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The Intersection of Nature and Comfortable Camping: Glamping Tourism and Culinary Experience

Zeynep YAMAÇ ERDOĞAN
Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Faculty of Applied Sciences, Department of Tourism Guiding, Bilecik, Türkiye. zeynep.erdogan@bilecik.edu.tr https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7677-8738

Abstract

The study aims to examine the food and beverage experiences of tourists participating in glamping tourism and to identify the interrelationships among these elements as well as their connection to overall satisfaction levels. In this context, a total of 204 reviews on food and beverage experiences from the three most-reviewed glamping facilities in Sapanca were analysed using the MAXQDA24 qualitative data analysis software and subjected to content analysis. The findings reveal that the food and beverage services offered at glamping facilities are generally structured and standardized, with no inclusion of local or organic products. Additionally, while tourists are largely satisfied with the standard breakfast and dinner services, they generally do not express a notable expectation for local and organic flavors. Furthermore, the need to enhance the variety and differentiation of food and beverage services in regions with a high concentration of glamping facilities has been emphasized.

Keywords: Glamping Tourism, Gastronomy, Tourist Experience, Tourist Satisfaction, Sustainable Tourism

1. INTRODUCTION

Glamping tourism (eye-catching/luxury camping) has rapidly gained popularity in global tourism in recent years as a form of camping that does not compromise on comfort and luxury (Budiasa, 2019). This particular form of tourism, which involves direct engagement with nature (Nabila & Alifa, 2024), provides guests not only with high-quality accommodation but also with an extraordinary environment that enhances the experience. However, the value of the glamping experience in tourism is not confined solely to the provision of lodging; rather, it is enriched by the inclusion of food and beverage services, which play a pivotal role in shaping and elevating the overall experience for visitors.

Gastronomy represents a key feature in the attractiveness of a tourist region, serving as both a part of the culture of the destination that tourists come to explore and as an element that characterizes societies (Moulin, 2000: 20). Offering gastronomic experiences by destinations and establishing a connection between geography, local culture, and traditions is an important factor (Richards, 2003: 16-17). In today's world, where there has been a notable increase in environmental awareness and a growing interest in healthy eating habits, authentic foods have emerged as a vital component of sustainable gastronomic tourism. These foods provide tourists with a distinctive and immersive experience, contributing to the broader appeal of destinations that prioritize sustainability and local food cultures (Akdağ & Üzülmez, 2017). The local, organic, and sustainable gastronomic options offered at glamping sites enable tourists to nourish themselves in harmony with nature, deepening their vacation experience. In this way, glamping tourism goes beyond just providing comfortable accommodation, offering an authentic

experience enriched by eco-friendly practices and local cuisine, thereby contributing to sustainable tourism.

Based on the points outlined above, the aim of this study is to examine the food and beverage experiences of tourists participating in glamping tourism and to identify the interrelationships among these elements as well as their connection to overall satisfaction levels. The study seeks to examine the food and beverage experiences offered by glamping facilities in Sapanca, a region known for its high density of such facilities, within the context of service quality and satisfaction levels, and to provide a clear understanding of this aspect. The extremely limited number of studies in this area within the literature emphasizes the originality of the research.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Beyond its role as a physiological means of nutrition to fulfill basic human needs, food has been shown in various studies to play a key role in motivating tourists' interest in local cuisines, thus enhancing their destination experiences through participation in gastronomic tourism (Fields, 2002; Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009; Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul & Huang, 2019). Due to the globalization of the world and the near unification of different regions, tourists are increasingly drawn to destinations that offer distinct identities and experiences rooted in local culture. In this context, they seek out experiences that highlight uniqueness and differentiation, allowing them to engage more deeply with the local culture and environment (Pavlidis & Markantonatou, 2020). In recent years, travel motivated by food and beverage has become increasingly important from an economic, social, and cultural perspective. Local foods not only represent national and regional identities but also reflect personal identity, playing a significant role in the development of a destination's image (Choe & Kim, 2018; Erdoğan, 2024).

Gastronomy, as an influential factor in the selection and revisiting of destinations, contributes to the tourism industry in several ways. These include increasing the number of tourists, extending their length of stay, boosting tourist spending in destinations, fostering the development of new types of tourism, enabling the introduction of alternative products, and creating new employment opportunities (Yılmaz, 201: 172). Within the context of the multifaceted relationship between gastronomy and tourism, it is essential to approach both concepts holistically and create opportunities that open new perspectives through a sustainable approach.

