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Monitoring changes in food neophobia level and attitude towards street food of tourists with the moderating effects of different sensory attributes

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the relationship between attitudes towards street food and food neophobia among the tourists was examined with two-way hypotheses. In this relationship, the moderating effect of the sensory attributes (texture, taste, smell, appearance, stickiness, hardness/softness, chewiness) on the attitude towards street food and food neophobia level of 650 tourists visiting Türkiye was determined. As food neophobia level increased, the positive attitude towards street food decreased. In the individual evaluation of the moderating effects, it was found that taste, smell, appearance, and hardness/softness improved attitudes towards street food even in the presence of food neophobia. The negative attitude towards street food caused by neophobia turned positive with the influence of these characteristics. Street foods with high acceptable texture and stickiness scores reduced the level of food neophobia. Strikingly, the neophobes who have a positive attitude towards street foods despite low-scored sensory characteristics may be neophiles towards some specific street foods.

Keywords: Neophobic, Neophile, Sensory, Experience, Street food

Introduction

Street foods are ready-to-eat products that bear significant traces of the food culture of the countries. These products are in high demand because they are low-priced, can be prepared quickly, and are easily accessible. However, street food does not seem safe to many people due to the possibility of being unhygienic, using poor-quality products, not meeting sensory expectations, and sometimes not being familiar (Isanovic et al., 2023; Torres Chavarria & Phakdee-auksorn, 2017). Moreover, even one of these factors can negatively affect the attitude towards street food and cause consumers to develop neophobia towards these foods (Siddiqui et al., 2022).

Food neophobia is considered the avoidance or reluctance to eat new and unfamiliar foods (Dovey et al., 2008). Internal and external factors are effective in the development of food neophobia. Internal factors include eating disorders, the individual's own food-related traumas, bad experiences, upbringing style, cultural norms, and the family's attitude towards unfamiliar foods (Białek-Dratwa et al., 2024). External factors are generally related to food characteristics (Coulthard et al., 2022).

Food characteristics are primarily perceived through sensory evaluation by consumers. Sensory experiences with food can arouse reactions such as appetite and satisfaction in the individual. Therefore, the consumer's attitude towards food and tendency to consume it are related to the acceptability of sensory properties (Elkins & Zickgraf, 2018; Prescott et al., 2022). If the sensory properties are unacceptable, the consumer may refuse to try the food and develop neophobia towards that food (Prescott et al., 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2022). When this information was interpreted for this study, it can be concluded that sensory characteristics and their potential to create neophobia affect the attitude towards street food. In addition, it is also worth considering which sensory attributes are significant and whether they can turn the negative effect of neophobia into a positive direction on individuals' attitudes towards street food. Determining these sensory attributes that can both reduce the level of neophobia and change the attitude towards street food positively is important not only for street food, but also for designing new and local recipes to be prepared for foreign guests. It would be useful to investigate the moderating effects of sensory properties to prevent tourists' positive attitudes towards these foods, or the hedonic eating experience for everyone, from turning negative.

From a theoretical background point of view, Predictive Processing Theory (Friston, 2005) and Approach–Avoidance Conflict Theory (Lewin, 2013) might explain the fundamentals of the investigation. Predictive Processing Theory explains that the brain determines whether or not to sensorially test a given situation based on past experiences and makes its choice according to expectations. Used to explain findings in cognitive science, neuroscience, psychology, and philosophy, this theory may also explain the mechanism of neophobia (food). On the other hand, the Approach–Avoidance Conflict Theory helps explain the tendency of a neophobic individual to be a neophile. According to the theory, the likelihood of a desirable/pleasant situation occurring can lead to ignoring negative/unpleasant situations, thus explaining the dilemma in these cases. The two theories together can be related to the findings of this study as follows: food neophobia increases perceived uncertainty toward unfamiliar foods. Positive sensory properties reduce uncertainty by providing familiar and rewarding sensory cues. Reduced uncertainty shifts the approach–avoidance balance toward approach behavior, resulting in increased acceptance of novel foods even among highly neophobic consumers.

In the literature, the effect of food neophobia on street food consumption is an issue that has been sufficiently highlighted in the literature (Cifci et al., 2024; Prescott et al., 2022; Siddiqui et al., 2022). Findings suggest that emotional responses play a central role in adult food neophobia. Coulthard et al. (2022) proposed the Sensory–Emotional–Association (SEA) model based on two adult studies and reported that food neophobia was strongly associated with emotional variables, particularly food-related anxiety and negative affective reactions toward unfamiliar foods. Their findings indicate that adults do not reject novel foods solely because of sensory uncertainty; rather, emotional evaluations substantially influence the decision to taste or avoid unfamiliar foods. Research focusing on sensory perception has shown that food neophobia is linked to heightened responsiveness to sensory characteristics of foods. Prescott et al. (2022) reported that highly neophobic adults exhibited stronger reactions to sensory properties such as taste, odor, and texture, while simultaneously displaying lower overall engagement with food-related experiences. The authors argued that food neophobia may reflect a broader pattern of reduced interest in food exploration combined with increased sensitivity to sensory information.

