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The Influence of Animated Films on Destination Marketing: An AIDA Model Analysis of Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe

Animasyon Filmlerinin Destinasyon Pazarlamasına Etkisi: Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe'nin AIDA Modeli ile Analizi

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Abstract

Animated films are increasingly recognized as influential tools in destination marketing, shaping audience perceptions and influencing tourism interest. This study examines the film-induced tourism impact of the animated movie Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe through the AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action). The research explores how the film introduces audiences to Göbeklitepe, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and whether it fosters destination awareness, curiosity, and potential travel intentions. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study employs content analysis of key scenes, historical and cultural representations, and secondary data sources, including tourism statistics and Google Trends data. Findings indicate that the film effectively captures attention through engaging storytelling and visual representation, sustains interest by embedding cultural and historical elements, creates desire through emotional engagement and familiarity, and potentially influences action by increasing awareness and shaping future tourism preferences. While direct causality between the film and visitor numbers remains inconclusive, evidence suggests that Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe plays a role in positioning Göbeklitepe as a recognizable and desirable travel destination. The study highlights the potential of animated films in heritage tourism marketing and provides recommendations for future research, including audience perception studies and long-term impact assessments of film-induced tourism.

Key Words: Animated films, destination marketing, film-induced tourism, Göbeklitepe, AIDA Model, cultural heritage

Özet

Animasyon filmleri, destinasyon pazarlamasında etkili araçlar olarak giderek daha fazla tanınmakta; izleyici algılarını şekillendirmekte ve turizm ilgisini etkilemektedir. Bu çalışma, Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe adlı animasyon filminin film turizmi üzerindeki etkisini AIDA Modeli (Dikkat, İlgi, Arzu, Eylem) çerçevesinde incelemektedir. Araştırmada film aracılığıyla izleyicilerin bir UNESCO Dünya Mirası Alanı olan Göbeklitepe ile nasıl tanıştırıldığı ve filmin destinasyon farkındalığı, merak ve potansiyel seyahat niyetleri oluşturup oluşturmadığı araştırılmıştır. Nitel bir durum çalışması yaklaşımıyla yürütülen araştırmada, filmin önemli sahnelerinin içerik analizi, tarihî ve kültürel temsillerin değerlendirilmesi ile turizm istatistikleri ve Google Trends verileri gibi ikincil kaynaklar kullanılmıştır. Bulgular, filmin etkileyici hikâye anlatımı ve görsel sunum aracılığıyla dikkati başarılı bir şekilde çektiğini, kültürel ve tarihî unsurları iç içe geçirerek ilginin sürdürüldüğünü, duygusal bağ kurma ve aşinalık yoluyla arzunun oluşturulduğunu ve farkındalığı artırarak gelecekteki turizm tercihlerini şekillendirmek suretiyle eyleme geçişi etkileyebileceğini göstermektedir. Film ile ziyaretçi sayıları arasındaki doğrudan nedensellik kesin olarak belirlenememekle birlikte, bulgular Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe filminin Göbeklitepe'yi tanınabilir ve cazip bir seyahat destinasyonu olarak konumlandırmada rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışma, animasyon filmlerinin kültürel miras turizmi pazarlamasındaki potansiyeline dikkat çekmekte ve gelecekteki araştırmalar için izleyici algısına yönelik çalışmalar ile film turizminin uzun vadeli etkilerinin değerlendirilmesine yönelik öneriler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Animasyon filmleri, destinasyon pazarlaması, film turizmi, Göbeklitepe, AIDA Modeli, kültürel miras

INTRODUCTION

In today's highly visual and digital-driven world, animated films are more than just a form of entertainment; they have become powerful tools for shaping perceptions, inspiring imagination, and even influencing real-world behaviour. One of the most intriguing aspects of modern animated films is their ability to introduce audiences to real-world locations, making them more than just backdrops for storytelling. This research focuses on how animated films, particularly Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe, contribute to destination awareness and impact audience perceptions of a real-world location.

Movies and television series can be described as mass media that can quickly penetrate the world of individuals and change people's perceptions. When evaluated in this context, films and television series have become a basic tool that affects people's thoughts and enables them to take a stand on certain issues and has the power to create images about people and places (Busby & Klug, 2001, p. 316).

The use of destinations in films sometimes occurs when filmmakers are influenced by the unique and striking features of the place. It is known that sometimes films are made for a certain fee by the relevant units

responsible for tourism marketing of the destinations, or the films are supported and used in public relations campaigns for tourism promotion. Many studies have shown that this situation affects travel decisions or increases the number of visitors to the destination where a movie reaches a large number of viewers. Being featured in a movie enables a destination to stand out from its competitors, to be promoted in an alternative and effective way, and to be positively established in the minds of consumers (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006a, p. 257).

The destinations reflected in the films increase the awareness of the landed place. The destinations featured in the films and TV series are capable of increasing the attractiveness of the place, hence film tourism can contribute to the tourism sector of the destination. These periods of increasing awareness and reflecting the place in a positive light help shape consumer perception of the place shown in the movie. Research by Bolan and Williams (2008) highlights that films serve as a powerful marketing tool by reinforcing positive destination imagery, influencing audience perceptions, and enhancing tourism appeal.

