

Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR)
is the official and international scholarly research journal of
Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty

Address Akdeniz University, Tourism Faculty
Dumlupınar Boulevard
Post Code: 07058 Campus ANTALYA,
TÜRKİYE

Telephone + 90 242 227 45 50
+ 90 242 310 20 20

Fax + 90 242 227 46 70

Full-text articles of AHTR can be downloaded freely from the journal website, at <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ahtr>

© Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty. Printed in Türkiye. Some rights reserved.

You are free to copy, distribute, display and perform the work as long as you give the original author(s) credit, do not use this work for commercial purposes, and do not alter, transform, or build upon this work.

Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty.

Abstracting and indexing: Scopus; Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI); Ebsco; Leisure, Recreation, and Tourism Abstracts, CAB International; CABI full text; Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ); Research Bible; Directory of Research Journals Indexing (DRJI); Scientific Indexing Services; Science Library Index; Index Copernicus; C.I.R.E.T; Open Academic Journals Index (OAJI); MIAR; Sherpa/Romeo; Sobiad; ULAKBIM TR Index

Volume 12, Issue 4, ISSN: 2147-9100 (Print), 2148-7316 (Online)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Akdeniz University Tourism Faculty
(the Owner)

Founding Editor
Prof. Bahattin ÖZDEMİR

Editors-in-Chief
Prof. Beykan ÇİZEL
Prof. Yıldırım YILMAZ

Co-Editors
Prof. A.Akın AKSU
Prof. Cihan COBANOGLU
Prof. Hazel TUCKER
Prof. Mehmet MEHMETOGLU
Prof. Filareti KOTSI
Dr. Edina AJANOVIC

Journal Editorial Office
Dr. Zeynep KARSAVURAN
Dr. Hatice KARAKAŞ
Dr. Onur SELÇUK
Res. Asst. Gürkan AYBEK

INTERNATIONAL EDITORIAL BOARD

- Prof. Levent ALTINAY, *Oxford Brookes University, UK*
Prof. Maria D. ALVAREZ, *Boğaziçi University, Turkey*
Prof. Seyhmus BALOGLU, *University of Nevada, USA*
Dr. John BOWEN, *University of Houston, USA*
Assoc. Prof. Carina BREGNHOLM REN, *Aalborg University, Denmark*
Prof. Dimitrios BUHALIS, *Bournemouth University, UK*
Prof. Nevenka CAVLEK, *University of Zagreb, Croatia*
Prof. Prakash CHATHOTH, *American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates*
Prof. Ming-Hsiang CHEN, *National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan*
Prof. Brendan CHEN, *National Chin-Yi University of Technology, Taiwan*
Prof. Kaye CHON, *The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*
Dr. Christina K. DIMITRIOU, *New Mexico State University, USA*
Prof. Erdogan EKIZ, *TEAM University, Uzbekistan*
Prof. Francisco J. GARCÍA-RODRÍGUEZ, *University of La Laguna, Spain*
Assoc. Prof. María Rosario GONZÁLEZ-RODRÍGUEZ, *University of Seville, Spain*
Prof. Stefan GROSCHL, *ESSEC Business School, France*
Prof. Doğan GÜRISOY, *Washington State University, USA*
Dr. Tobias HELDT, *Höskolan Dalarna, Sweden*
Assoc. Prof. Yeşim HELHEL, *Akdeniz University, Turkey*
Prof. Ram HERSTEIN, *Emeritus Professor, Israel*
Prof. Osman M. KARATEPE, *Eastern Mediterranean University, Northern Cyprus*
Prof. Metin KOZAK, *Kadir Has University, Turkey*
Prof. Salih KUŞLUVAN, *İstanbul Medeniyet University, Turkey*
Prof. Rob LAW, *The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*
Prof. Jingyan LIU, *Sun Yat-Sen University, China*
Prof. Eleanor LOIACONO, *Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA*
Prof. Oswin MAURER, *Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, Italy*
Prof. Luiz MOUTINHO, *University of Glasgow, Scotland*
Prof. Yasuo OHE, *Chiba University, Japan*
Prof. Fevzi OKUMUŞ, *University of Central Florida, USA*
Prof. Bahattin ÖZDEMİR, *Akdeniz University, Turkey*
Prof. Jovan POPESKU, *Singidunum University, Serbia*
Prof. Richard SHARPLEY, *University of Central Lancashire, UK*
Prof. Marianna SIGALA, *University of South Australia, Australia*
Prof. Juan José TARÍ, *University of Alicante, Spain*
Prof. Özkan TÛTÛNCÛ, *Dokuz Eylül University, Turkey*
Prof. Manuela TVARONAVIČIENĖ, *Vilnius Gediminas Technical University, Lithuania*
Prof. Alfonso VARGAS SANCHEZ, *Huelva University, Spain*
Dr. Adam WEAVER, *Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand*
Prof. Atila YÛKSEL, *Adnan Menderes University, Turkey*
Prof. Nedim YÛZBAŞIOĞLU, *Akdeniz University, Turkey*

CONTENTS

Research articles

Dimensions of Co-Creative Food & Wine Tourism Experiences – Findings from A Multiple-Case Study	337
<i>Mariana Carvalho, Elisabeth Kastenholz , Maria João Carneiro, Luís Souza</i>	
The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction on the Relationship between E-Menus and Customers Behavioral Intentions in the Quick Service Restaurants	368
<i>Tamer Hamdy Ayad, Ahmed M. Hasanein</i>	
Developing a New Scale for Service Quality in Intercity Buses: IBUSQUAL	391
<i>Sedat Çelik, Aysen Ercan İştin, Fikret Ertaş</i>	
A Model Proposal for Sustainable Career Management in Hospitality: Grounded Theory Perspective.....	421
<i>Volkan Aşkun, Rabia Çizel</i>	
Thanks to Reviewers	449

DIMENSIONS OF CO-CREATIVE FOOD & WINE TOURISM EXPERIENCES – FINDINGS FROM A MULTIPLE-CASE STUDY

Mariana CARVALHO ¹

*Coimbra College of Education – Polytechnic
Institute of Coimbra, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0003-0929-4247*

Elisabeth KASTENHOLZ

*Department of Economics, Management,
Industrial Engineering and Tourism,
University of Aveiro, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0003-4700-0326*

Maria João CARNEIRO

*Department of Economics, Management,
Industrial Engineering and Tourism,
University of Aveiro, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0002-1682-6857*

Luís SOUZA

*Department of Hospitality and Tourism,
Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil
ORCID: 0000-0002-9714-3942*

ABSTRACT

The relationship between food & wine tourism and co-creation is gaining prominence in the academic field, due to the increasing interest shown by visitors for engaging in multi-sensory, rich experiences while travelling. Considering the relevance of understanding most valued experience dimensions within each tourism context to help design memorable, immersive co-creative food & wine experiences, this article aims to identify the dimensions of food & wine tourism experiences from the perspective of visitors and supply agents. For this purpose, insights from a food tour experience in Lisbon and other gastronomic experiences in Bairrada and Dão wine regions are presented based on a qualitative approach. A netnography study, integrating the analysis of 658 visitor reviews and an interview with the tour operator, combined with a case study involving semi-structured interviews with visitors (N = 38) and supply agents (N = 6) from the above-mentioned wine regions, are key elements of this multiple case study. Content analysis was performed with QSR NVivo 12 software. Findings highlighted a convergent perception of visitors and supply agents regarding the most prominent dimensions of co-creative

Article History

Received 4 May 2023
Revised 16 June 2024
Accepted 5 August 2024
Published online 29 August 2024

Keywords

experience co-creation
food & wine tourism
qualitative research
multiple-case study

¹ Address correspondence to Mariana Carvalho (Ph.D.), Coimbra College of Education – Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal, Invited Adjunct Professor & Centre for Tourism Research, Development and Innovation (CITUR), Portugal. E-mail: marianacabralc@gmail.com

experiences identified and revealed the potential of qualitative methodologies in the promotion of in-depth knowledge, especially within exploratory research frameworks.

INTRODUCTION

Co-creation experiences in tourism have increasingly drawn attention and stimulated debate among academics and practitioners in recent years; this relatively recent term from the value co-creation literature in consumer behaviour studies has been applied to tourism, a particularly suitable experience context (Campos et al., 2015; Carvalho et al., 2023). Accordingly, co-creation may be perceived as a type of consumption experience in which consumers assume an active role (Pralhad & Rammaswamy, 2004). Understanding value creation in tourism implies the chance to embrace experiences where value is developed between tourists and others within the 'experiencescape' (e.g., the local community, supply agents or other tourists), while also interacting with local resources. Indeed, the relevance and complexity of tourism experiences, mirrored in the study of several experience dimensions, justifies continuous efforts of in-depth investigation in this domain, while investigation on the nature of co-creation in tourism, within diverse contexts, is still required (Mohammadi et al., 2021).

As an emerging special-interest tourism, food & wine experiences are undergoing increasing tourism demand. Visitors are keen to experience local food and wine products in destinations, as these are key cultural elements that may contribute to fostering cultural experiences (Kodaş, 2024; Qian et al., 2023). However, the literature remains short in addressing this topic. Specifically, for co-creation within food & wine tourism, a lack of theoretical and empirical research becomes evident, namely regarding specific dimensions of co-creation and their role for relevant experience results (e.g., loyalty and satisfaction) (Carvalho et al., 2023; Rachão et al., 2020).

