

COMPONENTS OF MEMORABLE GASTRONOMIC EXPERIENCE AND THEIR EFFECTS ON VISITOR SATISFACTION

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Abstract: The significance of gastronomy in shaping tourism experiences has been extensively documented. Memories of gastronomic experiences are now considered to be of crucial importance in tourists' cognitive, affective and behavioral evaluations. The objective of this study is to identify the components that constitute memorable experiences in the context of gastronomic tourism and to ascertain the effect of each component on visitor satisfaction. To this end, a quantitative research study was conducted in Gaziantep, a well-known destination in Türkiye with a reputation for its culinary attractions. The data were collected from 244 domestic tourists using the convenience sampling method with face-to-face surveys adapted from the scale developed to measure memorable tourism experiences by Kim et al. (2012). The data were analyzed with exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to extract the factors, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) to validate the measurement model and to test the proposed relationships between each component of the memorable gastronomic experience (MGE) and visitor satisfaction. The EFA demonstrated that the model, comprising seven sub-components, accounted for 74.09% of the variance in memorable experiences, thus indicating a robust predictive capacity. The findings of the study indicated that hedonism, involvement, local culture and novelty components contributed the most to the memorability of gastronomic experiences, while meaningfulness and knowledge contributed relatively low. MGE as a total construct was found to be associated with visitor satisfaction. Six of the MGE components (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, involvement and knowledge) were found to have a significant direct effect on visitor satisfaction individually. However, one other component, meaningfulness, was not found to be significantly associated with satisfaction. By unveiling of the pivotal components of MGE, this study yielded substantial insights and implications for entrepreneurs and DMO's that seek to enhance visitors' satisfaction with gastronomy.

Keywords: gastronomy, memorable gastronomic experience, visitor satisfaction, Gaziantep

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INTRODUCTION

Experience is the concept that represents the essence and central afacet of the tourism industry (Kim & So, 2022). Tourism experience is a complex construct (Neuhofer et al., 2014) and includes all the experiences that tourists have at a destination, including behavioral, perceptual, cognitive and emotional expressions or implications (Oh et al., 2007). It is evident that a plethora of goods and services are provided within that complex construct. However, in the modern era, it can be argued that the provision of such goods and services alone is insufficient to satisfy customers, who are seeking experiences that will dazzle their senses, engage them personally, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds (Schmitt, 1999). As Pine & Gilmore (1999) asserted, consumers are now seeking distinctive experiences that accompany these goods and services, with the objective of creating memorable experiences. A memorable tourism experience has been defined as a tourism experience that is positively recalled and revived in memory after an event has occurred (Kim et al., 2012). This is regarded as the ultimate experience that tourists aim to obtain (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Studies which are pertinent to this field of enquiry emphasize the significance of memorable experiences for both the demand and supply sides. The impact of memorable experiences on tourists' future travel decisions has been demonstrated by several studies (Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Kim et al., 2010). Tourists tend to rely on past experiences and memories while making decisions for their future trips (Lehto et al., 2004; Wirtz et al., 2003). Tourists with positive memorable experiences are more likely to revisit the destination (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). In recent times, there has been a shift in focus within the tourism industry, with practitioners now placing greater importance on the provision of memorable experiences for tourists, even more so than on the utilization of tangible resources (Wang et al., 2020). Memorable experiences represent a fundamental aspect of successful tourism products (Chen et al., 2020), serving not only as a primary driver of customer loyalty (Zhang et al., 2018) but also as a crucial factor influencing the competitiveness of a destination (Stone et al., 2018).

In light of the growing significance of memorable experiences, efforts to identify the essential elements that contribute to such experiences have intensified. Components of memorable tourism experiences have been researched by a growing number of studies (Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Lee, 2015; Chandralal et al., 2015; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Tsai, 2016;

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de Freitas Coelho et al., 2018; Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018; Sthapit, 2019; Yu et al. 2019; Cao et al., 2019; Seyfi et al., 2020) following the first scholars (Kim et al., 2012) who developed memorable tourism experience scale. Research on memorable experiences and their components are typically considered within the broader field of tourism context. However, research focusing on the specific attributes that contribute to the memorability of experiences within particular tourism contexts, such as gastronomy tourism, remains relatively limited. Recently, gastronomy as one of the main components of tourism experiences has begun to garner significant attention in academic research. Remaining heavily reliant upon the conceptualization of Kim et al. (2012), some authors (e.g. Tsai, 2016; Adongo, 2015; Lee, 2015) studied on the components of memorable gastronomic experiences, and besides, some other authors (e.g. Sthapit, 2017; Stone et al., 2018; Williams et al., 2019; Tsaur & Lo, 2020; Rašan & Laškarin Ažić, 2023) sought to identify the attributes of memorable gastronomic experiences from different perspectives. Despite these studies, the extant literature is unclear regarding the components that contribute most to the memorability of the gastronomic experience, and the effect of each component on visitor satisfaction. This study aims to make a contribution to the growing body of knowledge in the field of gastronomy tourism research by investigating the components that contribute to the creation of memorable tourist experiences. By gaining an understanding of these components and their effects on visitor satisfaction, it would be possible for enterprises to offer novel experiences creating intrinsic values to be recalled by tourists at a later date.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Memorability and memorable tourism experience

