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An Investigation of the Effect of Awareness and Positive Perception on Plant-Based Meat Preference Intention: A Field Study in Turkey

Farkındalık ve Olumlu Algılamanın Bitki Bazlı Et Tercih Niyetine Etkisinin İncelenmesi: Türkiye'de Bir Saha Çalışması

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ABSTRACT

The preference of plant-based meat products, which resemble animal meat by combining various herbs and spices, is a topic that has recently begun to attract the attention of researchers. The effectiveness of businesses investing in this area and the ability of consumers to gain plant-based meat-related benefits depend on knowing the factors that affect the adoption of these products. In this research, the role of awareness and positive perceptions in the preference intention of plant-based meat is questioned. In this context, a descriptive field study was carried out in Turkey, primary data were collected by online survey method and analyzed with SPSS. According to the findings of the analysis; positive perceptions and awareness are determined as effective variables in the intention to consume plant-based meat. Finally, the findings of the research were interpreted and recommendations for businesses and researchers were developed.

Keywords: Animal Meat Alternatives, Awareness, Perception, Plant-Based Meat

ÖZET

Çeşitli bitki ve baharatların bir araya getirilmesiyle hayvan etine benzeyen bitkisel kaynaklı et ürünlerinin tercih edilmesi, son zamanlarda araştırmacıların ilgisini çekmeye başlayan bir konudur. Bu alana yatırım yapan işletmelerin etkinliği ve tüketicilerin bitki bazlı et ile ilgili faydalar elde edebilmeleri, bu ürünlerin benimsenmesini etkileyen faktörlerin bilinmesine bağlıdır. Bu çalışmada, bitki bazlı etin tercih edilme niyetinde; farkındalığın ve olumlu algıların rolü sorgulanmaktadır. Bu kapsamda Türkiye'de betimsel bir saha çalışması gerçekleştirilmiş, birincil veriler çevrimiçi anket yöntemiyle toplanmış ve SPSS ile analiz edilmiştir. Analiz bulgularına göre; olumlu algılama ve farkındalığın, bitki bazlı et tüketme niyetinde etkili değişkenler olarak belirlenmiştir. Son olarak, araştırmanın bulguları yorumlanarak işletmelere ve araştırmacılara yönelik öneriler geliştirilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hayvan Eti Alternatifleri, Farkındalık, Algı, Bitki Bazlı Et

1. INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the increase in the world population and the increase in livestock activities along with economic developments have not only attracted attention in terms of animal rights; but also it is criticized for environmental degradation (excessive consumption of resources, climate change, etc.) and health problems (Broad, 2020; Rubio et al., 2020; Santo et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2021; Newton & Blaustein-Rejto, 2021). In terms of environmental effects; it is estimated that 14.5% of the total greenhouse gas emissions are originated from the sector and it has an undeniable effect on climate change. Processing and transportation of animal products (like meat, milk and feed etc.), fertilizer storage and processing are the main sources of emissions. Moreover; consumption of red and processed meat is associated with negative health problems, and it is claimed that consumption of especially red or processed meat may affect various cancers and other health outcomes (Vatanparast et al., 2020). Against the negative effects of excessive meat consumption on health; behaviors like reducing meat consumption (Van Loo et al., 2020) and making a plant-based diet can be recommended (Onwezen et al., 2021). Ultimately, significant increases in plant-based meat production and consumption have been observed in recent years (Curtain & Grafenauer, 2019).

In fact, plant-based meat, which has been a topic of discussion for a long time due to environmental problems (overuse of land, water and energy), human health and animal welfare concerns, has recently started to attract the attention of scientific researchers. The similarity of appearance and taste of plant-based meat to animal meat, increasing biological and chemical safety of them, and advances in the selection of protein sources have led to the use of plant-based meat as an alternative to animal meat. At this point, although the consumer's acceptance of these products increasing steadily, it is not widely adopted yet. Issues such as developing more effective strategies to inform/educate consumers about these products, producing more scientific information about their health properties, and finding more suitable protein sources to increase the quality, appearance, taste and chemical safety of them attract scientific attention (He et al., 2020).

On the other hand, although plant-based meat products can capture the flavor, texture, color and nutritional values of traditional meat, most consumers are reluctant to consume plant-based meat and these products are mostly marketed to vegans or vegetarians. The adoption of these products is primarily related to improving taste and texture and protein values, making them healthier (reducing salt content, etc.), designing sustainability and nutritional value labels and decreasing costs etc. In addition, some barriers stand out for consumers, such as health concerns, low environmental awareness and familiarity with the product, attachment to traditional meat, and new food phobia etc. (Choudhury et al., 2020).