According to a literature review related to co-creation within food & wine tourism, the percentage of qualitative studies in this field is below that of quantitative studies (Carvalho et al., 2023), although this particular research method appears to be especially suitable for promoting in-depth understanding of the still relatively recent phenomenon of co-creation, its conditioning factors and outcomes. Implementing qualitative research means collecting, analysing and interpreting data from real-world contexts, considering the features of a naturalistic setting and the collection of data by means of techniques that are expected to be as unobtrusive as possible

(Veal, 2017; Yin, 2011). In tourism research, qualitative studies are frequently used, either as part of mixed-methods approaches or as the main study method. This adds great value to the field, since the respective techniques (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus groups, social media analysis) permit preservation of the essence, idiosyncrasy and details of visitors' interactions, as well as perceptions, feelings, opinions and behaviours regarding the experiences they take part in (Veal, 2017), while also considering the diversity of contexts.

Inspired by the interpretative research paradigm, this paper reflects on the nature of co-creation in food & wine tourism, illustrating the debate with findings from a doctoral research project, comprising data collection by means of a) a netnography and b) interviews with both supply agents and tourists, within a multiple-case-study approach. The following research questions were defined for this study:

1. What are the distinctive elements and the most mentioned and valued dimensions of co-creation experiences in food & wine tourism?
2. What are the contributions that a qualitative study may add, namely through netnography and interviews, within a multiple case study framework?
3. What is the role of experience context for the type of co-creation in food & wine tourism experiences?

The multiple case-study presented here comprises complementary qualitative data collection methods, permitting manual and software-aided (NVivo) content analysis for categorization and understanding of patterns and relations amongst elements of analysis. It was carried out in a multiple-case framework of food & wine tourism in both urban (food tours in Lisbon) and rural contexts (the two routes in Portugal's Central Region). Results may thereby contribute to consolidation of findings regarding co-creative food & wine experiences, also considering specific contexts.

The present study firstly presents a brief introduction to co-creation of food & wine tourism, based on previous studies, and then discusses strengths and challenges of qualitative research, especially within a case-study context, focusing particularly on the methodological approaches used in previous studies. The pertinence, but also difficulties and drawbacks of qualitative approaches are illustrated based on the specific research project. The main results from this study on cocreation in food & wine tourism are presented. In the final discussion and conclusions section, insights are critically reviewed and the research questions answered. Findings and

debate add to understanding co-creation applied to food & wine tourism, with advances in conceptual, managerial and methodological scopes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Co-Creation in Food & Wine Tourism

Visitors increasingly search for authentic experiences through which they may become involved in the destination and connect to local identity in a participative way, engaging actively with local resources, products, and people. Tourists want to interact with locals and supply agents and feel part of the local community, enjoying unique local territory-based experiences (Carvalho et al., 2023). These demands may be assessed through the insights of the experience model suggested by Pine and Gilmore. In an experience-oriented economy, Pine and Gilmore (1998) refer that the combination of four realms of experience guarantee the 'sweet spot' of an experience: 'entertainment' (passive experience of environment absorption), 'education' (active and absorption experience), 'escapism' (active experience with a sense of immersion) and 'aesthetics' (passive, but immersive experience). In particular, the debate on 'value co-creation' within the service-dominant logic paradigm, suggesting the customers' active role as co-producers of value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008), is relevant for better understanding tourism co-creation.

In the tourist experience, where the key position of visitors is recognized, co-creation emerges as a result of subjectively perceived personal experience value, triggered by visitors' interaction with the locals, supply agents, and elements of the specific experiencescape (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Campos et al., 2015). Campos et al. (2015, p. 23) define co-creation as 'the sum of psychological events a tourist goes through when contributing actively through physical or mental participation in activities and interacting with other subjects in the experience environment'. These authors consider the physical environment as part of the experience, stressing the importance of embracing cultural and natural resources in experience co-creation. For Minkiewicz et al. (2014, p. 31), co-creation 'involves an effort between multiple stakeholders to co-create value/an experience collaboratively'. In addition, they propose a conceptual model for value co-creation within cultural tourism, where 'engagement', 'co-production' and 'personalization' are identified as central dimensions of the experience (Minkiewicz et al., 2014). Co-production stresses consumers' active involvement in the experience; personalization comprises flexibility, adaption, and customization of the experience offer, and engagement

corresponds to consumers' cognitive, emotional and physical involvement in the experience, suggesting that managers should provide suitable contexts to promote this immersion (Minkiewicz et al., 2014).

Within many types of destination and tourism contexts, food & wine tourism should be realized as a crucial part of most tourists' experiences. Although not always being a primary motivation, the opportunity to get to know the destination through local food in an authentic, multi-sensory and pleasurable way underlines the relevance of this tourism product in the destination context (Brochado et al., 2021; Gao et al., 2022). Food & wine tourism is defined by Crespi-Vallbona and Mascarilla-Miró (2020, p. 214) as 'trips that focus on exploring and enjoying meals and beverages, typical of their destinations to experience local culture', enhancing the value of local products and the authentic traits of the territory, thereby facilitating visitors' involvement in historical and cultural features of the visited place (Brochado et al., 2021; Carvalho et al., 2021; Kodaş & Özel, 2023). As pointed out by Richards (2021), gastronomic experiences, namely cooking classes, food & wine pairing, home-dining experiences with locals, food market visits and food tours have contributed to highlighting destinations' local traits, linking 'place, identity, culture and tourism'. Hence, food & wine may foster learning experiences through which visitors have the possibility not only of tasting different flavours but also getting to know local traditions and habits (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2020). Moreover, other attributes are found pertinent to promote visitor satisfaction and memorability in food & wine experiences, namely regarding 'multi-sensory' experience opportunities, 'active participation', 'hedonism', 'fun' and 'emotional' immersion, 'nostalgia' (promoting the remembering of past moments), 'reflective connections' (remembering previous food tasting and travel experiences), 'local culture' (reflecting identity of territories), 'novelty' and 'food risk-taking' (newness and adventurous tasting experience), 'social interactions' and 'co-created relationships' (building social bonds) and 'authenticity' (perceived genuineness of the experience) (Rachão et al., 2021; Stone et al., 2021). Indeed, visitors search for more participative, interactive, engaging and meaningful experiences, in which diversified and new food & wine activities are required (Antón et al., 2018; Getz & Brown, 2006). Hence, co-creation may add value to the tourist experience, where tourists play a central role and may interact socially with others, while enjoying multi-sensory experiences in a physically, emotionally and cognitively engaging way (for example in food & wine pairing, well-designed wine tasting events or harvesting experiences), contributing to both deeper involvement and satisfaction (Binkhorst & Den

Dekker, 2009; Campos et al., 2015). In the domain of experiential marketing, Schmitt (1999) also suggests a framework in which combined dimensions are seen as crucial to promote appealing experiences and customer satisfaction, which is in line with the aforementioned co-creative food & wine experiences. The author stresses how important it is to 'sense' (stimulation of the five senses), 'think' (cognitive involvement), 'feel' (emotional involvement), 'relate' (social interaction) and 'act' (participation) to gain satisfaction with the experience.

In the tourism field, experience co-creation in food & wine is a relatively new and understudied research topic, as found in a recent literature review (Carvalho et al., 2023; Rachão et al, 2020). Indeed, food & wine tourism values local products and traditions, triggering authentic and memorable experiences, as fostered by creative supply agents, who have an important role in developing engaging co-creative experiences in the destination foodscape (Park et al., 2022; Richards, 2021).

Within this special interest tourism, Rachão et al. (2021) reveal social interaction as particularly relevant; it mainly takes place between tourists and the locals, to stimulate tourists' active participation and leads to satisfaction (Rachão et al., 2021). In a different setting, particularly in cooking workshops, Prayag et al. (2020) found that social interaction between chefs and participants, as well as the interaction with the physical environment and the destination ambiance, were crucial in fostering co-creation experiences for visitors. Tourists' previous knowledge of culinary practices seemed to be important in terms of their interest in co-creating experiences. In wine tourism, Gao et al. (2022) found that wine tourists highly value product-related aspects like 'wine', the 'lunch experience', 'the bottle of wine', 'chocolate' and the 'scenery', reinforcing the importance of adopting a holistic perspective on wine tourism. These authors added that experience value also results from educational aspects, contributing to visitors' involvement (Gao et al., 2022). Based on a literature review, Carvalho et al. (2023) proposed a conceptual framework of co-creation in food & wine tourism, in which interaction (social interaction between tourists, supply agents and the local community and interaction with the destination environment), active participation (being physically and mentally involved in activities), engagement (sensory, emotional and cognitive) and personalization (the pertinence of customizing the tourist experience) were perceived as key dimensions in fostering the creation of value, leading to visitors' satisfaction, loyalty and memorability.

Indeed, and as a tourism trend, co-creative food tourism experiences are increasingly in demand (Okumus, 2020; Richards, 2021), calling for more in-depth studies in this recent area. This qualitative and multi-method study aims to adding value to the literature in this particular field.