Sustainable gastronomy, by addressing local food sources within their spatial and cultural context, contributes to both economic and environmental sustainability. At the same time, it emerges as a key element that strengthens the identity of destinations and provides a competitive advantage (Rinaldi, 2017). In this context, sustainable gastronomy not only transforms eating habits to support human health and minimize environmental impacts but also addresses economic, social, and ecological dimensions through a holistic approach, ensuring that the needs of future generations are taken into account (Reynolds, 2020; Malinowska, Płoska, Chmielewski & Śledzik, 2024). In line with this, gastronomy and food elements play a significant role in the sustainable development of destinations, and through sustainable gastronomic tourism, they contribute to the preservation of regional traditions and local culture, as well as their transmission to future generations (Bayram, 2023: 76). The literature also emphasizes that sustainable local gastronomic resources have the potential to enhance a destination's ability to attract tourists and differentiate it from other destinations (Çetinsöz & Polat, 2018: 63).

The relationship between sustainable tourism and glamping emerges as one of the most effective ways for fostering sustainable growth within a tourist destination. Since sustainable tourism, by definition, involves conducting activities that preserve environmental integrity (Fernandes et al., 2021), it directly supports the use of glamping as a means to ensure that natural resources are utilized without causing degradation or depletion. In this context, it is worth addressing the

contributions of sustainable gastronomy -as can be part of glamping- to the sustainability of tourism. Practices such as the use of local and organic products, waste management, and environmentally friendly cooking methods not only help preserve nature but also contribute to local economies (Sorcaru, 2019; Pramezwary et al., 2022).

The nature-based glamping experience not only offers individuals the opportunity to be immersed in nature but also provides a holiday experience that enhances eating habits through sustainable gastronomy, fostering increased environmental awareness. Glamping refers to glamorous and luxurious camping experiences (Budiasa et al., 2019). Derived from the combination of the words "glamorous" and "camping," glamping eliminates the negative aspects of traditional camping, such as leaky tents, uncomfortable sleeping bags, and irregular food preparation, by providing pre-setup accommodations that offer the comfort of home (Brooker & Joppe, 2013: 4). Glamping allows people to experience the luxury of five-star service in natural settings, typically in remote areas, within an eco-friendly concept (Düzgün, 2021: 154; Nabila & Alifa, 2024), offering a sense of comfort akin to being at home (Meriç et al., 2021: 401). In this context, glamping tourism has become increasingly popular as a type of tourism that integrates harmoniously with the natural environment without causing harm, while prioritizing safety (Yıldırım & Erkılıç, 2019: 481). It is frequently preferred by those seeking to escape urban life and by nature and camping enthusiasts. Recently, there has been a shift from traditional tourism and camping towards a new tourist offering, glamping tourism, which combines nature-based tourism and camping preferences with the luxury holiday experience (Göktaş et al., 2017: 108).