Several studies have highlighted the role of food neophobia as a barrier to food innovation and sustainability transitions. Rabadán and Bernabéu (2021) found that food neophobia significantly limits consumer acceptance of novel food products, alternative proteins, and innovative food-production technologies. High-neophobic adults are consistently less willing to try

foods perceived as unfamiliar, technologically advanced, or culturally distant. As can be seen, many studies have been conducted on food neophobia; however, the relationship between them has not been considered bidirectionally, and the moderating effect of each sensory attribute has not been determined. In this study, the changes in neophobia levels and approaches to street food as a result of their interaction with each other were examined, and the moderating effects of sensory attributes were measured holistically and individually in this change. For this purpose, the first research question of the study is "To what extent does food neophobia affect attitudes towards street food, considering the sensory properties of food?" The second research question is "To what extent does the attitude towards street food affect the change in the food neophobia level of an individual, considering the sensory properties of food?" Finally, the moderating effect of each sensory attribute of foods on the relationship between food neophobia and attitude towards street food was also examined.

Accordingly, the hypotheses of the study were listed below and illustrated in Figure 1:

H_1: Food neophobia negatively affects attitude towards street food.

H_2: Food neophobia affects attitude towards street food with a moderating effect of sensory attributes.

H_3: Street food changes the level of food neophobia.

H_4: Street food affects food neophobia level with a moderating effect of sensory attributes.

Materials and Methods

Material

The survey comprised 9 sociodemographic questions, 10 neophobia items, 7 basic sensory attributes of new food items, and 20 items for attitude towards street food [consisting of 4 dimensions: Affection (3 items), hygiene (4 items), food quality (7 items), service quality (6 items)]. The food neophobia scale (FN) constructed by Pliner & Hobden was used to determine the food neophobia level of the participants. To create the items of sensory attributes (SA), textural properties determined by Szczesniak (2002) were taken into consideration. Attitudes towards street food (SF) were measured using the (Torres Chavarria & Phakdee-Auksorn, 2017) scale adapted to Turkish people by (Solunoğlu, 2018).

Methods

All procedures were conducted according to the World Medical Association's Declaration of Helsinki. This study has been ethically approved. The study was conducted with 667 participants from foreign guests who came to the Aegean, Mediterranean, and Black Sea regions of Türkiye for touristic purposes in 2023-2024. This study was conducted on foreign adults staying in accommodations (hotels, pensions, and other guesthouses) in these regions. It was carried out on a voluntary basis during check-out. Participants were informed about the content of the study, and after obtaining their voluntary consent, the survey was administered. The convenience sampling method was used to collect data. Inclusion criteria were that they were foreigners and adults, while exclusion criteria were that they completed the questionnaire incompletely. First, following the same procedure as for collecting the main data, a pilot study was conducted with 50 volunteers for 3 scales to check the suitability of the survey statements and their comprehensibility. The pilot study responses were not processed as research data. Then, the validity and reliability of all subdimensions were tested using the main data. The overall Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was found to be 0.932, and the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.919. Since these values were higher than 0.8 (Hair et al., 2013), the actual data started to be collected. After the actual data were collected, the data of 17 participants who responded inconsistently to the reverse-coded items and scored incompletely were excluded from the study. The remaining responses were checked to determine whether the data were normally distributed. It was confirmed that the data had a normal distribution, with skewness and kurtosis values being between -2 and +2, as suggested by George & Mallery (2019). Then, the data were checked for multicollinearity. Accordingly, VIF values are expected to be less than 4, and correlation coefficients are expected to be less than 0.8 (Hair et al., 2013). All the results found to be consistent with these values, and the correlation matrix, were presented in Table 4. Then, exploratory factor analysis was carried out with the "maximum likelihood" extraction method. For confirmatory factor analysis, path analysis was performed using the AMOS structural equation modeling software (shown in Supplementary Material); then the hypotheses were tested, and the results were reported in Table 5.

Statistical Analyses

SPSS 23 software (IBM Corp., New York, USA) was utilized to classify the demographics and to conduct validity (exploratory factor analysis) and reliability (Cronbach's alpha) tests of the scales. Moderator effects and their levels were determined with the SPSS PROCESS v4.2 plug-in. Confirmatory factor analysis and hypothesis tests were performed with AMOS 24 software (IBM Corp., New York, USA), and the hypothesis results were checked with SPSS 23 software.

Results and Discussion

The demographic characteristics were listed in Table 1. Accordingly, most of the participants were male, between the ages of 31 and 40, from Central Anatolia, married, Muslim, undergraduate, private company employees, and earning $980 or less. Table 2 showed that the standardized factor loadings did not exceed 0.6, and all the AVE values were found to be higher than 0.5, and the CRs were higher than 0.70, as suggested by Hair et al. (2013).

