

EXAMINATION OF THE MODERATOR ROLE OF COUNTRY IMAGE IN THE EFFECT OF EWOM AND EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT ON VISIT INTENTION

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Abstract: Restaurants that operate in any country and serve food from another country create an image of those countries in customers. Based on this, this research was designed considering that Turkish, Italian, and Japanese restaurants operating in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, create the image of their own countries among these customers and also affect the customers' intention to visit to their own countries. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth and emotional involvement on the intention to visit foreign country restaurants and the moderator role of the country images of these restaurants on this effect. The study was analyzed with data obtained from Azerbaijani consumers who visited restaurants serving Turkish, Italian, and Japanese cuisine. Within the scope of the study, 12 hypotheses were analyzed with SPSS and Process v4 statistical analysis programs. As a result of the study, all hypotheses were supported. It was found that both E-WOM and emotional attachment on the intention to visit a restaurant were higher in Japanese cuisine compared to other countries. The moderator role of country image in the effect of E-WOM and emotional attachment on the intention to visit was found to be the highest in Japanese cuisine and the lowest in Turkish cuisine. It can be said that the findings of the study can be used especially for restaurant operators in decision-making processes.

Keywords: country image, emotional involvement, word of mouth, visit intention

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INTRODUCTION

Tourism is a fascinating pastime that allows individuals to learn about new countries, cultures, cuisines, traditions, and lifestyles. Traditional food experience based on culture (gastronomy) has become an exciting topic for tourists worldwide (Sutiadiningsih et al., 2023). Tourists often organize meaningful associations with the image and its symbolic and experiential values and keep these associations in their memories (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993; Cai, 2002; Lai et al., 2020; Akay, 2020). The image of a place is considered an important factor in the traveler's investment and decision-making process (MacKay and Fesenmaier, 1997; Tasci and Gartner, 2007). Country images are important external cues in product evaluations. Country images elicit associations and can influence purchase decisions. A positive country image can promote a positive reputation for the entire product category (Hakala et al., 2013). The concept of food image and the role that food and culinary traditions play in the formation of the destination image have also been addressed (Zain et al., 2018). A person's emotions, attitudes, ideas, and beliefs affect the person's image of a product, and this image has a greater impact on human behavior than objective facts (Martineau, 1958). Studies in the literature on country image mostly consist of studies on product-country image (PCI) or "country-of-origin" (COO) (Maher and Carter, 2011; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2003). Studies on product-country image include studies that analyze how the perception of a country, and its residents affect consumers' attitudes towards that country's products (Heslop et al., 2004; Laroche et al., 2005; Maher and Carter, 2011) and are based on structural foundations. Some studies indicate that the impact of country image may differ across service categories (e.g., Berentzen et al., 2008). Studies on how information about the country of origin of a service offering influences consumer purchasing behavior are related to banking, airlines, and insurance (Pecotich et al., 1996; Lin and Chen, 2006; Berentzen et al., 2008), although specific to food services are scarce (Martinelli and De Canio, 2019).

Tourists' word-of-mouth information about their experiences with other tourists in the context of a tourist destination and being strong enough to make a decision expresses the satisfaction of the tourist with both positive and negative information (Bigne et al., 2001). Today, electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) is considered one of the most effective forms of communication in tourism businesses. The use of eWOM as an alternative decision aid on social media can benefit consumers (Silaban et al., 2023). Online review ratings and comments have significant effects on restaurant selection (Jeong and Jang,