Furthermore, there are only a few studies on plant-based meat preference, which are conducted in developed countries or in regions where animal meat is not culturally accepted, and studies in other regions and countries are insufficient (Bryant et al., 2019). However, it is the responsibility of the relevant stakeholders to bring such innovations to the sector in line with sustainability and improving the welfare of people and future generations (Candogan & Ozdemir, 2021). At this point, it is possible that researches on the variables affecting the preference intention, awareness and perceptions about plant-based meat will contribute to the clarification of the subject.

2. PLANT-BASED MEAT PRODUCTS AND PLANT-BASED MEAT MARKET

Plant-based meat products, which express meat-like products by making use of plant-based ingredients like peas, soybeans and wheat, are being tried to be substituted for animal meat products (Choudhury et al., 2020). At this point; the development of plant-based meat is based on the development of products like seitan (a high protein cooked meal made from wheat gluten), tofu/bean curd, yuba/tofu skin, and peanut nuttose (Rubio et al., 2020).

Since food is a product category directly related to health, plant-based meat has received attention primarily for its health effects. In the study of Curtain & Grafenauer (2019), which compared the nutritional values of plant-based meats and real meat equivalents in supermarkets in Sydney; plant-based meats were found to be generally low in caloric value and fat. In Vatanparast et al.'s (2020) study examining the effect of increasing plant-based meat consumption by 100% and reducing red and processed meat consumption by 50% on diet quality in Canada, it was found that the nutritional values were higher in general and it was concluded that it would be healthier except for less zinc and vitamin B12 intake.

Studies show that plant-based meat consumption is mostly associated with a vegan diet, while the vegan meat market is considered in terms of belief, health and ethics. At this point veganism is more common in China and India, originating from religions like Hinduism and Buddhism. However, it is stated that vegan nutrition is increasing day by day, businesses produce plant-based meat products with similar characteristics to animal meats, and the issue is an important especially for tourism and gastronomy sectors (Ucan & Bozok, 2019: 32, 24).

It is claimed that veganism began in 1944 when some members of the British Vegan Society recommended that eggs and dairy products be avoided as well. Although this request was not initially accepted, Donald Watson coined the term vegan, and then this trend increased to a level that caused around 150 thousand people to become vegan in 2014. However, this trend has accelerated in recent years and many supermarkets and manufacturers have launched their plant-based products and more than 50 thousand products have been certified by the Vegan Society. As a result of the developments; plant-based meat included not just vegans, but flexitarians as well. Moreover, in the pandemic process, the demand for meat and meat prices increased and meat shortage was felt more (URL 1). In this context, the study of Kim et al. (2021), conducted in 6 developed countries, concluded that those fed with plant-based meat survived the virus less severely (Kim et al., 2021:1).

Veganuary, a non-profit organization that encourages trying and continuing vegan products and aims to raise awareness, promotes itself as an organization that encourages people and businesses to protect the environment, prevents animal suffering and reduces health problems. In the organization's report on the 2022 campaign; 800 new vegan products and 740 menu options were introduced to market and 620,000 people pledged to go on a vegan diet (US, UK, India, Germany, Italy, Mexico first in number) at the end of January 2022. Moreover it is stated that the Veganuary hashtag has received more than 550 million views on TikTok and the participants sent nearly 20 million support mails. Furthermore, it is stated that more than 100 businesses such as Harrods, Aveda, Volkswagen, Papa John's, Domino's Pizza Germany, Allianz Germany, Unilever participated in the campaign, encouraged their employees to eat vegan and offered more vegan options in the workplace. With the effect of such developments, more plant-based products such as hamburger, pizza, chocolate, cheese, milk, fish, chicken, dessert and ice cream took place in the market (URL 2).

The International Vegetarian Union, which was established in Germany in 1908, similarly in its works; draws attention to the importance of plant-based nutrition, supports developments in the sector, and states that especially large enterprises invest in plant-based protein production. The community's website provides lists of businesses that

offer goods and services globally that are vegan, vegetarian or have these options. According to this; in the tourism category; there are 20,863 restaurants in the Asia & Middle East region and 701 restaurants in Turkey (URL 3).