Table 1. Demographics of the participants

Demographics	n	%
Gender		
Male	340	52.3
Female	310	47.7
Age		
≤20	120	18.5
21-30	137	21.1
31-40	145	22.3
41-50	138	21.2
≥51	110	16.9
Religion		
Islam	268	41.2
Christian	211	32.5
Jewish	157	24.1
Other or no religion	14	2.2
Marital status		
Single	253	38.9
Married	397	61.1
Level of education		
High school	154	23.7
Undergraduate	441	67.8
Graduate	55	8.5
Occupation		
Private company employee	214	32.9
Government employee	187	28.8
Freelance	215	33.1
Other (retired/unemployed/student)	34	5.2
Monthly income		
≤$490	225	34.6
$491-$980	231	35.5
$981-$1473	144	22.2
≥$1474	50	7.7

CMIN/DF ($\chi 2$/df) would normally be expected to be less than 2 (Satorra & Bentler, 1994). However, it is possible that this value will increase as the number of samples increases. Similarly, RMSEA, which shows the covariance and variance fit level, tends to decrease as the number of samples increases. The results in Table 3 show that RMSEA is ideal (0.05) and CMIN/DF is slightly higher than the lower limit. In addition, the CFI, which compares the covariance matrix predicted by the model with the covariance matrix of the null hypothesis model, was found to be close to the ideal value of 0.95 (0.94) and within the acceptable range (Satorra & Bentler, 1994). Thus, it can be concluded that there is a low correlation ($r<0.8$) between the variables, in line with Hair et al. (2013). It is seen in the correlation matrix in Table 4 that the correlation is low, as expected in regression analysis, and is supported by the absence of multicollinearity among the variables. NFI, which is an indicator of the improvement in the fit of the hypothesized model and the current hypothesis, was within the acceptable range (Table 3). The fact that NFI, which is an alternative to CFI, is acceptable also shows that the study was conducted with a sufficient sample size, as reported by Bentler (1990). TLI, which is an indicator of NFI based on the effect of the number of observed variables, was also found to be compatible, revealing that the determined independent variables were appropriate. The RFI is within acceptable limits. This shows that the deviations resulting from increasing the number of variables and samples in this model are insignificant. The SRMR, which represents the standardized difference between the predicted and observed correlations, is expected to be less than 0.08. The fact that all these values are acceptable indicates that the model captures the data well (Bentler, 1990).

As shown in Table 5, all hypotheses of the study were supported. For the first research question, the effect of food neophobia on the attitude towards street food and the contribution of sensory attributes to this effect were examined, and this relationship was found to be positive ($\beta=0.612$) at the $p<0.01$ level. All the t-values were accepted because they were greater than +2 or less than -2 at the level of $p<0.05$ (Field, 2013). Figure 2 shows the prominent sensory attributes that determine the attitude towards street food in the presence of food neophobia. While the taste, smell, appearance, and hardness/softness of foods had a significant moderating effect on changing attitudes towards street food, the effects of texture, stickiness, and chewiness characteristics were not found to be significant ($p>0.05$). In addition, taste ($\beta=0.166$), smell ($\beta=0.165$), appearance ($\beta=0.270$), and hardness/softness ($\beta=0.174$) positively influence individuals' attitudes towards street food ($p<0.05$). From the graphs in Figure 2, the high level of each of these four characteristics of the food improved the individual's attitude towards street food. Furthermore, even at the moderate scoring level compared to smell and hardness/softness, taste and appearance ($p<0.01$) were found to significantly and positively alter attitudes towards these foods.