In the context of tourism, from a dynamic perspective, memory plays a pivotal role in understanding an individual's recall of tourism experience of personal relevance (Kim et al., 2021). Memorability is an important aspect of tourism experiences (Pikkemaat & Schuckert, 2007). This is because memory is an integral part of the experience itself (Poulsen & Kale, 2004). Furthermore, memories of leisure experiences are likely to be rich, vivid and detailed (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Memorable experiences have been described as special and spectacular (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), exciting (Ihamäki, 2012), embodying superlative quality (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013), easier to recall and unforgettable (Wikström, 2008). Memorability is the tourists' evaluation of a travel experience as memorable, based on their ability to recall the travel activities they engaged in after the completion of the travel consumption (Oh et al., 2007). The formation and recall of memories, which extend throughout the tourism experience, directly affect the tourist's perception and impression of the destination, and further influence the tourist's intention to revisit (Marschall, 2012; Quan & Wang, 2004; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). The attributes of memorable experiences have been the subject of an increasing number of studies in tourism. Over the years, several studies (Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Lee, 2015; Chandralal et al., 2015; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Tsai, 2016; de Freitas Coelho et al., 2018; Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018; Sthapit, 2019; Yu et al., 2019; Cao et al., 2019; Seyfi et al., 2020) have attempted to examine the dimensions of memorable tourism experiences or to test the framework originally developed by Kim et al. (2012) in other contexts. As noted above, Kim et al. (2012) were the first scholars to develop a scale that could measure memorable tourism experiences in a quantifiable way. The scale consists of seven dimensions: hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge.

Hedonism refers to experiences related to emotions such as enjoyment, excitement, and pleasure (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). A substantial proportion of tourism activities can be classified as hedonic consumption. Tourists seek to experience pleasure during their stay in destinations and during the subsequent recall of the experience. In this sense, it can be stated that the hedonistic component, which is associated with positive emotions such as pleasure, enjoyment, excitement, and happiness, has a critical importance in memorable tourism experiences (Kim et al., 2012). Novelty refers to experiences different, unique, and authentic (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015) and it is considered as a crucial component of the tourism experience. As Cohen (1979) stated, tourists are inherently driven to seek out novel experiences. Tourists travel to a destination with the anticipation of an experience that is novel and distinct, recognizing that the opportunity for a similar experience in the future is limited. Local culture refers to tourists' interactions with local people and culture. The desire of tourists to gain a deeper understanding of the local people and their culture, and to engage in meaningful interactions with them, is regarded as a significant motivating factor in travel. Tourists who engage with local culture tend to evaluate their tourism experiences as more meaningful and memorable (Kim et al., 2012). The concept of refreshment is an important aspect of tourism, as it allows tourists to relax and recharge, providing a much-needed break from their daily lives and routines. It has been demonstrated that the experience of physical, social and psychological relaxation during tourism, as well as the positive emotions it engenders, contribute to the formation of memorable tourism experiences. Meaningfulness can be defined as the component related to the meaningfulness and importance of experiences for tourists (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015).

Tourism experiences can be conceptualized as an inner journey undertaken with the aim of self-actualization. During this journey, tourists seek meaningful experiences that provide cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological satisfaction (Kim & Ritchie, 2014). Involvement refers to interests and active participations of tourists in experiences (Kim et al., 2012). During tourism experiences, tourists' participation in activities aligned with their interests contributes to the memorability of their experiences. Knowledge encompasses the acquisition of geographical, historical, and cultural information about destinations and contributes to tourists' intellectual development and memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011).

Gastronomic experience

Gastronomy is simply the art or science of cooking and eating well. It encompasses not only the practices of cooking, eating and drinking, but also any activity related to gastronomy, which has emerged as a pivotal component of tourism experiences. Gastronomy has thus been the focus of considerable attention and is now considered a field of research in its

own right (Johns & Kivela, 2001). Food-related studies have been conducted for more than three decades in the field tourism literature (Hsu et al., 2022). Since it is a tourist attraction, a part of local culture, a tourism product at destination and a tourist experience (Chen & Huang, 2016), there is a close relationship with gastronomy and tourism. Gastronomy attracts and motivates not only the tourists that have a particular interest in local food, but also the tourists that have more relaxed attitudes towards local foods (Henderson, 2014). Tourists may travel with primary or secondary motivations such as exploring a different cuisine, learning about the local cuisine, enjoying typical local dishes, relaxation, or cultural enrichment (Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Long, 2004). As Wang (2004) asserted, gastronomic experiences in tourism can be classified into two categories: (1) those that are a regular part of daily life and satisfying a basic physiological need, and (2) those that are unique and enhance the overall tourism experience, potentially even classifying as 'peak experiences'. The memorability of gastronomic experiences is a key factor in their potential to become part of a peak tourism experience. The significance of local gastronomy in the tourism sector is well-documented. Enterprises in many destinations integrate their gastronomic attributes into tourism products to promote culinary excellence (Neuman, 2017), attract more tourists (Eriksen, 2015; Mei et al., 2017), enhance destination loyalty (Folgado-Fernandez et al., 2017) and differentiate themselves (Chang et al., 2011).

