

INTENTION OF INDEPENDENT TRAVELERS TO CONSUME STREET FOODS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF EXTENDED TPB: THE MODERATING ROLE OF HEDONISM

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intention of consuming street food during independent travelers' trips based on the Theory of Planned Behavior, which is expanded with the variables of past experience and hedonism. The relationships between the variables of attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and past experience, and behavioral intention variable were examined. Moreover, moderator role of hedonism variable in the relationship between attitude and behavioral intention was tested. The study was conducted in Istanbul, and 523 of 541 questionnaires were analyzed. Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used to test the five hypotheses proposed in research model. Results showed that attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control and experience, respectively, were important factors affecting the intention of independent travelers to consume street food. However, results also indicated that hedonism does not have a moderating effect between attitude and behavioral intention. It was shown in this study that the expanded Theory of Planned Behavior can be used to explain street food consumption intention. Finally, theoretical and managerial implications of the current study were presented.

Article History

Received 11 June 2022
Revised 19 May 2023
Accepted 18 June 2023
Published online 10 July 2023

Keywords

hedonism
independent travelers
street food
past experience
theory of planned behavior

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INTRODUCTION

Street food has an important place among alternative products for eating out. World Health Organization (WHO) defines street food as "Food and beverages prepared in the streets and similar public places, or prepared and presented at the sales place by the seller, which can be consumed at the time of sale or later without the need for any additional processing" (WHO, 1996). Many studies (Privitera, 2012; Choi et al. 2013; Hiamey et al. 2013) show that street foods are mostly consumed by low-income people in developing countries since it is easily accessible and cheap. However, in the USA, there is a rise of the "food truck" movement, where street food is seen as an important fashion and trend regarding consumer nutrition (Newman & Burnett, 2013). Since it is consumed in different ways throughout various geographies, it can reflect the characteristics of the society in which it is consumed, as it is prepared with local products and cooking techniques (Calloni, 2013). Therefore, it provides an authentic experience for tourists with its features such as representing a local product, creating sociality, and being more accessible than other food groups. Moreover, the street food festivals organized in some countries (European Street Foods Festival, Austria; Thai Street Food Festival, Thailand etc.) show that this phenomenon is not only about meeting nutritional needs through cheap consumption, but that it can also provide consumers with an enjoyable consumption experience. In this framework, street foods have recently managed to attract the attention of researchers in the field of tourism and gastronomy.

Street food has been discussed mostly as regards vendors in studies on food hygiene and safety (Abdalla et al., 2009; Cho et al., 2011). On the other hand, it is seen that there are fewer studies on consumers. In particular, although some studies were conducted on consumer attitudes in the context of tourists (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017; Akşit, 2019), perceptions of risk and benefit (Choi et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2018), intention to revisit (Yeap et al., 2019; Maknu et al., 2020), and street food experience (Ozcelik & Akova, 2021; Cifci et al., 2022), their numbers are still insufficient. In this context, there is a need to examine street food in the context of tourists' food consumption.

Previous studies used Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) successfully in exploring behavioral intents toward certain food groups (Padgett et al., 2013; Wu, 2014) and street foods (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017; Ukenna et al., 2018; Şahin & Solunoğlu, 2019). Similarly, this study explores the intention of independently traveling tourists to consume

street foods using TPB extended with past experiences and hedonism variables. Specifically, there is a lack of studies and discussions on the reasons for consumption of street foods in the context of utilitarian or hedonic value. In addition, no study was found that investigated the intentions of foreign independent travelers (backpackers, travelers, etc.) towards street food. Independent travel has become a growing segment in the tourism industry with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis (Wen et al., 2021). With the increasing interest in independent travel, there is a need to explain the behavior of independent travelers in particular, rather than examining tourist behavior in general. In this context, this research focuses on independent travelers to explain their intention to consume street food. This study, which is a first in this framework, is considered valuable in filling the literature gap. This exploratory study, mainly focused on independent travelers, was conducted to provide theoretical and practical implications for the marketing of street food, which attracts a lot of attention, as a sustainable gastronomic tourism product. In other words, discovering the factors affecting the intention of independent travelers to consume street food will help this phenomenon to be used as a touristic marketing tool and to develop marketing strategies.

In the following sections, an extended literature on street foods presented first. The concepts of the study explained in detail and the research model developed. Later, methods and analyses introduced, and the findings of the field study were presented and discussed within the literature. The results of the study, theoretical and practical implications, limitations and suggestions for future studies constitute the last section.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Street Foods as General

Viewed from a wider perspective, street foods have been examined by several disciplines. Most of these studies have focused on the hygiene and sanitation practices of vendors within the concept of food hygiene and safety. It has been often found that vendors displayed unhygienic practices such as not washing their hands while preparing these foods (Da Silva et al., 2014), having insufficient knowledge about food safety (Liu et al., 2014), being inadequate in terms of personal hygiene, storing food in improper conditions (Choudhury et al., 2011), and keeping garbage at their working counter (Muyanja et al., 2011). In addition, various microorganisms that may cause potential hazards have been detected in samples taken from street foods (Abdalla et al., 2009; Cho et al., 2011). On the other hand,

according to research conducted on consumer perceptions, consumers have negative attitudes such as not trusting the quality of food, suspecting it to be contaminated (Cardoso et al., 2014), and seeing it as risky for health as a result of unhygienic practices, and thus they avoid consuming such foods (Khongtong et al., 2017). Studies in the field of socio-economics and governance show that street food vendors represent the informal economy, they create an unfair competition environment as they do not pay taxes as a result of working without a license (Bromley, 2000), and they disrupt pedestrian and vehicle traffic, cause waste problems and noise (Martin, 2014). It is also among the findings of the studies that some local governments apply double standards to immigrant vendors and local vendors for such reasons (Basinski, 2014). Vendors suffer from practices such as arrests, intimidation, and the destruction of sales carts/stands (Tinker, 1993) by the police officers or soldiers of local governments. In the literature, it has been reported that despite the problems, consumers consider street foods unclean yet tasty, and they are preferred for reasons such as price, unique tastes, easy accessibility, and social benefit (Hiamey et al., 2013).