Table 2. Validity and reliability values of scales and items

Scales and items	Factor loading	Cronbach's α	AVE	CR	Variance explained (%)
Sensory attributes of foods (SA)	***0.935***	***0.949***	***0.801***	***0.966***	***25.909***
SA1. Chewiness is important. I consume a new food when its chewiness is acceptable	0.982				
SA2. Hardness/softness is important. I consume a new food when its hardness/softness is acceptable	0.976				
SA3. Taste is important. I consume a new food when its taste is acceptable	0.933				
SA4. Appearance is important. I consume a new food when its appearance is acceptable	0.912				
SA5. Texture is important. I consume a new food when its texture is acceptable	0.876				
SA6. Stickiness is important. I consume a new food when its stickiness is acceptable	0.798				
SA7. Smell is important. I consume a new food when its smell is acceptable	0.766				
Food neophobia (FN)	***0.944***	***0.944***	***0.756***	***0.969***	***16.816***
FN1. I like to try new and different foods (R)	0.965				
FN2. I am reluctant to try new and different foods	0.950				
FN3. I think new and different foods will make me sick	0.939				
FN4. I am very picky when trying new and different foods	0.921				
FN5. I am very meticulous in choosing food.	0.857				
FN6. I don't spare food; I consume almost every food (R)	0.824				
FN7. I always try new and different foods (R)	0.821				
FN8. Trying new foods is risky	0.812				
FN9. I hesitate to consume foods whose ingredients I do not know	0.800				
FN10. I hesitate to try different foods because I think I will starve	0.779				
Attitude towards street food (SF)	***0.916***	***0.922***	***0.659***	***0.975***	***16.303***
Food quality	***0.900***	***0.925***	***0.651***	***0.928***	***6.753***
FQ1. Street vendors use fresh ingredients	0.974				
FQ2. Street food is natural and free of additives	0.829				
FQ3. The smell of street food is appealing	0.791				
FQ4. It is easy for me to eat street food	0.769				
FQ5. Street food is healthy and nutritious	0.764				
FQ6. Street food is visually attractive	0.754				
FQ7. Street food is served in proper condition in terms of food safety	0.744				
Affection	***0.839***	***0.901***	***0.650***	***0.848***	***3.393***
A1. Street food makes me feel good	0.861				
A2. Thinking about street food makes me happy	0.812				
A3. I feel trying street food is a fun experience	0.743				
Service quality	***0.899***	***0.914***	***0.652***	***0.917***	***3.893***
SQ1. Street food represents an authentic local culture	0.941				
SQ2. There is a wide variety of street food options	0.845				
SQ3. The location of the dining venues is convenient	0.834				
SQ4. Street food locations/vendors provide fast service	0.756				
SQ5. It is easy to order my meal at street food location/vendors	0.729				
SQ6. Street food vendors are friendly	0.711				
Hygiene	***0.933***	***0.916***	***0.690***	***0.540***	***2.264***

Hy1. Street food is hygienic	0.977				
Hy2. I am not afraid of getting sick from street food	0.831				
Hy3. Street vendors are well-groomed and clean	0.759				
Hy4. Food stands and carts are clean and well-organized	0.735				
Total	***0.922***	***0.955***	***0.712***	***0.989***	***59.027***

(R): Reverse-coded items

Table 3. Measures of goodness of fit

Measurements	Values	Acceptable fit
CMIN/DF	2.96	$0 \leq$ CMIN/DF ≤ 5
RMSEA	0.05	$0 \leq$ RMSEA ≤ 0.10
CFI	0.94	$0.90 \leq$ CFI ≤ 1
NFI	0.91	$0.90 \leq$ NFI ≤ 1
TLI	0.93	$0.90 \leq$ TLI ≤ 1
RFI	0.90	$0.85 \leq$ RFI ≤ 1
SRMR	0.06	$0 \leq$ SRMR ≤ 0.10

CMIN/DF: Relative Chi-Square (Chi-Square/Degrees of Freedom), RMSEA: Root Mean Square Error of Approximation, CFI: Comparative Fit Index, NFI: Normed Fit Index, TLI: Tucker-Lewis Index (Non-Normed Fit Index [NNFI]), RFI: Relative Fit Index, SRMR: Standardized Root Mean Square Residual

Table 4. Correlation matrix

Scales	Sensory attributes	Food neophobia	Affection	Food quality	Hygiene
Food neophobia	-0.121**				
Affection	0.198**	-0.213**			
Food quality	0.300**	-0.324**	0.238**		
Hygiene	0.202**	-0.260**	0.319**	0.247**	
Service quality	0.261**	-0.291**	0.212**	0.352**	0.316**

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5. Multiple regression analyses and hypothesis tests

Variable	Beta	Adjusted R^2	R^2 change	*t*-statistic	Decision
Model 1		0.097**	0.098**		
Hypothesis 1: **FN ⟶ SF**	-0.741**			-8.113**	*Supported*
Model 2		0.414**	0.417**		
Hypothesis 2: **FN x SA ⟶ SF**	0.612**		0.030**	5.724**	*Supported*
Model 3		0.098**	0.099**		
Hypothesis 3: **SF ⟶ FN**	-0.529**			-5.599**	*Supported*
Model 4		0.105**	0.109**		
Hypothesis 4: **SF x SA ⟶ FN**	0.514*		0.006*	2.009*	*Supported*

Beta coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level for * and at the 0.01 level for **

FN: Food neophobia, SA: Sensory attributes, SF: Attitude towards street food

A good taste profile is undoubtedly one of the sensory attributes that moderates the approach of individuals with food neophobia to street food. The most important reason that a person consumes street food is that it is pleasant to taste (Clark, 1998; Hoang & Tučková, 2021). After "taste," the other important factor in deciding to try new foods is “smell”. Smell directly affects liking and has a positive correlation with food preferences, even in complex food products, as reported by Donadini et al. (2021) and Puleo et al. (2021). In a previous study, 46% of blind panelists refused to taste edible insects due to their bad smell (Mishyna et al., 2020). Therefore, in situations where other sensory characteristics cannot be evaluated, "smell" is almost the only factor that can cause someone to refuse to consume an unfamiliar food.