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2011; Aureliano-Silva, 2021; Zhang et al., 2010). Online ratings are scores obtained from customer evaluations by websites, and online comments are short texts expressing customers' experiences with a company (Mariani et al., 2019). Involvement theory, which has become more important in the field of marketing, explains how individual differences can affect consumer purchasing and communication behavior (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). The perceived importance or relevance of a product or purchase decision for consumers is described as involvement (Petty et al., 1983). According to involvement theory, customers react according to the importance they give to a product, which affects purchase intention (Laurent and Kapferer, 1985). Customers' evaluations and comments serve as a signal for other people evaluating alternatives on the same online platform to make purchase decisions (Aureliano-Silva et al., 2021). Online review comments can be functional or emotional. Emotional comments refer to consumers expressing their feelings about these attributes in their own words (Standing et al., 2016). After the analysis of previous studies, it was seen that the cognitive dimension of "involvement" was mostly addressed (Brijs et al., 2011). This study addresses the emotional dimension of participation. While tourism literature proves that many factors affect travelers' consumption of tourism products (Lepp and Gibson, 2008; Hsu et al., 2009), research on the effects of restaurant meals on the country image and thus on visiting that country has been insufficient in the literature. Following other studies such as Nadeau et al. (2008), Kim and Yoon (2003), a model has been developed that connects the country image with the destination image and integrates the cognitive and emotional components of the destination image in a single structure. While these authors explain the cognitive part with the country image dimensions, other authors (Chen and Phou, 2013) consider the destination image as a cognitive component of tourist attitude.

Following these criteria, a new model has been tested in this study. In the literature, studies have been conducted on country images and culinary products of countries such as Thailand (Lertputtarak, 2012; Tsai and Wang, 2017; Promsivapallop and Kannaovakun, 2019), Vietnam (Chi et al., 2019; Yasami et al., 2021), Bosnia (Peštek and Činjurević, 2014), Türkiye (Önçel et al., 2018), Lebanon (Assaker and O'Connor, 2021), Indonesia (Pahrudin et al., 2023), Finland (Hakala et al., 2013), Italy (Martinelli and De Canio, 2019; Pagliuca and Rosciano, 2018). Considering all these, the main purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of electronic word of mouth and emotional involvement on the intention to visit foreign country restaurants and the moderator role of the country images of these restaurants on this effect. In this study, the electronic word-of-mouth communication and emotional involvement originating from Italian, Turkish and Japanese cuisines in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan were analyzed on the behavior of visiting that country.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

1. Electronic Word of Mouth (EWOM)

One of the sources of information in communication sources is electronic word of mouth (e-WOM). Many studies are conducted in marketing and tourism using electronic word of mouth marketing. Electronic word of mouth communication is "all information communication made to consumers directly or through internet-based technology about the use of certain goods and services" (Pahrudin et al., 2023). Electronic word of mouth (e-WOM) affects tourists' decisions in the tourism sector. Some studies have been conducted on the relationship between e-WOM and visit intention. Reichheld and Sasser (1990) accepted the recommendation of the product to others as a specific indicator of future behavioral intention. Another important indicator of positive post-purchase behavioral intentions is the positive spread of the product to others (Boulding et al., 1993). Zeithaml et al. (1993) emphasized that positive word of mouth communication is the primary information tools for consumers. Tourists who have a satisfactory experience are more likely to recommend the destinations they visit to their friends and relatives (Beeho and Prentice, 1997).

Williams and Soutar (2009) argued that this is important in tourism because new business relies on positive word-of-mouth marketing. Hutchinson et al. (2009) suggested that tourists who intend to revisit are more likely to recommend the destination to others. Liu and Jang (2009) used word-of-mouth, recommendation, and repeat purchase as indicators in their research on post-meal behavioral intentions. Wang (2015) found that e-WOM affects tourists' intention to visit a destination. Abubakar et al. (2017) found that e-WOM can affect tourists' intention to visit in health tourism. The study conducted by Williams and Buttle (2014) revealed that word-of-mouth marketing can influence tourists' perceptions and behaviors regarding their visit intentions. Therefore, word-of-mouth marketing can predict and influence tourist behavior (Zhang et al., 2010). The study conducted by Assaker and O'Connor (2021) with data obtained from participants in the United Kingdom and France examined the effects of various electronic word-of-mouth platforms (travel websites, social media, photo and video sharing platforms, blogs, and online communities) on visit intention in Lebanon.

