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Between Authenticity and Institutional Recognition: Authenticity Discourse around Van Herbed Cheese in Online Visitor Reviews

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ABSTRACT: Van Herbed Cheese is registered as a geographical indication by the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office (Registration No. 405, 2018) and is regarded as the signature product of the Van breakfast tradition. To examine how this institutional authenticity claim is confirmed in actual visitor experience, this study analyzed 98 real visitor reviews collected via Google Maps from ten businesses in Van province (eight breakfast establishments and two retail herbed-cheese sellers), coded line by line using a pre-designed ten-dimension scheme (objective authenticity, general taste/abundance, cheese-specific sensory quality, table sociality, place attachment, expectation gap, on-site hygiene/trust, remote-purchase trust, and memory/nostalgia). Findings show that expectation gap is the strongest and most stable predictor of visitor rating (mean rating difference: -2.72), a relationship that remained virtually unchanged when the corpus was expanded from 37 to 98 reviews. The coding scheme displayed strong structural sensitivity to venue type: general taste/abundance appeared in 85.0% of breakfast-establishment reviews but almost never in retail reviews (5.6%), while remote-purchase trust appeared exclusively among retail sellers (44.4%). Remote-purchase trust and memory/nostalgia frequently co-occurred in the retail context, with visitors often purchasing the product remotely in search of a flavor tasted years earlier. Place attachment, by contrast, shifted from a simple positive association in the smaller sample to a more complex pattern as the corpus grew, revealing that visitors can evaluate location independently of product or service quality. These results indicate that the legal registration of a geographical indication does not guarantee a consistent authenticity experience at the point of consumption, and that authenticity is continuously reconstructed in the tension between institutional and individual verification.

1. INTRODUCTION

Local gastronomy plays an increasingly central role in the construction of destination identity and in generating touristic appeal. For visitors, tasting a regional food is not merely an act of physical satisfaction but a way of coming into contact with the cultural distinctiveness of the place they are visiting. Within this context, Van province has become one of Turkey's leading gastronomy-tourism destinations through a breakfast culture of its own, known as "Van breakfast" (Van kahvaltısı), which places herbed cheese at its center.

For this research, herbed cheese carries an authenticity claim that is not merely symbolic but institutionally recognized: following an application submitted by the Van Chamber of Commerce and Industry on 28 July 2017, the process concluded with the registration of Van Herbed Cheese as a geographical indication by the Turkish Patent and Trademark Office on 31 December 2018 (Registration No. 405; Turkish Patent and Trademark Office, 2018). Çiçek and Koç (2024), evaluating Van's geographically indicated products within the scope of gastronomy tourism, emphasize that such registrations make a significant contribution to a destination's touristic marketability, but that registration alone does not mean the product is

presented consistently at every point of consumption. This formal registration legally confirms that the product is tied to a specific geography and production method; yet it is precisely here that the motivation for this study emerges: whether an authenticity claim registered at the institutional/legal level is always confirmed in actual visitor experience remains largely unknown. Is authenticity a fixed quality that can be attributed to a product through a geographical-indication certificate, or is it a fragile judgment renegotiated at every moment of consumption?

Recent field research on Van's food-service sector shows how current this question is in the local context. Bozaz and Yavuz (2023), interviewing owners and chefs at 20 tradesman restaurants (*esnaf lokantaları*) in central Van, examined these businesses' practices of using local and geographically indicated products, along with their strengths and weaknesses, through content analysis, and revealed the importance of tradesman restaurants for Van's culinary culture and gastronomy tourism. This study complements that research in two respects: first, as a data source, it relies on visitors' own independent, unsolicited online reviews rather than business owners' self-reports; second, rather than tradesman restaurants in general, it narrows its focus to a single emblematic product (herbed cheese), making visible in finer detail how authenticity is tested at the product level.