It is also known that individuals with high levels of food neophobia tend to reflexively smell food less frequently (Puleo et al., 2021). Comparing the factors in Figures 2 and 3, it appears that smell affects the approach to street food, but it does not affect the level of neophobia related to food. This may be because individuals with food neophobia have a weak sense of smell and therefore make decisions based on prejudice.

Considering the appearance, street foods need to be well visualized in order to be marketed globally and locally. Presenting good photographs or sharing attractive posts will be appealing to gastronomic tourism. This is possible through the visual aspect. Furthermore, using images of street food at travel destinations can increase visitors' willingness to travel, as visuals have been shown to significantly influence tourists' travel decisions (Lee et al., 2020).

Another important sensory attribute is hardness. Hardness, sometimes called softness for some foods, is a mechanical property. In this study, attitudes towards street food are negatively affected when the hardness/softness of the food is deemed unacceptable by consumers. Hardness/softness is a secondary sensory attribute, as it is a textural/mechanical sensation that can be determined during the eating experience. The hardness/softness of solid products corresponds to the consistency of liquid products, as both are reactions to food deformation (Szczesniak, 2002), and it is known that the increase in consistency is positively related to the expected satiation. When the hardness/softness level of street food is appropriate, it can induce a feeling of fullness and foster a positive attitude towards that food, as concluded by Hogenkamp et al. (2011).

Other secondary sensory characteristics, such as texture, stickiness, and chewiness, were found to be insignificant in influencing attitudes towards street food in the presence of food neophobia. Since these sensory characteristics may have evoked negative attributes of the food, it may not have been possible to change the negative attitude towards street food in individuals with food neophobia. Szczesniak (2002) also noted that textural, or secondary sensory, characteristics such as stickiness make it difficult to change a negative attitude towards that food.