Since the beginning of travel, food has been an integral part of the tourist experience. Given that every tourist needs to eat during their trip, the food available at the destination plays a crucial role (Güneş, 2019). In nature-focused holiday experiences, the food and drink options become even more significant, influencing the overall quality of the tourist experience. The similarities and differences in meal preparation with specific equipment in nature during traditional camping highlight key elements that strengthen the sustainability and comfort aspects of glamping tourism. In traditional camping, meals are typically prepared in a simple, practical manner, using equipment that suits the natural environment (Urcan, 2016). In contrast, glamping prioritizes comfort, with gastronomic experiences often enriched through the use of local and organic ingredients. Given that camping is an activity that directly engages with nature (Nabila & Alifa, 2024), and that camp meals form an essential part of outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism (Calvén, 2025), in glamping, both accommodation and the preparation and presentation of food serve as crucial elements that enrich the overall tourist experience. Furthermore, the concept of sustainable gastronomy creates a holiday experience in harmony with waste management and the use of eco-friendly materials in glamping sites (Güneş, 2019), fostering greater environmental awareness among guests and adding more significance to their holiday experience.
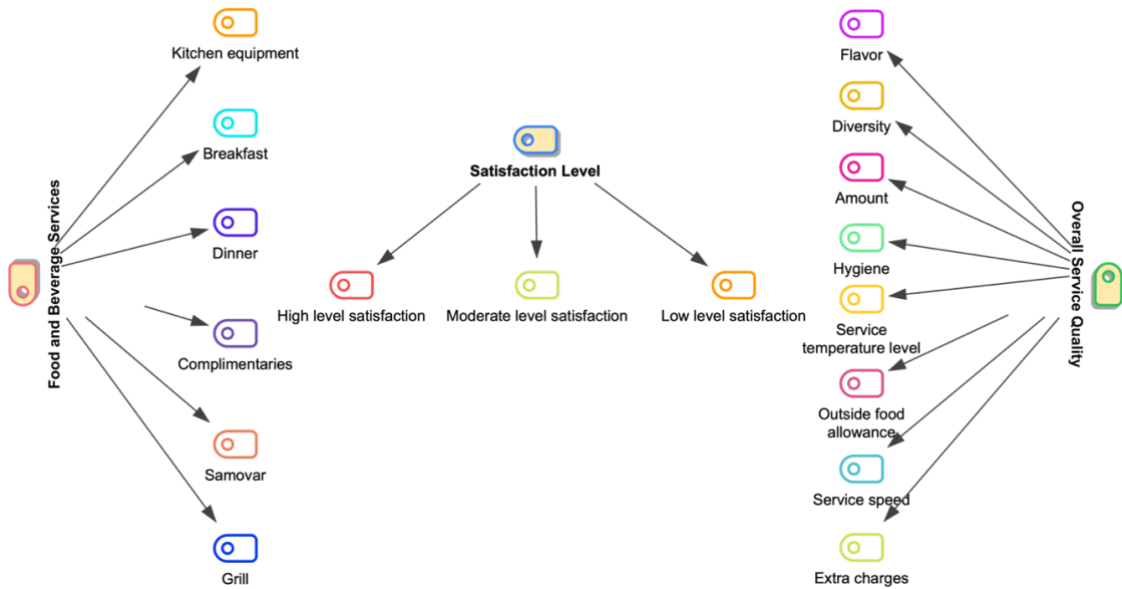
3. METHOD

A qualitative approach has been adopted as the research method, and content analysis has been conducted. The sample of the study consists of three glamping facilities located in the Sapanca destination, which stands out due to its proximity to large cities and natural wealth, and has the highest number of reviews on Google Maps. In this context, reviews of the glamping facilities were collected, revealing a total of 780 reviews for the three establishments. Subsequently, comments related to the food and beverage experience were extracted, yielding 204 relevant reviews. These selected reviews were then transferred into a Word document and consolidated into a single analysis file.

The study focuses on the food and beverage services at glamping facilities, specifically examining the aspects that tourists are satisfied with and the issues they have raised complaints about. In

this context, the comments were reviewed multiple times by the researcher, and main themes, themes, and codes were developed. The main theme, "Food and Beverage Experience," was based on literature and conceptual understanding (concept-driven), while the themes "Food and Beverage Services," "Satisfaction Level," and "Overall Service Quality" were data-driven. Figure 1 illustrates the hierarchy of the themes, and codes related to the main theme allowing for a clear visualization.

Figure 1. Code Hierarchy

For qualitative and mixed methods, the data were processed into themes and codes using MAXQDA24, a computer-assisted analysis software, and the content analysis process was initiated. In the Findings section, visuals related to the analysis are provided, along with data quotations that constitute the raw content of the main theme, in an effort to ensure data transparency.

