

THE IMPACT OF NOVELTY SEEKING ON INTENTION TO VISIT A COUNTRY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF OVERALL CUISINE IMAGE

Bulent AYDIN ¹

Department of Tourism, Batman University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-5449-4611

B. Zafer ERDOGAN

Department of Marketing, Anadolu University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0002-2147-7356

Erdogan KOC

Department of Business Administration, Bahcesehir University, Turkey
ORCID: 0000-0003-3183-2574

ABSTRACT

Participation in travel is continuously increasing throughout the world. Seeking novelty, particularly novel cuisine, is one of the motivating factors underlying travel. Image is one of the most important factors that affect intention to visit a country and experience the cuisine. This study examines the mediating effects of Turkish cuisine image on the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit. In this regard, Turkish cuisine image and its effect on individuals from the United Kingdom (U.K.) who had eaten at Turkish restaurants was analyzed. Individuals at Turkish restaurants were asked to fill out self-administered questionnaires with 78 questions. An online platform of people was also utilized. It was seen that cuisine image has a significant mediating role on the intention to visit Turkey.

Article History

Received 21 February 2021
Revised 24 October 2021
Accepted 25 October 2021
Published online 14 Mar. 2022

Keywords

gastronomy tourism
novelty seeking
intention to visit
Turkish cuisine image

INTRODUCTION

According to data from the World Tourism Organization (WTO) before the COVID-19 pandemic, while an average of 1.4 billion tourists participates in international travel annually, it is predicted that this will climb to approximately 1.8 billion tourists by 2030 (UNWTO, 2011, 2017a). Studies have found that most of the tourists indicate that seeking novelty and

¹ Address correspondence to Bulent Aydin (Ph.D.), Department of Tourism, Batman University, Batman, Turkey. E-mail: baydin1986@gmail.com

escaping from their routine are their main motivations for traveling (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Jang & Cai, 2002, S. Chang, 2011; Šimková & Holzner, 2014; Levitt et al., 2019). Although tourism began mainly with general interest tourism (GIT), i.e., sun, sea, and sand tourism, currently there is an increasing trend towards special interest tourism (SIT) (Koc, 2005; Koc & Altinay, 2007). However, most tourists still report that their interest in traveling to Turkey is for GIT (Koc, 2005; Okumus et al., 2012; Albayrak, 2013). The Turkish destinations most preferred by tourists are consistent with this fact.

Since the Turkish tourism industry primarily caters to general interest tourism (i.e., sun, sea and sand tourism), and the fact that the special interest tourism is growing at the expense of general interest tourism, Turkish tourism may be considered to be vulnerable due to the change in the demand pattern in the market. Product differentiation was thought to be an influential tool for reducing risk in tourism and strengthening the industry (Koc, 2005). In this sense, special interest tourism products are of vital importance for the future of the Turkey's tourism industry. In addition, considering Turkey's wealth of cultural resources (Okumus et al., 2012), product differentiation is foreseen to be beneficial. Therefore, improving special interest types of tourism such as gastronomy tourism is crucial for sustaining and increasing Turkish tourism demand in the future.

Novelty constitutes one of the main motives for participation in gastronomy tourism (Trauer, 2006; W. Chang, 2011; López-Guzmán et al., 2017). Novelty seeking is regarded as one of the primary intrinsic motivations for international travel (Dann, 1977, 1981; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Uysal & Jurovski, 1994; Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Jang & Cai, 2002; Chen & Chen, 2015; Levitt et al., 2019). Yet, according to Cohen (1972), individuals traveling in search of novelty are also looking for environmental familiarity. This situation constitutes the tourist's paradox. Particularly discouraging of visits to a country is perceived risk associated with the visit (Karamustafa et al., 2013). Therefore, familiarity with a certain destination is a key factor for tourists seeking novelty. This familiarity with some aspects of a country reduces the anxiety associated with traveling there (Alvarez & Korzay, 2011; Mak et al., 2012).