The number of studies on the gastronomic experience is growing at a rapid pace, and those studies show that gastronomic experience is discussed from different perspectives. For instance, some studies have sought to ascertain the understanding the role and impact of food and beverage consumption in the tourism experience (Quan & Wang, 2004; Kivela & Crofts, 2006); defining characteristics that influence tourists' gastronomic experience (Chang et al., 2011); defining the attributes of gastronomic experiences (Williams et al., 2019) and the underlying components of such experiences (e.g., Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Jin et al., 2012; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Quan & Wang, 2004). Quan & Wang (2004) presented a conceptual model, and discussed the food and beverage consumption as a part of the peak experience and the supporting experience. In their study, Son & Xu (2013) evaluated gastronomic experience according to six criteria: its role as a source of novelty, its capacity to provide sensory pleasure, its status as a peak experience, its function as a symbol of authenticity, its role as a symbol of prestige, and its function for cultural discovery. Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) identified three components of the gastronomic experience: the food experience, the space/environment experience, and the behavioral experience. They also indicated that the gastronomic experience in restaurants is influenced by the type of food served, its location within the restaurant, and the manner in which it is presented.

In recent tourism and gastronomy literature, authors have been discussing the concept of gastronomic experiences and their memorability. Some studies have focused on identifying the attributes and/or components that contribute to the memorability of gastronomic experiences. Tsai (2016), for instance, sought to identify the components of memorable gastronomic experiences and found that these components include hedonism, involvement, novelty, meaningfulness, refreshment, local culture and knowledge. Williams et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study, revealing attributes of memorable gastronomic experiences, including relationships with the local community and other stakeholders, experiences with other trip participants, emotions as triggers, and uniqueness. Cao et al. (2019) identified attributes of memorable dining experiences from sensorial, behavioral, affective, intellectual, and social perspectives. Tsaur & Lo (2020) identified four components of memorable dining experience from the perspective of restaurant attributes: service behavior, exquisite and delicious cuisine, amazing physical environment and unique atmosphere, and high perceived value.

The majority of studies on gastronomic experiences have focused on cognitive components (e.g. Ribeiro & Prayag, 2019; Moreo et al., 2019; Sipe & Testa, 2018), while only a limited number have focused on affective components (e.g. Hsu et al., 2022). However, there have been attempts by certain authors to incorporate both cognitive and affective elements into their models (e.g. Akhshik et al., 2022; Horng & Hsu, 2021; Tsaur & Lo, 2020). These models have explored the concept of affective elements arising from cognitive memorable gastronomic experiences. Recently, Rašan & Laškarin Ažić, (2023) proposed a model of memorable gastronomic experience consisting of both cognitive (i.e. the physical environment, food quality, service quality and value for money) and affective (i.e. emotions) components.

METHODOLOGY

Study site and the measurements

Gaziantep, located southeast of the Anatolia Region in Türkiye, has been chosen as study site since the city has a rich culinary heritage and a reputation as a center of gastronomic excellence. Gaziantep with its culinary heritage and gastronomic attractions has been a member of Creative Cities Network of UNESCO since 2015.



Figure 1. Location of the study site – Gaziantep, the first city of gastronomy of Türkiye

Before the site study, we had an approval (on 30th November 2021 with protocol number 214582) from Anadolu University Ethics Commission. The data were collected from domestic gastro-tourists visiting Gaziantep via convenience sampling

technique using face-to-face surveys. The survey included a part that allows to get participants' descriptives and two scales to measure memorable gastronomic experience and visitors' satisfaction. Memorable gastronomic experience (MGE) scale was adapted from Kim et al.'s (2012) memorable tourism experience scale that has 24 items and seven independent components. Scale's validity and reliability in a cross-cultural context was verified by various scientific studies, some of which were in gastronomy tourism (Adongo et al., 2015; Tsai, 2016). A 3-item scale was used to measure visitors' satisfaction with gastronomy (SAT). MGE and SAT were measured with a 5-point likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Research model and hypotheses

The relationship between experience and satisfaction is commonly investigated in the marketing and tourism literature. In the vast majority of these studies, the experience is considered as a tourism experience, tourist experience or destination experience, associated with various features of destination or focused on experiences for a specific type of tourism. It is seen that some studies partially include attributes related to gastronomy in the measurement of tourist experience while limited studies measure only gastronomic attributes. Studies on the role and importance of gastronomy in tourism experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Kivela & Crotts, 2005, Kivela & Crotts, 2006; Beer, 2008; Kim et al., 2009; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016) show that local food and beverage consumption is an important component of tourism experiences and contributes significantly to the tourists' overall satisfaction level. In this study, all components presented in the proposed model (Fig.2) were measured using indicators related only to gastronomy and not to other attributes of the destinations. Following hypotheses are expected to make a new contribution to the literature, as they would allow a better understanding of the relationship between components of MGE and visitors' satisfaction level.

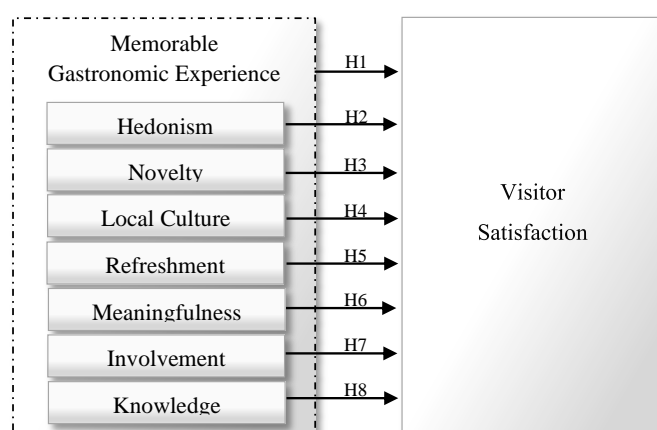


Figure 2. Proposed research model

H1. Memorable gastronomic experience is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H2. Hedonism is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H3. Novelty is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H4. Local culture is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H5. Refreshment is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H6. Meaningfulness is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H7. Involvement is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

H8. Knowledge is positively associated with visitor satisfaction.