One of the richest and least filtered data sources available for pursuing this question is visitors' own, unsolicited online reviews. Reviews left on platforms such as Google Maps reveal, independently of researcher intervention, whether visitors find a business or product authentic, the concrete grounds on which they defend that judgment, and which other dimensions of the experience (price perception, service quality, venue atmosphere) this judgment becomes entangled with. Yet the literature has predominantly treated authenticity as a unidimensional construct, positioning whether a product or experience is found authentic along a single scale. This study questions that assumption and proposes that the authenticity judgment is in fact composed of two distinct, at times mutually canceling orientations (confirmation and denial), and that these orientations are in turn sustained by different underlying mechanisms (sensory evidence, perceived commercialization, comparative reference, hospitality).

Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to examine, through qualitative content analysis, how authenticity discourse around herbed cheese is produced on the basis of 98 Google Maps reviews collected from ten food-service businesses in Van (eight breakfast establishments and two retail herbed-cheese sellers), which dimension of the coding scheme most strongly and most stably predicts visitor satisfaction, whether the scheme shows structural sensitivity to venue type, and how remote-purchase trust and memory/nostalgia interact in the retail context. The study seeks answers to the following research questions:

- RQ1: Which dimension of the coding scheme most strongly predicts visitor rating, and does this relationship hold as the sample grows from 37 to 98 reviews?
- RQ2: Does the coding scheme show structural sensitivity to venue type that is, does it distinguish meaningfully between businesses offering a full meal experience and businesses selling the product for take-away/remote purchase?
- RQ3: How do remote-purchase trust and memory/nostalgia interact in the context of a geographically indicated product that travels beyond its place of origin, and how does place attachment behave as the sample grows?

The remainder of the study is structured as follows. Section 2 discusses the development of the authenticity concept in the tourism literature and positions this study theoretically. Section 3 explains the research method, the data-collection process, and the development of the coding scheme. Section 4 presents the findings. Section 5 discusses the findings from a theoretical and managerial perspective, and the study concludes with its limitations and directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. The Development of the Authenticity Concept in the Tourism Literature

Authenticity is one of the most long-standing and extensively debated concepts in tourism research. MacCannell (1973) argued that the modern tourist is engaged in a search for a "real" experience, yet what is typically offered is a staged reality adapted for touristic consumption staged authenticity. This conceptualization frames authenticity through the relationship between the "front stage" and "back stage" of the setting or experience presented to the visitor, and assumes that tourism businesses produce front-stage arrangements that imitate the back stage.

Cohen (1988) extended this discussion through authenticity's relationship with the process of commoditization, arguing that a cultural product's being produced for commercial purposes does not automatically render it inauthentic, and that authenticity

is instead a relative category, continually renegotiated over time. Cohen's emphasis on object authenticity -the claim that a product's "realness" rests on its concrete, verifiable qualities (its origin, production method, materials) - bears directly on this study's D2 (sensory/physical evidence) dimension.

Wang (1999) proposed existential authenticity as an alternative to object authenticity. In this view, visitors sometimes seek not the "realness" of the product itself but the authenticity of the relationships they form, the freedom they feel, or the intimacy they experience during the visit; authenticity, in this sense, is not inherent in an external object but in the subject's own experience. This distinction forms the conceptual basis of this study's D5 (hospitality/relational authenticity) dimension.

Cohen and Cohen (2012) proposed a framework bringing these earlier approaches together: "hot" and "cool" authentication. Cool authentication operates when an authority (an expert, an institution, a tradition) declares something authentic through a one-off, formal, performative act; hot authentication operates when the individual reaches a judgment of authenticity through a repeated, informal, performative process grounded in their own experience. Online visitor reviews are, to a large extent, a data source that operates through this second, hot-authentication logic: the visitor reaches an independent judgment based on their own experience at the table, regardless of the "cool" authority of the business or the geographical indication. The core motivation of this study lies precisely in this tension — while a cool authentication of herbed cheese exists (geographical-indication registration), hot authentication (visitor reviews) does not always confirm it.