Qualitative Research on Co-Creation in Food & Wine Tourism

Despite the increase in research on experience co-creation in food & wine tourism in recent years, there is a lack of sound empirical evidence observable in the field (Carvalho et al., 2023; Okumus, 2020; Rachão et al., 2020). In an integrative literature review comprising 97 empirical studies in the field of experience co-creation and food & wine tourism, the authors Carvalho et al. (2023) notice that quantitative methods are prevalent compared to qualitative ones (49% and 43%, correspondingly) and that few studies follow mixed-methods designs (8%). Although this study shows a relatively important number of qualitative studies in the field of food & wine experiences (Carvalho et al., 2023), it is clear that more qualitative research in the specific field of co-creation experiences in this domain is needed. This is evident, when considering the nature and scope of co-creation in tourism (centred on people and their interactions) and the features of qualitative research, namely its focus on naturalistic settings, the use of unobtrusive data collection and quest for in-depth understanding of the complex phenomena under study (Veal, 2017). In particular, very few empirical studies were found systematically focusing on the dimensions of tourism co-creation in food & wine, and none which specifically refer to food tours or consider both urban and rural contexts. Accordingly, more qualitative studies are needed to better understand the specificities of this type of tourism. In line with the nature of qualitative research, the relevance of case studies lies in the importance of obtaining a holistic, in-depth understanding of certain phenomena, making them particularly suitable to a diversity of complex, context-dependent research problems within the scope of social sciences (Veal, 2017). Case studies are understood as 'a particular case or set of cases, describing or explaining the events of the case(s) (...) and may rely on quantitative or qualitative data (or both) but usually involves some field-based data' (Yin, 2011, p. 207). They contribute to identifying new, relevant insights that may inspire managerial action and theory development, specifically by sustaining research hypotheses to be validated in larger scale, quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014).

As for the presence of exploratory case studies in food & wine experience co-creation, the settings of the cases found in the literature range from wine routes and wine tourism destinations (Carvalho et al., 2021;

Cubillas et al., 2017; Kirova, 2021; Rachão et al., 2019, 2021; Thanh & Kirova, 2018), to dining in a teahouse restaurant in China (Chen, 2018). In the study of Carvalho et al. (2021), 22 semi-structured interviews were undertaken with visitors in Bairrada, a Portuguese wine region, which permitted comprehensive analysis of the perceptions visitors have of their experiences in the region. Analysing the data collected with the support of NVivo permitted the observation of the outstanding role of 'interaction' (both between the individuals and with the experiencescape) in value-creation in co-creative rural wine tourism. Similar techniques were adopted by Rachão et al. (2021), whose findings showed that tourists perceive co-creation by means of seven identified categories, namely 'social interaction, novelty, creativity, social sustainability, environmental awareness'. In these authors' study, 14 semi-structured interviews were held with visitors, and a focus group of five participants allowed for the collection of in-depth information regarding visitors' motivations and experiences in another Portuguese wine region, Vinho Verde, followed by NVivo-supported content analysis. Cubillas et al. (2017) selected semi-structured interviews to apply to winery managers (3 + 3) and visitors (17 + 10) from two local wineries in the Sonoita-Elgin Wine Region in Arizona, USA, to analyse how perceived authenticity is related to value co-creation. No reference to software was made in this study. The findings of the study suggested four core principles for authentic co-creation experiences to strengthen touristic authenticity, namely dialogue, accessibility, risk assessment, and transparency.

In the research field of co-creative food & wine experiences, netnographic studies are also identified as a useful qualitative approach, particularly interesting to enrich case-study research, for example when analysing visitors' shared and authentically lived experiences, which can potentially trigger place attachment (Souza et al., 2020), and the memorability of food experiences (Sthapit & Börk, 2020). Other netnographic studies focused on understanding the value co-creation experience in the context of cooking classes in Thailand (Qian et al., 2023) or on traditional breakfast experiences of international visitors in Istanbul (Kodaş, 2024). Netnography has also been increasingly used in research on wine experiences (for example, Kastenholz et al., 2022; Kirova, 2021; Thanh & Kirova, 2018). This technique helps reveal meaningful content that is available online, resulting from tourists' spontaneous reviews of experiences shared with other travellers and correspondingly influencing them. Netnography has become more notable in academic research since Kozinets' (2002) often-cited seminal article that provided a reflection on the requirements of systematic, rigorous and valid netnographic approaches.

Despite the high potential of netnography in terms of data diversity and quality and despite the increasing interest in the approach, there is room for more netnographic studies in hospitality and tourism academia (Gewinner, 2023).

Indeed, the growth of online community platforms, particularly those related to travel (e.g. TripAdvisor, Couchsurfing) and the increase in digital consumption justifies a systematic analysis of the enormous amount of data available online. Netnography is also simpler and requires less time and resources to collect data than traditional survey approaches (An & Alarcón, 2021; Cunha et al, 2021; Gewinner, 2023; Kozinets, 2002; Thanh & Kirova, 2018). Kozinets (2002) highlights the flexibility and usefulness of netnography as well as its unobtrusive character regarding the study of consumption patterns in online communities. This potential may be particularly meaningful for marketers, supply agents and destination management organizations (DMOs) involved in tourist experience design, permitting an in-depth understanding of the specificities of visitors' perspectives about the experiences lived and their outcomes (Gewinner, 2023). For assessing appealing and meaningful tourist experiences, analysis of visitors' discourse in online communities may thus help unveil tourists' behaviour, motivations, perceptions and attitudes, as intended with qualitative research (Veal, 2017), particularly in a domain that is not yet widely understood (An & Alarcón, 2021). Disadvantages of netnography include credibility, authenticity and trustworthiness of available content and the difficulty of generalizing findings based on reviews of an online community (Kozinets, 2002), while its usefulness as a complementary technique is increasingly acknowledged (An & Alarcón, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

Contextualization of The Multiple Case Study Approach

This paper presents a multiple-case study, the main purpose of which is to identify distinctive elements and experience co-creation dimensions of food & wine and to reflect on the pertinence, opportunities and challenges of the qualitative methodological approach in this area. This reflection is guided by current evidence obtained from a concrete project on co-creation in food & wine tourism in Portuguese urban and rural destinations. The emergence of food tour experiences in tourism justifies the selection of the first case study, where visitors had the opportunity to get to know the culture of a city by tasting its local products within an historic urban experiencescape. For this purpose, the case of a gastronomic tour enterprise in Lisbon was

chosen given its resonance in visitors' comments. The food tour experience may be considered a particularly interesting guided, yet still interactive urban food tourism experience; in it, visitors walk through a historical neighbourhood and enter diverse small, traditional restaurants, having the opportunity to engage with a unique experiencescape, aided through the intermediation of an enthusiastic local guide. Here, netnography was chosen due to the richness of content permitting an understanding of the food tour experience, as voluntarily and publicly shared by participants.

On the other hand, the case studies of the Bairrada and Dão wine regions were chosen to contrast the urban with a more rural, larger and more independently explored territorial context. The regions were chosen given their investment in wine tourism and its potential, with the tours being structured along wine routes and including rich natural and cultural heritage, apart from wineries and gastronomy. The Bairrada region is located in the Central Region of Portugal, near the Atlantic coast and between Aveiro and Coimbra. It has unique natural and cultural elements, combining diversified tourism products such as sun and sea, nature (e.g. the Buçaco Forest, with more than 400 native species), spas (e.g. Luso and Curia), culture and urban tourism (Centre of Portugal, 2023a). In the interior of this region, the Dão area presents scenically outstanding mountain ranges (Serra da Estrela, Caramulo), with hills, valleys and granitic features characterizing the landscape. Rural and nature tourism as well as health tourism (with a variety of thermal spas, e.g. São Pedro do Sul) and cultural tourism (e.g. in the city of Viseu) are important experience facets of the region (Centre of Portugal, 2023b). Both regions have different terroir characteristics and grape varieties which enhance the unique character of these wines. These specificities also add value to the distinctive wine experiences fostered in these territories, permitting an extra layer of analysis of the wine tourism context.

Triangulation of sources based on visitors' and supply agents' perspectives is additionally presented, thus permitting the analysis of the visitor experience in different settings (urban food tour versus food & wine/terroir experiences in two rural wine regions). Indeed, different cases, data sources and perspectives add depth to the research. Diversity in 'data' (from different sources), 'method' (multiple methods), and 'investigator' (different researchers involved in collection and interpretation), as well as 'theoretical triangulation' (selecting different theoretical perspectives to interpret data), contribute to a more rigorous and credible analysis of qualitative data derived from cases (Creswell, 2014; Decrop, 1999; Patton, 2002). The three different case studies presented here, within a multiple-

case research logic, also permit validation, differentiation and consolidation of results. The following subsections present detailed information regarding the methodological procedures adopted in this multiple case-study.

Data Collection and Analysis

Experiencing Food Tours – A Netnographic Approach to Food Tourism in Lisbon

For the first study, netnography was adopted as a research technique to collect relevant data and analyse visitor's experiences shared on the online platform TripAdvisor, following the steps recommended by Kozinets (2002), as presented in table 1.