Street Foods in Tourism and Gastronomy

Street food has become an important part of the tourist experience. Therefore, the concept has been discussed in different contexts within the disciplines of tourism and gastronomy. For example, Ozcelik and Akova (2021) found that street food experience affected behavioral intentions and that there was a positive correlation between relevant variables. Cifci et al. (2022) shown that street food experience affected destination image, revisiting intention, and word of mouth communication intention. Another study revealed that the quality of street food experience positively affects the destination image and word-of-mouth intention (Lee et al., 2020). In addition, Maknu et al. (2020) found that gastronomy attractiveness and past gastronomic experience have positive effects on Malaysian Muslim tourists' revisit intentions.

The effects of perceived risks and benefits on attitudes and behavioral intentions as regards street food are also discussed. In this context, it has been determined that perceived risks affect the attitude towards street food negatively, but the perceived benefit positively (Choi et al., 2013; Gupta et al., 2018). It is also stated that attitudes affect behavioral intentions (Gupta et al., 2018). Khanna et al. (2022), on the other hand, emphasized that word-of-mouth communication about street food vendors positively affects the attitude and intention to consume. They also found

that there is a significant negative relationship between perceived risk and intention to consume. Mudunkotuwa and Arachchi (2020) revealed that perceived risks negatively affected attitude, but unlike other studies, they found a positive effect between perceived risks and behavioral intentions. The researchers concluded that in this case, despite the risks, tourists can still recommend street food.

Opinions regarding street food, components of attitude, and the relations between attitudes and behavioral intentions have been examined. In his study on determining the attitudes of domestic tourists towards street food, Akşit (2019) found that it consists of six dimensions: food quality, service quality, sense of pleasure, hygiene, monetary value, and satisfaction. The attitude towards street food is positive with the highest average attitude belonging to the service quality, and the lowest belonging to the hygiene factor. Yıldırım and Albayrak (2019) investigated the opinions of foreign tourists visiting Istanbul about street foods and reported concerns about the nutritional value, cleanliness, sellers' clothes, and cleanliness of the sales place. In another study, Jeaheng and Han (2020) mentioned the positive effect of tourists' attitudes toward street food on their intention to continue consuming and to recommend. Additionally, Yeap et al. (2019) reported that the attitude toward street food influences young domestic travelers' intention to revisit Penang through place attachment.

A group of researchers examined street food based on TPB. In this context, Chavarria and Phakdee-auksorn (2017), among the leading researchers, analyzed attitude in six dimensions. The authors argued that affection, satisfaction, and service quality dimensions have significant effects on behavioral intention whereas hygiene, food quality and value for money do not make a significant contribution. They also found that subjective norms and perceived behavioral control (PBC) affected the intention for consuming street food. Ukenna et al (2018) found that attitude, subjective norm and PBC were effective on intentions to patronize street food vendors within the framework of expanded TPB, but past experience did not have any affect. Hakeem and Lee (2018) reported that the attitude toward Korean street food and subjective norms of Muslim visitors affected their buying intentions. Finally, Kargiglioğlu and Aksoy (2020) concluded that attitudes and subjective norms regarding traveling for tasting street food positively affected behavioral intention for destination selection. Within this framework, it is understood that TPB is successfully used on street food. The literature review will be continued in the conceptual framework and hypotheses section that follows.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Independent Travelers

According to Cohen's (1972) tourist typology, independent travelers are wandering and exploratory individuals, who are open to innovation, avoid tourism industry businesses, and do not find ordinary tourist experience intimate enough. They can distance themselves from their own culture, but at the same time preserve their core values, use accommodation and adopt food habits of the place visited, and try to learn the language of local community. On the other hand, unlike tourists who buy package tours, it is seen that independent visitors are defined as visitors who are prone to risk when choosing certain holiday items, have a more flexible schedule as they make their own tour planning without using any intermediary, travel multiple regions and not stick to just one destination; they are also described as individuals who are able to quickly internalize new information, desiring to learn unusual routes and new cultures, and people with low budgets who make their own budgeting decisions for their travel (Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Tsaur et al., 2010; Hyde & Lawson, 2003). In addition, the desire to see and travel to new places, search for exploring new cultures, new information, and adventure, search for something new, developing social interaction and personal development (Andersen et al., 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2004) are among the main motivation sources of independent travelers. As mentioned above, street food is seen as a fun alternative for people with this kind of motivation as it is less expensive, helps save time, is easily accessible, provides social benefits, represents local cuisine, and serves as a bridge in communication with the local people. Moreover, it is observed in the literature that there is a relationship between personality traits and food preferences, and personality affects food choices (Shipman & Durmuş, 2016; Kılıçlar et al., 2018). Street foods considered traditional and readily available with a wide variety at any time of the day are acceptable to independent tourists who are open to experience. Therefore, independent travelers were chosen as the target group in this study.