Through globalization, immigration (Kesteloot & Mistiaen, 1997; Roseman, 2008; Clemes et al., 2013) and tourism, many elements of certain cultures are assimilated by countries in other parts of the world. One such element is the cuisines of the other countries. Cuisine is an important part of a country's image (Min & Lee, 2014) that can contribute significantly to

tourists' desire to visit it through its novelty. In addition, the cuisine plays an important role in acquiring familiarity with the country. As a result, cuisines have become a powerful tool for developing and marketing destinations (Kivela & Crotts, 2005; Okumus et al., 2007; Horng & Tsai, 2012; Guzman & Canizares, 2012; Chi et al., 2013; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Antón et al., 2019).

As seen from the above-mentioned explanations, cuisine image (CI) is one of the essential elements for the development of tourism within the context of gastronomy. However, despite the fact that a country's cuisine and the image created of its cuisine has positive effects both on the image of the country and on the visiting intention, a research gap exists in terms of Turkish cuisine in this respect. On the other hand, in other countries, research is needed on the perceived image of the individuals who experience Turkish cuisine within the context of seeking novelty and as to whether the intention arose to visit Turkey which is the country of origin. Especially, it remains uncertain whether cuisine image mediates the relationship between seeking novelty in terms of cuisine and intention to visit. Therefore, the present study aims to demonstrate the effects of novelty-seeking on Turkish cuisine image and how it affects intention to visit Turkey. Furthermore, the mediating role of Turkish cuisine image, formed via visiting Turkish restaurants abroad, in the likelihood of visiting Turkey was investigated. By demonstrating the mediating role of cuisine image in the relationship between visitors' novelty-seeking motivation and their intention to visit, the present study aims to make both a practical contribution to Turkey's tourism efforts and a theoretical contribution to the tourism literature.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Visit Intention

Consumer behavior varies greatly depending on what is being consumed (Solomon et al., 2012) along with its complexity (Howard, 1989). There are many factors that affect consumer behavior (Howard, 1989; Lam & Hsu, 2006; Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010; Hsu & Huang, 2010). However, intention is the most essential of these factors (Ajzen, 1991; Madden et al., 1992; Hsu & Huang, 2010). Although behavioral intention does not always result in performing the behavior, it has a strong impact on the performance of the behavior (Howard, 1989; Ajzen, 1991).

Behavioral intention can vary depending on the object of the intention. However, in the tourism context, the behavioral intention that has been of greatest interest is the intention to revisit and willingness to recommend a tourist destination (Ramkissoon et al., 2011). Intentions are indications of how strongly people are willing to try to perform a behavior and how much of an effort they will expend to engage in an act (Ajzen, 1991, p. 181). Although behavioral intention is claimed to have a significant effect on the realization of behavior, even a strong intention does not always result in the performance of a behavior (Howard, 1989). Studies performed on intention to visit and intention to re-visit have indicated (Chen & Tsai, 2007; Phillips et al., 2013; Alvarez & Campo, 2014; Hallmann et al., 2015; Molinillo et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2018) that image is the common factor affecting both.

Novelty-seeking

Novelty seeking is known to be one of the most important motivations for traveling (Crompton, 1979; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Dimanche & Havitz, 1995; Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Jang & Feng, 2007; Chen & Xiao, 2013; Chen & Chen, 2015; Chi et al., 2019; Skavronskaya et al., 2019; Hong & Desai, 2020). In general, travel motivations are grouped under two different categories: push and pull (Dann, 1977, 1981; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Jang & Cai, 2002; Chen & Chen, 2015), or seeking and escaping (Iso-Ahola, 1982; Šimková & Holzner, 2014). Novelty seeking is considered to be one of the primary intrinsic push motivations for travel (Baloglu & Uysal, 1996; Jang & Cai, 2002; Chen & Chen, 2015). Since the desire to explore and experience new food and to observe various cultures constitutes the central motivation for gastronomy tourism (Fields, 2002; Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010), cuisine image influences the amount of attraction to a culture for novelty-seekers. According to Van Trijp et al. (1992) in the psychology literature, the basis for novelty seeking is exploratory behavior. Optimal stimulation level (OSL) is the fundamental concept in this theory (Van Trijp et al., 1992; Assaker et al., 2011; Assaker & Hallak, 2013). Researchers hypothesize that when actual stimulation does not correspond to the OSL, individuals attempt to regulate their level of stimulation and bring it in line with OSL through exploratory behavior. The motivations to seek novelty and engage in exploratory behavior are the leading motivators for tourist visits as well (Wong & Zhao, 2016; Hong & Desai, 2020).