4. FINDINGS

The text subjected to content analysis was divided into ten sections to enable systematic coding. In the chart presented in Figure 2, the horizontal axis is numbered from 1 to 10. The names of the themes and codes, along with the colors used in the chart, are specified on the left side of the graph. This allows for easy tracking of the distribution of themes and codes throughout the text, as well as the sections where they decrease or intensify.
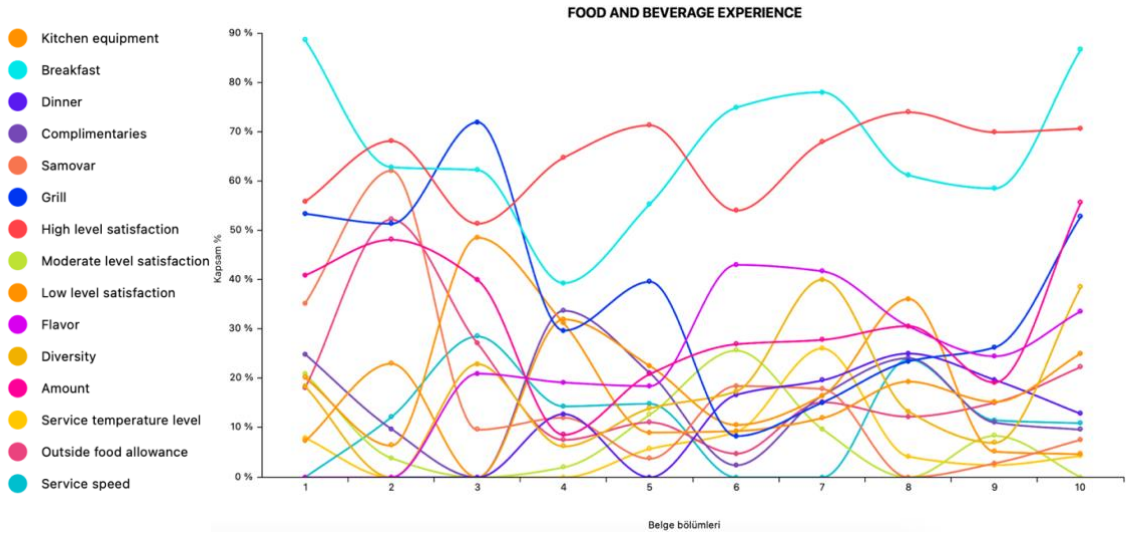
Figure 2. Code Distribution within the Document

It can be observed that the "Breakfast" code is assigned the highest percentage of 89% in section 1 and the lowest percentage of 39% in section 4. Similarly, when examining the distribution of the "High Level Satisfaction" code in the chart, it can be determined that it is coded at high rates throughout the document. This suggests that comments expressing tourists' high levels of satisfaction are prevalent in the majority of the analyzed text.

Figure 3 visualizes the statistics of the codes within the "Food and Beverage Services" theme. The highest coding rate was assigned to the "Breakfast" code, followed by the "Grill" and "Dinner" codes, with a noticeable difference between them. This indicates that, within the limited services offered by the three glamping establishments in Sapanca included in the analysis, breakfast naturally stands out as one of the first and most significant activities of the day. Additionally, in this tourism experience that incorporates elements of camping, it is possible to consider that the expectation may have been exceeded relatively easily, given that more limited facilities could also be accepted. The prominence of the "grill" and "dinner" codes in the glamping food and beverage experience can be explained by the value placed on grilling, as well as the fact that dinner, being a key food and beverage activity, is often associated with grilling in the context of glamping.
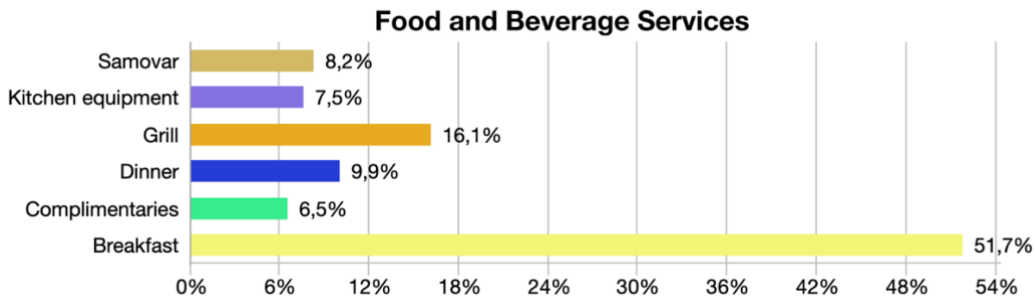

Figure 3. Code Statistics of Food and Beverage Services Theme

In Figure 4, under the "Overall Service Quality" theme, it is observed that the highest coding frequencies are assigned to the "Amount," "Flavor," and "Diversity" codes, while the "Extra Charges" code has the lowest frequency. This can be attributed to the fact that, in a study focusing primarily on the food and beverage experience, the majority of comments are centered on breakfast and dinner, with aspects such as portion size, taste, and available options being frequently discussed in both positive and negative terms. Moreover, as certain services offered at

the facilities come with an additional charge, some tourists have highlighted this in their reviews to inform potential visitors about these extra costs. Below are some data quotations related to this matter:

> *"We had amazing breakfasts. It was wonderful, everything was fresh. The pastry was hot, the scrambled eggs were delicious. The tea was perfectly brewed, and I must say I'm a tea addict. There were more than 20 types of food on our plates."*

> *"The only aspect that I think needs improvement is the breakfast; for breakfast lovers, the variety and portions were limited."*

> *"We wanted to have a grill for dinner, but the grill service is paid. Even the ice is charged."*

Overall Service Quality

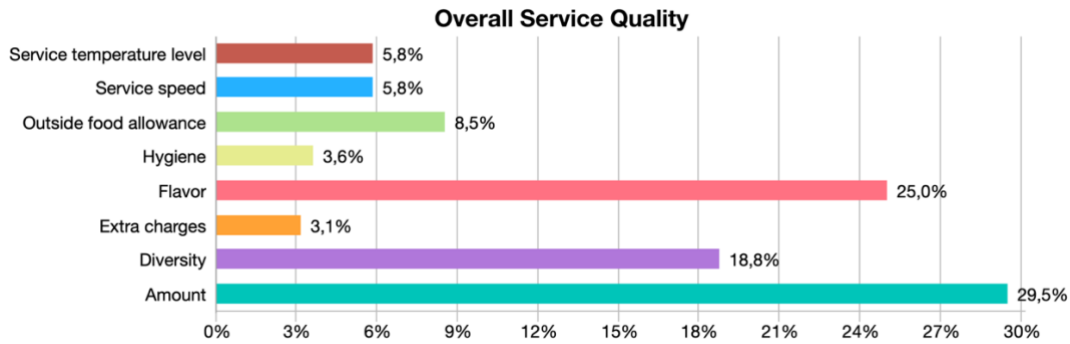| Category	Value
Service temperature level	5,8%
Service speed	5,8%
Outside food allowance	8,5%
Hygiene	3,6%
Flavor	25,0%
Extra charges	3,1%
Diversity	18,8%
Amount	29,5%

Figure 4. Code Statistics of Overall Service Quality Theme

As can be seen in Figure 5, based on the satisfaction levels analyzed in visitor reviews, 77.1% of tourists reported high satisfaction. This indicates that a significant majority of tourists who experienced glamping tourism had their expectations successfully met, resulting in an overall positive experience. Additionally, the percentage of tourists with moderate satisfaction is 8%, while 14.9% reported low satisfaction. These data indicate that while the glamping experience was satisfying for most tourists, it also highlights that the expectations of some tourists were not fully met. The high satisfaction rate reflects the overall success of the glamping facilities, while the low satisfaction rate indicates areas that need improvement. Data quotations related to each satisfaction level are provided below.

> "The breakfast wasn't bad, but there weren't many options."

> "The two-person breakfast had 4 slices of tomato and 2 slices of cucumber. It was really the worst breakfast I've seen."

> "I can say the breakfast in the morning was excellent. I didn't expect it to be this good, we really liked it."
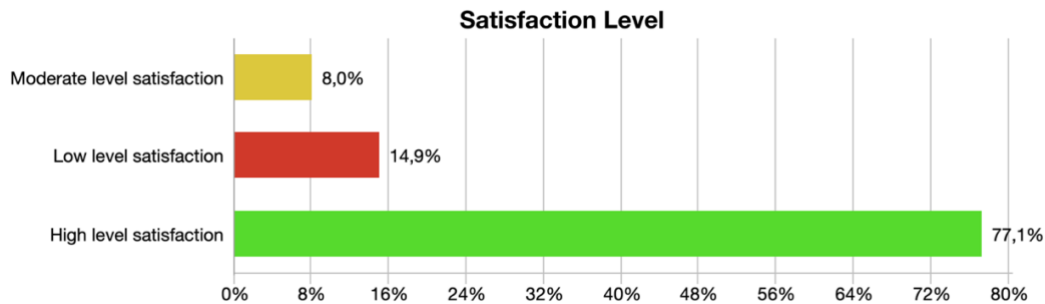

Satisfaction Level

Category	Value
Moderate level satisfaction	8,0%
Low level satisfaction	14,9%
High level satisfaction	77,1%