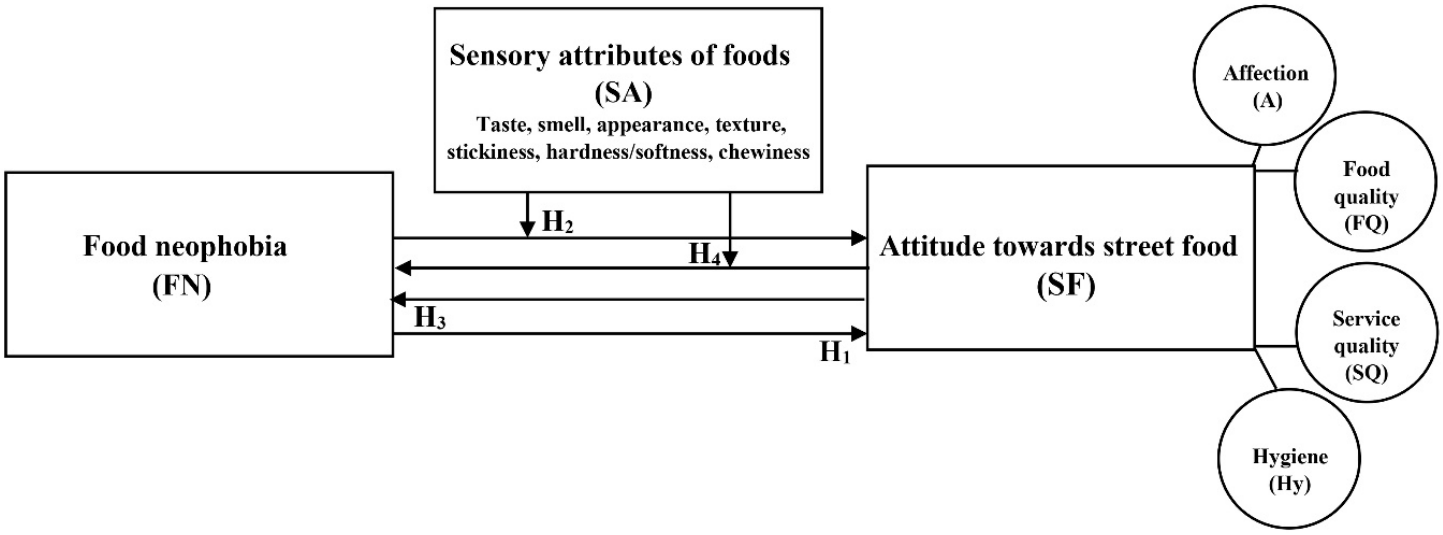

Figure 1. Research model

These were all answers to the first research question. The findings for the second research question are as follows: The effect of street food on food neophobia and the significant contribution of the sensory attributes to this relationship (β=0.514) were determined ($p<0.01$). As illustrated in Figure 3, only texture and stickiness contributed positively to the development of food neophobia ($p<0.05$). In other words, the texture and stickiness of street food may have the potential to trigger food neophobia. Texture (β=-0.755) and stickiness (β=-0.418) of street foods can significantly change the individual's food neophobia level in a negative way ($p<0.05$). As can be seen from the texture graph in Figure 3, good texture reduced food neophobia level linearly. After the point where poor and good texture overlapped (SF mean=3.5), this trend changed. This situation may stem from the fact that those who are already willing to consume street food want to try new products, even if the texture is poor. This situation may stem from the fact that those who are already willing to consume street food may want to try new products even if the texture is poor. This result can be explained by individuals' interest in novelty rather than their interest in (street) food in general. Individuals who were wary of street food did not care whether the food was sticky or not and exhibited high levels of food neophobia. However, stickiness is a very effective predictor for those who have a positive attitude towards street food (those with high SF scores). Therefore, there are significant differences in food neophobia levels between low, medium, and high scores on the stickiness graph. Furthermore, high levels of food neophobia in individuals can amplify negative associations stemming from food characteristics, leading to significant changes in outcomes (Pliner, 2008). The opposite is also possible; as in this study, individuals with food neophilia may have a positive approach to new foods. Therefore, the influence of sensory characteristics on the approach to the new product may have become insignificant. This is even more evident in cases where attitudes towards street food scored highly (positive), showing that sensory characteristics did not affect attitudes.

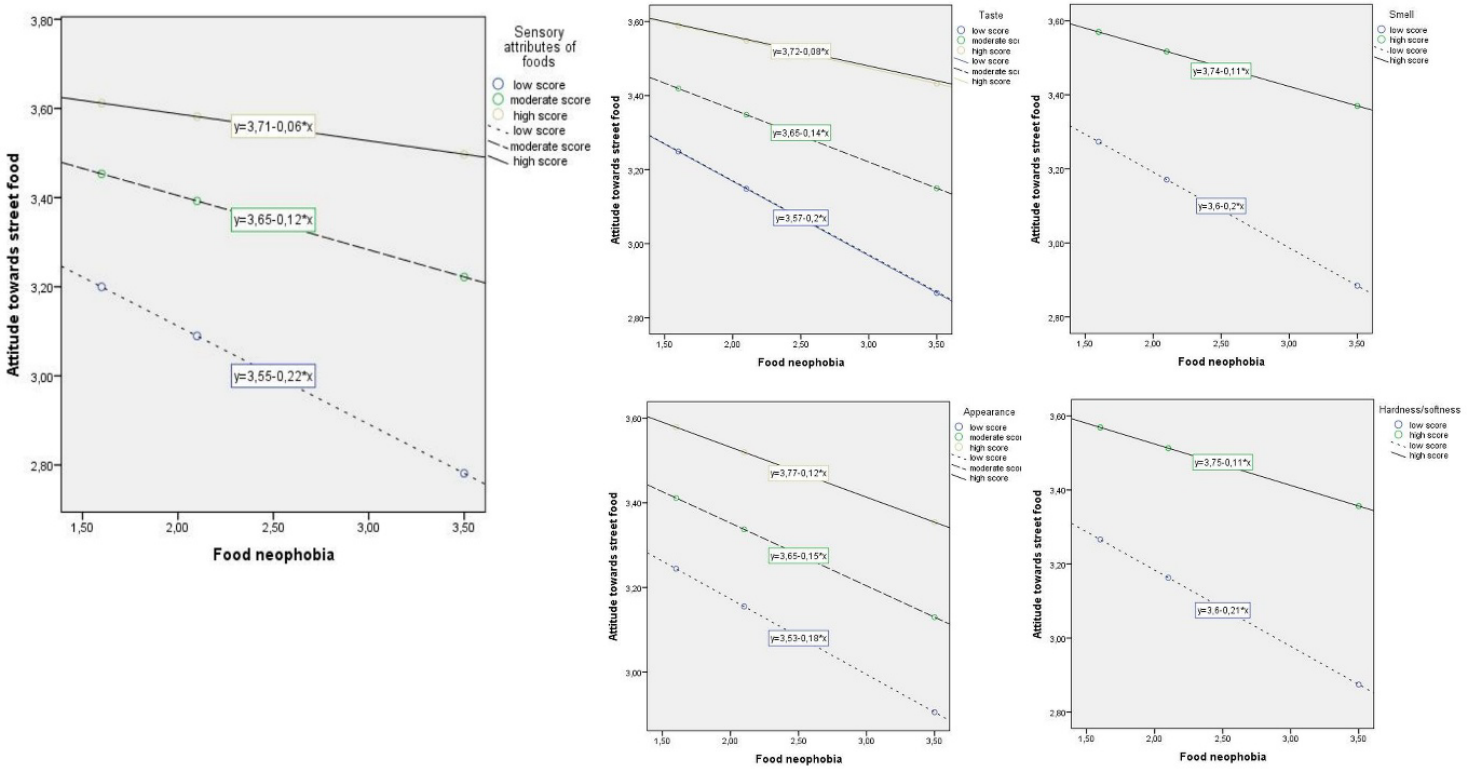

Figure 2. Effects of sensory attributes on attitudes towards street food considering food neophobia

