism, sustainable tourism, event tourism, gastronomy enterprises, Bishkek

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INTRODUCTION

Today, despite the high number of newly opened enterprises, we also see a significant number of enterprises closing. This situation arises from the highly competitive nature of the tourism sector. Various factors such as the quality of services offered by enterprises, their financial status, and the effectiveness of marketing activities all influence this competitive structure (Antonova, 2022). Considering the large number of enterprises, there has been an increase in competition as enterprises have started offering concepts that cater to every demand and budget. In such a competitive environment, enterprises need to be more creative to stand out in the sector and must keep track of various factors such as customer satisfaction, marketing activities, innovation, and global trends. Among these methods are events such as festivals, workshops, congresses, and seminars. By participating in such events, enterprises not only enhance their promotional and advertising activities but also play a crucial role in ensuring customer loyalty and building an image that is open to innovation (Choo et al., 2022; Geng et al., 2024; Benhaida et al., 2024; Jiménez-Partearroyo et al., 2024).

Tourism events play an important role in shaping society, culture, and the economy, and are becoming increasingly popular worldwide. They attract the attention of tourism professionals, investors, operators, local communities, and tourists. Additionally, since these events increase tourism activity in the region, they also contribute to revitalizing the local economy (Akhundova, 2024). Restaurants, cafés, bakeries, hotels and other gastronomy enterprises offer visitors a unique tourism experience and the opportunity to explore the various tourism options in the region, by showcasing local cuisine, diverse food offers, authentic culinary heritage and enhancing destination branding (Zhu & Yasami, 2021; Kalenjuk Pivarski et al., 2024). In this regard, GE contribute not only to generating income for the destination but also to promotional and marketing activities. This situation supports overall economic development as it increases the region's and the country's income and contributes to job creation (Yıldırım & Kırıcı Tekelli, 2022; Piboonrungrroj et al.,

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2023). All these reasons show that tourism impacts all stakeholders, especially in the tourism sector. This research was conducted to determine the expectations of tourism enterprises managers regarding tourism events, to identify how GE are affected by such events, and to assess their level of participation and motivations for participating in these events. The study was carried out in Bishkek, a significant tourism destination in Central Asia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Festivals

Festivals are defined as social celebrations that occur on specific months and days for various reasons. Festivals, which are referred to as festivities, carnivals, ceremonies, and celebrations in different regions and languages, are more broadly described as events. Since their content, purposes, timing, locations, and organizational methods vary, it is not possible to provide a precise definition of the term festival. Additionally, the reason for the lack of consensus in the definitions proposed by researchers is the different perspectives from which they view the organized festivals, including social, cultural, and economic aspects (Şengül & Genç, 2016; Sormaz et al., 2025). Festivals offer an opportunity to escape from the daily routine and socialize with family and friends in a larger community, positively impacting the standard of living in society (Pavluković et al., 2017). In their study, Kim & Uysal (2003) suggest that perceived socio-economic impacts can be categorized under four headings: community attachment, economic benefits, social costs, and social incentives. While these four social impacts are not widely adopted, they note that the positive economic effects are more likely to be perceived as higher than other social cost and social incentive factors. Additionally, the local population benefits from an increased standard of living, but is also exposed to price increases in goods and services.

Work Shops

Workshops provide a great platform for knowledge sharing for all participating individuals and enterprises (Metsaots, 2016). In the past, these events were organized primarily for students, but today they are also planned and organized for industry professionals and managers. Therefore, GE employees and managers, who are unable to dedicate time to their personal and professional development due to the industry's demanding schedule, can use these events to enhance their success in an increasingly competitive sector environment for themselves and their enterprises.

Tourism Congresses

Conferences are “people with (partly) shared interests and goals meet face-to-face to share experiential stories, research findings, educational materials, and future visions” (de Vries & Pieters, 2007). In events such as conferences or symposiums, where scientific sessions take place, papers are presented orally and later published in full text. With this tangible outcome, they contribute to the scientific field by providing information on current changes and developments in the area of focus (Boyras & Sandıkçı, 2018). The aim of tourism conferences is to bring together academics in the field of tourism studies and stakeholders from the tourism industry to raise awareness in both academia and the sector within the framework of a set theme, as well as to contribute to the development of cooperation between academia and the industry (Karamustafa, 2013). Additionally, it is an important organization for examining the tourism sector at local, national, and international levels, identifying encountered issues, and offering solutions (Çakıcı, 2009).