Many businesses develop and market plant-based meat, the vast majority in North America and Europe. Particularly, companies such as Impossible Foods that signed a B2B model with companies such as Burger King attracted more attention. The company Beyond Meat, reached many customers by presenting its products to final customers in the markets with the B2C model and by taking part in the menus (Choudhury et al., 2020). According to researches by different marketing research firms on the plant-based meat, the market size in 2021 is estimated between \$ 5.02 billion to \$ 8.5 billion (URL 4, 5, 6) and the market is expected to grow rapidly in the following years. In these researches, it is seen that the market is dragged especially by hotels, restaurants/cafes and the manufacturers.

The plant-based meat market is expected to grow in Turkey as well, and it is seen that some businesses have made investments in plant-based products and there have been some developments regarding the products. As a member of the International Vegetarian Union (IVU) The Vegan Association Turkey (TVG), which gained the status of an official association in 2012, promotes itself based on animal rights and tries to raise awareness of vegan products. For example, it is seen that a vegan menu has been provided in a university cafeteria as of 28.02.2022, with a joint effort with the related university community (URL 7). Moreover; plant-based products of brands such as Everfresh, Veggy, Vappy, Vegan Dunyasi, Clearspring, Everfresh, Yasam Foods, Trakya Ciftligi are marketed through websites such as vegandukkan.com, vegandunyasi.com, veganbakkal.com.tr (URL 8, 9, 10). In addition, restaurants like Burger King and McDonald's have added plant-based options to their menus and retailers like Migros, BIM, A101 placed on their shelves some packaged plant-based meat products. In short, it is understood that the plant-based meat market in Turkey is quite new and developing.

3. ADOPTION OF PLANT-BASED MEAT

Studies on alternative meats indicates the acceptance of these products is low and they show that factors like taste and health of products, familiarity, attitude, food neophobia and social norms can be effective in adoption of them (Onwezen et al., 2021). Some researches about the adoption of plant-based meat; associates it with individual variables such as the consumer's tendency to try new food and sustainability orientation. For example, in the experimental study conducted in the U.S.A. by Loo et al. (2020), it was determined that even when the price was significantly reduced (by 50%), consumers mostly preferred animal meat and only 28% of them preferred alternative meats. At the mentioned study vegetarians, males, relatively young, and those with higher education were found to have stronger preferences for plant-based and lab-grown meat. In Hwang et al.'s (2020) study, in which an online survey is conducted with 504 Korean consumers, it has been concluded that factors such as sustainability, food curiosity, and distrust of biotechnology are effective factors. Similarly, Estell et al. (2021) surveyed 679 people in Australia and found that consumers associated plant-based eating more with a vegan diet, and Bryant & Sanctorem (2021), which is conducted in Belgium, found that plant-based meat alternatives favored by vegetarian dieters. Besides; in Motoki et al.'s (2022) study, which drew attention to situational factors, it is concluded that environmental conditions (especially being with friends) influence the predicted acceptance of plant-based meat. Accordingly, plant-based meat is more likely to be tried with family, friends or alone. In addition, there is a more desire to try them in food festivals, restaurants, cafes and at home than places such as bars.

3.1. Effect of Awareness

In regions with little or no awareness and knowledge about plant-based meat, consumer adoption is difficult to predict. However, it can be asserted that awareness is the primary factor in the acceptance of new products, where people do not have knowledge or awareness, and their positive attitudes and intentions have not matured. It is possible to mention that the plant-based meat is in the new or not sought/unseen product category which has not been in the market before, has low consumer awareness and is at the entry stage of the product life cycle. Awareness will be the primary factor in the trial and adoption of plant-based meat, which is mostly known and preferred by vegans in the market. Therefore; awareness and persuasion efforts are needed to create primary demand for new products such as plant-based meats. This can be by transferring the messages about benefits of the products and the burdens they reduce to the consumer through marketing communications.

The marketing programs try to affect consumers in terms of being aware of the products (Kotler & Keller, 2012: 228) since awareness is a major stage in the adoption of new products (Rogers, 1976; Manning et al., 1995: 292) and consumers should be informed about the product through advertisements or word of mouth. With the increase of awareness and knowledge about the product; as the perceived value of the consumer increases, the perceived risks decrease and the tendency to adopt increases (Kalish, 1985: 1569; Hanafizadeh & Khedmatgozar, 2012: 151; Agarwal et al., 2017: 74). In short, marketing function aims to build people's awareness. Only by this way it is

possible to be preferred, to have brand value and to be successful in the market. On the other hand, low product awareness is an important problem for businesses (Kotler & Keller, 2012: 54-61). Even the businesses that are preferred in the market should make products and brands easier for the consumer to come to mind when needed (Solomon et al., 2006: 77, 538).