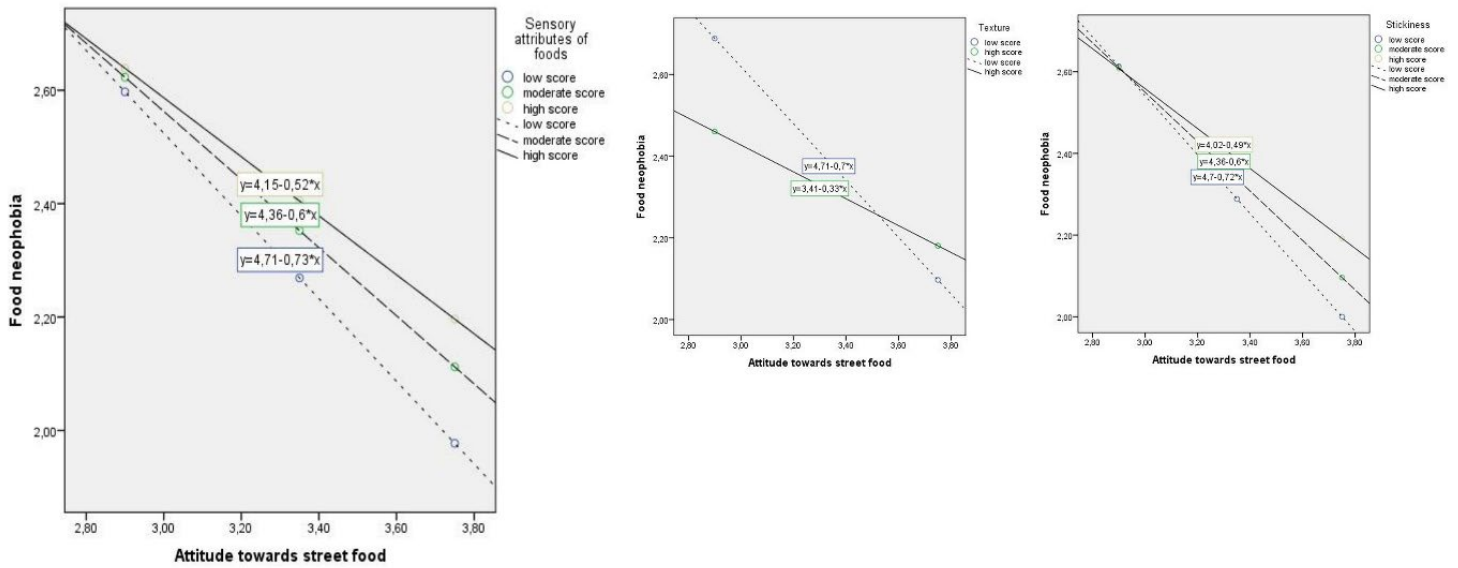

Figure 3. Effects of sensory attributes on food neophobia considering attitudes towards street food

Texture scoring involves visual perception of structural, mechanical, and surface properties. This attribute is a more important sensory criterion in solid or semi-solid foods (Dar & Light, 2014), and it is the only sensory attribute by which a person imagines mouthfeel (Agorastos, 2023). As understood from previous studies (Ozcelik & Akova, 2021; Sezgin & Şanlıer, 2016), consumers perceive street food in the solid food category. Therefore, street foods whose texture is not perceived well are likely to be rejected without tasting or even create food neophobia due to disgust. Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that the texture of street food affects the food neophobia level significantly in this study ($p<0.01$).

Another critical sensory attribute that affects the level of food neophobia in the street food experience is stickiness. Since stickiness reminds one of a slimy texture and suggests that the food may be rotten, it reduces the tendency to consume that food (Saluja & Stevenson, 2019). Therefore, it is expected that a high stickiness score in an individual will increase the level of food neophobia.

Briefly, the prominence of texture and stickiness among sensory characteristics that increase food neophobia suggests that these two attributes are key criteria in street food consumption. Therefore, considering these criteria may be important when developing new foods and street food concepts. What is particularly interesting is that individuals consuming unusual foods with these two characteristics may have neophilia instead of food neophobia.

To sum up, sensory characteristics such as taste, smell, appearance, hardness/softness, and chewiness have been found to be ineffective in causing an individual to develop food neophobia in the context of street food. A possible reason for this is that if street food is already accepted, these sensory characteristics may not lead to neophobia. A second possibility is that the food phobia is already at a very high level, and no other moderating effect besides a comprehensive sensory characteristic such as texture and surface indication (stickiness) can alter this level.