Figure 5. Code Statistics of Satisfaction Level Theme

Figure 6 illustrates the relationships between themes and codes. The connections between themes and codes are depicted with varying thicknesses, indicating the strength of the relationships, where stronger connections are represented by thicker lines and weaker connections by thinner ones. In this context, it can be observed that there is a direct, strong relationship between the main theme of "Food and Beverage Experience" and the "Breakfast" code. Additionally, the "Breakfast" code also shows strong relationships with the "High level satisfaction", "Moderate level satisfaction", and "Low level satisfaction" codes under the "Satisfaction Level" theme. It has been determined that the breakfast service offered by the facility has a significant impact on the satisfaction level in glamping tourism. As the first meal of the day and a key component of the limited food and beverage services provided by the facility, breakfast has frequently appeared in visitors' comments.
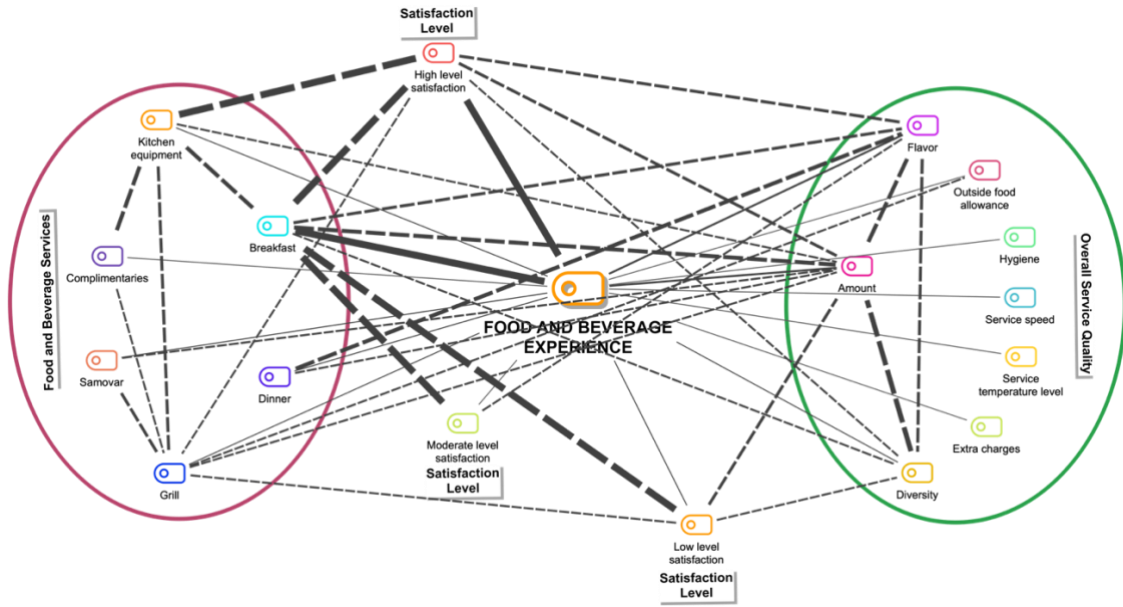

Figure 6. The Interrelationship Map of Themes

Evaluations related to breakfast have been found to be associated with the codes under the "Overall Service Quality" theme in determining the satisfaction level. Specifically, the "Flavor," "Amount," and "Diversity" codes are identified as strong determinants. The strong relationship between these three codes can be explained by the fact that visitors often mention these three elements together in their comments.
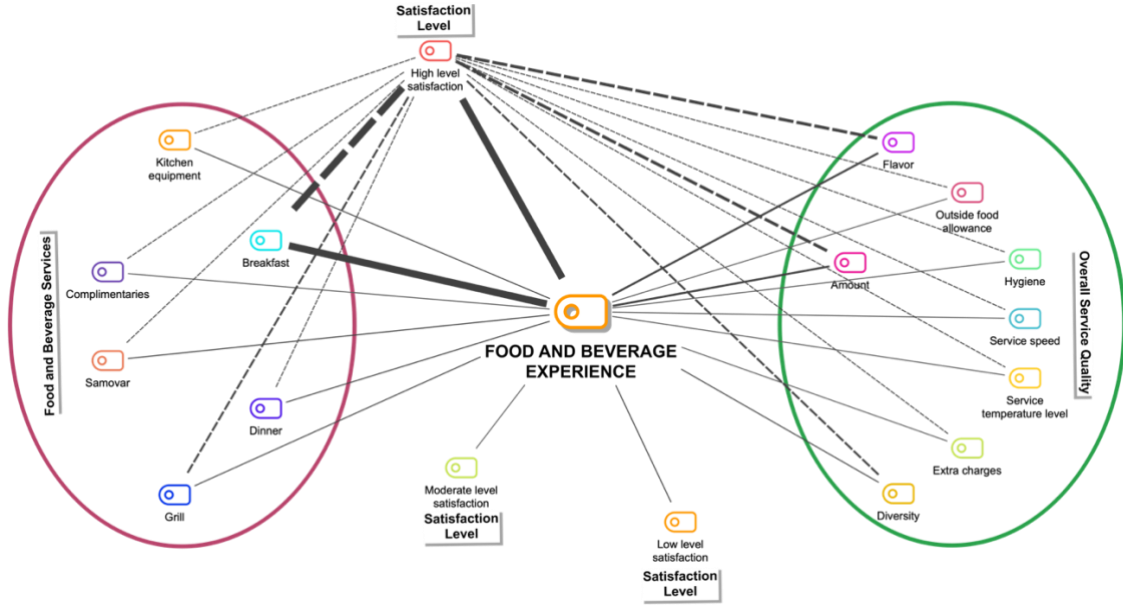
Figure 7. The Interrelationship Map with High Level Satisfaction Code