Table 1. *Steps implemented in the netnography based on Kozinets' (2002) perspective*

Procedures	Additional information of the study
<i>Entrée</i> (defining the research question and identifying the appropriate online platforms)	Scope of the research questions - Identification of dimensions of co-creation experiences in tourists' comments on their participation in a gastronomic tour - Analysis of how value was co-created in the aforementioned experiences
	Online platform selected TripAdvisor
Data collection	Experience selection Criteria adopted for data collection: (i) language – all English and Portuguese reviews; (ii) time span – April 2014–June 2017; (iii) no translations.
	Visitor reports downloaded and organized in an Excel file; Reviews manually analysed;
Data analysis	Dimensions identified in previous studies were considered before coding; other emerging dimensions (from discourses) were added subsequently. Coding procedure: Two researchers were in charge of the coding tasks independently (for increasing reliability): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Researchers coded 30 reviews together; 2. Researchers coded remaining reviews separately; 3. Researchers identified differences in coding and arrived at a consensus on discrepant codes.

Here, evidence was sought on the presence, content and role of certain experience dimensions for value co-creation, based on post-visit reviews analysis of an urban food tour. Additionally, triangulation via an

additional method (semi-structured interview) and data source (supply agent: the food tour operator), as suggested by Decrop (1999), added important insights into the experience co-creation process.

TripAdvisor was the platform selected, one of the 'largest travel guidance platforms' (TripAdvisor, 2021), where tourists share their reviews regarding a destination's activities, restaurants or hotels. Comprising more than 934 million reviews of approximately 8 million businesses, TripAdvisor helps visitors plan their trips, operating in 43 markets and 22 languages (TripAdvisor, 2021). Besides the diversity of experiences presented on the platform, information regarding the date of the experience and visitors' origin is available (Xiang et al., 2017), making this platform most suitable for this study.

Regarding data collection, Taste of Lisboa Food Tours, a Portuguese enterprise that provides food tours in Lisbon, was chosen, given its visibility on TripAdvisor due to numerous reviews. For that purpose, all Portuguese and English reviews (without translation) from April 2014 (the beginning of the experiences) to June 2017 were selected. In all, 658 online reviews were considered, totalling 56,710 words. The comments were downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet for manual coding. For increasing credibility of online content, the perspective of the supply agent of commented experiences was added (An & Alarcón, 2021). The CEO of the gastro-cultural tours enterprise was interviewed in July 2021, via Zoom. The purpose was to find evidence of how co-creation is perceived when designing the gastronomic tours and understanding the strategies the company has adopted to address the challenges imposed to the tourism sector in the post-Covid-19 era.

As recommended by Kozinets (2002), data analysis comprised three steps. First, two independent researchers were involved to enhance the reliability of coding (intercoder reliability) and objectivity in data analysis. They started by coding 30 reviews together to reach agreement on coding discourses. Then, the researchers coded the remaining 628 reviews separately and lastly shared their final coding and identified discrepancies until a consensus was reached. The final rate of agreement was of 97%.

This data coding and analysis was done manually. The categories for coding were established based on previously identified co-creative experience dimensions resulting from the frameworks of Pine and Gilmore (1998), Minkiewicz et al. (2014) and Schmitt (1999) with some dimensions related to several models. Table 2 presents these dimensions and a brief definition.

Table 2. *Pre-established dimensions for the analysis of visitors' reviews in the netnography*

Dimensions	Meaning
Sense and aesthetics (sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch)	Stimulation of senses and visitors' immersion in the experience
Feel	Visitors' emotional and affective experiences
Think/education	Visitors' interest in learning and cognitive engagement
Relate	Fostering social interaction contexts between different stakeholders (visitors, local inhabitants, supply agents, the travelling group and tourists met in the destination)
Personalization	Customization considering visitors' preferences
Entertainment	Visitors' passive absorption
Act/co-production	Visitors' active participation
Escape/engagement	Deep involvement in the experience

Source: adapted from Carvalho et al. (2023)

Bairrada and Dão – Two Case Studies in Portuguese Wine Routes

The other two case studies were carried out in two Portuguese rural wine routes in the country's Central Region: Bairrada and Dão. In Bairrada, a convenience sample was firstly defined for the Bairrada wine route, including tourists visiting the region. They were approached by researchers in different places, namely a hotel unit and a rural hotel accommodation, as well as the official store of the Bairrada route and a winery. This took place between May 2019 and February 2020. In the case of Dão, two sampling techniques were used. On the one hand, a convenience sample was selected, with researchers addressing visitors in a winery, from August 2019 to March 2020, to then adapt to pandemic restrictions. Tourists who had visited the region over the preceding two years were hence identified on the researchers' contact lists and through social media. Additionally, a snowball sampling technique was used, which consisted of asking each interviewee to provide the contact of another person who had also visited the region over the same period of time. Interviews were held until September 2020. Therefore, the multiple-case study sample included 22 visitors to Bairrada and 16 visitors to Dão. The perspective of supply agents from both regions was also considered, which implied adopting the convenience sampling approach again. A small group of agents who provided co-creative food & wine experiences was contacted and three agents from Bairrada (a winery, a winemaker, and a travel experience company) and three from Dão (an accommodation unit, a winery & restaurant, and a wine farm) accepted to participate. In this kind of exploratory research, a significant amount of information is collected for a small number of cases (Veal, 2017). The sample size of exploratory studies

fits into what the literature suggests as appropriate for qualitative studies, ranging from 1 to 25 cases (Fusch & Ness, 2015), allowing in-depth analysis of more detailed data per case, i.e. a somewhat in-depth focus on the phenomena of interest (McGinley et al., 2021; Yin, 2011).

As for data collection tools, scripts of two interviews (considering agents and tourists) were created as well as validated by experts working on the TWINE project². An in-depth, semi-structured interview is a meaningful qualitative method, through which the interviewees may express themselves authentically, based on the previously defined script (Patton, 2002; Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1998). Such interviews are usually applied to a small number of subjects (Veal, 2017) and may occur face to face, via telephone or via the internet (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2011). This tool is of particular importance in exploratory case studies, when a topic is relatively new or when there is scarce academic research about it. Furthermore, interviews are an appropriate tool to collect highly detailed data regarding individuals' perceptions, behaviours and experiences (Patton, 2002), which is the case of this project. The interviews with visitors in Bairrada were all held face to face, and in Dão only the first interview was applied in the destination. The remaining ones happened online or through the phone, which implied that the meetings had to be scheduled and the project and respective aims had to be firstly introduced to interviewees by email. Regarding the supply agents from Bairrada and Dão, all interviews (three from each region) were held between August and October 2020 via Zoom (two) and via telephone (four).

Most interviews were applied by the leading author of this article, following recommended criteria to guarantee successful data collection, namely: starting with a brief explanation of the study purpose and making reference to the length of the interview; asking the visitors' permission to record the interview and assure data anonymity; conducting the interview following the defined script, but not rigidly, e.g. not following the order of the questions if the natural discourse of the respondent follows a distinct order; promoting an atmosphere so that the interviewee could express him/herself without interruption; establishing rapport with the interviewee to foster his/ her involvement in the interview; respecting moments of pause, when the respondent reflects on a certain subject; avoiding the discussion of different points of view and respecting the interviewees'

² Twine - "Co-creating Sustainable Tourism & WINE Experiences in Rural Areas" – was a 4-year research project whose analysis, based on a holistic perspective, was focused on co-creation experiences in rural wine destinations, specifically in three wine routes in the Central region of Portugal: Bairrada, Dão, and Beira Interior.

considerations; and guaranteeing an appropriate and informal environment (Quivy & Campenhout, 1998; Veal, 2017; Yin, 2011).

The script of the interview applied to the visitors has three sections: i) visitors' food & wine tourism experience in general; ii) visitors' experience in the region; iii) characterisation of the visitors' profile. All questions included in the script were formulated based on literature in the field and were complemented by validated self-measurement scales. The script of the interview applied to the supply agents, on the other hand, aimed at assessing the presence of dimensions of co-creation experience, namely 'participation', 'interaction', 'engagement', and 'personalization' (Carvalho et al., 2023) in the experience design.

Table 3. *Stages of the content analysis process based on the documentary corpora of the semi-structured interviews*

Procedure	Additional information
1. Organizing data Manual transcription of the in-depth semi-structured interviews	Bairrada (visitors: 484 minutes; agents: 100 minutes) Dão (visitors: 951 minutes; agents: 94 minutes) Food tours (agent: 55 minutes) Total of 28 hours of audio recording
2. Verification of each interview	The whole content of the interviews was revised
3. Files imported into data analysis software Word documents with the interviews transcribed	Each file was uploaded to NVivo
4. Classification of cases	Profile characterization was added in NVivo
5. Tree nodes defined	Themes and categories created before the coding process, considering the script of the interview
6. Development of coding process	Coding of the interviews and clarification of possibly overlapping categories and codes (punctually discussing with the co-authors); categories identified inductively;
7. Repetition of the coding process	Recoding process within a time span of two months
8. Data analysis and interpretation according to the coding process	Identification of indicators, word cloud creation (word frequencies) and interpretation of data

Content analysis was the technique used for data analysis and table 3 provides a description of the procedures implemented within that scope, supported by the qualitative analysis software NVivo 12. As for the initial organization of data, the in-depth interviews were transcribed manually and verbatim, and the transcribed content was then revised. All files were then imported to NVivo, and the characteristics of the visitors' profile were added (classification of cases). Initial deductive coding was implemented, according to pre-established themes and categories alluded to in the interview script. Categories related to the co-creation experience dimensions emerged inductively. The documentary corpus was then coded, and this process was repeated within a time frame of two months,

considering the guidelines to assure the criterion of stability (Krippendorff, 2004), and the purpose of guaranteeing uniformity and consistency of the process.