Theory of Planned Behavior

According to this theory, the main factor determining behavior is the behavioral intention that immediately precedes the behavior (Ajzen, 1985). The three main factors that determine behavioral intention are attitude toward behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Attitude towards behavior represents the positive or negative evaluations

an individual makes for a behavior. Subjective norms express the social pressure that an individual perceives on certain behavior. PBC represents such as time, money, opportunity, resources, skills, knowledge, and cooperation with other people. More generally, the individual's positive or negative thoughts about a behavior, the social pressure he/she perceives and perceived ease or difficulty about it determine one's intentions towards such behavior. Since behavioral intentions represent the individual's willingness to perform certain behavior, it is important to examine and reveal those intentions.

Behavioral Intention. Behavioral intention is defined as the individual's readiness to perform any behavior, as well as the evaluation of motivational factors that can affect it (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, it is a phenomenon that determines how much effort the individual is willing to put into the realization of the behavior. If the individual has a positive attitude towards the behavior, the social environment approves it, and the perceived control power is high, the behavioral intention will also be high. Since behavioral intentions are the immediate antecedents of the behavior, they increase the likelihood of such behavior being performed.

Attitude Towards Behavior. Attitude generally refers to positive or negative evaluations of objects, people or thoughts (Ajzen, 1991). After the individual's self-evaluation, the attitude towards the behavior can be positive or negative, positively or negatively affecting the behavioral intention.

A review of the tourism and gastronomy literature shows that there are studies examining the relationship between attitudes and behavioral intentions from different perspectives. For example, Han et al. (2011) showed that the attitudes of Chinese tourists towards visiting Korea are significant in their behavioral intentions. Similarly, attitudes toward special food groups affect the consumption intentions towards mentioned foods (Wu, 2014; Menozzi et al., 2015; Gakobo & Jere, 2016). For example, Ryu and Han (2010) found that attitude significantly predicts tourists' intention to consume local foods in New Orleans. Moreover, attitude towards consuming street foods affects intention (Choi et al., 2013; Chavarria & Phakdee-aurkson 2017; Şahin & Solunoğlu, 2019) because if individuals have a strong belief that consuming street food will lead to positive results (satisfaction, taste, exploring culture, developing social relations), it can be expected that their desire to consume street food will increase. Considering the current study, attitude of independent travelers towards street food consumption may affect the behavioral intention in question. Accordingly,

the relationship between these two variables is given below as the first hypothesis.

H1: *Attitudes towards street food consumption affect the intention to consume street food.*

Subjective Norms. Subjective norm is a concept that expresses the relationship of a particular behavior with the social environment. Ajzen (1991) defines subjective norm as the perceived social pressure of an individual to perform or not perform a certain behavior. These similar pressures may also apply to the consumption of certain foods. For example, Menozzi et al. (2015) found that subjective norms affect vegetable consumption positively. If the individual receives suggestions from his social circle (people he cares about) that it would be beneficial to consume street food, this may lead him to have a positive attitude toward street food consumption. Previous studies conducted among tourists have shown that subjective norms affect the intention to consume street food (Chavarria & Phakdee-aurkson, 2017; Hakeem & Lee, 2018; Şahin & Solunoğlu, 2019; Kargiglioğlu & Aksoy 2020). Following the current study context, subjective norms may be effective in the intention of consuming street food of independent travelers, resulting in the following hypothesis:

H2: *Subjective norms towards street food consumption affect intention to consume street food.*

Perceived Behavioral Control. Perceived Behavioral Control (PBC) refers to the perceived ease or difficulty in performing a behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The ability of an individual to exhibit any behavior may depend on factors such as time, opportunity, resources, knowledge, and skills. If the presence or absence of these factors is perceived, the individual has PBC. In other words, as the level of personal control increases, the probability of performing the behavior increases as well. Gakobo and Jere (2016) stated that PBC plays an active role in the consumption intention of African ethnic foods, which was also supported by other studies (Chavarria & Phakdee-aurkson, 2017; Ukenna et al., 2018; Şahin & Solunoğlu, 2019). Accordingly, knowing where, under what conditions, and at what prices street food is sold and how to eat it, as well as spare time, will increase the desire to consume such food. Therefore, PBC may be effective in the intention to consume street food of independent travelers, leading to the establishment of the third hypothesis:

H3: *Perceived behavioral control towards street foods consumption affects intention to consume street food.*

Past Experience

Past experiences can be an important reference source for future behavior. Some researchers have argued that individuals' past experiences should be considered to explain better their behavioral intentions (Kim & Chung, 2011). Taking the critical stance, Conner and Armitage (1998) argued that behaviors can be better explained if the past experience variable is added to the TPB. Therefore, researchers in various fields have often included the past experience factor in their research models to explain behavior.

Ye et al. (2017) found a significant relationship between past experience and Chinese consumers' intention to visit local wineries, while Ryu and Jang (2006) found that past experience has a positive effect on tourists' intention to try local cuisine. Jun et al. (2016) examined female restaurant customers' past experience with healthy foods that had less fat and calories and revealed that past experience positively affects their attitudes and intentions towards their next consumption of such food. In addition, Higuchi et al. (2017) showed that past experience affects intention of consuming fish and is an important variable in repetition of behavior. Finally, some research (Lee et al., 2020; Ozcelik & Akova, 2021; Cifci et al., 2022) also reported a positive impact of street food experience on behavioral intentions.