Tourism Workshops

Tourism workshops are meetings where scientists and experts in the field gather to conduct preliminary studies and evaluations on a specific topic (TDK, 2024). Tourism workshops are scientific and sectoral meetings attended by tourism sector representatives from the region where the workshop is held, public institutions, local governments, academics, other private sector representatives related to the workshop theme, and non-governmental organizations. In these meetings, where the selected topic is thoroughly discussed or proposals are developed for solving the issue, suggestions are made for all participants to help improve regional tourism and address its problems.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Purpose

Many different tourism events are held in various parts of the world. These events have a significant impact on attracting tourists to the region and country. Additionally, in connection with various events, they help increase the length of stay for these tourists, provide funding for the local economy, raise employment levels, improve the destination's image, strengthen the community spirit, and in still national pride among the local population. Furthermore, they play an important role in extending the tourism season, reducing seasonality costs, and increasing the value of local tourist products (Hall & Sharples, 2008). The aim of this study is to determine the expectations of GE from tourism events and to develop recommendations to increase their participation in these events. Since a significant portion of these events are organized primarily for the local population, the participation of tourism professionals remains limited. Events that cannot be embraced by tourism professionals are not considered to have fully achieved their intended success (Mutu, 2022). Therefore, the research is important for ensuring the participation of investors, managers, operators, and employees of GE in tourism events, as it allows these events to be embraced by the enterprises, helping them achieve the targeted success, while also enabling enterprises representatives to benefit professionally from these events.

Research Model

The research was conducted to determine the participation of GE operating in Bishkek, the capital and largest city of

Kyrgyzstan, in organized tourism activities and to identify the impact of these activities on the job satisfaction (JS) and professional expectations (PE) of middle and senior-level managers working in GE. In this regard, the research aims to determine the level of participation of GE in tourism activities in Bishkek and to assess the representation of these activities at national and international levels, the extent to which managers are influenced by these activities, and the role of GE in organizing these events. The model applied in the research and the proposed hypotheses were developed (Figure 1).

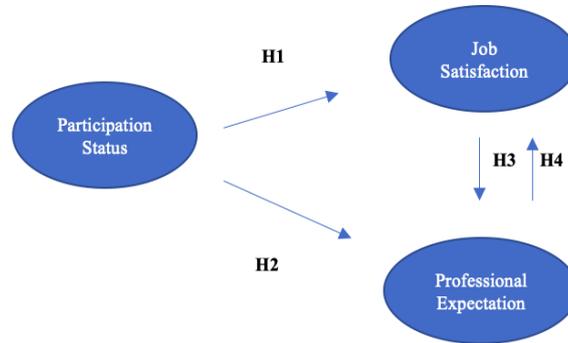


Figure 1. Research model

H1: The participation of GE in tourism activities affects the JS of their managers.

H2: The participation of GE in tourism activities affects the PE of their managers.

H3: There is a relationship between the JS level of managers and their PE.

H4: There is a relationship between the PE level of managers and their JS.

Sample

In cases where it is unnecessary, costly, or impossible to reach the entire population, general trends related to the population are often determined through sampling (Şimşek, 2012). A sample survey is a method of systematically collecting data about people's behaviors and attitudes by conducting interviews with a specifically selected group of participants who provide information about themselves and their opinions (Goodfellow, 2023).

In the study, tourism sector operating in Kyrgyzstan constitute the population. However, considering time, labor, other costs, and limitations, it was determined that the required number could be reached for conducting the research in the Bishkek region (Napa Truffle Festival, 2024), and tourism sector employees from enterprises operating in Bishkek were selected as the sample. Due to the difficulty in reaching the required number within the given time frame, it was deemed appropriate to select employees from GE in Bishkek who volunteered to participate in the research and hold managerial positions as the sample. Therefore, the sample of the study consists of 851 managers from GE.

Data Collection

In the study, the survey method, one of the quantitative data collection techniques, was used. The survey is one of the most commonly used data collection techniques in social sciences and other applied fields. Although surveys are used for various purposes, they are widely applied in academic research, government data collection/census tools, market research, and public opinion surveys (Bernard, 2000). The survey used in the study consists of questions that have been previously used and tested for validity and reliability (Mutu, 2022). The reliability of the study is influenced by various random and systematic errors that may arise during the data collection process (Ural & Kılıç, 2013). In research conducted in the field of social sciences, when the reliability analysis is performed using the Alpha method, a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.60 is generally considered to indicate that the scale is reliable (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004).