RESULTS

A Multiple-Case Study on Co-Creation Experiences in Food & Wine Tourism

According to the data resulting from the content analysis of 658 visitor reviews regarding post-visit perceptions of the Lisbon food tour experiences, the deductively pre-established categories of analysis were complemented by two categories that emerged from data analysis (inductive approach): one category may be also considered an experience dimension (authenticity) and the other referred to a frequently reported and relevant experience outcome ('loyalty', by means of revisit intention and recommendation). Amongst the categories related to experience dimensions (figure 1), 'aesthetic/sense' (reflecting mostly 'taste' and 'sight') (623 references), 'feel' (443 references), and 'think/education' (426 references) stood out, followed by 'relate' (212 references), 'authenticity' (199 references), and 'personalization' (111 references). These findings suggest that tourists' perceptions of co-creation in the food tours were mostly marked by the multisensory and emotional character of the experiences, while enhancing cognitive immersion and learning experiences resulting from visitors' interaction with different parts of the experiencescape. The emergence of 'authenticity' as a new category of analysis showed its pertinence to visitors in this context, suggesting the importance of fostering genuine experiences that highlight the uniqueness of local features.

Categories 'entertainment', 'escape/engagement' and 'act/co-production' were not so notable in the visitors' discourse, despite their theoretical and sometimes empirical relevance as tourist experience dimensions (Campos et al., 2015; Rachão et al., 2020; Thanh & Kirova, 2018). As for the categories reflecting outcomes of the experience within the scope of 'loyalty', visitors referred more often to attitudinal loyalty, frequently recommending the experience (364 references), in comparison with behavioural loyalty – 'revisit intention' (55 references).

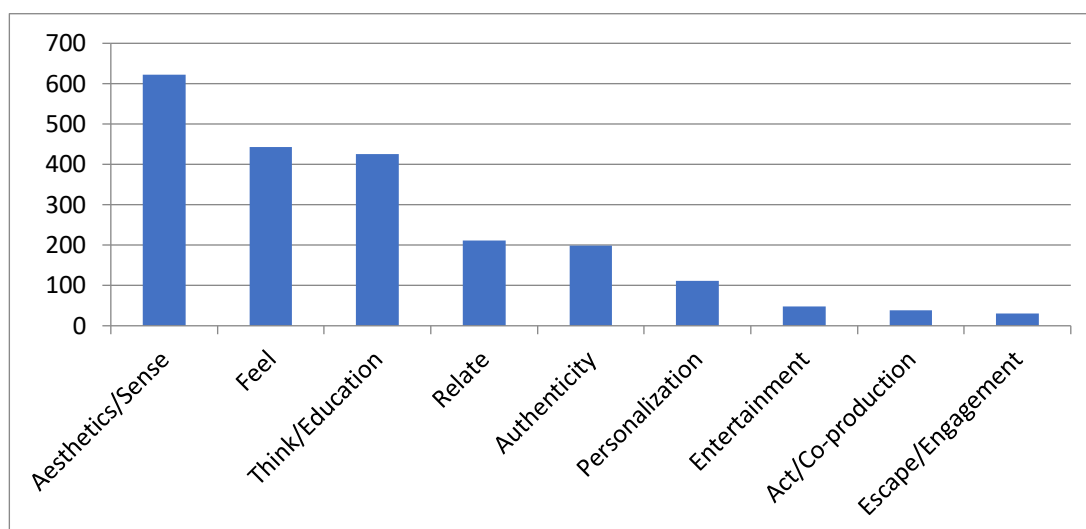


Figure 1. Frequency of visitors' references to aspects of co-creation dimensions in the tourist experience

The data resulting from the interview with the food tour operator confirmed the prevalence of 'interaction', 'engagement', 'active participation' and 'personalization' in the shape of food tour experiences, since, according to the agent, they may help in the attempt to foster value co-creation with clients and stakeholders. Based on the details provided by the operator, stimulating tourists' active communication with other tourists, the hosts, and the local community is key to promoting social interaction, strengthening the bonds between the parties involved, and contributing to tourists' engagement in the experience. This was evident in the visitors' discourse, since the category 'relate' was the fourth most referred to. Besides this, fostering aesthetic (enjoying the neighbourhoods and their atmosphere) and sensorial (tasting food products and wine) experiences as well as facilitating activities where entertainment and cognitive involvement is stimulated (edutainment), apparently also promoted visitors' engagement. These dimensions – 'aesthetics/sense', 'relate', 'think/education', and 'feel' – emerged in the visitors' discourse. For the agent, 'personalization' also stands out, being implemented when the host adapts the narrative to the travel group as well as when designing the food tour details, by respecting visitors' food preferences based on their cultural habits and needs. Visitors acknowledge and value such adaptations, although they may be less aware of the agent's efforts, since 'personalization' ranks sixth in number of referrals from visitors' discourse.

As for the Bairrada and Dão case studies, the richness of the data resulting from content analysis of the discourse in the interviews become

clear through the diversity of indicators identified within the scope of the categories of analysis elicited by the questions of the script, particularly within the sections 'Food & wine experiences in general' and 'Food & wine experiences in Bairrada and Dão' (see Appendix 1). The categories that emerged from the analysis coincided with the co-creation experience dimensions active participation, interaction, engagement, personalization, aesthetics, and authenticity and are listed in Appendix 2.

Regarding visitors' motivation for travelling to wine regions, aspects like gastronomy, wine and elements related to regional cultural and natural features were identified in their discourse (both from Bairrada and Dão), which coincided with their expectations when travelling to both regions. In addition, visitors from Bairrada also highlighted cycling, which was linked to the particular travel programme of these international visitors, and having the chance to enjoy their stay in a historic hotel as specific expectations.

In their description of outstanding experiences, visitors from both regions referred to specific experiences they participated in, namely wine and culinary workshops as well as visiting wine and gastronomic fairs (in the case of Dão) or wineries, engaging in wine tasting or food & wine pairing events, and immersive wine grape harvesting (in both regions). Besides this, aspects related to enjoying nature and the landscape, visiting museums, and having a sense of relaxation and escape were also mentioned by visitors from both regions. Tourists who travelled to Bairrada added the gastronomy and wine of the region, the possibility of cycling, having close contact with nature and discovering the region and learning about it as well as the hospitality of the local people and the chance to be immersed in the 1930s atmosphere of the hotel they stayed in. Visitors from Dão highlighted the fact that they enjoyed having contact with authentic local products and the atmosphere of the wine fairs for their genuine character, especially due to the contact with residents and producers as well as being in a rural environment, where they could enjoy the local traditions.

When trying to identify visitors' perceptions of aspects connected to the identified dimensions previously presented, it became clear that it was within the scope of the category 'outstanding elements in the experience', particularly when referring to specific activities they participated in, that respondents presented most detail. This reveals their multifaceted immersion in the experience, and the suitability of interviews for capturing corresponding perceptions and reflections with rich detail, and an emotional tone that a structured questionnaire (typically with Likert scales)

may not be able to assess, apart from many other issues possibly limiting questionnaire-based survey approaches (Cunha et al, 2021). In open-ended questions, the respondent presents what is 'at the front of his/her mind', rather than indicating a rating of dozens of scale items that may not always be read carefully, especially in longer questionnaires. From visitors' discourse, 'interaction' was the most prominent dimension, revealing how valuable contact with the local wine makers and staff was to respondents, which was evident in both wine regions. Aspects related to 'active participation' were also notable in most experiences tourists referred to (e.g., cooking, wine tasting, walking in the vineyards, and harvesting), followed by others connected to 'engagement' (cognitive and emotional). Details indicating the presence of 'personalization' were less evident, although still found in the sample, for example in wine tastings and workshops, particularly regarding the fact that visitors had private experiences and enjoyed being given closer attention by the staff. The analysis of the visitors' reviews also facilitated the identification of an additional co-creative experience dimension, namely the sensorial involvement, stressing the importance of interaction with the physical experiencescape. The detail and variety of the indicators presented under the category 'sensory experience' (Appendix 1) highlight the key role of senses in fostering visitors' engagement and immersion in food & wine tourism, which once again confirms the suitability of in-depth interviews to unveil interviewees' most prominent feelings and reflections.