The study conducted by González-Rodríguez et al. (2022) with an online survey from 460 participants examined the relationships between the credibility of the electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) source, perceived risk, and information usefulness, and how these affect tourists' destination visit intention and online review participation. Pahrudin et al. (2023) study examined the tourist behavior in the post-earthquake disaster linkage between information sources (word of mouth and electronic word of mouth) and risk perception towards tourists' intention to visit a destination in Indonesia. The study conducted by Silaban et al. (2023) with data from 263 individuals examines the information adoption model to determine how consumers adopt eWOM on Instagram and its impact on travel behavior. Meenakshy et al. (2024) studied the electronic word of mouth (eWOM) sharing intentions among domestic tourists on personal and public online networks. The analysis of data from 630 domestic tourists visiting five major tourist destinations in India revealed that the friendliness of the destination residents and the natural beauty of the destination affect the overall destination experience of the tourists.

H1: Electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) has a positive impact on visit intention

2. Emotional involvement

Product image cannot be defined from only one perspective, it is constructed from both cognitive and emotional aspects

(Dichter, 1985). While cognitive image expresses the totality of a person's beliefs and attitudes towards the features of a product and is the precursor of emotional image (Holbrook, 1987), emotional image represents the person's feelings and emotions about the product (Stern and Krakover, 1993). Tourists are very interested in the historical value of food in each area they visit (Pavlidis and Markantonatou, 2020). Koufaris (2002) examined the effects of emotional and cognitive reactions to visiting a virtual store on revisit intentions and revealed an indirect relationship between emotional involvement and behavioral intentions. In a study examining the use of technological products by Pohlmeier and Blessing (2011), it was determined that emotional commitment has a positive effect on behavioral intentions. In a study conducted by Yao (2013), the mediating effects of tourists' emotional involvement in the destination were investigated in order to evaluate the relationship between tourist motivation and satisfaction. Biswas et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between destination characteristics and tourist satisfaction and the extent to which emotional involvement mediates the relationship between destination characteristics and tourist satisfaction. Lai et al., 2020 analyzed the predictive power of cognitive and emotional food image components on potential tourists' behavioral intentions by using Chinese tourists' perception of Australia as a context. Aureliano-Silva et al. (2021) investigated the effect of online reviews on consumers' restaurant visit intentions with the mediating role of involvement.

H2: Emotional involvement has a positive impact on visit intention

3. Country image

Recently, destination image has received considerable attention in tourism literature (Alvarez and Campo, 2014; Bruwer et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Papadimitriou et al., 2018). Although there is a large body of literature on behavioral intention models that destination image positively and directly affects, there is very little research that facilitates the understanding of country image as a determinant of destination image in behavioral intention models (Palau-Saumell et al., 2016). Ouellette and Wood (1998) suggested that past behaviors explain future behavioral intentions. Sönmez and Graefe (1998) and Petrick et al. (2001) stated that past behaviors are a predictor of travelers' revisit intentions. In the study conducted by Lam and Hsu (2006), it was suggested that past behaviors increase travelers' predictive intentions to choose Hong Kong as a travel destination. Ryu and Jang (2006) found a positive causal relationship between past behaviors and tourists' intention to consume local cuisine in travel destinations. On the other hand, destination image psychologically represents a person's perceptions and feelings about a destination (Crompton, 1979). In light of Crompton's definition of destination image, tourism researchers have suggested that although destination image is a multidimensional structure that includes cognitive and emotional images, the emotional evaluation of a destination largely depends on cognitive evaluations (Lin et al., 2007; Luque-Martinez et al., 2007).