A pilot test was conducted with 50 participants from the sample group. It was determined that the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) value of the data obtained from the pilot test was >0.60 , and it was concluded that the scale was reliable. The survey scale used in the study has been adapted in accordance with its intended purpose by utilizing multiple sources. The survey includes a total of 11 questions in three sections (demographic information, professional information, and enterprises activity information) to identify the characteristics of the participants and their enterprises. Additionally, the enterprises' status of following tourism events (3 questions; CA: 0.815) and their status of participating in tourism events (15 questions; CA: 0.900) were assessed in two sections, with a total of 18 questions aimed at gathering responses regarding their approaches to tourism events.

Evaluation of Data

The data obtained in the study were evaluated using a statistical program. For interpreting demographic information, Frequency and percentage values were used, while Frequency, percentage values, and ANOVA analyses were used for interpreting the other sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Data

Of the 851 tourism managers who participated in the study, 67.2% are male and 32.8% are female. It was determined that 60.9% of the participants were between the ages of 26 and 40, and 80.7% were born outside of Bishkek city. It was determined that 50.8% of the participants had a bachelor's degree and 40.2% received their vocational training from a

vocational school. Additionally, 69.8% of the participants held managerial positions as chefs, 57.1% worked in the service department, and 49.2% had more than 10 years of experience in the sector. It was determined that 40.5% of the enterprises participating in the study were managed by department heads and the general manager, 39.4% applied restaurants management, and 66.0% had a guest profile that included both local and foreign guests.

Data of Tourism Event

When examining the participants' status of following tourism events, it was found that 65.8% followed tourism events held abroad, 52.6% did not follow tourism events held in Kyrgyzstan, and 55.0% followed tourism events held in Bishkek. When the obtained data were evaluated statistically, it was found that the participants' status of following tourism events abroad ($p < 0.001$), in Kyrgyzstan ($p < 0.01$), and in Bishkek city ($p < 0.01$) were statistically significant (Table 1).

Table 1. Following Tourism Events (** $p < 0.001$, *** $p < 0.001$)

	Restaurant		Café & Bakery		Others		Total		f	p
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Held Abroad										
Yes	196	23.0	139	16.3	225	26.4	560	65.8	8.406	0.000***
No	178	20.9	69	8.1	44	5.2	291	34.2		
Held in Kyrgyzstan										
Yes	170	20.0	83	9.8	150	17.6	403	47.4	7.215	0.001**
No	204	23.8	125	14.7	119	14.0	448	52.6		
Held in Bishkek										
Yes	180	21.2	91	10.7	197	23.1	468	55.0	4.764	0.009**
No	194	22.8	117	13.7	72	8.5	383	45.0		

It was determined that 69.4% of the managers of the participating enterprises did not attend/support national/international tourism events, 57.2% did not attend/support festivals, 66.2% tourism fairs, 63.0% tourism conferences, 73.3% tourism tours. When the results were examined, it was found that there were significant differences between groups in festivals ($p < 0.01$), tourism fairs ($p < 0.001$), tourism conferences ($p < 0.001$), and tourism tours ($p < 0.001$) (Table 2).

The impact of participation in tourism events on JS and PE

The impact of enterprises managers' participation in tourism events on their JS and PE is provided in Table 3.

Table 2. Participation in Tourism Events Held (** $p < 0.001$; *** $p < 0.001$)