While many studies have examined the effects of live-action films on tourism and destination image, limited research has been conducted on the impact of animated films in this context. Animation, often perceived as content targeted solely at children, has been underestimated as a marketing tool for tourism. However, with the global popularity of animated films, it is important to examine how these films influence travel behaviour, particularly among families. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing how the animated film *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* positions Göbeklitepe as a destination and whether it sparks curiosity and awareness among viewers.

Most studies concur that visual media, such as movies or TV programs, provide intangible benefits, including increasing awareness of a screened destination during the pre-visit stage (Connell, 2005; Crofts, 1989; Croy, 2010; Croy & Walker, 2003; Frost, 2006; Han & Lee, 2008; Iwashita, 2008; Macionis & Sparks, 2009; Mercille, 2005; O'Connor et al., 2010). There are many papers which investigated the relation between movie (or drama) and destination image (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Riley & Van Doren, 1992; Riley et al., 1998; Hudson & Ritchie, 2006b; Frost, 2006).

Most film tourism studies focus on the diverse effects of film on tourism. In addition, most studies focus on marketing the city or country featured in a TV drama or film. One of the possible reasons of why cartoon animation has not been investigated in destination image study would be that target of cartoon animation has longly been believed only children. Therefore, most researchers might judge cartoon animation was less worth investigating within destination image study. However, this study takes a narrower scope by focusing on a animation film set in a real destination.

The power of animation lies in its ability to create emotional connections with audiences. Through engaging storytelling, vibrant visuals, and culturally embedded narratives, animated films can make destinations feel accessible and exciting. *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* introduces children and families to one of the most

significant archaeological sites in the world, Göbeklitepe, in a way that is both entertaining and educational. By embedding historical and cultural elements within an adventurous storyline, the film fosters a sense of curiosity and admiration for the location, which can potentially translate into a desire to visit in the future.

Cartoons have been a compelling force embedded in destination marketing (Kirillova et al., 2019). Stewart (2022) indicates that animation provides all recreational possibilities for tourists to enjoy a cheerful, active and interesting vacation. Animation is a prime way to promote tourism destination marketing (Chen et al., 2021), but how animations and cartoons content affect image of destinations and number of visitors has not been fully discussed.

In animation cinema, which we can consider as an important area of cultural production within today's media channels, the use of real places and real destinations in the films made in the last decade, unlike cartoons, instead of a fairy-tale or fantastic world, draws attention. The use of real places in animated films contributes to the awareness of destinations, helps them come to the fore and contributes to their existing image. Therefore, the use of destinations in animated cinema has the possibility of benefiting from the gains of film-effect tourism. The use of destinations in animated cinema, knowingly or for other reasons, causes children to "learn" those destinations and the cultural practices related to those destinations.

In 2002, the Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau (HVCB) made a 3-year, \$3.9 million agreement with Disney for the Lilo and Stitch movie, and a destination was marketed for the first time in an animated movie (<http://gohawaii.about>).

Although the audience of animated cinema may seem at first glance to be children between the ages of 6 and 12, these films that children watch with at least one family member actually appeal to a larger audience. Considering the person who accompanies the child and watches that movie with him, it can be thought that the target audience of animated films is wider.

Children influence families' purchasing decisions. Children, who are considered important in the decision to go on holiday, the timing of the holiday, the choice of destination, and the preferred type of tourism, are also important as potential tourists of the future. Dunne's research revealed that 75% of parents show holiday brochures to their children, get their opinions, and make their holiday choices accordingly. According to Marzella's study, 93% of families give importance to their children's interests when planning their holidays (Çakıcı & İyitoğlu, 2011).

The use of destinations in animated cinema can be used both as an advertisement and public relations activity in tourism promotion, and more importantly, it is thought that it contributes to the creation or creation of country images in the minds of children, who are the target audience, or contributes to the existing image. The visual elements in animation cinema enable children, the primary target audience, to experience a "learning" or "making sense" process about the outside world. One of the main claims of the

study is that animated films are a tool for children who are not yet tourists and who do not have the opportunity to make primary travel decisions in the short term, to create a "list of places to go" in their minds and at the same time to guide their parents about the destinations to be visited.

Any statistical data showing the impact of destinations featured in animated films on the number of visitors, or any study mentioning the impact of destinations used in animated films on their image haven not been found. In this study, it is accepted that children, who are the target audience of animated films, cannot make the decision to go on vacation or go somewhere on their own, and that the impact of these films on the increase in the number of visitors cannot be determined directly and in the short term. However, it is thought that if a destination is used in a movie, it will benefit from the results of film-effect tourism.

Given the influence of film tourism and the increasing role of animated films in shaping public interest, this study seeks to explore the impact of *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* in increasing awareness of Göbeklitepe as a cultural and touristic site. By analyzing the film's depiction of the destination and its potential to inspire tourism-related actions, this research aims to contribute to the broader discussion on the role of animation in destination marketing.