They concluded that local cuisine is one of the important elements in the formation of the destination image (Zain et al., 2018), and this positively affects tourists' intentions to revisit and spread positive word of mouth (Kim, 2018; Liu et al., 2017; Prayag et al., 2017). In a study conducted by Lertputtarak (2012) using survey data collected from 476 foreign visitors, tourists' perceptions of destination image and Thai food image were examined and the relationship between these two variables and tourists' revisit intentions was analyzed. In a study conducted by Hakala et al. (2013) using a survey among American, French, and Swiss university students, the country image of Finland was examined among potential consumers of Finnish products. In a study conducted by Martinelli and De Canio (2019), data were collected from Danish customers of Italian restaurants in Copenhagen using a structured questionnaire and the role played by the image of Italian cuisine in shaping customers' attitudes was examined. As a result of a study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2020) with customers eating at Thai and Korean restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the important role of the emotional country of origin image in the relationship with the cuisine image and subsequently with behavioral intention was determined. In the study conducted by Yasami et al. (2021) a survey was conducted with 411 Chinese tourists visiting Phuket to examine the multidimensional structure of food image, evaluate the impact of destination food image on tourist loyalty intentions, and examine the mediating effect of food satisfaction on this relationship. In the study conducted by Nguyen and Hsu (2022), the relationships between electronic word of mouth (eWOM), destination image, and visit intentions of Southeast Asian solo female travelers towards India as a tourist destination were examined. In the study conducted by Kar et al. (2024), the dimensions affecting the destination food image in the state of Odisha were examined with a sample of 270 participants in India. As a result of the study, it was found that five independent variables, namely attitude, social media, local food experience, food culture and advertising, had a positive and significant effect on the destination food image.

H3: Country image positively moderates the impact on between electronic word of mouth (E-WOM) and visit intention.

H4: Country image positively moderates the impact on between emotional involvement and visit intention.

4. Visit intention

In studies conducted in the field of tourism, behavioral intentions are often interpreted as the intention to visit, revisit, or repurchase, and the desire to recommend the tourism product to others. Visit intention is the customer's intention to visit a new destination or recommend it to others. The more interested the customer is, the higher the intention to visit. According to Jeong and Jang (2011), restaurant service quality, ambiance and pricing are all components of eWOM and affect customers' visit intention. A study by Loi et al. (2017) found that a destination's good service quality has a positive effect on satisfaction and revisit intention. Similarly, a study conducted by Tsai and Wang (2017) revealed that a positive image of Taiwanese food leads to tourists' revisit intention and willingness. Chi et al. (2019) revealed how important the cognitive image foreign tourists perceive of Vietnamese food is in forming their revisit intentions. Xu et al. (2019) investigated the role of positive and negative emotions in examining tourist satisfaction in the context of tourists' visits to museums and tourist attractions.

The study conducted by Yoopetch and Chirapanda (2024) examined the health and spa tourism intention from the perspective of international tourists visiting Thailand after COVID-19. The results of this study, which analyzed the

survey data collected from 403 international tourists visiting Thailand, found that satisfaction, service quality, and electronic word-of-mouth significantly affected the revisit intention of health tourists. The study conducted by Sugiyama et al. (2024) investigated the effect of tourism components on satisfaction and revisit intention based on the data of 269 young water park tourists. The results of the study found that attractiveness, accessibility, and main facilities were significant predictors of the satisfaction and revisit intention of young water park tourists.

METHODOLOGY

1. Purpose

Azerbaijan is a country rich in oil resources and oil revenues cover a significant share of the state budget. The development of non-oil-based production and services has been determined as one of the main goals in the country's future strategy. Different foreign country restaurants are available in each country, especially in big cities and cultural centers. These restaurants attract customers with the images of the countries where they serve their meals. The main purpose of this study is to analyse the intentions of customers who go to different country restaurants in their own city and eat the food of that country to travel to those countries. Therefore, the intentions of customers who go to the restaurants of three countries (Turkish, Italian, and Japanese) in Baku, the capital and the biggest city of Azerbaijan and taste the national food of these countries to travel to these countries were analyzed. In the research model, the visit intention was included as the dependent variable, and EWOM and emotional involvement were included as the independent variables. The country image variable was included in the model as a moderator variable and the level of its effect on the causality between the dependent and independent variables was tested. The variables and hypotheses of the research are shown in Figure 1. Figure 1 presents the research framework of this study. The independent variable is visit intention. The dependent variables are electronic word of mouth and emotional involvement. The moderating variable is country image.