Conclusion

The increase in food neophobia level significantly increases the negative attitude towards street food. Similarly, street food characteristics can trigger food neophobia. Sensory properties are bidirectionally effective between food neophobia and attitude towards street food. They have a moderating effect on reducing food neophobia. The sensory characteristics of street (new or unfamiliar) foods can change the level of food neophobia. Sensory attributes of foods positively affect attitudes towards street food, even if the food neophobia level is high. Specifically, taste, smell, appearance, and hardness/softness of the street food have a significant positive impact on the attitude towards street food. On the other hand, texture and stickiness can significantly change the food neophobia level in a negative way. Individuals with a high tendency towards street food, even poorly textured foods, and with low food neo-

phobia can be considered "neophiles". In future studies, external factors that determine food preferences and ensure satisfaction in the eating experience in today's digital world can be examined. It can be investigated which of these factors will affect consumers' tendency to be willing to try new foods. Social media, one of these tools, can also be considered as one of the factors. This study contributes to the theoretical background of the gastronomy, tourism, and food science literature, while providing insights for food handlers in recipe development. On the other hand, a limitation of the study is self-report bias resulting from the survey method. Although all participants understand and respond in English, not all of them are native English speakers. A sensory evaluation panel is recommended for future research. Since sensory characteristics are multidimensional, conducting this study with trained panelists will yield more detailed outputs.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest: The author(s) declare that they have no actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest related to this article.

Ethics committee approval: This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Amasya University (approval number is E-30640013-108.01-135626). Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants.

Data availability: The data will be made available upon request by the author(s).

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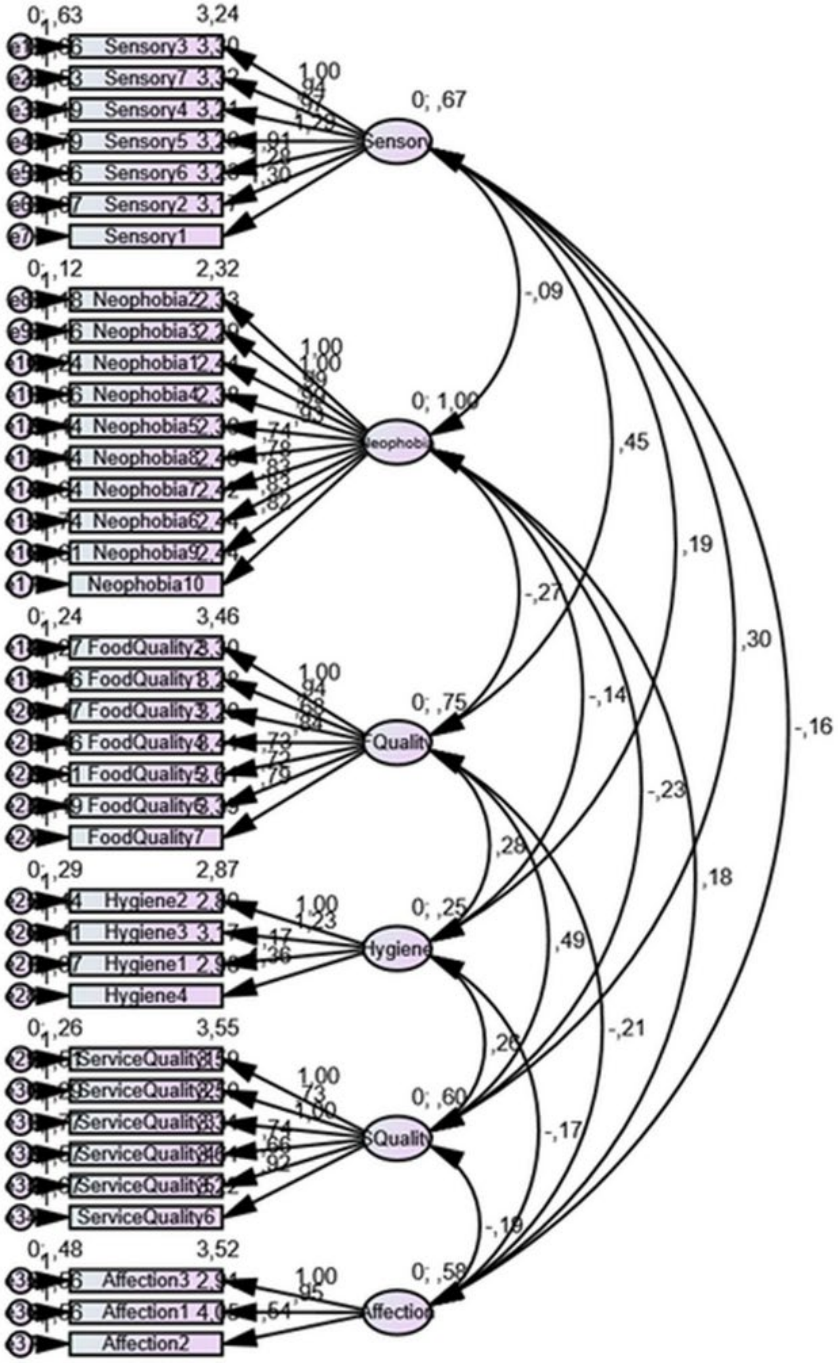
Supplementary Material: Path analysis