Tourism is widely acknowledged to play a pivotal role in presenting opportunities for those seeking to escape routine and seeking novelty (Hong & Desai, 2020). Experiencing different cuisines and tasting different

food are considered to be among the many examples of such opportunities (Quan & Wang, 2004). Furthermore, several studies have concluded that experiencing cuisines constitutes an important aspect of travel experiences (Rimmington & Yüksel, 1998; Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Chen, 2013; Seo & Yun, 2015). On the other hand, research findings indicate that individuals traveling for the purpose of seeking novelty may be hesitant about a new cuisine (Cohen, 1972; Cohen & Avieli, 2004; Choi, 2019; Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2020). It is argued that this hesitation is alleviated to a certain extent by previous gastronomic experiences via restaurants (Choe & Cho, 2011) or being familiar with the dishes (Seo et al., 2013). Furthermore, hesitation or concerns not only diminish novelty-seeking motivation (Seo et al., 2013; Choi, 2019), but also causes the development of negative attitudes leading to abstention from other countries' cuisines (Asperin et al., 2011; Ji et al., 2016). In other words, attitudes and desires tend to change in a positive manner, while hesitation is alleviated (Lai et al., 2020). This leads tourists traveling for novelty to experience cuisines risk-free, and further helps them to form an impression of a country's cuisine without prejudice.

Seeking novel cuisine affects tourists' attitudes and behavior, image of a cuisine, and intention to visit the country from which it originated. Mun et al. (2018) concluded that novelty-seeking has a significant effect on participants' attitudes towards visiting a country. According to Albaity and Melhem (2017), there is a significant positive correlation between novelty seeking and image. However, according to Assaker et al. (2011), novelty seeking and intention to revisit are negatively related. Jang and Feng (2007) examined the effect of novelty seeking on intention to revisit in the short, medium, and long term and they determined that novelty seeking only affects intention to revisit positively and significantly in the medium term.

Theoretically, novelty-seeking has an impact on a country's image and desire to visit it (Albaity & Melhem, 2017; Mun et al., 2018). Although some studies have examined the correlation between novelty seeking and intention to revisit a country, the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit for the first time has not been examined. The current study investigates the intention to visit a country for the first time rather than the intention to revisit it. In addition, the effect of novelty seeking on the image of Turkish cuisine was investigated for both traditional and modern restaurants. In this context, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: Novelty seeking affects the visiting intention of a country positively among visitors to traditional restaurants.

H2: Novelty seeking affects the visiting intention of a country positively among visitors to modern restaurants.

H3: Novelty seeking affects overall cuisine image (OCI) positively among visitors to traditional restaurants.

H4: Novelty seeking affects OCI positively among visitors to modern restaurants.