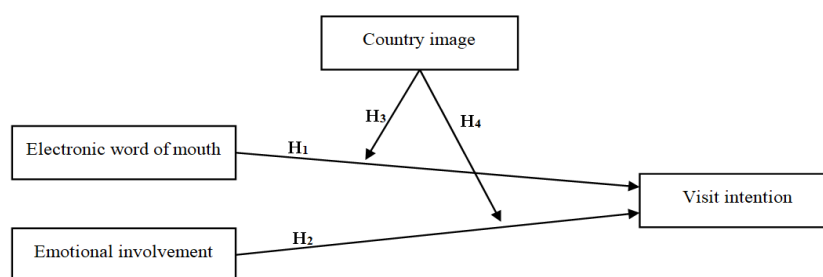


Figure 1. Research model

2. Design and Data collected

The food of a country is governed by environmental factors and is influenced by social, cultural, and religious roots (McIntosh, 1995). Relationships with foreign products depend on how the country of origin of this product affects its norms and internal values (Brijs et al., 2011). These three components, operationalized as cognitive (beliefs or knowledge towards the country and its products), emotional (feelings towards the country and its products) and conative (behavioral intentions towards its products), have also been used in studies on tourism country image (Campo and Álvarez, 2014; Sönmez and Sirakaya, 2002). Two other types of studies on PCI (product-country-image) argue that love and admiration for a certain country influence evaluations and attitudes towards products (Batra et al., 2000), while in the case of emotional studies, there are also normative studies that analyze the consumer. However, attitude, represented by a sequential process of behavior, cognitive, emotional, and inviting factors, is a sequential process and is represented by the "country image dimension" created by the person's eating and experiencing behavior in the restaurant in the conceptual model of the study. Destination image and food image form the basis of tourists' destination choices. In this study, the behavior of visiting a country after eating its food was analyzed. In the light of all this information, the survey of the research was designed, and data was collected. Initially, the survey items were prepared in English and then translated into Azerbaijani (McGorry, 2000). All measurements were made on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from "5" = "strongly agree" to "1" = "strongly disagree". Before the survey was shared among consumers, a pretest was conducted with 12 people. Since the relationship between Turkish, Italian, and Japanese cuisine restaurants in Azerbaijan and the images of these countries was analyzed within the scope of this research, a screening question was added to the survey. The screening question was as follows: "Have you eaten at a restaurant serving Turkish, Italian, or Japanese cuisine in the last 3 months?". Those who answered "yes" to this question continued the survey, while those who answered "no" did not participate in the survey.

3. Measures and Data Analysis Procedure

Previous studies in the literature were used to measure the variables. We used six items from Bambauer-Sachse and Mangold's (2011) study to assess EWOM and three items from Huang et al. (2013) study to measure Emotional Engagement. We measured country image with four items from Baldauf et al.'s (2009) study and visit intention with four items from Jang and Namkung's (2009) study. We used SPSS 25.0 to examine the data that we had gathered. The impacts of EWOM (H₁), Emotional Involvement (H₂), and the moderating role of country image on these variables were assessed analytically using simple regression. Nonetheless, SPSS PROCESS was used to investigate the moderating impact of country image (H₃, H₄). To test the working model, SPSS was utilized using Hayes (2022) PROCESS macro. One of the bootstrap analysis techniques for analyzing indirect effects that Hayes (2012, 2022) suggests using is the

PROCESS macro. The influence of the moderator variable on the relationships between these variables was examined after regression analysis was used to assess cause-and-effect relationships between the variables.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

1. Sample Characteristics

The study was based on the responses to the online survey questions that were given by 450 people. Among the survey participants, 287 (63,8%) people are female, 318 (70,7%) are single, 213 (47,3%) are bachelor's degree, 234 (52%) people's monthly income is between 0-499 AZN, 156 (34,7%) people are shopping once a month. Within the scope of the survey, 150 participants from all three countries participated in the survey using the purposive sampling method. Table 1 provides a summary of the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1. Sample profile