Based on the visitor data collected, the in-depth interviews with supply agents also helped understand how co-creation is considered (and conditioned) in the experience design, as exemplified next. According to the supply agents of both regions, the experience dimensions 'interaction', 'active participation', 'engagement', and 'personalization' are all considered when designing the food & wine co-creation experiences they provide. Appendix 3 depicts the indicators resulting from the analysis of these agents' discourse within the scope of each category, corresponding to the dimensions in focus. As for 'active participation', the agents highlighted the role of promoting activities that require tourists' co-production (e.g., learning how to open wine bottles or cooking and preparing home-made bread, cheese and jams, as well as giving tourists the chance to participate in harvesting). This stands clearly out in the case of food & wine experiences, even regarding the stimulation of aspects related to other dimensions, such as 'interaction' and 'engagement'. As for this matter, the details provided by visitors (referred to above) show their appreciation for being co-constructors of their experiences and for the feelings resulting

from such deep involvement (e.g., a sense of escape in the vineyards, and the sense of authenticity when contacting with the locals at harvesting). 'Interaction', according to the agents, is fostered by means of establishing an informal and welcoming atmosphere, where tourists feel at ease to ask questions and clarify doubts, and by promoting contact between tourists and the local staff. In line with this, visitors provided insights into how they enjoyed the contact and learning with the winemaker, the staff and the local community. As stated by the agents, triggering visitors' emotional arousal when designing food & wine experiences is of fundamental importance in fostering visitors' engagement in the experience and its memorability (e.g., giving visitors the chance to interact with the experiencescape, with the authenticity of the wineries and with the local people involved in the harvesting and wine-making process). The agents also highlighted the pertinence of promoting 'personalization' by means of facilitating customized experiences for small groups and of adapting their offer to particular preferences and needs of the demand, which was also positively perceived by tourists. However, 'personalization' referrals were more common amongst supply agents than visitors who may be less aware of the importance of this dimension, while suppliers consider the dimension when designing experiences in a professional manner, to meet visitors' needs and preferences.

Insights from The Cross-Case Studies

Similar results from both urban and rural food & wine tourism contexts lead to the conclusion that the main co-creation dimensions suggested in theory were apparently generally relevant. Figure 2 shows the most common dimensions identified in the three different case studies, as well as the differences that stood out in these studies.

In more detail, human interaction seemed to be quite significant in all experience contexts, not only contributing to a relaxing atmosphere that fostered empathetic relationships between visitors and the staff (the tour guide in the food tours and the local wineries' staff and the winemaker in the wine regions), but also adding value in educational and cognitive terms. In Dão, visitors also had contact with residents in wine and gastronomic fairs, which was valued for the authenticity they felt when in contact with locals. Particularly in the case of Bairrada, interaction with the destination environment was stressed by visitors whose main motivation was cycling in the region, as well as for those who wanted to explore the natural setting of this territory through hiking, which was clearly valued, complementing gastronomic experiences in this territory.

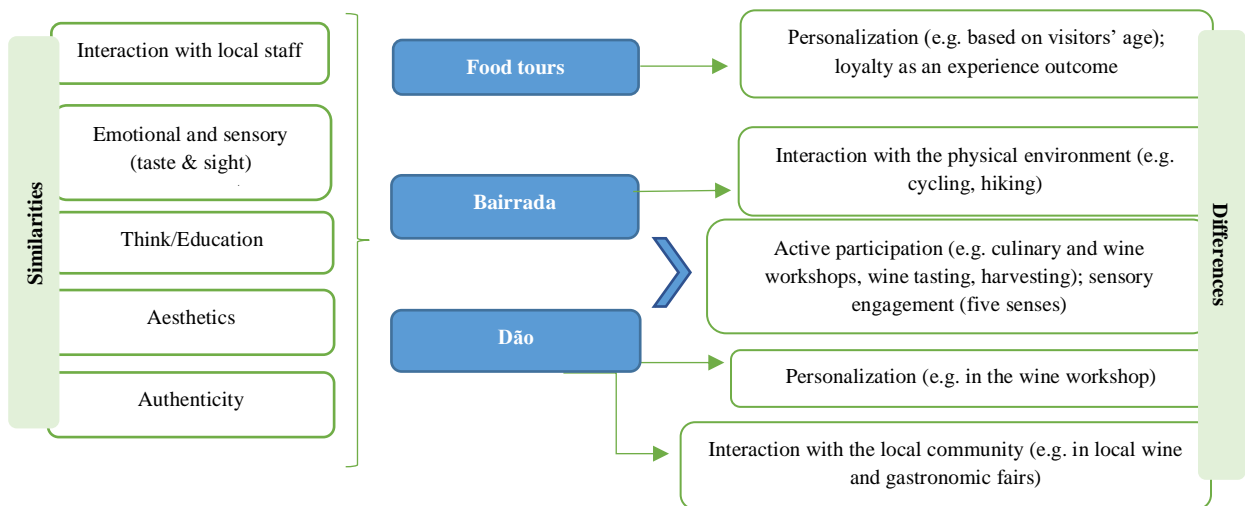


Figure 2. Similarities and differences identified in the multiple-case study regarding visitors' perspectives

Authenticity was also identified as a relevant dimension in all analysed contexts. This dimension emerged in all case studies, reinforcing visitors' appreciation for genuineness when co-creating value in these experiences.

Different aspects between both studies were also identified. The emergence of loyalty as an experience outcome was found only in the food tours case study. Furthermore, although personalization was identified as pertinent by visitors in all destination contexts, elements related to this dimension seemed to be less evident in their discourse in the case of Bairrada. Despite the fact that sensory engagement was the highlight in this case study (mainly in terms of taste and vision), this dimension stood out in visitors' discourse regarding their co-creation experience in the wine regions, involving all five senses, which corroborated its importance to visitors' deep involvement and its memorability. Active participation seems to be also more relevant in the food & wine activities provided in the wine routes, mainly in wine and culinary workshops and in the harvesting experiences in which visitors participated. Hence, the emphasis found in visitors' discourse on 'sensorial aspects', 'authenticity' and elements regarding the 'active participation' is noteworthy, suggesting the outstanding character of these experience dimensions in co-created food & wine tourism, however with distinct concrete elements depending on the physical but also social experience context.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the literature, there are few empirical studies addressing food & wine tourism and the corresponding co-creation experience dimensions (Carvalho et al., 2023; Rachão et al., 2020). Hence, this study contributes to this debate and tries to fill this gap with additional empirical evidence taken from three case studies, in a qualitative manner. Results also show the pertinent contribution of a qualitative approach in this field, by means of a multiple-case framework addressing both hosts and guests in three different geographical settings. The research design, comprising triangulation between sources, investigators, and contexts of data collection (rural, urban, diverse regions), confirmed the outstanding role of 'interaction', 'active participation', 'engagement', 'personalization' and 'authenticity' as co-creative dimensions, in both visitors' experience perceptions and supply agents' experience design, corroborating other studies in the field (Carvalho et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2022; Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Rachão et al., 2019, 2021). With a better understanding of visitors' perspective regarding co-creative experience value, this study highlights the main features supply agents should consider when designing co-creative gastronomic experiences, in order to promote subjective involvement and memorability, as previously found in other studies (Carvalho et al., 2023; Stone et al., 2021).

Indeed, regarding the thickness of the data collected (either in visitors' reviews or in visitors and supply agents' perceptions gathered through in-depth interviews) and having conscientiously examined and systematized it via content analysis, our understanding of specificities of co-creation of food & wine experiences can be advanced. Additionally, patterns, similarities, and differences between the perspectives of the main actors co-creating such experiences were observable, adding value to the research area regarding the nature of these specific experiences. In the food tour case study, the spontaneous and open character of netnography facilitated the confirmation of patterns as to tourist experience dimensions, also highlighted by other authors (Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Schmitt, 1999), as well as the identification of an additional experience dimension (authenticity), apparently most important in food & wine tourism experiences. The emergence of this dimension reinforced the importance of clues of local identity in co-creative experiences, where visitors expect to feel part of the community (Crespi-Vallbona & Mascarilla-Miró, 2020; Williams et al., 2019). Loyalty also emerged in association with these experiences as most important experience outcome.

The analysis of visitors and supply agents' perspectives revealed that social interaction was the most prevalent dimension identified in the experiences facilitated, both in the urban context and the wine regions, suggesting the key role of human interaction with the winery/restaurant staff, the winemaker, the tour guide or with other tourists for memorable co-creative experiences. These findings corroborate the conclusions of previous studies (Antón et al., 2018; Richards, 2021) and reveal the importance of being prepared to involve opportunities for personal contact, with both training of front-office staff and development of experiencescapes and activities that promote social interaction (e.g. workshops or shared meals).

Despite being less identified in visitors' discourse, personalization seems crucial for visitor satisfaction and loyalty in the three destination contexts, particularly perceived in Dão region (e.g. personal contact in the wineries or in wine and culinary workshops) and in the food tours (e.g. adaptation to visitors' diet). As multisensory experiences, attending to visitors' different needs and desires is crucial to facilitate visitors' emotional and cognitive immersion in experiences, which should be taken into account by supply agents and DMOs when designing these experiences. Customized and differentiated experiences, targeted to distinct visitor groups, may constitute an opportunity to develop truly unique experiences, increasingly appreciated by demanding and experienced visitors who seek new, outstanding and meaningful discoveries in their trips.