Within the scope of this study, the animated film *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe*, which is the first animated film focusing on the Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site, was examined. Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2018, and 2019 was declared as the "Year of Göbeklitepe" by the Presidency. These developments attracted attention to Göbeklitepe both in Türkiye and in the world, and in this process, various studies were carried out to raise awareness about the site. One of these is the animated film *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe*, whose main target audience is children. In this study, It is aimed to introduce Göbeklitepe to the audience as a touristic attraction center within the scope of *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* animated film and to examine its contribution to destination awareness. Within the scope of the study, the possible contributions of the animated film in question to the interest in the destination and the desire to visit it were evaluated. This research follows the AIDA Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action) to evaluate how the film influences destination awareness, curiosity, and potential tourism interest (Kotler & Keller, 2016). By applying this structured approach, the study analyzes how visual storytelling in animated cinema can effectively promote cultural and historical sites.

METHOD

The discovery of Göbeklitepe, located 18 kilometers northeast of Şanlıurfa city center, near Örencik Village, caused the rewriting of human history. Dating back to 9600 BC, it is considered the oldest temple in the world and is on the UNESCO World Heritage List. Described as the "zero point of history" with its 12 thousand years of history, the historical ruins, whose fame transcends borders, host visitors from many parts of the world every year. *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe*, an animated film centered on Göbeklitepe,

has become the most-watched animated film of all time in Türkiye. The film was released on December 27, 2019, remained in theaters for 24 weeks, and reached a total audience of 3,444,814 (Box Office, 2024). The trailer of the movie was watched 9.8 million times on YouTube by December 2024 (YouTube, 2024).

In an era where digital content and visual storytelling shape consumer perceptions and influence tourism decisions, analyzing the role of animated films in destination marketing is increasingly relevant. *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* presents a unique opportunity to explore how animation can generate awareness and interest in real-world locations. Given its vast audience reach and the coinciding rise in visits to Göbeklitepe, this study aims to investigate whether animated films can act as catalysts for cultural and heritage tourism.

Although the increase in visitors cannot be definitively attributed to the movie, *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* was deemed worthy of research due to the remarkable rise in awareness and interest surrounding Göbeklitepe. Consequently, the film was selected as the sample for this study.

To structure the evaluation, this study employs the AIDA Model, which categorizes the impact of the film on tourism perception into four stages: Attention (awareness generation), Interest (building curiosity), Desire (creating emotional engagement), and Action (potential travel intentions) (Barry, 1987). This model provides a systematic approach to examining the relationship between animated films and destination marketing (Bolan & Williams, 2008).

The study was designed as a case study, which is a qualitative research model. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher examines one or a few situations within a limited timeframe in depth, using multiple data collection tools (observations, interviews, audio-visuals, documents, reports), and identifies themes related to the phenomenon. Rather than generalizing, a case study focuses on gaining a deeper understanding of the case itself (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 435).

While previous research on film tourism has focused largely on live-action films and their impact on destination marketing, little attention has been paid to the influence of animated films. This study fills that gap by exploring whether an animated feature can generate significant interest in a historical and cultural site. By analyzing *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe*, this research examines whether animation can serve as an effective medium for promoting heritage tourism, particularly among younger audiences and their families.

A document review, a subcategory of case study research, was employed in this study. Document review is a research technique that involves identifying, selecting, interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing data from various sources (Kıral, 2020, p. 175). The primary document for analysis was the *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* animated movie.

The research process included:

- Repeated Viewings of the Film – The movie was analyzed multiple times to extract relevant content.
- Scene Selection – Key scenes related to Göbeklitepe and its cultural representation were identified and documented through screenshots.
- Content Analysis – The dialogues, visuals, and themes in these scenes were examined to evaluate the contribution of the film to the promotion of Göbeklitepe as a destination.

The study not only seeks to understand whether the film increased awareness of Göbeklitepe but also explores how its narrative and visual representation might shape viewers' perceptions and influence their future travel decisions. By analyzing how the film integrates cultural heritage with storytelling, this research aims to highlight the potential of animated films as tools for cultural preservation and destination branding.

The findings of this study can provide valuable insights for tourism marketers, content creators, and policymakers who aim to leverage animated films in destination promotion strategies. By demonstrating how animation can introduce historical sites to younger audiences and families, this research contributes to the broader discussion on film-induced tourism and its role in cultural heritage awareness.

FINDINGS

How Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe Captures Audience Attention Through Storytelling

One of the most effective ways to introduce historical and cultural destinations to broad audiences is through visual storytelling. Animation, in particular, has the power to engage viewers of all ages while subtly embedding historical and cultural narratives into entertaining storylines (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006b; Kim et al., 2007). *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* serves as a compelling example of how an animated film can bring attention to a significant archaeological site by weaving it into an engaging adventure story. This section explores how the film captures audience attention and introduces Göbeklitepe as a historical and cultural destination.