Data analysis

Pre-analysis was performed by using initial data set (257) to find out whether the data satisfy assumptions of structural equation modeling such as sample size, missing data, outliers, normality and multicollinearity (Kline, 2011; Reisinger & Mavondo, 2007). Those that have coding errors and missing values were deleted. Since the extreme values effect normality negatively, outliers that determined via Mahalanobis distance method ($p < .001$) were excluded from the data set. Skewness and kurtosis coefficients of observed variables were within acceptable ranges. That showed normality of data according to Tabachnick & Fidell (2013). The following analyzes were continued with 244 data, 95% of initial data. The data analysis was conducted in two phases. In the first phase, the SPSS 23.0 software was employed for descriptive and inferential analyses, as well as exploratory factor analyses, with the objective of determining the sub-components of the construct. In the second phase, AMOS software was utilized for confirmatory factor analyses, the construction of a structural equation model (SEM), the evaluation of model estimates, and the testing of hypotheses.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' profile

A total of 244 respondents' descriptives are shown in Table 1. With a general evaluation, the profile of participants included more female than male (54.5%), age range were mostly 21-30 (38.5%) and 31-40 (26.6%), mostly they were married (63.9%) and graduated (57.0%). The responses shows that it was the first visit for 43% of participants, while the other visited the destination twice or more. 54.1% of participants made a short stay (1-3 days) in destination, and 31.1% of them stayed 4-7 days.

Table 1. Respondents' descriptives

Variable		N 244	%
Gender	Female	128	52.5
	Male	116	47.5
Age	20 and less	17	7.0
	21-30	94	38.5
	31-40	65	26.6
	41-50	38	15.6
	51-60	21	8.6
Marital status	61 and more	9	3.7
	Single	88	36.1
Educational level	Married	156	63.9
	Primary/secondary	18	7.4
	High school	65	26.6
	Graduate	139	57.0
Length of stay	Post graduate	22	9.0
	1-3 days	132	54.1
	4-7 days	76	31.1
	8-14 days	26	10.7
	15 days and more	10	4.1
Number of visits	Once (first visit)	105	43.0
	Twice	65	26.6
	Three times	60	24.6
	Four times or more	14	5.7

Table 2. Exploratory factor analysis outcomes

Factors and Items	Loadings	Eigen Value*	% VE*	α^{**}
Hedonism		8.109	13.160	.848
x1. Thrilled about having a new gastronomic experience	.730			
x2. Indulged in activities during gastronomic experience	.729			
x3. Really enjoyed this gastronomic experience	.765			
x4. Exciting experience	.814			
Refreshment		2.395	12.080	.867
x12. Liberating experience	.868			
x13. Enjoyed sense of freedom	.847			
x14. Refreshing experience	.674			
x15. Revitalized through this gastronomic experience	.658			
Meaningfulness		1.661	11.146	.858
x16. I did something meaningful during the experience	.811			
x17. I did something important during the experience	.886			
x18. Learned about myself during the experience	.826			
Knowledge		1.551	9.948	.840
x22. Exploratory gastronomic experience	.685			
x23. Had new knowledge	.817			
x24. Experienced a new culture	.835			
Novelty		1.240	9.822	.824
x5. Once-in-a-lifetime gastronomic experience	.804			
x6. Unique gastronomic experience	.723			
x7. Different from previous gastronomic experiences	.792			
Local Culture		1.084	9.466	.790
x9. Good impressions about the local people	.640			
x10. Closely experienced local culture	.804			
x11. Local people at destination were friendly	.814			
Involvement		1.001	8.472	.705
x19. Experienced the food/drinks I really wanted to try	.683			
x20. Enjoyed doing the activities I really wanted to do	.803			
x21. Interested in gastronomic events	.597			
Total variance explained: 74.09 %				
*Rotation sums of squared loadings (eigen value, % of variance explained)				
**Cronbach's alpha				

Exploratory factor analysis

The exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed to see the structural components of MGE scale and validity. Keiser-Meyer-Olkin values (.877), Bartlett's test of Sphericity (χ^2 276=3334.855 p = .000), and inter-item correlations showed that sampling was adequate for analyses. To get a better factor pattern, Principal Component analysis extraction with varimax rotation method was used. The analysis revealed that all factor loadings of observed variables are above .500