	Abroad		In Kyrgyzstan		In Bishkek City		Total		f	p
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%		
National/International Tourism Events										
Didn't support/participate	717	84.3	559	65.7	493	57.9	590	69.4	2.310	0.101
As a sponsor	53	6.2	117	13.5	178	20.9	116	13.6		
In the organizing committee	29	3.4	118	13.9	96	11.3	81	9.5		
Other	52	6.1	57	6.9	84	9.9	64	7.5		
Festivals										
Didn't support/participate	736	86.5	495	58.3	229	26.9	487	57.2	7.531	0.000**
As a sponsor	57	6.7	175	20.6	226	26.6	153	18.0		
In the organizing committee	41	4.8	117	13.5	245	28.8	134	15.8		
Other	17	2.0	64	7.6	151	17.7	77	9.0		
Tourism Fairs										
Didn't support/participate	770	90.5	543	63.8	375	44.1	563	66.2	19.144	0.000***
As a sponsor	36	4.2	143	16.9	249	29.3	143	16.8		
In the organizing committee	31	3.6	128	15.0	116	13.6	92	10.8		
Other	14	1.7	37	4.3	111	13.0	53	6.2		
Tourism Conferences										
Didn't support/participate	776	91.2	513	60.3	319	37.5	536	63.0	34.367	0.000***
As a sponsor	41	4.8	193	22.7	202	23.7	145	17.0		
In the organizing committee	23	2.7	78	9.2	248	29.1	116	13.6		
Other	11	1.3	67	7.8	82	9.6	54	6.4		
Tourist Tours										
Didn't support/participate	774	91.0	599	70.3	501	58.9	624	73.3	16.314	0.000***
As a sponsor	40	4.7	140	16.5	113	13.3	98	11.5		
In the organizing committee	26	3.0	60	7.1	96	11.3	61	7.2		
Other	11	1.3	52	6.1	141	16.6	68	8.01		

Table 3. Multiple Regression Analysis on the Impact of Participation in Tourism Events on JS and PE

Variables	B	SS	B	T	P	Tolerance	VIF
	-2.326	1.314		14.561	0.000		
JS	0.211	0.035	0.152	10.175	0.000	0.949	1.061
EP	0.757	0.043	0.526	18.325	0.000	0.865	1.061
R=0.880		R ² =0.725		Adj.R ² =0.810		F=105.311 p<0.001	

In multiple regression analysis, the R² value is expected to fall between 0 and 1 (Cohen, 1992). When examining the evaluation of the impact of GE managers' participation in tourism activities on their JS and PE through multiple regression analysis, it is observed that the R² value is 0.725. This result indicates that participation in tourism activities has an effect on the managers' JS and PE. Furthermore, when the research model was tested, the linear relationship between the variables included in the model was also found to be statistically significant (p<0.001). Based on these results, the tested hypotheses H1 (The participation of GE in tourism activities affects the JS of their managers) and H2 (The participation of GE in tourism activities affects the PE of their managers) were accepted.

Table 4. The Relationship between JS and PE (** p<0.05)

Variables	JS	
	R	
PE		0.221**
	P	0.038
	N	851

The Relationship between JS and PE

The relationship between the JS and PE of the participating GE managers is presented in Table 4.

Upon examining the relationship between the levels of JS and PE of tourism managers, a statistically significant positive correlation was identified between JS and PE (r = 0.221; p < 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that JS during participation in tourism activities has an impact on PE (H3), and conversely, PE also influence JS (H4). This finding substantiates both the H3 (There is a relationship between the JS level of managers and their PE) and H4 hypotheses of the study.

DISCUSSIONS

In general, tourism events organized for both public and private institutions in all countries aim to develop and strengthen regional and national tourism. These events, which have objectives such as working on, discussing, and finding solutions to a specific topic, are important not only for the public sector and local governments but also for GE that will serve as sectoral supporters. However, due to reasons such as negligence or lack of importance given by factors such as the organizing company, the host region, or country, GE are often not participating in these events. A significant group of these enterprises is GE.

However, in terms of regional and national tourism, it is crucial for the sustainability of these activities to ensure the participation and support of GE operating in the region, as well as to gain the participation and support of the public and the people. In this way, tourism can contribute to the region, area, and country in various fields such as economic, cultural, and social, while also ensuring the sustainability of these events. As a result of the research, it was found that enterprises follow tourism events held abroad and in the city of Bishkek, but do not follow tourism events held in Kyrgyzstan. Additionally, it was determined that enterprises did not "support/participate" in tourism events held abroad, in Kyrgyzstan, and in the city of Bishkek. In Altay's (2019) study, it was emphasized that tourism activities generally contribute to the district in many ways, supporting the professional and personal development of the local people, improving the district's infrastructure, ensuring the protection of nature, and contributing to the increase and development of the district's tourist areas. In the study by Türker et al. (2016), it is emphasized that tourism has increased the quality of life for the local people in Safranbolu. Aydın (2018) highlights that tourism has brought new job opportunities to the region and provided additional income economically. Bayat (2010), Çelikkanat (2015), Güneş (2014), Hançer & Mancı (2017), Işık et al. (2016), and Tayfun & Kılıçlar (2014) have reached similar results in their studies conducted in Iğdır, Bodrum, Kepez & Konyaaltı, Diyarbakır, Erzurum-Pasinler, and Alanya & Gazipaşa, respectively. In line with these results, domestic and international tourism events should be increased both in terms of quality and quantity. It is inconceivable for GE to be excluded or left out of the development of the quality of tourism events. On the contrary, GE must be actively involved in these events, either as enterprises themselves or through their representatives.