The findings of the above studies show that the past experience factor has an important effect on explaining individuals' behavioral intentions. In particular, this variable was examined in the studies using TPB framework, obtaining positive results and contributing to better explanations of the examined behavior (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kim & Chung, 2011). The positive/negative experiences of individuals who previously consumed street food and their confidence due to obtained information may determine their future street food consumption. Therefore, the intention of independent tourists to consume street food can be influenced by their past experiences, formulized in the fourth hypothesis:

H4: *Past experiences towards street foods consumption affect street food consumption intention.*

Hedonism

Understanding the value that individuals perceive against any phenomenon is important for various branches of science and disciplines, and this concept attracted the attention of researchers in fields such as

psychology, sociology, and marketing. Ryu et al. (2010) conceptualized perceived value as general evaluations based on consumers' perceptions of what they give and get from a product or service. According to Babin et al. (1994), most researchers have focused on the utilitarian value of consumer behavior, which has long been characterized as a rational task. It is accepted that consumers perform consumption behavior by making more cognitive decisions. However, this traditional approach to the consumption decision falls short of fully addressing the consumption value (Babin et al., 1994), ignoring important consumption phenomena such as sensory and emotional pleasures. As a result, a hedonic perspective has emerged for a better understanding of consumer values (Lim, 2014).

There are two types of consumption values: utilitarian and hedonic. While the utilitarian value is related to the purpose of consumption to perform the task and whether this task is fulfilled effectively or not, the hedonic value represents the value related to the perception of pleasure in the consumption process (Doong et al., 2012). More precisely, utilitarian value focuses on the functional and objective characteristics of the product or service (Ünal & Ceylan, 2008). In this case, price, usefulness, efficiency and benefits of the product or service are important. Hedonic value is more subjective and personal than utilitarian value. It is associated with the consumer's desired sensations, such as visual images, fantasies, pleasures, sounds, smells, and touches with certain products or services (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982). Similarly, hedonic value refers to consumers' desire for psychological benefits, including experiential, intangible, multi-affective, and positive states such as happiness (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Hyun et al., 2016). In short, hedonic value is related to the consumer's prioritizing the pursuit of entertainment and pleasure.

Utilitarian and hedonic values are included in some research models to explain behaviors that occur in the context of a particular food group. For example, Kang et al. (2015) stated that hedonic value positively affects restaurant customers' intention to choose healthy foods. On the other hand, Lee and Yun (2015) found that hedonic and utilitarian values significantly both affected the intention to purchase organic food. Anisimova's (2016) study also proved the important role of hedonic values in the intention to purchase organic foods.

Considering the studies that emphasize cheapness, accessibility, and nutrition values as reasons for consuming street food among locals, it is possible to say that street food consumption is shaped around utilitarian values. However, it can be interesting to examine which values affect

consumption preference among non-local people or more specifically, to understand how important hedonic values are for tourists traveling to a new destination. Some tourists consume local foods to learn about the local culture, gain new experiences, and socialize, arousing curiosity and excitement. Since street food can also be perceived as one that can give happiness when consumed, it can be associated with hedonic values. Moreover, the hedonic approach of tourists may also positively affect their attitudes toward street food consumption. In the current study, it is predicted that hedonism (pleasure, discovery, excitement, etc.) plays a moderating role between the attitudes and intentions of independent travelers toward the consumption of local street foods. Finally, the last hypothesis can be proposed as follows.

H5: Hedonism has a moderator role between attitude and intention to consume street food.

Based on the above hypotheses, the research model is created and presented in Figure 1.

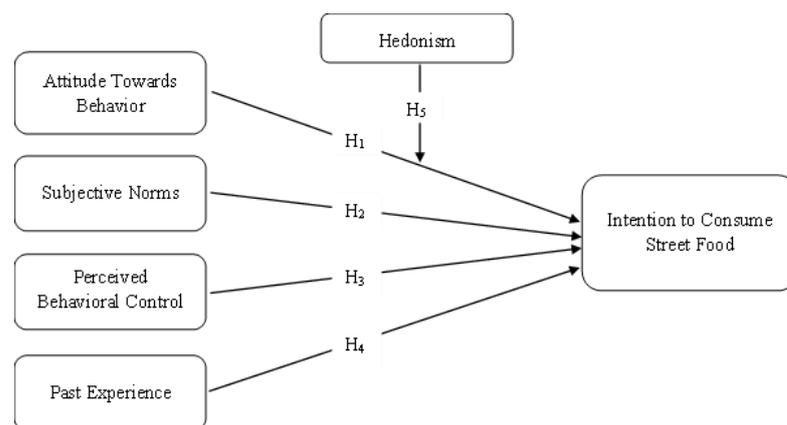


Figure 1. *Research Model*

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative method approach was adopted in the study, which is an approach that allows testing the relationships between variables that can generally be measured with the help of measurement tools and analyzed using statistical processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2014). The cross-sectional study design, on the other hand, is a research design that is used to quantitatively describe the prevalence of a phenomenon, trend, problem, attitude, opinion or topic by taking a section (sample) from the population, and it is the most commonly used research design in social sciences (Kumar, 2011; Creswell, 2016).

Research Instrument

Measurement scales in the current study were adapted by using the relevant literature for the proposed research model. In order to measure attitude as an independent variable, six-item scale proposed by Han et al. (2011) was used. For measuring the other two independent variables, subjective norm and PBC the three-item scales were taken from Wu's (2014) study. For measuring past experience as an independent variable, the six-item scale was taken from Higuchi et al.'s (2017) study, while for hedonism seven-item scale was taken from Anisimova (2016). The dependent variable, behavioral intention, was measured through five-item scale by Gakobo and Jere (2016). Participants were asked to answer a total of 30 questionnaire statements regarding these six scales with a 5-point Likert-type rating (1=I strongly disagree and 5=I strongly agree). The questionnaire forms were prepared in English only, considering the nationalities of the participants would be very diverse and taking the scales' original language into account.