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	163	36.2%
	Female	287	63.8%
Marital status	Single	318	70.7%
	Married	132	29.3%
Education	School graduate	38	8.4%
	Bachelor's degree	193	42.9%
	Master's degree	213	47.3%
	PhD degree	6	1.3%
Monthly personal income (AZN)	0-499	234	52%
	500-999	143	31.8%
	1000-1499	45	10%
	1500-1999	24	5.3%
	2000 and over	4	0.9%
Work sector	Public sector	69	15.3%
	Private sector	188	41.8%
	Entrepreneur sector	101	22.4%
	Student	88	19.6%
	Unemployment	4	0.9%
Frequency	Every day	0	0%
	Twice in a week	1	0.2%
	Once in a week	52	13.8%
	Twice in a month	145	32.2%
	Once in a month	156	34.7%
	Once in three months	86	19.1%
Which country's restaurant do you prefer the most?	Türkiye	150	33.3%
	Italy	150	33.3%
	Japan	150	33.3%

2. Measurement of Validity and Reliability

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to evaluate the constructs of the model. To validate the measurement model, a factor analysis was initially conducted (Table 2). All items of the variables showed high factor loadings. Cronbach's Alpha was used to ensure that the scales were internally consistent before conducting the reliability study (Hair et al., 2010). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient can be found between 0 and 1. For all constructs, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were determined to be higher than the required standard of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2010). The results of the validity and reliability analysis of the data set are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Factor analysis

Variables	Items	Factor Load	Total Variance Explained	KMO	Cronbach Alpha
Electronic word of mouth (EWOM)	EWOM-1	0.914	73%	0.867	0.925
	EWOM-2	0.911			
	EWOM-3	0.888			
	EWOM-4	0.884			
	EWOM-5	0.804			
	EWOM-6	0.709			
Emotional involvement	EI-1	0.913	70%	0.610	0.777
	EI-2	0.860			
	EI-3	0.720			
Country image	CI-1	0.835	64%	0.780	0.807
	CI-2	0.829			
	CI-3	0.812			
	CI-4	0.713			
Visit intention	VI-1	0.920	73%	0.767	0.869
	VI-2	0.859			
	VI-3	0.855			
	VI-4	0.764			

3. Hypotheses Analysis

It was investigated if electronic word of mouth had any effect on the intention to make an online purchase in accordance with the study's stated objectives. The findings of the regression analysis revealed that electronic word of mouth had a favorable influence on the visit intention (H₁). The next thing that was done was an investigation into whether or not emotional involvement had any effect on the visit intention (H₂). Therefore, it was discovered that the R² value and the F values that were established via the process of regression analysis were acceptable ratios in the context of social sciences and the relevant body of literature. Table 3 displays the R, R², corrected R², B, and Beta v p values for each variable.

Finally, it was tested whether the country image has a moderating effect on these effects (H₃). For two of the three examples, we have used model 1 from Andrew F. Hayes' SPSS Process v4 (2022). At the beginning, it was centralized by taking the standard values of each variable. The product of the independent variable and the moderator variable was then calculated to estimate the interaction effect. After that, a two-step linear regression analysis was used to assess whether or not the moderator variable had a significant effect. Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between electronic word of mouth and visit intention for Türkiye (H_{3a}, Table 4). Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between emotional involvement and visit intention for Türkiye (H_{4a}, Table 5).

Table 3. Regression analyses of the variables (Note: EWOM – Electronic word of mouth; EI – Emotional involvement; VI – Visit intention)

Country	Independent variable	Dependent variable	R	R ²	Adj. R ²	B	Beta	Sig.
Türkiye	EWOM	VI	0.332	0.110	0.104	0.362	0.332	0.000
	EI	VI	0.290	0.084	0.078	0.376	0.290	0.000
Italy	EWOM	VI	0.430	0.185	0.179	0.393	0.430	0.000
	EI	VI	0.218	0.047	0.041	0.335	0.218	0.000
Japan	EWOM	VI	0.379	0.143	0.138	0.245	0.379	0.000
	EI	VI	0.557	0.310	0.306	0.631	0.557	0.000

Table 4. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and electronic word of mouth for Türkiye