In addition to these, it is stated that the first stage in the adoption of innovations is awareness, followed by the stages of seeking information/interest, evaluation, trial and adoption. At the awareness stage of new products; although consumers are starting to become aware of the product, they do not have much knowledge. In the transition to the awareness stage, which requires more marketing efforts; advertisements play an important role and more personal selling and similar marketing efforts are required (Kotler et al., 2005). In addition, it is recommended that businesses initiate word of mouth communications for new products, support them with advertisements (López & Sicilia, 2013) and engage in integrated marketing communication efforts. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of awareness in the acceptance of plant-based meat as a new product. In the study conducted by Bryant et al. (2019) by collecting data from 3030 people in China, India and the U.S.A., it was understood that familiarity is an important factor in acceptance of plant-based meat in all countries (Bryant et al., 2019).

3.2. Effect of Perceptions

It is seen that perception and expectations are important in adoption, especially in many models that explain diffusion of innovations (Agarwal & Prasad, 1998: 15). Consumers' tendencies towards new products are related with; positive evaluations and attitudes towards the product (Fu & Elliott, 2013: 257), perceived risks (De Ruyter et al., 2001: 184; Hirunyawipada & Paswan, 2006; Klerck & Sweeney, 2007: 171), perceived product characteristics (Ho & Wu, 2011: 258; Jeong et al., 2017: 399), perceived usefulness, perceived originality (Li et al., 2015: 214), perceived ease of use (Shen & Chiou, 2010: 42) and concerns about the performance of the new product (Herzenstein et al., 2007: 251). However, the related researches have been carried out mostly for the adoption of technological innovations and it is seen that there are few studies on plant-based meat products.

In the study of Michel et al. (2021), in which an online survey was conducted with 1039 German consumers and the rate of those consuming meat alternatives was seen as low; it has been found that “meat” has positive connotations (delicious, meal, steak, etc.), but meat alternatives have negative connotations (bean curd, vegan, vegetarian, disgust, etc.), especially women are more concerned about animal welfare and environmental effects of meat consumption. In addition, it was understood that meat alternatives should be similar to meat in terms of taste, texture and ease of preparation. In the study of Estell et al. (2021), it was determined that consumers pay attention to the contents of plant-based meat products, especially the iron and B12 content, and that taste is a fundamental factor for preference these products. Depending on these explanations; consumers' acceptance of plant-based meat is expected to be influenced by their evaluations of them as balanced, tasty, adequate or healthy.

In addition, since consumers' perceptions of plant-based meat vary over time, acceptance of these products can vary with respect to time. For example, Bryant & Sanctorum's (2021) study in Belgium, shows that rate of those who stated that plant-based meats meet the needs increased from 44% to 51% and that the concerns about the environmental effects of animal agriculture increased significantly.

4. A FIELD SURVEY

4.1. Research Method and Data Collection Tool

In this research, primary data were collected by online survey and convenience sampling method in Turkey. To measure the research variables, 5-point Likert style items (1. Strongly Disagree, 5. Strongly Agree) were prepared by using the literature. Accordingly, the research of Bryant et al. (2019) was used for the items prepared to determine awareness about plant-based meat. In addition, for items prepared to determine the perceptions that plant-based meat products can be a balanced, healthy, adequate, tasty and affordable alternative to animal meat without harming natural resources, the studies of Estell et al. (2021) and Bryant et al. (2019) are benefited. To measure the preference intention of plant-based meat products; Bryant et al. (2019), Bryant & Sanctorum (2021), and Motoki et al.'s (2022) studies were benefited. Finally, questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants, the frequency of animal meat consumption and their previous experience of plant-based meat were included.

4.2. General Characteristics of the Participants



417 person participated in the research. After deletion of outliers, 396 responses were included in the analyses. People in the research have participated mainly from the Central Anatolia Region (Ankara and Kirikkale in particular), the Black Sea Region, the Marmara Region and other regions as seen in following table.