2.2. Local Food, Place, and Authenticity

Sims (2009), examining the role of local food in the sustainable tourism experience, argued that local products are not merely an object of consumption for the visitor but a concrete point of contact with the place itself. According to Sims, local food enables the visitor to form an "edible" bond with the destination; the authenticity of the food therefore extends directly into the destination's overall authenticity perception. This framework explains why herbed cheese can be read not merely as a breakfast component but as a metonymic representative of Van's touristic identity: the presence or absence of the product triggers a judgment not only about the individual business but, indirectly, about the destination itself indeed, as the Findings section shows, statements such as "there wasn't even herbed cheese in a place like Van" carry an implicit disappointment directed not only at the business but at the destination.

Observing this relationship directly in the Turkish context, Bozaz and Yavuz (2023) examined the extent to which tradesman restaurants in Van reflect local and geographically indicated products in their business practices, finding that owners position these products as both an identity marker and a marketing tool, but that sustaining this consistently is difficult. Similarly, Çiçek and Koç (2024), evaluating Van's geographically indicated products within gastronomy tourism, highlight these products' potential to contribute to destination branding while emphasizing that cross-business presentation consistency is critical to realizing that potential. Koç (2025), focusing directly on the product category to which herbed cheese belongs, found that despite the centrality of dairy products to the touristic experience in Van, marked inter-business differences exist in production standardization and presentation consistency. These three findings converge theoretically with the pattern observed in this study's D6 (expectation gap) dimension — namely, that when an authenticity claim is not supported by economic practice (pricing, transparency), it is challenged by the visitor. In addition, the very use of the term *esnaf* ("tradesman") as a shortcut for authenticity in some corpus reviews ("*esnaf esnaf değil*" [not a real tradesman], "*esnaflik kaliteleri*" [tradesman-like qualities]) is a finding directly relatable to this literature.

2.3. Online User Reviews: A Domain Where Authenticity Discourse Becomes Visible

Kozinets (2002) introduced netnography to marketing and consumer research, arguing that user-generated content in online communities offers a "natural" observation setting, independent of researcher intervention. This methodological approach allows visitor reviews to be read not merely as a satisfaction indicator but as a discursive domain in which consumers construct their cultural judgments about a product or experience.

Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008), examining the role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the hospitality and tourism sector, showed that such content directly shapes business reputation and visitor expectations. What matters for this study is that eWOM is not merely a marketing/reputation issue but also a domain in which cultural judgments such as authenticity are collectively negotiated: a business's authenticity claim is not confined to a single visitor's experience but, once the review is published, becomes part of the expectation frame for subsequent visitors — which forms the structural source of the "comparison with others' experience" pattern observed in this study's D7 (comparative authenticity reference) dimension.

The most directly comparable methodological precedent for this study is Le, Arcodia, Novais, and Kralj's (2022) study of authenticity perception in online restaurant reviews. Using an interpretive approach and thematic analysis, this research showed that consumers construct authenticity both from cues belonging to the business itself (setting, product, staff) and from the ways they project their own subjectivity onto the business. This finding directly supports the present study's multi-layered approach, which links D1 (the authenticity judgment) not only to the product but to relational dimensions such as D5 (hospitality); however, while Le et al.'s study remains at the level of the general restaurant context, this study narrows its focus to a single geographically indicated product (herbed cheese) to examine in finer detail how the authenticity judgment becomes concrete at the product level. In the Turkish context, Koç and Şahin (2023) adopted a similar methodological approach, examining online reviews of restaurants through content analysis using the example of Google Maps. This study demonstrates that reviews on online map/travel platforms are becoming an increasingly established data source in restaurant research in Turkey as well, offering a local precedent that methodologically supports the use of online reviews as a data source in the present study.

2.4. Conceptual Model and Positioning of the Study

The real coding scheme used in this study (the coding notebook, *kodlama_defteri.xlsx*) treats authenticity not as a single judgment but as a multi-layered structure operating across nine distinct dimensions. D1 (objective authenticity — the village-made versus packaged distinction, place of production, expressions such as “real”/“original”) rests directly on Cohen's (1988) concept of object authenticity: the visitor uses concrete cues about the product's origin and production method as evidence of authenticity. D3 (cheese-specific sensory quality) further concretizes this concept at the product level, testing object authenticity through directly sensory qualities such as herb intensity, saltiness, and texture.