Breakfast in glamping establishments emerges as a critical service that shapes visitors' overall experiences. In these types of accommodations, where limited food and beverage alternatives are offered, the quality of breakfast directly influences guests' overall satisfaction. Elements such as taste, portion size, and variety are key factors in guests' assessment of the service quality. If the breakfast does not meet expectations, it could negatively affect visitors' overall perception of the service. On the other hand, a positive breakfast experience can strengthen the overall positive impression of the establishment.

Figure 7 illustrates the themes and codes strongly associated with the "High level satisfaction" code. The most prominent relationship is between the "Food and Beverage Experience" main theme and the "Breakfast" code, which are mutually interconnected. This indicates that breakfast services within the food and beverage experience in glamping establishments play a significant role in achieving high levels of satisfaction. Accordingly, no relationship was found between this code and the "Moderate level satisfaction" or "Low level satisfaction" codes. All remaining codes were found to be associated with comments that could contribute to "High level satisfaction." Within the overall food and beverage experience at glamping establishments, breakfast emerges as one of the strongest satisfaction determinants. The emphasis placed on breakfast in the comments of visitors reporting high satisfaction indicates that this service occupies a central role in the accommodation experience.
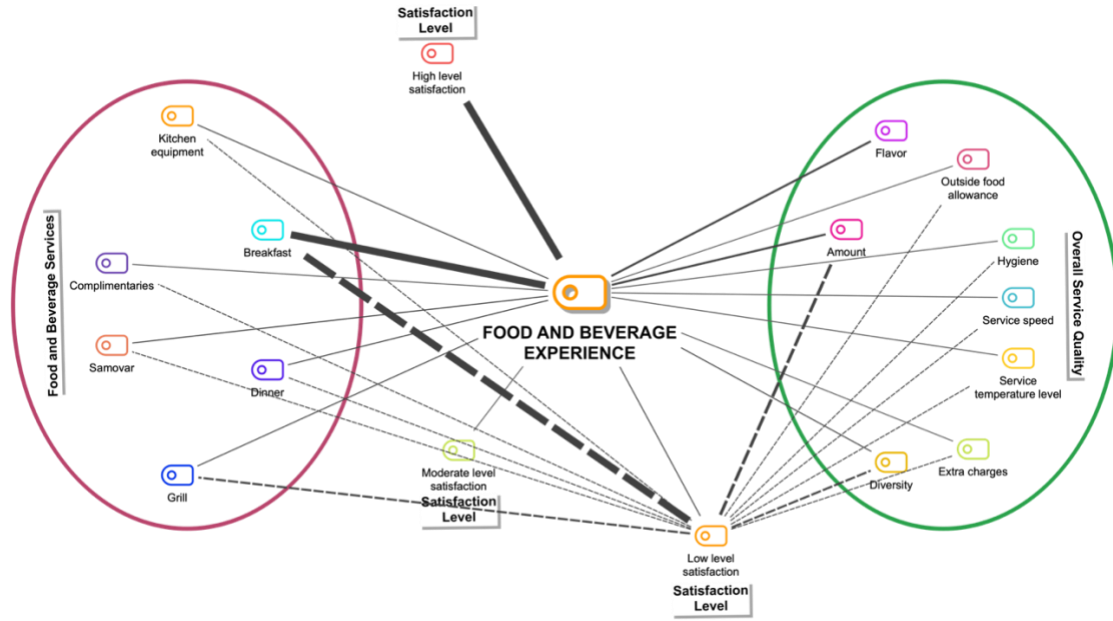
Figure 8. The Interrelationship Map with Low Level Satisfaction Code