The study findings also corroborate the position of renowned authors within the scope of social sciences (Creswell, 2014; Quivy & Campenhoudt, 1998) and leisure and tourism studies (Veal, 2017), regarding the appropriateness of qualitative research for assessing individuals' unique and distinct perceptions, ideas, motivations, needs and behaviours. The organization, structure and depth promoted by in-depth interviews was confirmed, by the immersion in recalled experiencescapes fostered by this method and the level of detail of the information correspondingly provided. These facts were germane to finding evidence of similar perceptions shared by visitors and agents from both routes as well as to identifying subtle differences that are indicative of specific features of each route (e.g., the appropriate conditions for cycling in Bairrada or the authenticity of the food & wine fairs in Dão) and context (also comparing to the urban food tour). Furthermore, data collected via interviews with visitors enabled another outstanding experience dimension to be identified, namely 'sensory engagement', suggesting the promotion of sensory experiences for enhanced visitor satisfaction (Schmitt, 1999).

The validity of these findings on experience dimensions in food & wine tourism is reinforced by the fact that they result from triangulation of sources by means of comparing the perspectives of visitors and supply agents, in both rural and urban settings. Such findings add theoretical insights to the field and contribute to remedying the lack of theoretical and qualitative empirical research identified (Carvalho et al., 2023). The depth reached through the findings confirms the suitability of this research design to help a more thorough understanding of how value is co-created in attractive, unique, and memorable food & wine experiences. However, due to its features, the qualitative research approach can only identify and thoroughly explore complex phenomena which are not yet fully understood, such as tourist experience co-creation, while not aiming at generalizing patterns or confirming causal relationships. Instead, it may contribute to the development of pertinent hypotheses to be subsequently analysed via quantitative, large-scale validation studies; the survey questionnaires used in these studies may include some of the details found in the present and other qualitative approaches on the topic, included Likert-scales to operationalize the co-creative experience dimensions in food & wine tourism identified here. However, particular challenges of such quantitative data collection and analysis must also be recognized, especially in niche tourism contexts like rural wine tourism (Cunha et al., 2021).

In managerial terms, the rich, detailed information presented, summarized in categories with indicators that emerged from real-context perceptions revealed by these qualitative studies, also adds relevant insight to destination management organizations (DMOs) and food & wine tourism business managers regarding visitors' preferences (Kodaş & Özel, 2023) emotional responses and perceptions about co-creative food & wine experiences, as also found in other studies (Carvalho et al., 2023; Rachão et al., 2021). Thereby, these findings may help DMOs and supply agents design more attractive and innovative experiences, meeting visitors' expectations and establishing the value of the features and identity of territories. Moreover, this study stresses the importance of tourism managers' adopting a holistic perspective in experience design, since cultural (historical features of the region) and natural (the mountains and the surrounding environment) elements of the destination are confirmed as crucial in co-creative food & wine experiences (Getz & Brown, 2006; Richards, 2021), thereby adding to the distinctiveness and competitiveness of destinations.

As for limitations of the study, the fact that no additional tools (e.g., focus groups, systematic participant observation) were used may be pointed out. In the case of the netnography, the fact that the reliability of the tourists' reviews could not be assessed may be a limiting factor. Considering the sample size of the netnography, complementing the analysis with a quantitative approach could have provided significant insights into the representativeness of the co-creative food tour experience dimensions based on the visitors' reviews, despite the qualitative character of the study. Future research based on qualitative empirical studies regarding co-creative gastronomic tourism may benefit from interpreting and presenting data with the support of different and also visually appealing and eventually more intuitive tools for interpretation, such as conceptual maps, matrixes or word clouds, provided by CAQDAS (Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis). Topics of interest for future research would include the assessment of the impact of participation in food & wine experiences, comprising dimensions of co-creative experiences in tourist satisfaction, memorability and loyalty, trying to provide evidence for causal relations. Here, a quantitative approach, based on a well-developed questionnaire, possibly in distinct food & wine tourism contexts (rural, urban, indoors, outdoors, with more or less active participation and learning opportunities), may be worthwhile avenues of future research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Funding: This article was developed in the scope of the research project TWINE - PTDC/GES-GCE/32259/2017 - POCI-01-0145-FEDER-032259, funded by FEDER, through COMPETE 2020 - Operational Programme Competitiveness and Inter-nationalization (POCI) and by national funds (OPTDC/GES-GCE/32259/2017 -E), through FCT/MCTES.

Additionally, this work was financially supported by the Research Unit on Governance, Competitiveness and Public Policies (GOVCOPP) (UIDB/04058/2020) + (UIDP/04058/2020), funded by national funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia.

REFERENCES

- An, W., & Alarcón, S. (2021). From netnography to segmentation for the description of the rural tourism market based on tourist experiences in Spain. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2020.100549>
- Antón, C., Camarero, C., & Garrido, M. J. (2018). Exploring the experience value of museum visitors as a co-creation process. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(12), 1406–1425. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1373753>

- Binkhorst, E., & Den Dekker, T. (2009). Agenda for co-creation tourism experience research. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 18(2–3), 311–327. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368620802594193>
- Brochado, A., Souto, S., & Brochado, F. (2021). Dimensions of Sustainable Tour Experiences. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 22(5), 625–648.
- Brochado, A., Stoleriu, O., & Lupu, C. (2021). Wine tourism: A multisensory experience. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(5), 597–615. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2019.1649373>
- Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., do Valle, P., & Scott, N. (2015). Co-creation of tourist experiences: A literature review. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 21(4), 369–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2015.1081158>
- Carvalho, M., Kastenholz, E., & Carneiro, M.J. (2021). Interaction as a Central Element of Co-Creative Wine Tourism Experiences—Evidence from Bairrada, a Portuguese Wine-Producing Region. *Sustainability*, 13(16), 9374. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13169374>
- Carvalho, M., Kastenholz, E., & Carneiro, M.J. (2023). Co-creative tourism experiences – a conceptual framework and its application to food & wine tourism. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 5(48), 668–692. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2021.1948719>
- Centre of Portugal (2023a). *As melhores coisas para fazer no Centro de Portugal*. Available at <https://www.centerofportugal.com/pt>
- Centre of Portugal (2023b). *Termas Viseu Dão Lafões*. Available at <https://turismodocentro.pt/artigo/termas-viseu-dao-lafoes/>
- Chen, Z. (2018). A pilot study of the co-creation experience in traditional Cantonese teahouses in Hong Kong. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 13(6), 506–527. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2018.1444045>
- Crespi-Vallbona, M., & Mascarilla-Miró, O. (2020). Wine lovers: Their interests in tourist experiences. *International Journal of Culture, Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 14(2), 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCTHR-05-2019-0095>
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design – Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th ed). Sage Publications.
- Cubillas, S., Mars, M. M., Torres, R. M., & Sias, P. M. (2017). Touristic authenticity and value co-creation: An exploration of two local wineries in Southeastern Arizona, USA. *Journal of Rural and Community Development*, 12(1), 34–54.
- Cunha, D., Kastenholz, E., & Lane, B. (2021). Challenges for collecting questionnaire-based onsite survey data in a niche tourism market context: The case of wine tourism in rural areas. *Sustainability*, 13(21), 12251. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112251>
- Decrop, A. (1999). Triangulation in qualitative tourism research. *Tourism Management*, 20, 157–161.
- Fusch, P., & Ness, L. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408–1416. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2015.2281>
- Gao, D., Xia, H., Deng, W., Muskat, B., Li, G., & Law, R. (2022). Value creation in wine tourism – an exploration through deep neural networks. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 30(3), 376–391. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13567667221140605>
- Getz, D., & Brown, G. (2006). Critical success factors for wine tourism regions: A demand analysis. *Tourism Management*, 27(1), 146–158. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2004.08.002>
- Gewinner, I. (2023). Netnography and its potential for studies in tourism and hospitality. In F. Okumus, S. Rasoolimanesh & S. Jahani (Eds.), *Cutting Edge Research Methods in Hospitality and Tourism* (171–194). Emerald Publishing Limited.