D4 (table sociality) and D5 (place attachment) can be related to Wang's (1999) concept of existential authenticity: in these dimensions, the visitor experiences not the product itself but the relationship they form (hospitality, being treated as a guest) or the place they are in (the view of Lake Van, regional identity) as the source of authenticity. Sims's (2009) emphasis on the local food–place bond forms the conceptual foundation of D5 in particular: the local product functions as a mediator of the concrete, “edible” bond the visitor forms with the destination.

D6 (expectation gap) is a direct application of Cohen and Cohen's (2012) distinction between cool (institutional/discursive, one-off) and hot (grounded in individual experience, repeated) authentication: the gap between the cool authentication of the “Van breakfast” discourse and the hot authentication the visitor experiences at the table constitutes the essence of this dimension. D7 (on-site hygiene and trust) can be related to MacCannell's (1973) front-stage/back-stage distinction — it can be read as the visitor's effort to sense the “back stage” (the real state of the kitchen, the real conditions of service).

D8 (remote-purchase trust) and D9 (memory and nostalgia) are two dimensions present in this study's coding scheme that do not have a direct counterpart in the existing theoretical framework covered by the References. D8 can be partly related to Çiçek and Koç's (2024) and Koç's (2025) findings on the relationship between geographically indicated products, destination branding, and post-purchase trust; however, this dimension sits, in essence, closer to the literature on e-commerce trust and remote-purchase behavior a domain beyond the scope of this study. D9 (memory/nostalgia) is not grounded in a specific source; the pattern of “rediscovering a product tasted years earlier,” which emerges in the Findings section, calls for a separate literature review drawing on the nostalgia-tourism and food-memory literatures (e.g., cultural/emotional consumption, autobiographical memory) this should be noted as an explicit area for theoretical expansion in this study.

D2 (general taste and abundance), unlike the other eight dimensions, corresponds not to a specific authenticity theory but to a general satisfaction/quality assessment; as the Findings section shows, this dimension emerges meaningfully only among breakfast establishments and functions largely as a descriptive baseline.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative content analysis design. Because the research question concerns visitor-generated meaning-making rather than experimentally manipulated variables, data consisted of unsolicited, publicly available online reviews, consistent with the netnographic tradition of studying user-generated content in its natural setting (Kozinets, 2002). The coding scheme was fixed in advance of data collection in a purpose-built coding instrument (an Excel workbook comprising a

codebook sheet, a sampling-frame sheet, a coding sheet, and sheets that automatically compute dimension frequencies and inter-coder agreement).

3.2. Data Source and Collection Process

Data were collected from Google Maps in two rounds: an initial round (7 September 2026) capturing the first three reviews visible on each business's overview page, and a second round (8 September 2026) in which the "Reviews" tab was opened and reviews sorted by "Most relevant" were retrieved until each business reached ten coded reviews (eight for one retail business, after two clearly unrelated reviews were excluded). For each review, the full text, author handle, star rating (1–5), and review date were recorded. Unlike some review platforms, Google Maps associates an individual star rating with every review, which constitutes a methodological advantage of this platform relative to TripAdvisor.

3.3. Sample

Ten businesses operating in central Van, spanning eight breakfast establishments and two retail herbed-cheese sellers, were selected through purposive sampling (Table 3.1). The inclusion of retail businesses is particularly important for capturing behavioral data (D8) on the product being purchased and taken away beyond on-site consumption.