Gastronomy Tourism and Turkey

Travel for gastronomy purposes is considered a niche market in the tourism industry (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010). Gastronomy tourism is conceptualized as visiting different locations, producers, and businesses for culinary purposes (Hall & Sharples, 2004). In gastronomy tourism, the main motivation is to dine, become familiar with local culture, develop new relationships, and gain self-respect as well as status (Fields, 2003; Harrington & Ottenbacher, 2010; Çalışkan, 2013). Gastronomy tourism is claimed to possess a loyal market segmentation (Kivela & Crofts, 2005). In addition, there is no seasonal dependency in this market segment (UNWTO, 2017b) as there is in others. Unlike many other travel activities, gastronomic travel is usually available year-round and any time of day without restrictions. This is considered an influential factor in motivating travel to destinations that are not highly seasonal (UNWTO, 2017b). On the other hand, gastronomy tourism is interpreted to have the potential to increase the sustainability of local, regional, and national economies (UNWTO, 2017b). Tourism provides 11% of the gross domestic product (GDP) of Turkey (WTTC, 2022) and provides a high level of employment (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007). Along with the manufacturing sector, tourism is one of the most important economic sectors in Turkey. In addition, tourism is a remarkably fast-growing industry not only in Turkey but in almost all developing countries (Bahar & Bozkurt, 2010). One dollar generated by the tourism industry has either a direct or indirect effect on 30 different sectors (Koc & Altinay, 2007). Therefore, the government and other stakeholders spend much effort in attracting tourists interested in local cuisine. The tourism goals of Turkey for 2023 are one of the indications of the aforementioned efforts (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2007). Turkish cuisine forms one of the important values that needs to be operated effectively. Like other nations' cuisine, Turkish cuisine has spread all over the world through Turkish restaurants (Kesteloot & Mistiaen, 1997). Therefore, individuals who are seeking novelty may prefer to visit and dine in traditional and modern Turkish restaurants.

Cuisine image (CI)

Image, which has both cognitive and affective components, has a complex structure. Evaluating the cognitive and affective components of products results in image formation (Peštek & Činjurević, 2014; Seo & Yun, 2015). Image is an important component of destination attractiveness (Uysal & Jurowski, 1994; Guzman & Canizares, 2012; Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Cömert, 2014; Peštek & Činjurević, 2014; Nelson, 2016). Studies also demonstrate that cuisine image has affected the behavior of tourists who visit a country (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Ling et al., 2010; Karim et al., 2011; Ramkissoon et al., 2011; Lertputtarak, 2012; Chi et al., 2013; Seo et al., 2014). A number of studies of various countries have found that CI has a significant effect on visiting intention (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Lertputtarak, 2012; Chi et al., 2013; Wang, 2015; Chatterjee & Suklabaidya, 2020; Lai et al., 2020). The uniqueness of destinations' cuisines is a key factor in a destination becoming popular and attractive (Horng & Tsai, 2012; Okumus et al., 2013; Okumus & Cetin, 2018).

Table 1. *The relationship between intention to visit, cuisine, and behavioral intention*

Author	Food image/Cuisine	Travelers' intentions to visit country		Behavioral intention
Ab Karim & Chi, 2010	French	Directly	No	-
		Indirectly	-	-
	Italian	Directly	Yes	-
		Indirectly	-	-
	Thai	Directly	Yes	-
		Indirectly	-	-
Lertputtarak, 2012	Thai	Directly	Yes	-
		Indirectly		-
Chi et al., 2013	Malaysian	Directly	No	-
		Indirectly	Yes	-
Seo et al., 2014	Korean/ Cognitive	Directly	-	Yes
	Korean/ Affective	Directly	-	No
Wang, 2015	Macau	Directly	Yes	-
		Indirectly	-	-
Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019	Thai	Directly	-	Yes
		Indirectly	-	-
Chatterjee & Suklabaidya, 2020	New York/USA	Directly	Yes	-
	Delhi/India	Directly	Yes	-
Lai et al., 2020	Australian/ Cognitive	Directly	Yes	-
	Australian/ Affective	Directly	Yes	-
Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020	Iran	Directly	No	Yes
		Indirectly	-	-

Numerous studies have found that the more favorable a destination's cuisine image is, the more likely it is that individuals will visit it. However, there are no studies so far on the influence of Turkish cuisine's image on the intention to visit Turkey. Therefore, the following hypotheses

regarding the effect of Turkish cuisine image for different restaurant types were examined in the present study. Despite the fact that attractive cuisines increase the intention to visit by creating a significant attraction for those seeking novelty, it remains uncertain as to what kind of mediating role a cuisine's image has in the relationship between novelty-seeking and intention to visit. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed.

H5: OCI affects visiting intention to Turkey positively among diners at traditional Turkish restaurants.

H6: OCI affects visiting intention to Turkey positively among diners at modern Turkish restaurants.

H7: OCI serves as a mediator of the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit for diners at traditional Turkish restaurants.