In Figure 8, it can be seen that the codes most strongly related to the "Low level satisfaction" code are "Breakfast" and "Amount", while "Grill" and "Diversity" show a strong relationship. The co-occurrence of these codes indicates that the low level of satisfaction is significantly influenced by the quality of breakfast, portion sizes, grilling experience, and food diversity. The "Low level satisfaction" code is associated with seven codes under the "Overall Service Quality" theme, with the only exception being the "Flavor" code, which showed no connection. Some related data excerpts are provided below:

> "*The only aspect that I think needs improvement is the breakfast; for breakfast lovers, the variety and portions were limited.*"

> "*The breakfast in the morning seemed like a single serving, it was insufficient.*"

> "It would have been better if breakfast had not been served, because it was really very, very bad – even the cat wouldn't eat it."

> "*We wanted to have a grill for dinner, but the grill service is paid. Even the ice is charged.*"

In the comments where visitors reported low satisfaction, breakfast, portion size, grill service, and diversity emerge as the most determining factors. This indicates that the food and beverage services offered in glamping establishments are assessed not only by their quality but also by their quantity and variety. Additionally, the fact that the flavor element is not associated with low satisfaction suggests that while the food may be satisfactory in terms of flavor, unmet expectations in other factors can lead to overall dissatisfaction.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Food and beverage experiences are a key component of holidays for tourists (Toksöz & Aras, 2016). As glamping tourism provides an immersive experience in nature, the gastronomic encounters within this setting are equally distinct and memorable. Especially, flavors based on local culinary traditions offer tourists both a gastronomic discovery and an opportunity to experience the region's cultural richness (Zararsız & Kargiglioğlu, 2022; Demir, 2024). In this context, the relationship between gastronomy and tourism not only provides a satisfying taste

experience but also allows tourists to establish a deeper cultural connection with the region (Sorcaru, 2019; Onur, 2021; Yubianto, 2023).

According to the results of the study, contrary to the information found in the aforementioned literature, it was observed that in glamping tourism experiences, the facilities do not offer local cuisine to tourists. Instead, a standardized breakfast is provided, with its contents remaining the same every day. In other words, an upgraded version of the breakfast and dinner typically prepared in traditional camping settings is served. Some facilities offer dinner services, while others do not; however, all of them provide a grill service for an additional fee, enabling tourists to cook food they bring from outside. The related limited services present barriers to preserving the authenticity of the destinations, shaping their identities, and highlighting their gastronomic values.

The lack of natural and organic products in a tourism experience that is immersed in nature hinders tourists from fully integrating with nature and enhances their environmental awareness. At this point, the results showing that visitors expressed high satisfaction with the breakfasts and dinners are noteworthy. The fact that no guest criticized the absence of local and organic flavors indicates that those participating in glamping tourism may not have sufficient awareness regarding local and organic foods, and were not expecting such offerings. Despite being classified as a form of special interest tourism, glamping tourism appears to attract tourists who seek a structured experience akin to organized mass tourism (Cohen, 1972). Furthermore, it offers products with highly restricted authenticity, to the extent that it elevates -in a sense- the destination's level of McDisneyization and undermines its tourism experience potential (Erdoğan, 2022). These shortcomings pose a significant barrier to enhancing the tourism experience. Particularly in regions where glamping facilities are concentrated, diversifying and differentiating offerings could provide a competitive edge, ultimately increasing satisfaction from both supply and demand perspectives.

Enhancing the gastronomic experiences in glamping tourism could involve offering more local and organic products, diversifying breakfast and dinner options, organizing local cooking workshops, and increasing tourists' awareness of sustainability. Furthermore, while providing an immersive experience in nature, integrating a nature-centric approach will not only bolster environmental sustainability but also foster a deeper connection between tourists and the natural world. Future studies should explore the impact of local and organic products on the tourism experience, considering the perspectives of both tourists and businesses, to better understand their role in enhancing the overall experience.

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