Pilot study was conducted on a small group of 51 foreign independent travelers to check the suitability of the measurement tool and Cronbach Alpha values for six different scales were calculated as follows: attitude was 0.803, subjective norm was 0.844, PBC was 0.780, intention as 0.865, past experience as 0.855, and hedonism as 0.807. Regarding construct validity, factor analysis determined that each scale was gathered under one factor. Based on these results, it may be concluded that the reliability and validity of the scales are ensured. After pilot study and considering the expert opinions, a few minor changes were made to the questionnaire form.

Research Area, Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected in Istanbul. Istanbul is among the top ten cities in the world in terms of diversity of street food culture and street food consumption (CNN Travel, 2018; Ozcelik & Akova, 2021). However, in this study, the intention to consume street food in general, not street food specific to Istanbul, was examined. Istanbul offers not only street food, but also museums, historical sites, ancient structures, unique Bosphorus views and world-famous places of worship, all of which are highly attractive in terms of the main motivations of independent travelers. Being an attractive cultural tourism and important transfer center with many international flight connections are only some reasons for selecting Istanbul for data collection. Moreover, Istanbul is considered as the first stop for those independent visitors who wish to visit more places throughout Turkey on a low budget. Harman et al. (2013) stated that backpackers stay in Turkey

for 11,5 days and spend 6 days in Istanbul. Thus, it is possible to conclude that the duration of independent travel in Istanbul is more than half of the total duration of a traveler's stay in Turkey. In addition, Istanbul was evaluated as the most suitable environment to reach the targeted independent travelers, as it hosted more tourists than other provinces in the season in which the data were collected.

According to the scope of the current study, foreign independent travelers who came to Istanbul were targeted. Convenience and purposeful sampling techniques were used for sampling. These techniques were preferred in order to increase the participation rate and to reach the participants easily, and also because they take into account some criteria in order for the participants to be included in the sample. In other words, it is aimed to choose individuals who do not travel with any tour guide, are younger and prefer to travel more individually, as they reflect the characteristics of the sample. The lack of statistics for the research population creates an obstacle to calculate the sample exactly. However, a certain number of samples can be targeted for the statistical approaches to be applied. PLS-SEM was used for model testing in this study. PLS offers the opportunity to work with smaller sample sizes than variance-based SEMs (Hair et al., 2017). Accordingly, an approach of 5 or 10 times the number of items can be adopted for the sample size (Hair et al., 2017).

The questionnaires were distributed around designated UNESCO sites, the Blue Mosque, Hagia Sophia and Topkapi Palace museums in March and April 2018, between 10:00-18:00. In total, 541 questionnaires were distributed. 18 questionnaires were eliminated due to missing data, resulting in 523 valid questionnaires being included in the analyses. In this case, the requirement of 10 times the number of items, which was 30, was met (Hair et al., 2017) and it was decided that the collected data were adequate for the sample size.

Data Analysis

Demographic characteristics of the participants, frequency and percentage distributions were examined using the SPSS 23 program. On the other hand, research was modelled and tests for hypotheses were conducted using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 3 program. CFA is an analysis used to test whether a previously used scale fits with the original structure and the degree of fit during current use (Thompson, 2004). SEM is a statistical approach to verifying structural theories and

testing and predicting causal relationships (Hoyle, 1995; Lee, 2007). Assumptions, validity, and reliability analyzes for PLS-SEM are given in the findings section. In addition, a checklist prepared on the use of PLS-SEM in the field of gastronomy and tourism (Aybek & Karakaş, 2022) and the approach presented by Hair et al. (2017) were used as guidelines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participants' Demographic Characteristics

When Table 1 is examined, it can be seen that majority of participants are single individuals at 18-30 years of age whose monthly income is below \$2000. This is similar to the findings of earlier studies (Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Tsaur et al., 2010; Harman et al., 2013), showing that independent travelers are mostly young people with low budgets. A vast majority of the participants have undergraduate and graduate degrees. In addition, most of them are private sector employees and students.

Table 1. *Participants' Demographic Characteristics*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	<i>Male</i>	272	52
	<i>Female</i>	251	48
	Total	523	100
<i>Age</i>	<i>18-24</i>	179	34,2
	<i>25-30</i>	219	41,9
	<i>31-36</i>	84	16,1
	<i>37-42</i>	18	3,4
	<i>43 and over</i>	23	4,4
	Total	523	100
<i>Profession</i>	<i>Private Sector Employee</i>	198	37,9
	<i>Public Officer</i>	44	8,4
	<i>Student</i>	176	33,7
	<i>Retired</i>	5	1
	<i>Unemployed</i>	11	2,1
	<i>Other</i>	89	17
Total	523	100	
<i>Marital Status</i>	<i>Married</i>	111	21,2
	<i>Single</i>	412	78,8
	Total	523	100
<i>Education Level</i>	<i>Primary School</i>	2	0,4
	<i>High School</i>	54	10,3
	<i>College</i>	28	5,4
	<i>Bachelor</i>	223	42,6
	<i>Master</i>	195	37,3
	<i>PhD</i>	21	4
Total	523	100	
<i>Average Monthly Income (\$)</i>	<i>1000 and over</i>	96	38,4
	<i>1001-2000</i>	60	24
	<i>2001-3000</i>	46	18,4
	<i>3001-4000</i>	22	8,8
	<i>4001-5000</i>	10	4
	<i>5000 and over</i>	16	6,4
Total	250	100	

A total of 67 different nationalities have been identified, and the highest distribution of nationalities is as follows: British, German, Spanish, French, American, and Chinese (Table 2). It is understood that the majority of them are individuals from the European region. Demographic findings were compared with the findings of Harman et al.'s (2013) study, and it was found that there were small differences in the top five rankings of frequencies according to nationalities. The reason for this difference may be that the research data were collected at different times, as Harman et al. (2013) collected the research data in August, and in this study, the data were collected in March and April. When other demographic characteristics are examined, the findings of the two studies mostly overlap.