Dwyer et al. (2009) stated that tourism stakeholders, rather than seeing future events as beyond their control, have the opportunity to shape the future to some extent according to their own needs, and one of these opportunities is the determination of management strategies for modern tourism. The participation of enterprises in tourism events is important as it supports the promotional, advertising, and marketing activities of the event. Enterprises will make a positive contribution to increasing external participation in the events. GE will contribute to the promotion of the district, province, region, and even nationwide, and even internationally, and to the marketing of the region's tourist products. In particular, by including GE in the organizing committees of these events, it will be possible to ensure that the enterprises take ownership of the events more actively. In this case, it is believed that enterprises, either through their management or staff participation, or financially, will support the events.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between the participation of GE managers in tourism activities and their levels of job satisfaction and professional expectations. This indicates that involvement in tourism-related initiatives may enhance managers' overall engagement, career motivation, and satisfaction with their professional roles. Such findings align with previous research emphasizing the role of experiential and industry-specific engagement in increasing job-related fulfillment among professionals (Cohen, 1992; Smith & Jones, 2018). Furthermore, the observed correlation suggests a reciprocal dynamic: not only do tourism activities contribute to higher levels of job satisfaction, but elevated professional expectations may also encourage more active participation in such initiatives. This two-way relationship highlights the importance of providing continuous professional development opportunities through tourism activities, which may act as informal learning experiences contributing to personal and organizational growth. From an organizational perspective, these results underscore the necessity of integrating tourism

activities into broader human resource and leadership development strategies within GE. By fostering environments where managers can engage with tourism networks, events, and collaborations, enterprises may benefit from a more motivated and strategically oriented leadership structure. However, it is important to note that while the findings are statistically significant, the correlation is moderate ($r = 0.221$), suggesting that other factors—such as organizational culture, individual personality traits, or external economic conditions—may also influence job satisfaction and professional expectations. Future research could further explore these variables and expand the sample size to increase generalizability.

Limitations

This study contributes to the tourism literature, as well as other widely available publications on tourism, by providing recommendations that also aim to develop the tourism sector. It ensures the lasting contributions to the tourism potential of the Bishkek destination. However, despite this, it still contains some limitations.

First of all, the time limitation of the study has been a factor. The surveys were conducted after the festivals in the destination had ended. Another limitation of the study is volunteerism. The data in the study were collected only from voluntary participants. Another limitation is that it focuses on the managers/operators of tourism establishments. This required the study to be cross-sectional, which limited its ability to make causal inferences.

Recommendations of Future Research

Considering the limitations of this study, some suggestions can be developed for future research. In future studies, data can be collected over a broader time period. If this time frame includes the period before the festivals, rather than just after they have ended, different correlations and results can be identified, and the recommendations based on these results can be expanded. Additionally, the sample could be expanded by engaging with non-volunteer tourism professionals during the initial meeting and convincing them to participate by discussing the importance of the study, rather than relying solely on voluntary participants. Since the cross-sectional nature of the study limits causal inferences, it is recommended that future studies take this into account. Tourism establishments are an important part of the tourism sector; however, future research could include all stakeholders of the tourism sector in the sample group. Additionally, placing more emphasis on or providing more detail regarding the reasons for attending/not attending festivals could lead to the development of different recommendations for the tourism sector in the destination compared to this study. Thus, a different perspective will be developed in the enhancement of the tourism potential of the destination. Finally, this study identifies the expectations of tourism establishments operating in a destination regarding tourism events organized in the destination and includes and discusses recommendations to increase these expectations. As a result, tourism events are organized for various purposes that can contribute to the tourism sector, including enhancing the tourism potential of the destination, improving destination tourism, increasing tourist satisfaction, ensuring tourists' intention to revisit, and developing word-of-mouth marketing. Therefore, it is important for all tourism stakeholders to contribute and support these events, which serve such broad purposes. To achieve this, tourism managers need to increase their efforts and consider the developed recommendations.

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