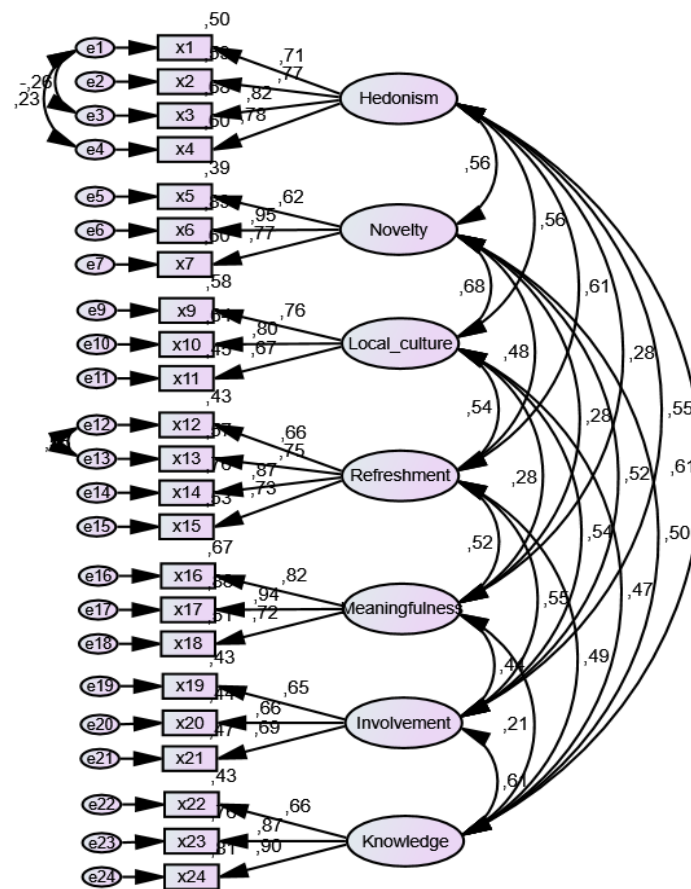
except one variable (x8) has cross-loadings on two factors. Excluding that item, the analysis was repeated and obtained a well interpretable factor structure. As shown in Table 2, seven factors/components (with an eigen value greater than 1) explained 74.09% of total variance. The factors of memorable gastronomic experience are hedonism, refreshment, meaningfulness, knowledge, novelty, local culture, involvement respectively.

As shown on the Table 2, Hedonism, explains 13.16% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 8.190. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .848, so the reliability is very good. Refreshment explains 12.08% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 2.395. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the factor was calculated to be 0.867, indicating a very good consistency. Meaningfulness, contributes 11.15% of the total variance explained with an eigenvalue of 1.661. The reliability of the factor is very good with a CA coefficient of 0.858. Knowledge has an eigenvalue of 1.551 and explains 9.948% of the variance. The factor was found to be reliable as the CA coefficient is .840. Novelty, which explains 9.82% of the variance with an eigenvalue of 1.240. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the factor was calculated to be .824, indicating good consistency. Local culture, with an eigenvalue of 1.084, explains 9.47% of the variance. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is .790. The last factor, Involvement explains 8.47% of total variance with an eigen value of 1.00. Cronbach's alpha is .705.

Confirmatory factor analysis

Memorable gastronomy experience measurement model was examined via first and second-order CFA by using maximum likelihood estimation method. Following the model fit assessments, analyses were conducted regarding the reliability and validity. To assess the measurement model's fitness to the empirical data, the chi-squared test (CMIN), the ratio of chi-squared to degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), the root means square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) indicators were used. Hu & Bentler (1999) strongly advise the use of one of the RMSEA, CFI with SRMR. Kline (2011) recommends the use of the χ^2 test, RMSEA, CFI and SRMR indicators in the assessment of model fit.

With a few modifications as shown on the path diagram (Figure 3), we obtained a model that performed a good fitness to data as CMIN (chi-square value) was 384.234; DF (degree of freedom) was 206; CMIN/DF was 1.865 (< 3); CFI was .940 ($\geq .90$); RMSEA was .060 ($< .08$) and SRMR was .049 ($< .08$). To evaluate the model, estimates of the relationship between 23 observed variables and 7 latent variables, standardized factor loadings, significance levels, average variance and error variances were investigated. Composite reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity were tested.



CMIN=384,234; DF=206; CMIN/DF=1,865; p=.000; RMSEA=.060; CFI=.940; GFI=.882

Figure 3. First-order confirmatory factor analysis path diagram

Table 3 illustrates the standardized factor loading ranges exceeding the acceptable threshold (>0.500), the average variance extracted (AVE), Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability (CR) coefficients for all seven latent variables.

Table 3. Indicators of measurement model

Latent variables	N. of observed variables	Standardized loadings range	Σ of std. loadings	A	AVE	CR
Hedonism	4	.705 – .825	3.072	.848	.591	.852
Novelty	3	.621 – .946	2.341	.824	.626	.830
Local Culture	3	.670 – .803	2.234	.790	.557	.790
Refreshment	4	.655 – .871	3.009	.867	.572	.841
Meaningfulness	3	.717 – .939	2.474	.858	.688	.867
Involvement	3	.654 – .686	2.004	.705	.446	.707
Knowledge	3	.656 – .900	2.425	.840	.665	.854