Rafadan Tayfa is a Turkish-made cartoon series that started broadcasting on 1 December 2014 on the Turkish State Television's TRT Çocuk channel, which broadcasts for children. The basic story of the cartoon series consists of various adventures experienced by a group of friends consisting of four children named "Rafadan Tayfa". The series reflects the neighborhood life and sincere human relations of the 80s and 90s in Türkiye. All kinds of funny events and adventures happen to this group of friends living in a neighborhood on the European side of İstanbul. *Rafadan Tayfa*, which started broadcasting on TRT Çocuk on December 1, 2014, became very popular and appreciated by its target audience, especially the young ones, and due to this intense interest, the production team of the film agreed to shoot a feature film.

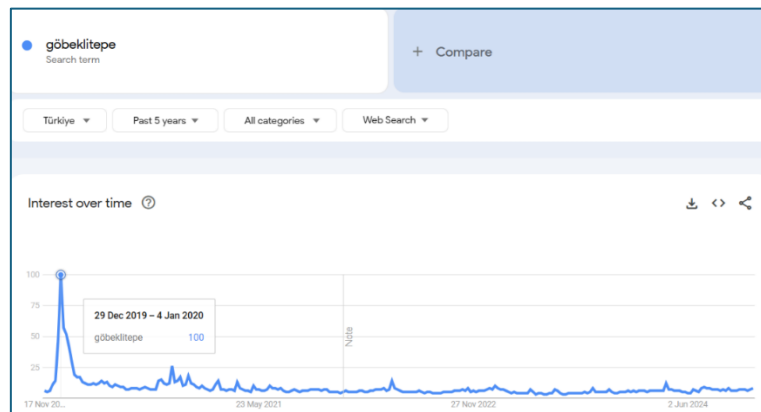
The animated film *Rafadan Tayfa: Dehliz Adventure*, released in cinemas on October 26, 2018, was the first production of this path. This movie, full of adventure and action, grossed more than 18 million TL and was watched by approximately 2 million people. Upon popular demand, the production team released the second film, *Rafadan Tayfa: Göbeklitepe*, which was released a year later, on December 27, 2019. This film was a bigger success than the first one and grossed approximately 55.7 million TL. Additionally, this film has been recorded as the most watched animated film of all time in Türkiye.

The main characters of the movie, *Rafadan Tayfa* team Hayri, Kamil, Akın and Mert; While his friends in Urfa are trying to make sense of a tray full of historical figures sent by Veysi, the mysterious phone call they receive from Veysi spurs them into action. Realizing that the tray decorated with interesting motifs was related to Göbeklitepe in Şanlıurfa, Hayri's sister Hale and Sevim also joined the team. They all set out for Urfa by train. Together, the children aim to show the tray to Uncle Mayor, the explorer of Göbeklitepe, and to find Veysi. Thus, they find themselves in a theft case. “*Rafadan Tayfa: Göbeklitepe*” includes our heroes in a robbery story, just like in the first movie, and establishes a historical detail as the main setting of the story. In the first movie, the corridors under Istanbul and Göbeklitepe, which is now on the UNESCO World Heritage List and hosts the first known temples of human history, were used. Frankly, the movie succeeds in making people wonder about this important historical place. It invites its audience to both Şanlıurfa and Göbeklitepe (<https://www.cocuklasinema.com/film-detay/rafadan-tayfa-gobeklitepe-305>). The film successfully builds curiosity about Göbeklitepe by embedding historical facts into its plot, making history accessible and engaging for younger audiences. By integrating elements of mystery, adventure, and humor, *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* ensures that audiences remain intrigued by the site's historical significance. This section will explore the measurable impact of this interest by analyzing how the film has contributed to online searches, discussions, and increased awareness of Göbeklitepe.

From Interest to Desire: How the Film Engages Viewers and Creates Destination Appeal

Interest in a destination can transition into a deeper emotional connection when audiences feel a sense of wonder and personal investment in the story. *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* cultivates this connection by visually emphasizing the mystique of Göbeklitepe, portraying it as a place of discovery and adventure. This section examines whether the film's compelling narrative and cultural elements have sparked a desire in audiences—especially children and families—to learn more about, and possibly visit, Göbeklitepe.

There is no study showing that the *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* animated film has a direct impact on the number of visitors. Similarly, there is no study investigating whether the movie is among the motivations of visitors to visit Göbeklitepe. However, some data mentioned in this part that may be related to the movie can be associated with the increased interest in the region and its impact on children's visits in particular.

Figure 1. Dynamic of popularity

According to Google Trends, the period in which the word Göbeklitepe reached the highest level in searches in the last 5 years corresponds to the period between 29 December 2019 and 4 January 2020. It is noteworthy that this date coincides with the date the movie was released (Google Trends, 2024).

Another remarkable data is the number of visitors to the Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site. According to data received from Şanlıurfa Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 8,860 people visited Göbeklitepe in January 2019. In January 2020, the number of visitors was 39,179. Considering factors such as the film's release on December 27, 2019, and the 2-week holiday of schools in Türkiye in January, this big difference compared to a year ago in the same month is also remarkable.