Table 3.1. The ten businesses forming the sample (total coded reviews: 98)

Business	Type	Total reviews on Google	Coded reviews
Urartu Han Van Kahvaltısı	Breakfast	6,210	10
Sütçü Kenan Kahvaltı Salonu	Breakfast	2,473	10
Şehr-i Van Sofrası	Breakfast	2,217	10
Van Kahvaltı Konağı	Breakfast	2,120	10
Sütçü Fevzi	Breakfast	1,506	10
Balcı Dede Kahvaltı Evi	Breakfast	1,129	10
Matbah-ı Van	Breakfast	917	10
Damak Kahvaltı Salonu	Breakfast	846	10
Van Otlı Peynir Berrak	Retail	56	10
Göl Şarküteri	Retail	36	8

3.4. Coding Scheme

The coding scheme comprises nine dimensions: D1 (objective authenticity), D2 (general taste and abundance), D3 (cheese-specific sensory quality), D4 (table sociality), D5 (place attachment), D6 (expectation gap), D7 (on-site hygiene and trust), D8 (remote-purchase trust), and D9 (memory and nostalgia). Each review was coded binomially (0/1) for each of these nine dimensions, and separately flagged for whether the literal phrase "otlu peynir" (herbed cheese) appeared. Full dimension definitions are provided in the codebook sheet of kodlama_defteri.xlsx.

3.5. Coding Process and Two-Stage Quality Control

All 98 reviews were coded manually, line by line, by a single researcher, on the basis of the definitions in the codebook sheet. In the first coding round ($n = 37$), an unexpected negative relationship between D5 (place attachment) and star rating contrary to theoretical expectation led to the identification and correction of a data-entry error (the D5 and D6 columns had been transposed in 9 of 37 rows). When the corpus was expanded to $n = 98$, D5's direction turned negative again; however, a row-by-row re-audit this time confirmed that this was not a data-entry error but a genuine pattern emerging as the sample grew (place/view evaluation can operate independently of product and service quality; see Findings, Section 4.5). This two-stage verification process shows that data quality can be audited through theoretical-consistency checks even without a second coder, but that not every inconsistency automatically signals an error each requires careful, case-by-case examination.

3.6. Analytical Approach

Descriptive frequency analysis was conducted at three levels: overall dimension frequency, cross-tabulation by venue type (breakfast versus retail), and comparison of mean star rating between reviews coded 1 versus 0 on each dimension. Given the corpus size, inferential statistical tests were not applied.

3.7. Research Ethics

All data consisted of publicly available reviews posted under user-chosen handles on Google Maps; no private communication, login, or restricted content was accessed. No ethical committee approval was required, as the study did not involve direct interaction with, or intervention on, human participants.

3.8. Reliability and Limitations

The kodlama_defteri.xlsx instrument contains a pre-designed Reliability sheet for computing inter-coder reliability; the first coder's codes for the initial $n = 37$ round were entered into this sheet, and a blinded coding packet (Ikinci_Kodlayici_KOR_Paket.xlsx) was prepared for an independent second coder. This reliability sample has not yet been updated for the expanded $n = 98$ round. By the author's decision, independent second coding was not carried out in this research round; an inter-coder reliability coefficient (Cohen's kappa) is therefore not reported in this draft. Other limitations include the sample's dependence on Google Maps' "Most relevant" sorting algorithm (a possible source of selection bias), the fact that only the first ~10 reviews per business were sampled (a small slice of a total review pool ranging from 36 to 6,210), and the fact that all coded reviews were in Turkish, which meant a Turkish/English comparison could not be tested.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Overview of the Corpus

The findings in this section are based on 98 real visitor reviews collected via Google Maps from 10 businesses operating in Van province (8 breakfast establishments and 2 retail herbed-cheese sellers) — ten reviews from nine businesses, and eight from Göl Şarküteri (two reviews were excluded from the corpus, as they were unrelated to the business, in order to preserve the integrity of the research). Breakfast establishments are represented by 80 reviews and retail cheese sellers by 18.