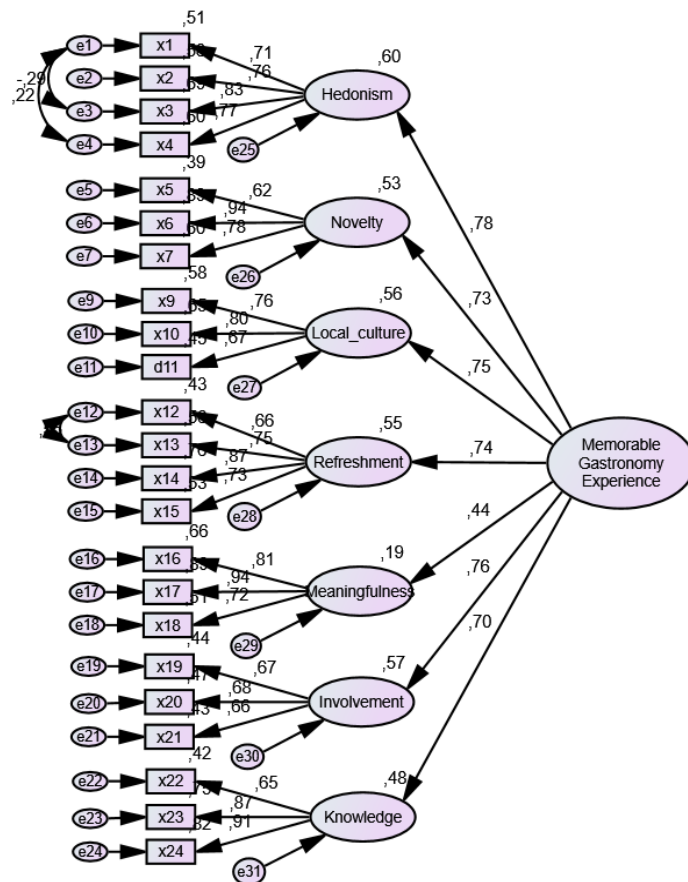
Each latent variable was indicated by a minimum of three observed variables and exhibited an acceptable level of AVE between 0.446 and 0.688. The composite reliability coefficients were calculated to be between 0.707 and 0.867. As the factor loadings, AVE, and CR coefficients met the requisite conditions, convergent validity was established.

Table 4. Factor Intercorrelations and discriminant validity

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7
F1_Hedonism	.769*						
F2_Novelty	.555	.791*					
F3_Local culture	.556	.681	.746*				
F4_Refreshment	.511	.475	.539	.756*			
F5_Meaningfulness	.277	.283	.281	.524	.830*		
F6_Involvement	.554	.522	.538	.548	.441	.668*	
F7_Knowledge	.607	.503	.466	.486	.206	.606	.815*

Note: Correlations are significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed); * Square root of average variance extracted

To assess discriminant validity, the factor correlations were compared with the square roots of AVE (Table 4). As the square roots of the AVEs were found to be greater than the relevant factor correlations, measurement model were deemed to meet the conditions of discriminant validity. Next, we performed CFA one again to see and evaluate the relationship between first and second order latent variables as the path diagram shown in Figure 4. Model fitness indicators showed a well fit (CMIN 438.794, DF 220, CMIN/DF 1.995, CFI .926, RMSEA .064, SRMR .065). All relations between MGE and sub-components were found significant at a .001 level.



CMIN=438,794; DF=220; CMIN/DF=1,995; p=.000; RMSEA=.064; CFI=.926; GFI=.870

Figure 4. Second-order confirmatory factor analysis path diagram

All R values (correlation coefficients) are significant at the .001 level and verify how well the model explains observed data. Calculated R^2 values (coefficient of determination) indicate the proportion of variance in the dependent variable (MGE) that can be explained by the seven independent variables. An R^2 of .602 has been found for hedonism and that means 60.2% of the variability in the memorable gastronomic experience can be explained by the hedonism. As the pleasure derived from the consumption of local food and beverages increases, it is observed that the perception of memorable gastronomic experiences is enhanced. Involvement, the component that refers to interests and active participations of tourists in experiences, explains 57.1% of variance. Another significant component was identified as local culture with an R^2 value of 0.561, which also has a considerable impact on the variance change in the MGE. In light of the findings that demonstrate a robust correlation between gastronomy and local culture, it can be posited that the consumption of food and beverages that serve as emblems of cultural identity (Cusack, 2000; Horng et al., 2012) facilitates the process of learning about cultures. There are growing interest among tourists in experiences that facilitate the discovery of local cultures (Roozbeh et al., 2013), so it is unsurprising that the local culture dimension emerges as a prominent feature that contributes to the memorable nature of gastronomic experiences. Another component of the MGE is refreshment, which accounts for 54.8% of the variance ($R^2=.548$).

Refreshment is associated with the feelings of freedom, relaxation and renewal that tourists experience during gastronomic experiences, allowing them to temporarily escape their daily routines. These positive feelings contribute to the formation of memorable gastronomic experiences. Novelty with a determination coefficient of .533 explains 53.3% of the variance change in the memorable gastronomy experience. Tourists are individuals who are innately driven to seek out novel experiences (Cohen, 1979) and they tend to prefer experiences that are distinct, novel, and unique, rather than an ordinary travel experience. The other component, knowledge, explains the variance change in memorable gastronomy experiences by 48.5% ($R^2=.485$). The terms 'knowledge' is used here to refer to the acquisition of new cultural insights by tourists through the exploration of local gastronomy and the acquisition of novel information during their gastronomic experiences. It can be proposed that the novel information acquired during travel contributes to the intellectual growth of tourists and their memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). The final component of MGE, meaningfulness, exhibits the lowest determination coefficient (.194) and accounts for 19.4% of the variance in gastronomic experience. The dimension of meaningfulness pertains to the degree to which tourists perceive the relevant experiences as meaningful and important.

Estimation of measurement model

Structural models, those illustrated in the Figures 5 and 6, were analyzed with bootstrapping procedure (5000 resampling) to obtain path coefficients, standard errors, and t-statistics for path coefficients.

The research hypotheses were tested then. The test results reveal that seven of hypotheses were supported and one of them were rejected. Hypothesis regarding the effect of memorable gastronomic experience on visitors' satisfaction was found to be strongly supported ($H1: \beta = .933, p < .001$).