An interview was held with Şanlıurfa Provincial Culture and Tourism Director Aydın Aslan about whether the movie had an impact on the number of visitors. He said the following on the subject:

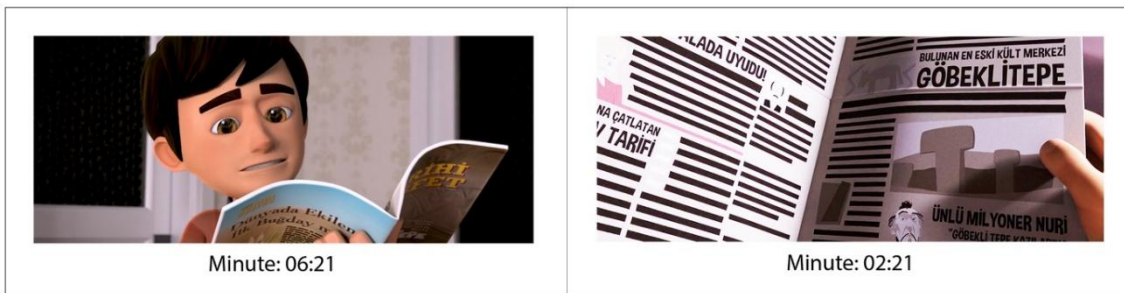
- 2019 was declared as the "Year of Göbeklitepe" by the Presidency. While we expected this situation to increase the number of visitors, 8,860 people, mostly adults, visited Göbeklitepe during the January 2019 holiday. The majority of the nearly 40,000 visitors who visited during the January holiday in January 2020 were families with children. During my field observations, I saw that the main reason families visit is their children's wishes. School trips have started to be organized to the region, where children's interest was previously very low. I met the child who watched the movie 3 times and came with his grandfather.

Of course, these are not enough to state with certainty that the film directly affected the increase in the number of visitors. However, it is thought that the observations of the most competent bureaucrat on tourism in the region, who is constantly in the field and interacts with tourists, are important. While direct causation cannot be established, the increase in visitor numbers to Göbeklitepe following the film's release suggests a potential correlation between media exposure and tourism interest. This section will further analyze how animated films can function as a call-to-action for families, educators, and tourism organizations, prompting them to explore heritage sites in real life. The next section delves deeper into how specific elements in the film reinforce this motivation by showcasing Göbeklitepe and Şanlıurfa as must-visit destinations.

Turning Awareness into Action: How the Film Promotes Göbeklitepe as a Tourism Destination

Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe animated film conveyed many elements about Göbeklitepe and the region to the audience. Göbeklitepe's location, historical background, importance for humanity and intriguing information about the region are depicted in various scenes. In addition, the historical, cultural and touristic attractions of Şanlıurfa and its surroundings, where Göbeklitepe is located, as well as many elements from culinary culture to traditions, were conveyed to the audience in a realistic form on the stages. In this section, the scenes in the movie and the information conveyed in these scenes are tried to be explained, accompanied by visuals.

Figure 2. The Oldest Cult Center Found, Göbeklitepe



As seen in Figure 2, the headline of the newspaper read by "Kazım", the villain of the movie, reads "The Oldest Cult Center Found, Göbeklitepe" (Minute 02:21). The impact of religious belief on the transition to settled life has been proven with Göbeklitepe, which is considered the oldest and largest known worship (cult) center in the world (muze.gov.tr).

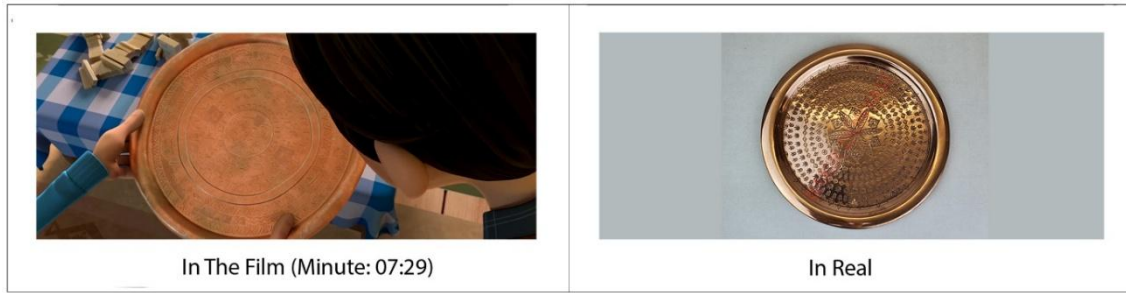
The character Mert read the following information about Göbeklitepe from the magazine called "Discover History" (Minute 06:21):

- "The actual length of the stone is around 5-6 meters and there is one that weighs 20 tons. I don't understand how they erected this 12 thousand years ago. Aliens did this or a lost civilization".

With this statement, attention was drawn to the incredible dimensions of the T-shaped obelisks in Göbeklitepe and aroused curiosity.

T-shaped obelisks; Different studies showing that they depict human-like beings further emphasize their importance. It is clear that their construction played an important role in the lives of the people at Göbekli Tepe with the possibility that these human-shaped T-shaped stele could represent gods, ancestors, or other similar beings. The results of the geomagnetic survey at Göbekli Tepe have shown us that, apart from the existing structures, there are at least 15 different structures and more than 200 obelisks in total (Sezer, 2023).