Table 4.1. Overall frequency of the ten dimensions and their relationship with star rating ($n = 98$)

Dimension	n (%)	Mean (code=1)	Mean (code=0)	Difference
D1 — Objective authenticity	19 (19.4%)	4.58	4.35	+0.22
D2 — General taste and abundance	69 (70.4%)	4.51	4.14	+0.37
D3 — Cheese-specific sensory	18 (18.4%)	4.61	4.35	+0.26

quality				
D4 — Table sociality	37 (37.8%)	5.00	4.03	+0.97
D5 — Place attachment	8 (8.2%)	4.00	4.43	−0.43
D6 — Expectation gap	16 (16.3%)	2.12	4.84	−2.72
D7 — On-site hygiene and trust	13 (13.3%)	3.46	4.54	−1.08
D8 — Remote- purchase trust	8 (8.2%)	4.75	4.37	+0.38
D9 — Memory and nostalgia	11 (11.2%)	5.00	4.32	+0.68

The literal phrase “otlu peynir” (herbed cheese) appeared directly in 12 of the 98 reviews (12.2%); this proportion was 8.8% (7/80) among breakfast establishments and 27.8% (5/18) among retail cheese sellers.

4.2. The Recurring Central Role of Expectation Gap (D6)

When the corpus was expanded from 37 to 98 reviews, D6’s (expectation gap) relationship with star rating remained almost exactly the same magnitude (difference: −2.72, versus −2.80 in the earlier round) — indicating that the finding is not coincidental but a genuine pattern that retains its stability as the sample grows. The mean rating for reviews coded D6 was 2.12, against 4.84 for reviews without D6.

“Calling this ‘Van breakfast’ would take a thousand witnesses to believe. As someone who has had breakfast all over Turkey, this was the most mediocre place I’ve been. I saw absolutely nothing distinctly Van about it.” (Van Kahvaltı Konağı, 1★, Google Maps)

“...we’d heard Van breakfast was notoriously expensive, we’d seen it in the photos, but it wasn’t like that at all extra charges on top.” (Damak Kahvaltı Salonu, 1★, Google Maps)

“I’ve ordered from this business several times. Unfortunately the cheese leaves you undecided every time you can’t quite call it excellent, but you can’t call it entirely bad either.” (Göl Şarküteri, 3★, Google Maps)

4.3. Structural Divergence by Venue Type: Confirmed in the Expanded Corpus

The comparison between breakfast establishments (n = 80) and retail cheese sellers (n = 18) reproduced the same structural pattern seen in the smaller corpus, confirming that the earlier finding was not a sampling coincidence (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Dimension distribution by venue type (n = 98)

Dimension	Breakfast establishments (n = 80)	Retail sellers (n = 18)
D1 — Objective authenticity	16 (20.0%)	3 (16.7%)
D2 — General taste and abundance	68 (85.0%)	1 (5.6%)
D3 — Cheese-specific sensory quality	8 (10.0%)	10 (55.6%)

D4 — Table sociality	30 (37.5%)	7 (38.9%)
D5 — Place attachment	8 (10.0%)	0 (0.0%)
D6 — Expectation gap	14 (17.5%)	2 (11.1%)
D7 — On-site hygiene/trust	11 (13.8%)	2 (11.1%)
D8 — Remote-purchase trust	0 (0.0%)	8 (44.4%)
D9 — Memory and nostalgia	6 (7.5%)	5 (27.8%)

D2 appears in 85.0% of breakfast-establishment reviews but only 5.6% of retail-seller reviews; D8 shows the exact opposite pattern, entirely absent among breakfast establishments (0.0%) but present in nearly half of retail reviews (44.4%). D3 (cheese-specific sensory quality) was also almost 5.5 times more frequent among retail sellers (55.6%) than breakfast establishments (10.0%) a gap noticeably wider than the roughly threefold difference observed in the first, $n = 37$ round, showing that the divergence sharpens as the sample grows.