H8: OCI serves as a mediator of the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit for diners at modern Turkish restaurants.

Traditional and modern types of Turkish restaurants

Basic characteristics differentiating restaurants from one another are general features such as type of service, product range, ambiance, price, and method of payment. Various classifications are made based on these features. When these classifications are examined, it has been observed that there is not any common type of classification both nationally and internationally.

Although there are different classifications made in the international literature, the following classifications are featured in general: sit down, fast-food, full-service, limited-service, fine dining, casual dining, theme, family, and ethnic restaurants. Jang et al. (2012) indicated that restaurants are divided into fast-food, casual dining, and fine dining restaurants, although there are no definite rules categorizing restaurants.

Restaurants abroad or restaurants that do not belong to the culture of the place they are located are often called ethnic restaurants (Olsen et al, 2000; Turgeon & Pastinelli 2002; Sriwongrat, 2008; Kılınç & Çavuş, 2010; Marinkovic et al., 2015). Turkish restaurants abroad also constitute the ethnic restaurants in the countries they are located. These restaurants are generally opened by immigrants to those countries (Çaglar, 1995; Kesteloot & Mistiaen, 1997; Roseman, 2008; Clemes et al., 2013; Min & Lee, 2014).

The U.K. is one of the countries where there are a significant number of Turkish restaurants. In 2013, there were nearly 200 Turkish restaurants

in London, apart from fast-food and take away kiosks (Karaosmanoglu, 2013). When the international classifications are taken into consideration, Turkish restaurants within the ethnic restaurant category fall into several different categories. According to Öğüt (2008), restaurants can be grouped into three categories: “traditional,” “modern,” and “casual,” while for Karaosmanoğlu (2013), there are two categories, “modern” and “traditional,” with fast-food and take away kiosks considered separately from full-service restaurants. Restaurants can also be categorized based on the food being served, décor, and customer profile.

According to the studies, insofar as the customers’ expectations differ in accordance with restaurant type (Öğüt, 2008; Jang et al, 2012; Karaosmanoglu, 2013), the effect of restaurant type on customers also differs. This shows that restaurant type must also be taken into consideration in research on cuisine image. Therefore, in this study, hypotheses were formulated based on specific restaurant types.

METHODS

Measurement

The current study utilized measures whose validity and reliability were verified in previous studies. To measure openness to novelty, an 8-item scale developed by Van Trijp et al. (1992) was used; to measure intention to visit, a 3-item scale developed by Alvarez and Cambo (2014) was used; and to measure cuisine image, a 15-item scale developed by Peštek and Činjarević (2014) was used along with two additional items, thus totaling 17 items. During the expert opinion stage, it was considered necessary to add items such as “Turkish cuisine is visually attractive” and “Turkish cuisine smells nice” to the cuisine image scale. The scales' content validity was evaluated by four experts, and a pilot study with 51 participants was conducted to verify the instrument's face validity. The pilot study was conducted with international students from Turkey who were native speakers of English. In this study, a 5-point Likert scale with endpoints ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) and a semantic differential scale ranging from -2 to +2 were used. The semantic differential scale is claimed to be the most suitable type of scale for image studies (Martin & Eroglu, 1993).

Sampling and Data Collection

The U.K., where many Turkish restaurants are located, was chosen as the location for the study (Karaosmanoglu, 2013). Compared with other societies, British society is known to be one of the most open-minded societies regarding ethnic issues, and also British people tend to have a strong inclination towards novelty or variety seeking behavior (Jamal, 1996). Additionally, according to 2022 WTTC data, the U.K. ranks fifth among all countries in terms of tourist visits to Turkey (WTTC, 2022).