Table 2. *Participants' Nationalities*

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>English</i>	31	5,9	<i>Chinese</i>	20	3,8	<i>Serbian</i>	14	2,7
<i>German</i>	30	5,7	<i>Russian</i>	19	3,6	<i>Ukrainian</i>	14	2,7
<i>Spanish</i>	27	5,2	<i>Iranian</i>	18	3,4	<i>Austrian</i>	13	2,5
<i>French</i>	24	4,6	<i>Indian</i>	15	2,9	<i>Belgium</i>	13	2,5
<i>American</i>	23	4,4	<i>Dutch</i>	15	2,9	<i>Romanian</i>	12	2,3
						<i>Others</i>	187	54,9
						<i>Total</i>	475	100

Reliability and Validity

According to Aybek and Karakaş (2022), few studies on tourism and gastronomy mention nomological validity, which refers to the foundation and proposition of conceptual models and relations between variables for the relevant literature (Hagger et al., 2017). Research model and hypotheses were developed following a comprehensive literature review as a result of which nomological validity was ensured. Composite reliability values were used to determine reliability. Table 3 shows that composite reliability values receive scores between 0.721 (lowest) and 0.901 (highest), which means that they are higher than 0.7 (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). AVE values calculated for convergent validity indicate that most structures have values higher than the recommended 0.50 (Hair et al., 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2019). However, hedonism (0.470) and attitude (0.467) structures remained slightly below the recommended value. Item number 2 was removed from the structure as the attitude structure obtained a lower score (Bagozzi et al., 1991; Hair et al., 2011). In addition, the satisfactory composite reliability and standardized factor loading values and the fact that these two constructs were just below the recommended value showed that they were acceptable. In this context, it is seen that the structures in the model are sufficient in terms of convergent validity.

Table 3. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	Items	Loadings	VIF	t
Attitude Towards Behavior	.714	.721	.467	Attitude1	.754	1.434	15.190
				Attitude3	.677	1.293	12.326
				Attitude4	.681	1.348	12.123
				Attitude5	.609	1.380	13.701
				Attitude6	.711	1.219	10.992
				Subjective Norms	.759	.759	.675
Subjective Norms	.759	.759	.675	SubjectiveNorm2	.801	1.464	15.377
				SubjectiveNorm3	.844	1.673	16.900
				Perceived Behavioral Control	.717	.730	.639
Perceived Behavioral Control	.717	.730	.639	BehaviorControl2	.851	1.576	13.349
				BehaviorControl3	.731	1.312	9.108
				Past Experience	.817	.858	.517
Past Experience	.817	.858	.517	Experience2	.699	2.407	8.005
				Experience3	.619	2.085	5.466
				Experience4	.810	1.953	12.103
				Experience5	.845	2.331	14.888
				Experience6	.638	1.418	7.643
				Hedonism	.806	.828	.470
Hedonism	.806	.828	.470	Hedonism2	.498	1.227	7.962
				Hedonism3	.746	1.709	17.168
				Hedonism4	.717	1.606	14.852
				Hedonism5	.752	1.808	17.441
				Hedonism6	.792	1.896	20.119
				Hedonism7	.532	1.215	10.265
				Intention to Consume Street Food	.900	.901	.714
Intention to Consume Street Food	.900	.901	.714	Intention2	.865	2.604	36.971
				Intention3	.837	2.266	32.448
				Intention4	.863	2.623	36.149
				Intention5	.821	2.286	34.766

Table 4 shows the HTMT values for discriminant validity. When HTMT coefficients are considered, a value over 0.90 indicates that discriminant validity could not be reached (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017). In Table 4, the lowest HTMT value is seen as 0.228 (between PBC and Subjective Norms), whereas the highest value is found as 0.823 (between Intention to Consume Street Food and Hedonism). In addition, a tolerance value lower than 0.20 and a VIF value higher than 5 implies potential collinearity issues (Hair et al., 2011, 2017). Table 3 shows that there is no collinearity problem.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity

	HTMT				
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Attitude Towards Behavior					
2. Hedonism	0,739				
3. Intention to Consume Street Food	0,764	0,823			
4. Past Experience	0,468	0,560	0,497		
5. Perceived Behavioral Control	0,367	0,343	0,476	0,265	
6. Subjective Norms	0,484	0,533	0,570	0,376	0,228

Model Fit

It is recommended to calculate model fit indices for latent variables before testing the research model. Within this framework, R^2 and AVE scores are used for goodness of fit (GoF) index suggested by Tenenhaus et al. (2004). As can be seen in Table 5, model fit index was calculated as 0.59 (> 0.36), which is evaluated as a very good fit (Tenenhaus et al., 2004).