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.3570	0.1274	0.5183	7.1074	3.0000	146.0000	0.0002
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	0.9507	0.8792	1.0814	0.2813	-0.7869	2.6883	
Electronic word of mouth	0.4043	0.3328	1.2149	0.2263	-0.2534	1.0621	
Country image	0.3055	0.4438	0.6883	0.4924	-0.5717	1.1827	
Int_1	-0.0340	0.1649	-0.2062	0.8370	-0.3600	0.2920	
Product terms key: Int_1: Electronic word of mouth x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Electronic word of mouth; W= Country image							

Table 5. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and emotional involvement for Türkiye

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.3171	0.1006	0.5342	5.4420	3.0000	146.0000	0.0014
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	0.3042	0.8442	0.3603	0.7191	-1.3643	1.9727	
Emotional involvement	1.0178	0.4317	2.3577	0.0197	0.1646	1.8709	
Country image	0.7326	0.4511	1.6240	0.1065	-0.1589	1.6242	
Int_1	-0.3391	0.2111	-1.6065	0.1103	-0.7563	0.0781	
Product terms key: Int_1: Emotional involvement x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Emotional involvement; W= Country image							

Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between electronic word of mouth and visit intention for Italy (H_{3b}, Table 6). Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between emotional involvement and visit intention for Italy (H_{4b}, Table 7). Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between electronic word of mouth and visit intention for Japan (H_{3c}, Table 8). Country image has a moderating effect on the relationships between emotional involvement and visit intention for Japan (H_{4c}, Table 9). A total of 12 hypotheses were tested because of the analyzes made in line with the purpose and method of the research. All hypotheses were supported (Table 6).

Table 6. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and electronic word of mouth for Italy

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.5054	0.2555	0.4300	16.7996	3.0000	146.0000	0.0000
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
Constant	-0.0399	0.8411	-0.0475	0.9622	-1.7022	1.6223	
Electronic word of mouth	0.5397	0.3239	1.6662	0.0978	-0.1004	1.1797	
Country image	0.7057	0.4582	1.5401	0.1257	-0.1999	1.6112	
Int_1	-0.1162	0.1706	-0.6810	0.4970	0.4535	0.2210	
Product terms key: Int_1: Electronic word of mouth x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Electronic word of mouth; W= Country image							

Table 7. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and emotional involvement for Italy

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.3587	0.1487	0.4916	8.5029	3.0000	146.0000	0.0000
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
	Constant	-0.0398	0.8678	-0.0458	0.9635	-1.7548	1.6752
	Emotional involvement	0.6418	0.4559	1.4077	0.1614	-0.2593	1.5428
	Country image	1.0432	0.4354	2.3960	0.0178	0.1827	1.9037
	Int_1	-0.2740	0.2138	-1.2816	0.2020	-0.6965	0.1485
Product terms key: Int_1: Emotional involvement x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Emotional involvement; W= Country image							

Table 8. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and electronic word of mouth for Japan

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.5672	0.3217	0.4189	23.70825	3.0000	146.0000	0.0000
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
	Constant	0.6592	0.4022	1.6390	0.1034	-0.1357	1.4541
	Electronic word of mouth	0.1947	0.1258	1.5483	0.1237	-0.0538	0.4432
	Country image	0.4950	0.2421	1.0451	0.0426	-0.0166	0.9735
	Int_1	0.0346	0.0760	0.4556	0.6493	0.1156	0.1849
Product terms key: Int_1: Electronic word of mouth x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Electronic word of mouth; W= Country image							

Table 9. Moderation analysis output of the country image on the relationship between visit intention and emotional involvement for Japan

Model Summary	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
	0.6168	0.3805	0.3826	29.8892	3.0000	146.0000	0.0000
Model	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	
	Constant	-0.8117	0.4974	-1.6319	0.1049	-1.7948	0.1714
	Emotional involvement	2.0656	0.3745	5.5159	0.0000	1.3255	2.8058
	Country image	1.2942	0.3388	3.8205	0.0002	0.6247	1.9637
	Int_1	-0.8607	0.2123	-4.0541	0.0001	-1.2803	-0.4411
Product terms key: Int_1: Emotional involvement x Country image							
Y= Visit intention; X= Emotional involvement; W= Country image							