The research data was drawn from consumers who had dined in traditional and modern types of Turkish restaurants in London. According to Karaosmanoglu (2013), apart from takeaway and fast-food restaurants, Turkish restaurants in London are characterized as modern and traditional. These two types of restaurants differ from each other in decor, consumer characteristics, and food being served. On the other hand, Turkish restaurants differ in terms of food preparation. For instance, while modern restaurants utilize standardized recipes in food preparation, in traditional restaurants, dishes are prepared based on the knowledge and the ability of the chefs. Since these restaurants have distinctive aspects and they have not been tested elsewhere, it was worth examining them separately. The target population of this study was people in the U.K. who had dined at Turkish restaurants (traditional and modern). Individuals were approached and 200 data was obtained through face-to-face solicitation. Furthermore, an online platform of people who had eaten at Turkish restaurants outside of the city was also utilized. Online data from 245 individuals were collected through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform. MTURK, launched by Amazon in 2005, serves as an online subject pool for research (Holden et al., 2013). Statistical analysis revealed no differences in data collected by these two different techniques. A total of 445 questionnaires were collected. However, after eliminating unusable responses, only 400 of those remained as a sample for the study.

RESULTS

Exploratory and confirmatory factor and reliability analysis

To identify each variable that was related to each other, exploratory factor analysis was conducted (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011). Maximum Likelihood was used as a factor determination method (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011); in addition, oblique rotation was performed in order to obtain the best results with the data (Hair et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011). The lower bound

for factor loadings was set at 0.30 (Hair et al., 2010). In this respect, the items which met those criteria were kept in the scale, while the others were deleted. Thus, three items were deleted one by one from the cuisine image scale, and analyses were performed.

Table 2. *Exploratory factor analysis*

Variables	Mean	Std.	KMO	Bartlett's test	Eigenvalue	Exp. Variance	Cronbach's Alphas
Novelty seeking	3.79	0.84	0.917	.0001	4.8	68.64	0.922
Quality and uniqueness of the cuisine	4.08	0.71	0.894	.0001	4.9	50	0.882
Health and visuality of the cuisine	3.77	0.78	0.894	.0001	1.6	16	0.830
Affective cuisine image	3.92	0.76	0.796	.0001	2.61	65.43	0.816
Intention to visit	3.13	1.15	0.696	.0001	2.46	82	0.890

First-and second-order confirmatory factor analysis results are presented in Table 3. The models' overall fit was evaluated in accordance with the χ^2 , CFI, GFI, SRMR and RMSEA indices proposed by Kline (2011). We also used the following criteria as acceptable values for goodness-of-fit indices: $0.90-0.95 \leq \text{CFI}$; $\text{SRMR} \leq 0.08-0.09$; $0.85-0.95 \leq \text{GFI}$; $\text{RMSEA} \leq 0.03-0.08$; $\chi^2/\text{sd} \leq 3-5$ (Kline, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2011).

Table 3. *First and second order confirmatory factor analysis*

First order CFA	χ^2/df	RMSEA	CFI	SRMR	GFI
Novelty seeking	2,91	,069	,920	,0613	,857
Quality and uniqueness of the cuisine					
Health and visuality of the cuisine					
Affective cuisine image					
Intention to visit					
Second order CFA	3.74	.083	.931	.0632	.902
Overall cuisine image					

Table 4. *Reliability and validity of the construct*

Variables	CR	AVE	Variables	CR	AVE
Novelty seeking	0.915	0.608	Overall cuisine image	0.943	0.543
Quality and uniqueness of the cuisine	0.888	0.570			
Health and visuality of the cuisine	0.828	0.548			
Affective cuisine image	0.819	0.531			
Intention to visit	0.889	0.731			

AVE and CR are presented in Table 4. The factor loading of composite reliability (CR) as shown in the table is far higher than 0.70, which is the ideal acceptable level. In addition, average variance extracted (AVE) loadings were found to be over 0.50, which is above the ideal acceptable point (Hair et al., 2010, p. 709).

Structural model

In this study, a four-variable model design was tested: dependent, independent, control, and mediator. The research model was applied to traditional and modern restaurants separately and the differences between them had been previously determined. SPSS PROCESS (Hayes, 2012, 2013) was used for testing the model and hypotheses. Results of the analysis relating to traditional restaurants are presented in Table 5. As seen in Table 5, hypotheses H₃, H₅, H₇ were supported, however, H₁ was not. In the model, whether participants had visited Turkey was a control variable and the analysis was performed accordingly. Results suggested that the state of being in a country had a significant influence on overall cuisine image, -0.17 ($p < 0.05$), while it did not have a significant influence on intention to visit ($p > 0.05$).