Table 5. *Goodness-of-Fit index*

	AVE	R ²
Attitude	0,467	N.A.
Subjective Norms	0,675	N.A.
Perceived Behavioral Control	0,639	N.A.
Past Experience	0,517	N.A.
Hedonism	0,470	N.A.
Intention to Consume Street Food	0,714	0,63
Mean	0,580333333	0,63
Goodness-of-Fit = $\sqrt{\text{Mean}(R^2) \times \text{Mean}(AVE)}$	0,599838867	

Model and Hypotheses Testing

The model was created at SmartPLS using structural equation modeling. Figure 2 shows that attitude towards street food, PBC, subjective norms and past experience accounted for 63% of intention to consume street food. Table 6, on the other hand, shows that attitude towards street food ($\beta = 0.231$; $t = 6.675$), PBC ($\beta = 0.177$; $t = 5.377$), subjective norm ($\beta = 0.156$; $t = 4.684$) and past experiences ($\beta = 0.080$; $t = 2.233$) directly affect the intention for consuming street food. Attitude has stronger impact on intention ($f^2 = 0,624$) followed by subjective norm, PBC, and past experience. In addition, there is a negative and statistically significant relationship towards the moderating impact of hedonism between attitude and intention ($\beta = -0.059$; $t = 2.521$). In this direction, the first four hypotheses were accepted but the fifth hypothesis was rejected for having a negative impact although it was statistically significant.

Previous research found that attitudes towards certain food groups affected consuming intentions (Ryu & Han, 2010; Wu, 2014; Menozzi et al., 2015; Gakobo & Jere, 2016) and that attitude towards street food, in particular, affected behavioral intentions such as recommending, revisiting (Yeap et al., 2019; Jeaheng & Han, 2020), repurchasing, and mouth-of-word advertising. This study determined that attitude towards street food affected intention and had the highest impact among the tested independent variables. This finding is similar to the attitude and intention relationships that are frequently repeated in the literature. In this context, it

is once again revealed that attitudes are an important factor in consuming street food. It is also consistent with the findings of studies showing that subjective norms (Menozzi et al., 2015) and PBC (Gakobo & Jere, 2016) significantly affect intention to consume food.

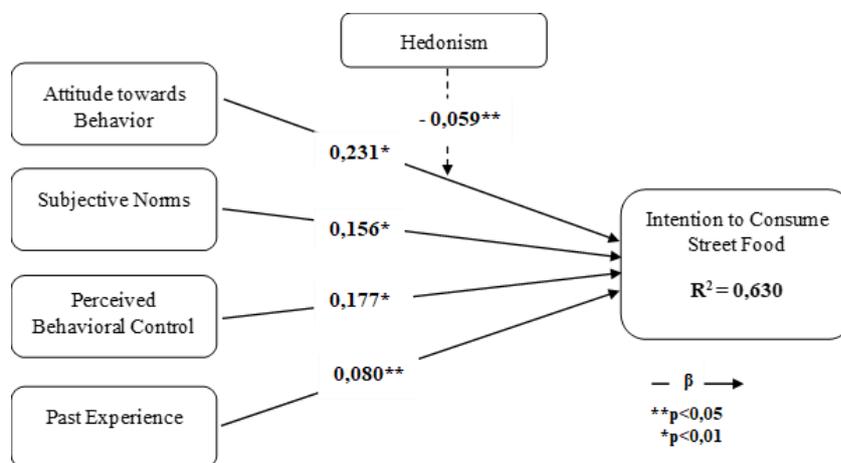


Figure 2. Model Testing

Table 6. Model and Hypotheses Testing

H	Path	Std. $\hat{\alpha}$	Std. Er.	t value	Decision	f^2	Confidence Int.	
							2.5%	97.5%
H ₁	ATT \longrightarrow ICSF	0.231	0.035	6.675*	Supported	0,624	0.160	0.297
H ₃	PBC \longrightarrow ICSF	0.177	0.033	5.377*	Supported	0,384	0.112	0.240
H ₂	SN \longrightarrow ICSF	0.156	0.034	4.684*	Supported	0,408	0.091	0.224
H ₄	PE \longrightarrow ICSF	0.080	0.035	2.233**	Supported	0,362	0.008	0.146
H ₅	HE x ATT \longrightarrow ICSF	-0.059	0.023	2.521**	Not Supported	0,624	-0.099	-0.008

ATT: Attitude; SN: Subjective Norms; PBC: Perceived Behavioral Control; PE: Past Experience; HE: Hedonism; ICSF: Intention to Consume Street Food
 * $p < .01$ ($t > 2.58$) ** $p < .05$ ($t > 1.96$)
 R^2 (Intention to Consume Street Food = 0.630)
 f^2 : 0.35 = high; 0.15 = medium; 0.02 = low

This study supported the findings of previous studies which examined street food within the framework of TPB and indicated that all relevant variables affected behavioral intentions positively (Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017; Ukenna et al., 2018; Şahin & Solunoğlu, 2019), and that attitude and PBC were found effective (Hakeem & Lee, 2018; Kargiglioğlu & Aksoy, 2020). Therefore, the fact that TPB is an important theory explaining behavioral intentions toward street food is also supported by this study.