Table 1. Regional distribution of participants

	Quantity	Percent	
Central Anatolia	268	67,7	Ankara: 114, Kirikkale: 96, Corum: 20, Yozgat: 17, Other: 21
Black Sea	58	14,6	Bartın: 43, Other: 15
Marmara	40	10,1	Istanbul: 24, Other: 16
Other	30	7,6	
Total	396	100,0	

51.8 % (205 people) of the participants in the study were female and 48.2 % (191 people) were male. It is seen that 58.3 % of the participants (231 people) in terms of age are under 27 years old, and 81.8 % (324 people) have an undergraduate or below degree in terms of the last school they graduated from. In addition, it was determined that 48.2 % (241 people) of the research participants consumed meat at least a few times a week, and lastly, the rate of those who consumed plant-based meat was 19.9 % (79 people).

Table 2. Characteristics of the participants

	Quantity	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender			
Female	205	51,8	51,8
Male	191	48,2	100,0
Age			
20 and below	71	17,9	17,9
21-27	160	40,4	58,3
28-34	55	13,9	72,2
35-41	55	13,9	86,1
42 and above	55	13,9	100,0
Latest graduated education level			
Vocational high school and below	224	56,6	56,6
Undergraduate	100	25,3	81,8
Graduate and higher	72	18,2	100,0
Monthly income			
Below 5 thousand TL	206	52,0	52,0
5-10 thousand TL	95	24,0	76,0
Above 10 thousand TL	95	24,0	100,0
Frequency of meat consumption			
Almost every day	50	12,6	12,6
A few times a week	191	48,2	48,2
A few times per month	114	28,8	28,8
Rarely	37	9,3	9,3
Never	4	1,0	1,0
Prior consumption of plant-based meat			
Yes	79	19,9	19,9
No	317	80,1	100,0
Total	396	100	

4.3. Analysis of Normal Distribution and Randomness

The skewness and kurtosis values of the research items and the randomness values of the data are shown in Table 3. Normality should be tested first in multivariate analyzes and in the application of parametric tests. Normality in social sciences is mostly realized by examining the values of skewness and kurtosis. Skewness is the symmetry of the distribution, and kurtosis is the values related to the height of the distribution's focal point (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013: 79, 82). The normal distribution shows the symmetrical distribution of the data around the central scores. The sharpness of the distributions, which is referred as kurtosis, expresses the concentration level of the answers at the ends of the distribution (Field & Hole, 2003: 132-135). Skewness and kurtosis values are between +, - 1.5 (Tabachnick & Fidel, 2013) or +, - 3 (Groeneveld and Meeden, 1984: 391-399) is considered sufficient to assume that the data are normally distributed. According to this, the values of skewness (lowest: -0.577, highest: 0.612) and kurtosis (lowest: -1.008, highest: -0.215) indicate that the data are normally distributed.

In addition, although the data were collected by a non-random sampling method, it is recommended to perform randomness control in order to apply parametric tests. It is often not possible to collect data by random sampling method on issues related to consumer behavior as like for this research. In the control of randomness, it can be analyzed over the averages for continuous variables in the Runs test (Kavak, 2008: 229-230). As a result of the

randomness analysis carried out in this study, it was concluded that the data showed a random distribution and therefore parametric tests were applicable in this regard.

4.4. Factor and Reliability Analyses

In the research, factor analysis was carried out on the answers given to the items about perceptions, awareness and intention for plant-based meat, and it was determined that the KMO coefficient was 0.905 and the Bartlett value (4036,404, $p=0.000$) was significant. Therefore, it is understood that the data is suitable for factor analysis. As seen in Table 4, factor loads, eigenvalues and explained variance values determined as a result of factor analysis performed with the principal component and Oblimin rotation method. Accordingly, the measurement items were gathered under factors in accordance with their contents and their preparation purposes; awareness, perception and intention. The calculated Cronbach Alpha values for the factors show the reliability is sufficient. When factor averages are examined, in terms of item group averages related to research variables; it is understood that answers were between disagreement and indecision level.