Table 5. Summary of hypothesis testing results for traditional restaurants

Hypothesis	Std.	t	Bootstrapping (CI:%95)		Testing Result
			LLCI	ULCI	
H ₁ . Novelty-seeking → Intention to visit	0.03	0.3193	-0.1372	0.1902	Not supported
H ₃ . Novelty-seeking → Overall cuisine image	0.29	6.8159*	0.2036	0.3692	Supported
H ₅ . Overall cuisine image → Intention to visit	0.79	6.6458*	0.5559	1.0245	Supported
H ₇ . Novelty → Overall cuisine image → Intention to visit	0.23	-	0.1164	0.3460	Supported
Total effect	0.25	3.0618	0.0901	0.4156	
Direct effect	0.03	0.3193	-0.1372	0.1902	
R²: .20; F (3, 229): 18.98; p < .001					

* $p < 0.001$; Bootstrap sample: 5000; CI: Confidence interval

Analysis results relating to modern restaurants are presented in Table 6. As seen in Table 6, hypotheses H₄, H₆, H₈ were supported, however, H₂ was not. This result shows similar results to the ones reported earlier for traditional restaurants. However, the effect coefficients are different. In other words, the effect coefficient of novelty seeking on cuisine image is higher in modern restaurants, while the effect coefficient of cuisine image serving as a mediator is higher in traditional restaurants. Also, in this

model, whether participants had visited Turkey was a control variable. Results suggested that whether participants had visited Turkey had no significant effect on either cuisine image or intention to visit ($p > 0.05$).

Table 6. *Summary of hypothesis testing results for modern restaurants*

Hypothesis	Std.	t	Bootstrapping (CI: %95)		Testing Result
			LLCI	ULCI	
H2. Novelty → Intention to visit	0.01	0.0800	-0.2499	0.2709	Not supported
H4. Novelty → Overall cuisine image	0.32	4.4474*	0.1785	0.4653	Supported
H6. Overall cuisine image → Intention to visit	0.71	4.5633*	0.4025	1.0200	Supported
H8. Novelty → Overall cuisine image → Intention to visit	0.25	-	0.0898	0.4849	Supported
Total effect	0.24	1.8213	-0.0209	0.4999	
Direct effect	0.01	0.0800	-0.2499	0.2709	
R²: .18; F (3, 115): 8.6101; p < .001					

* $p < 0.001$; Bootstrap sample: 5000; CI: Confidence interval

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the influence of novelty seeking participants' image of Turkish cuisine, formed largely from visits to traditional and modern Turkish restaurants in the U.K., on intention to visit Turkey. In this context, hypotheses were developed based on the literature and tested with a structural equation modeling approach. Analyses demonstrated similar results for both types of restaurants. Accordingly, overall cuisine image plays a direct role in mediating the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit Turkey for both traditional and modern Turkish restaurants. In both models, while the novelty-seeking positively affect the OCI, the direct effect on the intention to visit is not significant. In addition, in both models, OCI has a powerful, significant positive effect on visiting intention. Therefore, the outcomes show that only H1 and H2 are not supported, while other hypotheses (H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8) are supported. This study also included participants who had previously been to Turkey for various reasons. Therefore, whether the participants had visited Turkey was a control variable, and the effect of this was considered.

Discussion of the Results

Cohen (1972) reported that tourists' desire to travel was motivated by novelty, but they also desire a familiar atmosphere. In other words, they

would like to experience a familiar environment in the novel destination they visit (Cohen & Avieli, 2004).