4.4. Remote-Purchase Trust (D8) and Memory (D9): A Growing Evidence Base

The expanded corpus provides numerous new examples of D8 and D9 co-occurring in the retail context:

“I was searching for the wild-garlic-pressed, cellar-aged sheep’s cheese I had eaten twenty-one years ago while staying in Hakkari... I reached out via WhatsApp. They shipped me exactly the flavor I remembered, by courier.” (Van Otlı Peynir Berrak, 5★, Google Maps)

“I live in Denizli but I’m originally from Van; being far from home, I was longing for herbed cheese. I found your number online and placed my order.” (Van Otlı Peynir Berrak, 5★, Google Maps)

“My son had previously brought herbed cheese from Van for work; that was the first time we tasted it and we loved it. I found Berrak Peynircilik through an online search.” (Van Otlı Peynir Berrak, 5★, Google Maps)

Together, these three excerpts show that D8 and D9 are intertwined in the retail context not only statistically but narratively: trust in purchasing the product remotely is most often activated by a memory sometimes formed years earlier, sometimes through someone else of having tasted the product before.

4.5. Place Attachment (D5): A Complexity Revealed by Sample Growth

D5 (place attachment) appeared positive in the first, $n = 37$ round (+0.53), but reversed direction and turned mildly negative once the corpus was expanded to $n = 98$ (−0.43). This shift does not stem from a coding error but from a genuine complexity that emerged as the sample grew: two low-rated reviews praised the lake/venue location while separately, and negatively, evaluating the food or service.

“By the lake, nice atmosphere, no complaints about the service, but the breakfast wasn’t good at all everything was store-bought.” (Sütçü Fevzi, 1★, Google Maps)

“...they recommended this place around the lake for breakfast, the service was very poor... there’s a view, but...” (Sütçü Fevzi, 1★, Google Maps)

This finding shows that place attachment does not automatically translate into overall satisfaction; visitors can treat a venue’s location/view as an evaluative axis independent of the product and service delivered. It indicates that D5 may have appeared coincidentally one-directional (only positive) in the small, $n = 3$ sample of the first round, and confirms the need to re-test such dimensions in larger samples.

4.6. Summary of Findings

The expanded, $n = 98$ corpus confirmed the three core findings of the first, $n = 37$ round: (1) expectation gap (D6) continues to be the strongest and most stable predictor of star rating (−2.72, almost unchanged from the earlier round); (2) the coding

scheme's sensitivity to venue type has become even clearer — the breakfast/retail divergence in D2 and D8's retail-only presence is a pattern that strengthens as the sample grows; (3) the D8–D9 co-occurrence has been confirmed as a rich, recurring narrative pattern in the retail context. By contrast, D5 (place attachment) lost its simple positive appearance from the first round as the sample grew, revealing a more complex structure in which venue location and product/service evaluation can diverge — a methodological illustration of how one-directional findings from small samples can become more complex in larger ones.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. The Stability of Expectation Gap (D6): A Finding Independent of Sample Size

D6's relationship with star rating barely changed when the corpus was expanded from 37 to 98 ($\approx$ threefold) reviews ($-2.80 \rightarrow -2.72$). This stability indicates that the finding is not a coincidence arising from sampling noise, but rather a reproducible pattern consistent with Cohen and Cohen's (2012) hot/cool authentication framework. The visitor continuously tests the institutional/discursive claim of “Van breakfast” against their own hot authentication, and the outcome of this test continues to be the strongest determinant of satisfaction, independent of sample size.

5.2. Reconfirmation of the Coding Scheme's Structural Validity

The divergence between breakfast establishments ($n = 80$) and retail cheese sellers ($n = 18$) not only reproduced the first, $n = 37$ finding but sharpened further on some dimensions: D3's (cheese-specific sensory quality) retail-to-breakfast ratio rose from roughly threefold in the first round (50.0%/16.1%) to roughly 5.5-fold in the expanded corpus (55.6%/10.0%). The complementary zero/high pattern of D2 and D8 was likewise preserved exactly. This reproducibility is strong evidence that the coding scheme's sensitivity to venue type is not a sampling coincidence, but that these concepts are genuinely activated differently depending on distinct consumption contexts (a holistic meal experience versus a single-product purchase).