Figure 3. Urfa Copper Tray



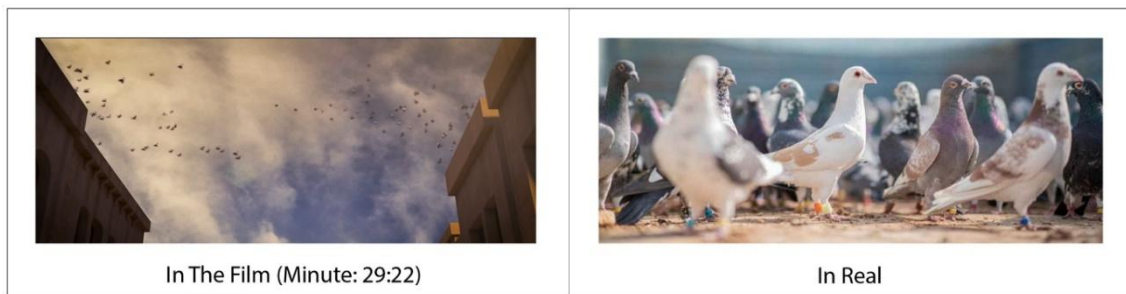
The copper tray on which the motifs found in Göbeklitepe are engraved is used throughout the film as an important material that opens the door to time travel (Minute 07:29). As seen in the Figure 3, Urfa Copper Tray is exactly the same as in reality. This scene draws attention to coppersmithing, a branch of handicrafts that is one of the livelihoods of the region. In addition to the production of household goods, coppersmithing has gained a new form and gained a touristic value. Copper products are among the most popular souvenirs purchased by tourists visiting the region.

Figure 4. Welcome To Şanlıurfa



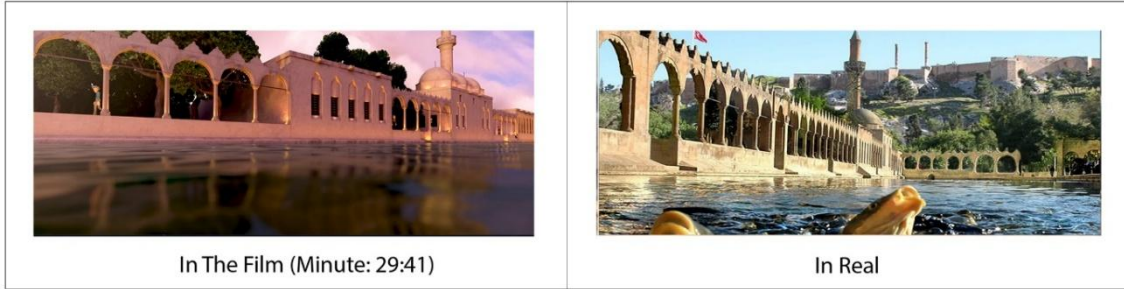
In the scene where the heroes in the movie arrive in the city of Şanlıurfa and are welcomed, local music, architectural structures specific to the region and stores selling local products are seen (Minute 28:38). It is emphasized in this scene that Göbeklitepe is within the borders of Şanlıurfa province. Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site is located 18 kilometers northeast of Şanlıurfa city center, near Örencik Village. It is emphasized in the beginning of the film (Minute 00:45).

Figure 5. Şanlıurfa Pigeons



In the film (minute 29:22), attention is drawn to Şanlıurfa Pigeons. Today, although pigeons are kept and flown in many parts of Anatolia, Şanlıurfa takes the lead in this regard, and bird breeding is among the important activities of the people of Şanlıurfa. People of Şanlıurfa love feeding pigeons, decorating them and wearing jewelry with them (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020a).

Figure 6: Balıklıgöl



In this scene (Minute 29:41), Balıklıgöl, the most important tourist attraction of Şanlıurfa, can be seen. Balıklıgöl is one of the prominent places associated with the life of Prophet İbrahim and considered sacred (turkishmuseums.com, 2023).

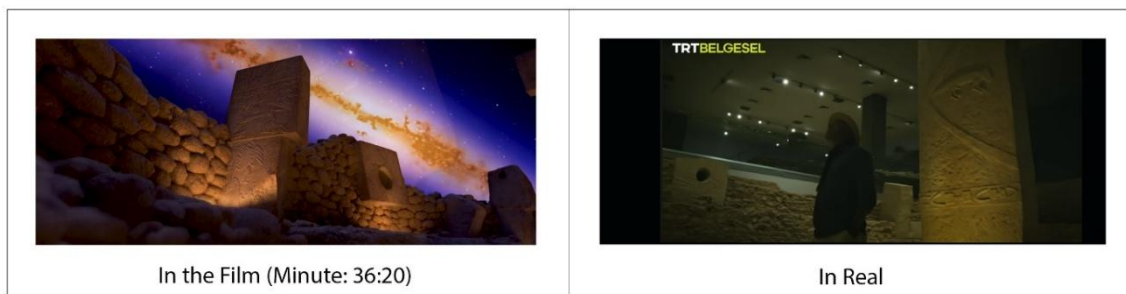
Figure 7. Sıra Night



One of the most striking cultural elements featured in the film is “Sıra Night”, which is included in the "Traditional Conversation Meetings" on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. In the movie, both informative discourses about Sıra Night were included and Sıra Night was reflected to the audience as a visual presentation (Minute 32:08). Sıra Night is an event held in Şanlıurfa, which stands out especially with its musical aspect and includes raw meatballs and mırza among the indispensable treats (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2020b). The film also mentions the historical background of Sıra Night and includes the information that it is not only a musical entertainment but also the liberation of Şanlıurfa from enemy occupation was planned on these nights.