Table 3. Factor analysis, reliability analysis and averages

	Factor Loading		
	Perception	Awareness	Intention
Plant-based meat can be an option for a healthy eating (less fat, salt etc.)	,879	,000	-,004
A plant-based meat diet can be an option for a balanced diet (less fat, salt etc.)	,861	,061	-,012
Plant-based meat eating can be an option to meet nutritional needs.	,843	,093	,025
Plant-based meat eating can be an option for a diet without harming natural resources	,842	,069	-,014
Eating plant-based meat can save money spent on animal meat	,801	-,079	-,038
Eating plant-based meat can meet delicious meat need as much as animal meat	,631	-,011	,167
Eigenvalue: 6,926, Explained Variance: 46,171, Cumulative Explained Variance: 46,171, Alfa: 0,911, Factor Average: 2,95			
I know where to buy plant-based meats	,025	,910	-,065
I know restaurants that serve plant-based meat	,074	,890	-,038
I have knowledge about plant-based meat	-,104	,888	,024
I know about plant-based meat brands	,005	,871	-,003
I am familiar with plant-based meat products	,117	,627	,167
Eigenvalue: 2,324, Explained Variance: 15,493, Cumulative Explained Variance: 61,664, Alfa: 0,907, Factor Average: 2,43			
I might try when I come across plant-based meat on a restaurant's menu	-,073	-,039	,918
I'm likely to try packaged plant-base meats	-,088	,107	,838
I am likely to regularly choose plant-base meat over animal meat	,166	-,060	,749
If I find the flavor adequate, I may overcharge for plant-based meat	,184	,038	,633
Eigenvalue: 1,385, Explained Variance: 9,231, Cumulative Explained Variance: 70,895, Alpha: 0,832, Factor Average: 2,72			
General Alpha: 0,915			

4.5. Correlation Analysis

According to the correlation analysis performed to examine the linear co-changes among the research variables, it was determined that the intention variable was positively, significantly and moderately related to positive perceptions, and similarly, it was positively, significantly and relatively low-related with the awareness variable. In addition, it is seen that the awareness variable is positively, significantly and moderately related to the perception variable.

Table 4. Correlation analysis

		Intention	Perception
Awareness	Pearson r	,386(**)	,452(**)
	Sig.	,000	,000
	N	396	396
Perception	Pearson r	,585(**)	1
	Sig.	,000	
	N	396	396

4.6. Regression Analysis

According to the multiple regression analysis performed to examine the predictive level of awareness and perception variables to intention, the research model was found to be significant ($F=110,976$, sig. 0.000) and it was determined that the independent variables explained 36 % of the variability in the dependent variable ($R=0.601$, $R^2=0.361$). Accordingly, it is understood that the intention is related to awareness and perceptions.

Table 5. Regression analysis

	B	S. Error	Std. Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Awareness	,147	,043	,153	3,387	,001	,796	1,256
Perception	,529	,046	,516	11,414	,000	,796	1,256

Dependant variable: Intention

5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In the research, the findings reveal that awareness and positive perceptions affect the intentions about plant-based meat. In general, it overlaps with the literature showing that awareness, positive perceptions, evaluations or expectations are important in the adoption of innovations. The finding regarding the effect of awareness on adoption is similar to the results of Bryant et al.'s (2019) research that draws attention to the importance of familiarity. In addition, the finding regarding the effect of perception on intention is similar to the results of Michel et al.'s (2021) research showing that meat alternatives should be similar to animal meat, and Estell et al. (2021) that flavor assessments are a key factor in plant-based meat choices. In short, the ideas of awareness and positive perceptions are important variables in plant-based meat preference intention are supported in the study.

The increase in consumption of animal meat has become a controversial issue in terms of environmental degradation and human health, as well as animal philanthropy and animal rights. As time goes by, more businesses and consumers show interest in plant-based meat products, which can be seen as an alternative to animal meat. However, the plant-based meat products are still new in the market and have not become among mainstream product lines. So beyond the importance of technological improvements in plant-based meat products; the idea that being aware of these products and having positive perceptions towards them is also important in the adoption has been examined in this research. With the field study carried out within the scope of the research; awareness and perception variables are depicted as important variables in the intention to consume plant-based meat.

The research findings indicates that the plant-based meat market has consumer sided mental infrastructure problems. And communication and sales promotion activities of companies will carry out in line with creating awareness and positive perception about the products will play an important role in the future of the sector. Therefore, plant-based meat producers and businesses trying to differentiate with these products in the market should take into consideration the awareness and perceptions. It can be suggested for these firms to make more use of traditional and digital media channels about the existence, features and benefits of these products. In addition, product tasting practices can be expected to be effective in this context. Besides these; it is thought that it will be useful to consider positive perceptions and awareness variables in researches and models to be created on plant-based meat and will contribute to scientific knowledge and theoretical development about the subject. As with any research, this research has also some limitations. The main limitations are; the limited sample size, the inability to represent all provinces of the country, the inability to reveal cause-effect relationships due to the descriptive nature of the method, and the assumption that the respondents gave honest answers to the survey items.

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