Table 6. The result of the hypotheses

Hypothesis	Result
H₁: E-WOM has a positive impact on visit intention.	Accepted
H _{1a} : E-WOM has a positive impact on visit intention for Türkiye.	Accepted
H _{1b} : E-WOM has a positive impact on visit intention for Italy.	Accepted
H _{1c} : E-WOM has a positive impact on visit intention for Japan.	Accepted
H₂: Emotional involvement has a positive impact on visit intention.	Accepted
H _{2a} : Emotional involvement has a positive impact on visit intention for Türkiye.	Accepted
H _{2b} : Emotional involvement has a positive impact on visit intention for Italy.	Accepted
H _{2c} : Emotional involvement has a positive impact on visit intention for Japan.	Accepted
H₃: Country image positively moderates the impact on between E-WOM and visit intention.	Accepted
H _{3a} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between E-WOM and visit intention for Türkiye.	Accepted
H _{3b} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between E-WOM and visit intention for Italy.	Accepted
H _{3c} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between E-WOM and visit intention for Japan.	Accepted
H₄: Country image positively moderates the impact on between emotional involvement and visit intention.	Accepted
H _{4a} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between emotional involvement and visit intention for Türkiye.	Accepted
H _{4b} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between emotional involvement and visit intention for Italy.	Accepted
H _{4c} : Country image positively moderates the impact on between emotional involvement and visit intention for Japan.	Accepted

Discussion and Conclusions

The effect of e-WOM on the intention to visit a restaurant has been determined in both Turkish, Italian, and Japanese cuisines. It has been determined that this effect is higher in Japanese cuisine compared to other countries. This finding is also consistent with previous studies in the literature. As a result of the study conducted by Lai et al. (2020), it has been revealed that cognitive food image is a stronger determinant of intention than emotional image and the moderating effect of food neophobia, the need to develop a destination image formation strategy. As a result of the study conducted by Martinelli and De Canio (2019) among Danish customers of Italian restaurants in Copenhagen, it has been determined that product country image affects the formation of positive attitudes towards ethnic restaurants even when the multi-signal approach is used. It can be said that the higher performance of e-WOM on the intention to visit a restaurant in Japanese cuisine is due to the closeness and respect of consumers to these country values, the positive effects of the Japanese country image, and also the different characteristics of consumers. Namely, relationships with foreign products depend on how the country of origin of this product affects its norms and internal values (Brijs et al., 2011).

Other studies on Far Eastern food also show that these effects are positive. For example, in a study conducted by Nguyen et al. (2020) based on survey data collected from 560 customers who ate at Thai and Korean restaurants in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, the effects of various factors such as country image, culinary knowledge, food and environmental authenticity on the behavioral intention to experience ethnic cuisine restaurants and the customer's intention to experience ethnic cuisine restaurants were examined. As a result of the study conducted by Lertputtarak (2012), it was found that the destination image and Thai food image have a positive relationship with tourists' revisit intention.

The moderator role of country image in the effect of e-WOM on visit intention has been found to have a positive effect in both Turkish, Italian, and Japanese cuisines. It was found that this effect was highest in Japanese cuisine and lowest in Turkish cuisine compared to other countries. As a result of the study conducted by Biswas et al. (2020), it was determined that destination features other than security also significantly affect the emotional involvement of tourists. As a result of the study conducted by Aureliano-Silva et al. (2021) it was determined that online reviews with higher online ratings and emotional appeal lead to higher restaurant visit intentions. However, it was found that customers with low restaurant participation were more affected by emotional comments than functional comments. It can be said that the findings of the study can be used especially in decision-making stages for restaurant operators. As in other studies, the results of this study are subject to various limitations. However, these limitations can provide a basis for future studies to continue investigating the effective factors affecting customer experience in a restaurant business context. First, this study was conducted on consumers who go to restaurants serving Turkish, Italian, and Japanese cuisine in Azerbaijan. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all country restaurants. In future studies, restaurants from different countries in addition to these three cultures can be included in the scope of the research. Second, this study tried to determine whether the image of the country the restaurant belongs to affects going to restaurants serving cuisine specific to different cultures. In future studies, different variables can be added to the research model.

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