Figure 8. Bull Stone

It is stated in the film that the first stone found in Göbeklitepe was the Bull Stone (minute 34:28). In Anatolia and Mesopotamia, some animals are associated with gods and often became symbols of gods (Nemet- Nejat, 1998, p. 186). Animals, which were symbols of the gods, were given with the gods and their statues were placed in the temples built for the gods. Bull depictions were frequently used for this purpose (Black & Green, 1992, p. 40). Bulls are depicted in most of the structures in Göbeklitepe.

Figure 9. Detailed information about Göbeklitepe**Figure 10. Detailed information about Göbeklitepe**

In these scenes (minute 35:56-36:20), the Uncle Mayor character gives information about Göbeklitepe for more than 1 minute. Some informative statements of Uncle Mayor about Göbeklitepe in the animated movie are as follows:

“Göbeklitepe is one of the most magnificent structures in history, built by many groups of people who lived as hunters and gatherers until then. Even though we do not know exactly why it was built, this is one of the places that helped us, as humanity, to settle down. Maybe they didn't use this place to live, maybe it was built as a calendar for agriculture, maybe to transfer knowledge, maybe for cultural meetings. But

no matter what, the people of that period prove that they were not far behind today's people with this work that has survived for thousands of years. "Hundreds of people came together and left their mark on history without the resources we have, and more importantly, our civilization is built on the foundations laid by these people, our ancestors."

Figure 11: Gastronomy in Urfa Region



Culinary culture is one of the richest cultural heritages in Şanlıurfa, passed down from past to future. When talking about the culinary culture of a country, it is necessary to mention the sources from which it has been fed throughout history. Turkish cuisine, which is considered among the top five cuisines of the world, and Urfa cuisine in particular, is one of the cornerstones of world culinary culture. Şanlıurfa is one of the few cities in the world whose founding date cannot be determined scientifically. In Urfa cuisine; Muslim, Christian, Jew, Assyrian, Armenian, Yazidi, Turk, Arab, Kurd, etc. You can find traces from every nation and culture. As seen in the following Figure 11, in many scenes of the film, attention is drawn to the food culture and diversity of the region.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

One of the most critical factors in effective destination marketing is the ability to capture the audience's attention and introduce them to a location in an engaging way. The animated medium provides a powerful tool for this by integrating historical and cultural elements into entertainment, making learning seamless and enjoyable. Through vibrant visuals and an engaging storyline, Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe successfully brings attention to Göbeklitepe, a heritage site of global importance. This study finds that the film's visual representation and storytelling techniques effectively position Göbeklitepe as an intriguing historical site, sparking curiosity and initial awareness among viewers.

The animated film Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe, which is the subject of the study, is the first animated film to introduce the Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site, which has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, whose discovery affected human history and aroused curiosity throughout the world, to a wide audience, especially children and families. As a result of the scenes in the film, the information given, and the images that match reality, triggering a sense of curiosity in the audience, knowledge and awareness about Göbeklitepe increased.

Within the scope of the study, it was aimed to evaluate the use of Göbeklitepe and its surroundings as a tourist destination in the Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe animation movie. In the film, it was conveyed to the audience that Göbeklitepe is located within the borders of Şanlıurfa province, 18 km away from the center, near the town of Örencik. In addition to the information that Göbeklitepe is the oldest cult center found, scenes are shown in which intriguing information is given about the huge size of the structures found, the fact that they were made by human hands, and that they can change the known history of humanity.

Beyond mere awareness, the film sustains interest by embedding engaging narratives and interactive elements that encourage deeper audience engagement. The incorporation of historical facts, mystery-driven storytelling, and vivid depictions of cultural elements ensures that Göbeklitepe is not only seen but also understood and appreciated by viewers. Additionally, the film highlights the magnificence of the archaeological site, subtly encouraging younger audiences and families to explore the topic further. This aligns with previous research suggesting that media representations significantly influence pre-visit destination perceptions and increase curiosity about unfamiliar places.

In the film, not only information about the Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site was included, but also different topics such as cultural elements of the region, tourist attractions, handicrafts and gastronomy features were presented to the audience. One of the most striking cultural elements featured in the film is Sıra Night, which is included in the "Traditional Conversation Meetings" on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List. In the movie, both informative discourses about Sıra Night were included and Sıra Night was reflected to the audience as a visual presentation. Also in the animated movie; It has been observed that cultural values such as Urfa pigeons, spices such as isot, gastronomy items such as liver kebab and raw meatballs, and coppersmithing, one of the traditional handicrafts, are emphasized due to the copper tray. It is thought that all of this information will attract the attention of viewers who have not visited the region and will trigger their desire to visit the region.