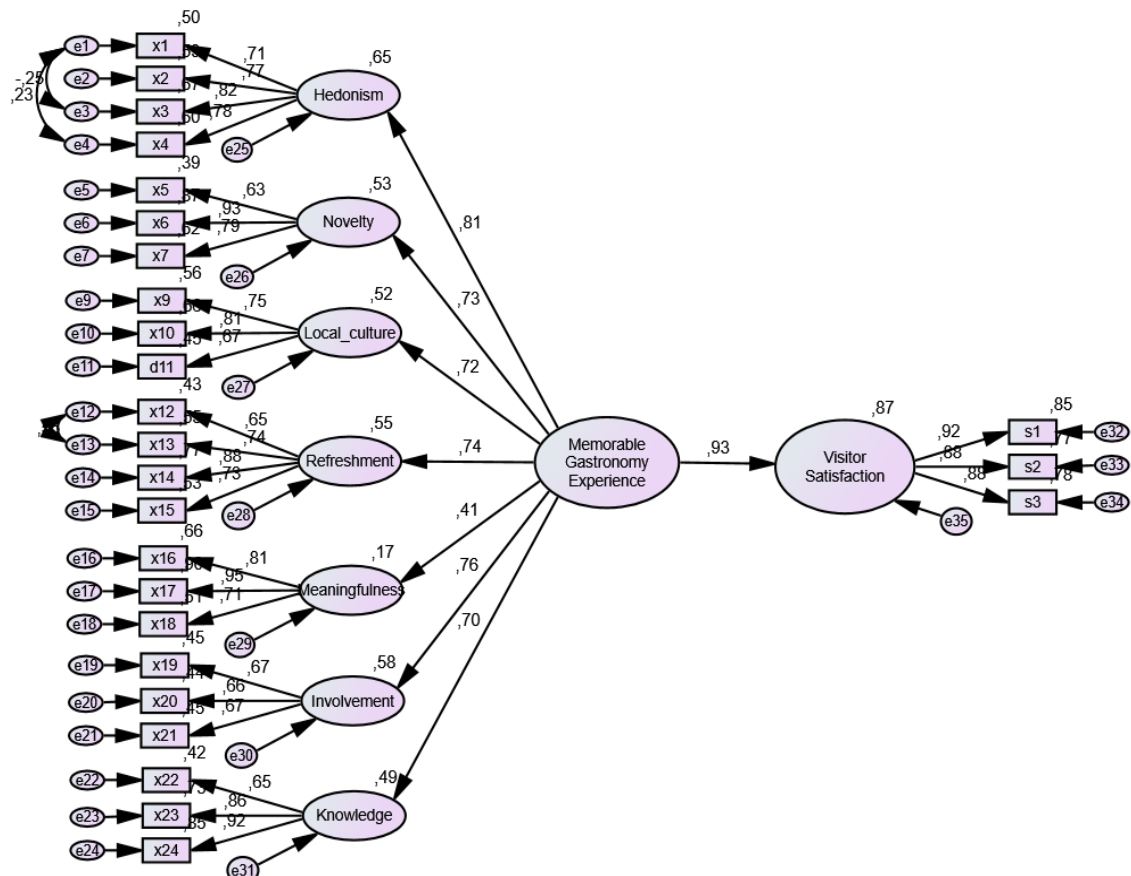


Figure 5. Structural model 1

Other seven hypotheses were related with the predictions of each MGE component's effect on visitor satisfaction. Since the direct effect coefficient ($\beta = .459$) was found significant ($p < .001$), hedonism had a direct and positive effect on visitor satisfaction. So, that hypothesis (H: 2) was supported. Hypothesis H3, which predicts a direct and positive relationship between novelty and satisfaction intentions, was supported ($\beta = .302$ $p < .001$). Local culture's effect ($\beta = .173$) on visitor satisfaction was found significant ($p < .005$), so the hypothesis H4 was empirically supported.