Similar to the previous studies (Conner & Armitage, 1998; Huang & Hsu, 2009; Kim & Chung, 2011), past experience was integrated to the model in this study to contribute to the theory and increase its explanatory power, and it was seen that it affected intention. Previous research (Lee et

al., 2020; Maknu et al., 2020; Ozcelik & Akova, 2021; Cifci et al., 2022; Rewtrakunphaiboon & Sawangdee, 2022) reported that experiences positively affected behavioral intentions. This study found a similar impact of past experience on behavioral intentions. However, it disagrees with Ukenna et al. (2018) who could not find support for the effect of past experiences on behavioral intentions. The difference can be attributed to the respective samples, contexts, or cultural dissimilarities of the studies.

Some researchers have considered hedonic value as an independent variable in the intention to consume certain food groups (organic foods, healthy foods) and have found that it affects consumption intentions positively (Kang et al., 2015; Lee & Yun, 2015; Anisimova, 2016). However, in this study hedonism has a negative effect on the relationship between attitude and intention. This result disagrees with the findings of previous studies. The rejection of hypothesis 5 can be attributed to the behavior of the independent travelers under consideration as independent travelers act with main motivations such as seeing several places in a short time with a low budget and desiring to learn new cultures and interact socially (Murphy & Pearce, 1995; Hyde & Lawson, 2003; Tsaur et al., 2010). On the other hand, street foods are consumed mostly because of their low cost, easy accessibility and understanding of fast consumption and sociality (Privitera, 2012; Choi et al., 2013; Hiamey et al., 2013). Therefore, it is believed that this hypothesis was rejected because independent travelers consume street food with a utilitarian approach rather than for hedonic reasons (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1982; Hyun et al., 2016).

CONCLUSION

This study explored the independent travelers' intention to consume street food through the attitude, perceived behavioral control and subjective norms included in the TPB expanded with experience and hedonism variables. Findings of the current study showed that the most important variables affecting the intention of independent travelers to consume street food are attitude, subjective norm, PBC, and past experience, respectively. On the other hand, hedonism plays a negative role between attitude and intention. In this context, according to the research findings, it becomes evident that attitude towards street food is the most important factor in consuming intention. Time, money, resources and information for the consumption in question, the opinions of the people who are important to the traveler and information brought by their previous experiences with street food are significantly effective. At the same time, it has been found

that street food is consumed with a utilitarian rather than a hedonistic approach.

Findings obtained from the study show that TPB can still provide valid and useful results in understanding the behavioral intentions for street food. In addition, integrating past experiences into the model increased its explanatory power, which is a novel finding. It reveals that past experience variable, which is recommended in the literature, can be analyzed in similar studies. On the other hand, this is the first study that used hedonism in street food research. However, rejection of the hypothesis suggests that utilitarian value can also be added to research models in the context of street food.

Findings of this study implicate important practical aspects. In particular, positive attitude towards street food will stimulate more desire for consumption. Various problems are indicated including potential risks related to street food (Abdalla et al., 2009; Cho et al., 2011), unhygienic practices by vendors (Choudhury et al., 2011; Muyanjanja et al., 2011; Da Silva et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2014), high levels of risk perception (Choi et al., 2013; Cardoso et al., 2014; Gupta et al., 2018; Mudunkotuwa & Arachchi, 2020; Khanna et al., 2022) and governance issues (Tinker, 1993; Bromley, 2000; Basinski, 2014; Da Silva et al., 2014). It is clear that findings such as hygienic problems can lead to negative attitudes regarding street food (Akşit, 2019; Yıldırım & Albayrak, 2019). In this context, problems can be solved through preventive measures such as educating street food vendors on hygiene and sanitation, constructing infrastructure appropriate for the vendors instead of developing policing measures by local governments, controlling all relevant activities, and preparing legal structure. In this case, attitudes towards street food can be improved in more positive direction. With the increase in trust in street food, the approval of people (spouse, mother, father, friends, etc.) who create subjective norms can be perceived at a higher level. In addition, inclusion of information about street foods in the sources used in the marketing of touristic products can make it easier for the tourists to consume these foods, as they will have certain preliminary knowledge about them. Including street food vendors in international fairs and organizations can be beneficial in terms of promoting street foods. Developing projects that increase the quality of street foods by public institutions make it possible to evaluate street foods within the scope of gastronomy tourism. Furthermore, utilitarian approaches are more popular than hedonic values in interpreting the consumption of street food; thus, if street foods maintain their status of being easily accessible and inexpensive without being adjusted for tourists, more positive results can be achieved.

In other words, applications that lead to a change in production and consumption of street food can generate negative effects. This study and previous research have shown that past experiences affect next behaviors. Contrary to the problems mentioned so far, in Portland, USA (Newman & Burnett, 2013), street food is a special group in diversifying and marketing tourism activities as an important gastronomic element. This can be used as a good example, provided that safe and enjoyable consumption is coordinated with the relevant managers and practitioners. Enabling consumers to have positive experiences with street food with such exemplary practices may lead to positive effects such as starting to consume street food and recommending it again.

Limitations and Future Research

Due to time-related and economic constraints, only the independent travelers who visited Istanbul in March and April were included in the sample. Research can be conducted in different regions during busier tourism seasons to improve the generalizability of results. Data collection tool was prepared in English language, as a result of which only those who spoke English could participate in the study. Further research can use scales in different languages to improve sample diversity. In addition, it was assumed that the participants had past experiences regarding street food. Further studies can add some items to the scales to ensure the participants have experienced street food. To be sure about past experiences, areas where street food is being sold or organizations for street food (fairs, festivals, etc.) can be chosen. Further research can take hedonism as an independent variable, integrate it into utilitarian model and thus reach more statistically significant results.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study is conducted in the scope of Master's Thesis defended at Akdeniz University Social Sciences Institute Tourism Management Department.

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