By integrating cultural richness and local traditions into its narrative, the film transitions audience engagement from mere interest to emotional connection and desire (Macionis, 2004; Rewtrakunphaiboon, 2009). Elements such as traditional music, cuisine, and heritage crafts deepen the audience's association with Göbeklitepe and Şanlıurfa, making the destination more appealing. Emotional storytelling has been shown to be a powerful driver in tourism marketing, as it creates memorable experiences that influence future travel behavior. Frost (2010) argues that films do more than just showcase destinations—they embed locations within powerful narratives that shape the way audiences emotionally connect with places, often sparking a deep desire to visit.

Emotional storytelling has been shown to be a powerful driver in tourism marketing, as it creates memorable experiences that influence future travel behavior. Research by Hudson, Wang, and Gil (2011)

further supports this, highlighting that exposure to film content can significantly shape destination image and the desire to travel, particularly through emotional engagement and cultural familiarity. For children, who are important influencers in family travel decisions, the film serves as an introduction to a potential 'bucket list' destination, making it more likely that they will express a desire to visit in the future.

There is no data indicating that the film caused an increase in the number of visitors to Göbeklitepe. In addition, the film was watched by 3.4 million people in movie theaters, its trailer received nearly 10 million views, and it still continues to be watched on the internet. In Türkiye's most watched animated movie, Göbeklitepe and the historical, cultural and touristic features of the region were met with great interest. Although it cannot be proven with concrete data, it is assumed that it has a positive effect on the intention to visit.

While direct causation between film exposure and increased tourist numbers remains difficult to measure, indications of real-world engagement suggest that the film has played a role in influencing destination perception (Beeton, 2021; Connell, 2012). Bolan and Williams (2008) argue that film-based marketing significantly enhances destination image, often leading to increased consumer interest and travel motivation. The rise in Google searches for Göbeklitepe around the film's release date, increased regional tourism discussions, and reports of children influencing family travel decisions all point to a film-induced tourism effect. Frost (2010) highlights that cinematic portrayals of destinations can evoke personal transformation and cultivate a sense of place attachment among viewers, often inspiring them to turn their media-driven fascination into real-world travel decisions. As previously noted, the power of film tourism lies not only in immediate visitor numbers but also in long-term destination branding—positioning a location as a place worth visiting in the minds of potential future travelers.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While this study provides valuable insights into the role of animated films in destination marketing and the application of the AIDA Model to analyze audience engagement, several limitations should be acknowledged: The study examines the impact of *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* on destination awareness and interest but does not establish a direct causal link between film exposure and an actual increase in visitor numbers. The observed rise in interest and visitor statistics may also be influenced by other factors, such as the "Year of Göbeklitepe" campaign and general tourism trends.

The findings are based on Google Trends, box office numbers, tourism reports, and interview statements, but no primary data collection (such as surveys or interviews with audiences) was conducted. Future studies should use quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews to capture audience perceptions directly. The study primarily focuses on how the film raises awareness among children and families. However, adults, educators, and foreign audiences who watch the movie may also play a role in destination promotion. Future research should explore different demographic groups' reactions to animated destination marketing.

This research assesses the film's immediate impact on tourism interest, primarily within the first year after release. However, long-term effects—such as whether children exposed to the film eventually visit Göbeklitepe in later years—are not examined. Future studies should survey children, parents, and teachers to determine whether watching the film directly influenced their interest in Göbeklitepe. Interviews with families who visited Göbeklitepe after watching the film could provide deeper qualitative insights into film-induced tourism. Researchers could conduct experimental studies comparing groups that have and have not seen the film to measure differences in destination perception and travel intent. Pre- and post-exposure tests could determine how much the film influences knowledge, perception, and willingness to visit the site.

A longitudinal study could track how *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe* continues to shape tourism interest over multiple years. Researchers could analyze visitor data over a 5-10 year period to see whether film exposure has a lasting impact on tourism. Future research could compare Göbeklitepe's case with other animated films that promote real-world destinations, such as Disney's *Lilo & Stitch* (Hawaii) or Pixar's *Luca* (Italian Riviera). This could provide global insights into how animation affects tourism branding across different cultures. This study applied the AIDA Model to analyze the impact of *Rafadan Tayfa 2: Göbeklitepe*. Future studies can apply AIDA to other animated films or tourism marketing strategies to test whether similar audience engagement patterns emerge. Expanding the AIDA framework to digital marketing, virtual tourism experiences, and interactive media could also offer insights into modern tourism promotion strategies.

By addressing these limitations and expanding research on film-induced tourism and animation as a marketing tool, future studies can deepen our understanding of how digital storytelling shapes destination branding. The intersection of animation, cultural heritage, and tourism marketing presents an exciting avenue for continued academic exploration. In future studies, it is recommended that researchers ask children who visit Göbeklitepe whether they watched the movie and whether they referred their families to visit. However, in a study conducted on those who watch the movie, it can be investigated whether the movie creates a desire to visit the region.

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