5.3. The Complexification of Place Attachment (D5): A Caution from Small Samples

D5's direction shifting from positive (+0.53) at $n = 37$ to mildly negative (-0.43) at $n = 98$ is the most instructive methodological finding of this study. This shift is not an error but a case in which a dimension that appeared coincidentally one-directional in a small sample ($n = 3$) reveals its genuine complexity as the sample grows ($n = 8$): visitors can and do evaluate a venue's location/view along an axis independent of the quality of the product and service delivered. Sims's (2009) concept of the place–product bond offers a partial explanation here: although place attachment is a contributing element to authenticity perception, it is not, on its own, an “authenticity insurance” that compensates for product/service shortcomings. This finding can also be read as a general methodological caution that one-directional relationships appearing in small-sample qualitative studies need to be re-tested as the sample grows.

5.4. Remote-Purchase Trust (D8) and Memory (D9): Narrative Coherence

The numerous new D8/D9 examples that emerged in the expanded corpus confirm that these two dimensions operate in the retail context not coincidentally but as a narratively integrated whole: having tasted the product in the past usually through someone else, sometimes years earlier is the most frequently recurring motivation behind the behavior of repurchasing it remotely. This pattern lends concrete, consumer-behavior support to Çiçek and Koç's (2024) and Koç's (2025) discussions of geographically indicated products and destination branding: a product's geographical-indication status enables not only its on-site consumption but also its being carried in memory and sought out again independently of the destination.

5.5. Limitations

- Although the sample has been expanded ($n = 98$), it remains relatively small; cell sizes for dimensions such as D5 and D8 ($n = 8$) call for cautious statistical interpretation.
- Only the first ~ 10 reviews under Google Maps' “Most relevant” ranking were sampled per business; this ranking algorithm may disproportionately surface certain types of reviews (e.g., those with photos, longer reviews, or reviews from Local Guides), which may constitute a source of selection bias.
- Coding was carried out by a single researcher; although the reliability infrastructure has been prepared, independent second coding was not carried out in this round either.
- All coded reviews were in Turkish; a Turkish/English comparison could again not be tested in this dataset.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined, through qualitative content analysis of 98 Google Maps reviews collected from ten businesses, how the institutional authenticity claim carried by Van Herbed Cheese as a geographical-indication-registered natural resource is tested in actual visitor experience. The corpus presented a picture that largely confirmed, and in some respects complexified, the findings of the initial pilot round ($n = 37$).

The confirmed findings fall into three main headings. First, expectation gap (D6) continued to be the strongest and most stable determinant of satisfaction (star difference: -2.72 , virtually unchanged from the first round); this shows that the failure to meet the expectation created by the “Van breakfast” discourse is a robust finding, independent of sample size. Second, the coding scheme’s sensitivity to venue type became even clearer as the sample grew: general taste/abundance evaluation (D2) dominates in breakfast establishments (85.0%), while remote-purchase trust (D8) emerges only among retail cheese sellers (44.4%) a contrast that reproduced, and strengthened, the first-round finding. Third, the narrative interweaving of remote-purchase trust (D8) and memory/nostalgia (D9) in the retail context was confirmed with an evidence base that grew richer as the sample expanded.

Place attachment (D5), by contrast, evolved from a simple positive relationship ($+0.53$ at $n = 37$) into a more complex picture (-0.43 at $n = 98$) as the sample grew. This does not stem from a data error, but from a finding that appeared coincidentally one-directional in a small sample ($n = 3$) revealing its true nature that venue/view evaluation can operate independently of product and service quality as the sample grew ($n = 8$). This constitutes a concrete example of the importance of re-testing small-sample qualitative findings in larger samples.

In conclusion, this study has shown that the legal registration of a geographical indication does not automatically mean that the product produces a consistent authenticity experience at every point of consumption; authenticity carries a continuous tension between institutional (cool) authentication and visitor-experience-based (hot) authentication that remains stable regardless of sample size. Three steps are recommended for a publication-ready study: (i) computing an inter-coder reliability coefficient by having the prepared blinded coding packet completed by an independent second coder; (ii) further expanding the sample for rare/complex dimensions such as D5; and (iii) reviewing the consistency of the theoretical discussion in the Introduction and Theoretical Framework sections with these expanded findings.

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