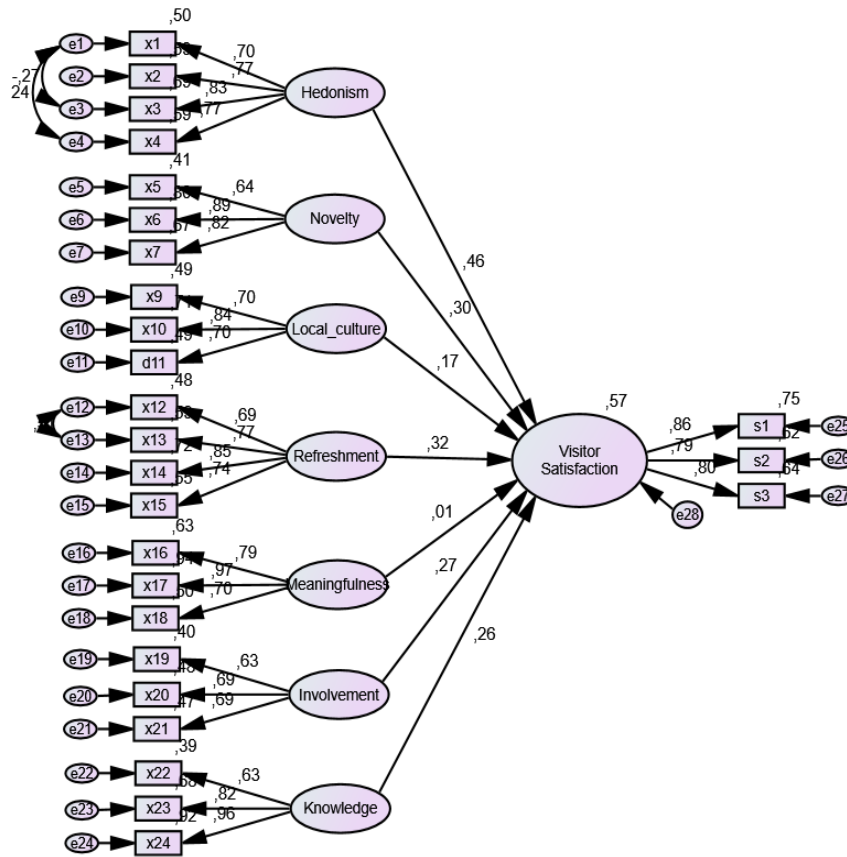


Figure 6. Structural model 2

Refreshment, as another component of memorable gastronomic experiences, effected visitors' satisfaction level since the hypothesis H5 was supported ($\beta = .318$ and $p < .001$). Hypothesis H6 predicted that meaningfulness had a positive effect on visitors' satisfaction with destination, however the test results shows that the hypothesis could not supported ($\beta = .015$ and $p = .787$). Involvement's effect on satisfaction was found positive and significant ($\beta = .272$ and $p < .001$), thus H7 was supported. The last component of memorable gastronomic experience, knowledge, also had a significant effect ($\beta = .257$ and $p < .001$) on visitors' satisfaction with destination. As predicts a positive relationship, hypothesis H8 was supported. The statistics of hypotheses tests were summarized on Table 5.

Table 5. Hypotheses test results

Hypothesized association	Std. estimate	Std. error	t-value	p-value	Status
H1: MGE → Visitor satisfaction	.933	.152	9.967	< .001	supported
H2: Hedonism → Visitor satisfaction	.459	.066	6.318	< .001	supported
H3: Novelty → Visitor satisfaction	.302	.055	4.800	< .001	supported
H4: Local culture → Visitor satisfaction	.173	.063	2.876	.004	supported
H5: Refreshment → Visitor satisfaction	.318	.053	5.001	< .001	supported
H6: Meaningfulness → Visitor satisfaction	.015	.041	.271	.787	not supported
H7: Involvement → Visitor satisfaction	.272	.074	3.922	< .001	supported
H8: Knowledge → Visitor satisfaction	.257	.061	4.317	< .001	supported

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify the components of memorable gastronomic experience, and to explore how each component effects visitors' satisfaction with destination. To answer the research questions, we conducted this research with a sample of 244 gastro-tourists in Gaziantep which is a well-known, attractive gastronomy destinations of Türkiye. We measured memorable gastronomic experience and its sub-components with an instrument tool that we adapted from Kim et al.'s (2012) memorable tourism experience (MTE) scale. The results revealed that memorable gastronomic experience has seven components, each of which has contributions to the memorability of gastronomic experiences at different levels. The

components with the proportion of variance in memorable gastronomic experience were respectively hedonism (60.2%), involvement (57.1%), local culture (56.1%), refreshment (54.8%), novelty (53.3%), knowledge (48.5%) and meaningfulness (19.4%). Besides, we have aimed to find out the predicted effects of memorable gastronomic experience and each component individually on visitors' satisfaction level with destination. Hypotheses tests' results allowed us a better understand relevant relationships. The findings reveal a strong, positive relationship between memorable gastronomic experience and visitors' satisfaction. Regarding the effects of components, study findings showed that hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, involvement and knowledge had a direct effect on satisfaction. However, there we could not find any significant evident that meaningfulness had an effect. We found the memorable tourism experience components of hedonism, refreshment and novelty were more likely to increase visitors' satisfaction level with destination.

Implications

Since the present study proves the components which make the gastronomic experiences particularly memorable, it gives some important insights to entrepreneurs. Practically, this study demonstrates that tourists will remember their gastronomic experiences based on the local food's hedonistic elements, the novel, unique and authentic nature of the gastronomic experiences, the interactions with local people and culture via local gastronomy, the experiences of physical, social and psychological relaxation, the active participation in experiences and the knowledge allowing them to be more informed. That means entrepreneurs need to design food experiences that appealing to tourists' hedonistic emotions. They need to novel and authentic food related creations that include cultural traits. They need to offer various gastronomic events and activities that which attract tourists and encourage their active participation. Such events enable tourists to perceive their experiences as memorable, and in this way, the satisfaction level of visitors can be increased.

Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations. Since the study only involved domestic tourists visited Gaziantep, future studies need to confirm this model by using a sample of international tourists. Another limitation is that we measured memorable gastronomic experiences with only positive evaluations. Further studies need to consider that visitors may encounter unpleasant experiences. The concept of memorability of gastronomic experiences are relatively new and need to be investigated in deep. With this study, we measured the memorable gastronomic experiences perceived by the gastro-tourists shortly after the relevant experiences. It has not been known yet whether the memorability of those experiences would last long. So, further studies are needed to explore this concept by using past experiences. Depending on their interest level to gastronomy, tourist may perceive the components of memorable gastronomic experience different. As Quan & Wang (2004) argues gastronomy and related activities may be just a part of daily routine for some of the tourist, while it means a peak experience for others. As demonstrated in previous studies (Hjalager, 2003; Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Cordova-Buiza et al., 2024), different tourist groups can be identified depending on their interest in local gastronomy. So, we suggest scholars to research the concept by comparing those tourist groups.

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