Because of the positive relationship between image and familiarity (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991; Milman & Pizam, 1995; Baloglu, 2001; Ha & Perks, 2005; Phillips & Jang, 2010; Seo et al., 2013; Tan & Wu, 2016), image may be used to provide the necessary level of familiarity. Similarly, the results of this research support the idea that an optimum level of familiarity for the destination is achieved through cuisine image. Thus, as exhibited in the current study, cuisine image is considered to serve as a mediator in the relationship between novelty-seeking and intention to visit. According to the study results, cuisine image serves as a positive mediator of the relationship between novelty seeking and individuals' intention to visit the country of origin of the cuisine. However, the direct effect of novelty-seeking on intention to visit was not significant. Results obtained regarding novelty-seeking are in accordance with some studies (Albaity & Melhem, 2017) in the literature while they do not overlap with others (Mun et al., 2018). The results we obtained for cuisine image are fully compatible with similar results in the literature (Ab Karim & Chi, 2010; Lertputtarak, 2012; Chi et al., 2013; Wang, 2015; Chatterjee & Suklabaidya, 2020; Lai et al., 2020). On the other hand, in this study, as distinct from past research, the effect of cuisine image in mediating the relation between novelty-seeking and desire to visit was demonstrated.

Theoretical Implications

Novelty seeking is widely acknowledged as one of the primary motivators of travel. The behavior of novelty-seeking emerges as a result of attempts to regulate congruity, driving exploratory behavior. In other words, the main factor driving individuals to seek novelty is the attempt to correct incongruity between optimum stimulation and actual stimulation. However, it is mostly associated with neophobia when novelty-seeking behavior is directed towards consumption (Asperin et al., 2011; Choe & Cho, 2011; Derinalp Çanakçı & Birdir, 2020). Despite individuals' motivation to seek novelty, they experience hesitation towards products they are not familiar with due to lack of knowledge and experience (Van Trijp et al., 1992; Choe & Cho, 2011). Reducing such hesitation facilitates and encourages novelty-seeking behavior. The results of this study are consistent with past theory.

Turkish cuisine has become familiar in the U.K. through the large number of Turkish restaurants. This familiarity alleviates perceived

hesitation towards Turkish cuisine, thus encouraging further experiencing the cuisine and seeking novel culinary adventures. In this sense, alleviation of hesitation leads to the development of a defined cuisine image among those seeking novelty or variety. This image provides new positive impressions of the cuisine's country of origin. Neophobia has been regarded as a possible explanation for the lack of a direct positive effect of novelty-seeking on intention to visit a destination. An implication of the results of this study is that one may consider a positive image to be an essential variable for novelty-seeking on account of avoiding the effect of neophobia and its effect on intention to visit. Therefore, image plays a pivotal role in facilitating novelty seeking and forming an intention to visit a destination.

Practical Implications

We conclude that the familiarization of potential tourists with Turkish foods has a significant influence on visiting intention to the country. Therefore, the development of the cuisine is of paramount importance for attracting tourists to the country. In addition, we found that the image of Turkish cuisine plays an important role in mediating the relationship between novelty seeking and intention to visit Turkey for consumers who have dined in both traditional and modern types of Turkish restaurants. This familiarity reduces the perceived risk of visiting. Therefore, it is vital to increase the number of Turkish restaurants abroad. In addition, events such as Turkish food festivals and cultural festivals that include food and local drinks can be held in these restaurants. Free trials also can be offered to reduce consumer hesitation towards the cuisine. This can also be considered an effective marketing tool to improve the cognitive and affective image of Turkish cuisine. Furthermore, to enhance the consumer experience, creative marketing activities such as organizing workshops and cookout contests for Turkish cuisine could be effective tools for generating tourism demand for Turkey.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The research sample was limited to people who dined in traditional and modern Turkish restaurants in the U.K., as these types of restaurants present more standardized service than fast food and take-away Turkish restaurants. Testing the study model with a sample of individuals who dine in fast food and take-away Turkish restaurants may provide valuable insights. Moreover, restaurant image and familiarity variables can be included to explore their interactions with other variables in the study

model. Lastly, this study was carried out in a single country, the U.K.. Future studies might investigate the role of cuisine image in a range of countries in comparison.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This research was conducted as part of a doctoral thesis project that was funded by Anadolu University, Scientific Research Projects Commission (Grant number 1604E152).

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