- Kastenholz, E., Cunha, D., Eletxigerra, A., Carvalho, A., & Silva, I. (2022). The experience economy in a wine destination – Analysing visitor reviews. *Sustainability*, 14(15), 9308. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159308>
- Kirova, V. (2021). Value co-creation and value co-destruction through interactive technology in tourism: The case of 'La Cité du Vin' wine museum, Bordeaux, France. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(5), 637–650. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1732883>
- Kodaş, D. (2024). Exploring the dimensions of traditional breakfast experience: A netnography study. *European Journal of Tourism Research*, 36. <https://doi.org/10.54055/ejtr.v36i.3136>
- Kodaş, D., & Özel, Ç. (2023). Antecedents of gastronomy destination brand equity: an examination of gastronomy experience, motivation, and destination satisfaction. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 11(1), 45–71. <https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.1009968>
- Kozinets, R. V. (2002). The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 39, 61–72. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935>
- Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- McGinley, S., Wei, W., Zhang, L., & Zheng, Y. (2021). The state of qualitative research in hospitality: A 5-year review 2014 to 2019. *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 62(1), 8–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1938965520940294>
- Minkiewicz, J., Evans, J., & Bridson, K. (2014). How do consumers co-create their experiences? An exploration in the heritage sector. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(1–2), 30–59.
- Mohammadi, F., Yazdani, H., Pour, M., & Soltani, M. (2021). Cocreation in tourism: A systematic mapping study. *Tourism Review*, 76(2), 305–343. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-10-2019-0425>
- Okumus, B. (2020). Food tourism research: A perspective article. *Tourism Review*, 76(1), 38–42. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-11-2019-0450>
- Park, E., & Widyanta, A. (2022). Food tourism experience and changing destination foodscape: An exploratory study of an emerging food destination. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 42, 100964. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2022.100964>
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative Research & Evolution Methods*. Sage Publications.
- Pine, B., & Gilmore, J. (1998). Welcome to the experience economy. *Harvard Business Review*, 76(4), 97–105.
- Prahalad, C., & Ramaswamy, V. (2004). Co-creation experiences: The next practice in value creation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18(3), 5–14. <https://doi.org/10.1002/dir.20015>
- Prayag, G., Gannon, M., Muskat, B., & Taheri, B. (2020). A serious leisure perspective of culinary tourism co-creation: The influence of prior knowledge, physical environment and service quality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(7), 2453–2472. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2019-0897>
- Qian, J., Lin, P., Wei, J., Liu, T., & Nuttavuthisit, K. (2023). Cooking class travel in Thailand: An investigation of value co-creation experiences. *Sage Open*, 13(2), <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231176994>
- Quivy, R., & Campenhoudt, L. (1998). *Manual de Investigação em Ciências Sociais* (2nd ed.). Lisboa: Gradiva.

- Rachão, S., Breda, Z., Fernandes, C., & Joukes, V. (2019). Enogastronomy in Northern Portugal: Destination Cooperation and Regional Identity. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 7(2), 216-237. <https://doi.org/10.30519/ahtr.573163>
- Rachão, S., Breda, Z., Fernandes, C., & Joukes V. (2020). Cocreation of tourism experiences: Are food-related activities being explored? *British Food Journal*, 122(3), 910-928. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-10-2019-0769>
- Rachão, S., Breda, Z., Fernandes, C., & Joukes, V. (2021). Food-and-wine experiences towards co-creation in tourism. *Tourism Review*, 6(5), 1050-1066. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-01-2019-0026>
- Richards, G. (2021). Evolving research perspectives on food and gastronomic experiences in tourism. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 33(3), 1037-1058. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-10-2020-1217>
- Schmitt, B. (1999). Experiential marketing. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(1-3), 53-67.
- Souza, L. H., Kastenholz, E., Barbosa, M. L. A., & Carvalho, M. S. S. C. (2020). Tourist experience, perceived authenticity, place attachment and loyalty when staying in a peer-to-peer accommodation. *International Journal of Tourism Cities*, 6(1), 27-52. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJTC-03-2019-0042>
- Sthapit, S., & Björk, P. (2020). Towards a better understanding of interactive value formation: Three value outcomes perspective. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(6), 693-706. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2018.1520821>
- Stone, M., Migacz, S., & Sthapit, E. (2021). Connections between Culinary Tourism Experiences and Memory. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 46(4), 797-807. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348021994171>
- Thanh, T., & Kirova, V. (2018). Wine tourism experience: A netnography study. *Journal of Business Research*, 83, 30-37. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.10.008>
- TripAdvisor (2021). *About TripAdvisor*. Retrieved September 2021, from <https://tripadvisor.mediaroom.com/US-about-us>.
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2004). Evolving to a new dominant logic. *Journal of Marketing*, 68(1), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.68.1.1.24036>
- Vargo, S. L., & Lusch, R. F. (2008). From goods to service(s): Divergences and convergences of logics. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 37, 254-259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2007.07.004>
- Veal, A. J. (2017). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism*. Pearson.
- Williams, H, Yuan, J., & Williams Jr, R. (2019). Attributes of memorable gastro-tourists' experiences. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 43, 327-348. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348018804621>
- Xiang, Z., Du, Q., Ma, Y., & Fan, W. (2017). A comparative analysis of major online review platforms: implications for social media analytics in hospitality and tourism. *Tourism Management*, 58, 51-65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2016.10.001>
- Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. The Guildford Press.

APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – *Categories of analysis and indicators resulting from visitors' discourse on experiences in the Bairrada and Dão regions*

	Categories	Indicators
Food and wine experiences - in general	Motives for travelling to wine regions	Business, gastronomy, nature and culture, region, wine
	Expectations of wine experiences when travelling	Appreciating the buildings' architecture, authenticity of the experience, cycling, enjoying new experiences, fun, gastronomy, nature enjoyment, no expectations, having a sense of peace, social contact, walking, wine, quality of advice on wine
	Wine experiences expectations when travelling to the region	Cycling, gastronomy, history and culture, hotel, nature, rural tourism, wine,
	Wine tourism definition	Architecture, food & wine, learning opportunities, memorable experience, natural and cultural destination resources, new emotions, features of the region, wine as attraction, wineries' history, wine producing process, contact with the winemaker, wine landscape, local lifestyle,
	How important is wine?	Part of daily and social life, part of professional career, a way of getting more knowledge (of wine, of the local culture), a way of having amusing experiences, the relationship with food, not important
	Wine consumption	At meals, regularly, at the weekends, in business contexts
	Importance of wine when choosing a holiday destination	Very important, complement to the trip, not important
	Offering wine	Family and friends
	Monthly spending on wine	€20–€40, €40–€60, €60–€80, €80–€100, €100–€200, €200–€300
	Culinary interests	Interest, little interest, no interest
	Search for local products	Yes
	Search for gastronomic experiences while travelling	Yes, no, would be interested
	Gastronomic experiences in the regions of Bairrada and Dão	Categories
What attracted visitors to the region		Wine, gastronomy, social issues, the region and nature, cycling, identity, hospitality, geographical proximity, professional reasons, quality of products, friends' recommendation, spa and thermal treatments
Most typical in the region		Wineries, grape varieties, history, nature, peace, architecture and decoration of local eateries, authenticity, sparkling wine, heritage, hospitality, the landscape, the vineyards' landscape, small cafés, local community, wine, gastronomy (suckling pig, regional desserts, codfish, <i>chanfana</i> , <i>ovos moles</i>), Bical grape variety, wine history, flowers, rural setting, regional wine features

What stands out in the experience	Food & wine experiences, gastronomy, wine, the hotel, nature, museums, relaxation and a sense of escapism, discovering the region, learning, the authenticity of the experiences, contact with the rural environment, cycling, hospitality
Contacts with different parties	Supply agents, residents, travel group, other tourists
Sensory experience	<p>Image – Buildings’ architecture, ancient buildings, colours, the shape of the environment and the vineyards, forest, the beauty of Curia Hotel, nature (the mountains), peace, rural features, the culture of sitting around the table at lunch, thermae, tranquillity, vines, the beauty of Viseu, wine, wineries, wine farms, quiet streets in rural areas, signs of lack of cleanliness in public places</p> <p>Smell – Gastronomy (grilled meat, cheese, sausages, strawberries), nature (eucalyptus trees, plants, grass, wet land), wine (wine must and associated cellar smell, the wood, the smell of Arinto, Touriga Nacional and other grape varieties)</p> <p>Sound – Nature (ducks, birds, dogs, water, the river, the rain), rural (the church bells, silence and quietness, people talking far away, tractors, low levels of sound produced by nature), wine (the cork coming out of the bottle), no elements</p> <p>Taste – Bittersweet, different flavours, food and wine pairing, fresh, hot and salty flavours, intense, spices, sweet, wine and gastronomy (suckling pig, <i>bairradino</i> dessert, sparkling wine, Baga and Bical grape varieties, strawberries, bread and regional cheese</p> <p>Touch – Barren touch, branches, linen, straw hat, glass, bottle of wine, dry land, grapes, vines, no elements</p>
The learning experience	Wine (local wineries and local wine, regional grape varieties, wine production techniques, local producers’ history and aspects related to the family businesses), gastronomy, food and wine pairing, cultural and historical traits of local products, the region, nature (landscape in the region), the authentic hospitality of the local people, safe country, social component, self-development
Overall experience satisfaction	Expectations met, expectations exceeded, no expectations
Experiencing local products	Traditional dishes (suckling pig, goatling, <i>ovos moles</i> , almond dessert, seasonal fruit, chestnuts,
Importance of gastronomy to the overall experience satisfaction	Important, not important, complement

Appendix 2 – Emerging categories of analysis and indicators resulting from visitors' discourse in experiences in the Bairrada and Dão regions

Categories	Indicators
Active participation	Wine workshops, culinary workshops, grape harvesting, the physical effort resulting from the harvest experience, getting to know the region, walking in the vineyards, tasting the wine, experiencing food & wine pairing, the need for more interactive activities, cycling, discovering the region
Interaction	Supply agents, staff, winemaker, knowledge transfer (guided, informative), the travel group, other tourists, the local community, the hospitality, empathy and authenticity of social contact, the linguistic barrier (between non-Portuguese speaking tourists and the locals), the physical environment (natural local resources)
Engagement	Cognitive engagement (learning about the wines, the region, the local culture, the winemaking process, food & wine pairing), emotional engagement (the feelings arising from being in the vineyards), cognitive and emotional engagement (self-reflexion, feeling immersed in the destination), other (local culture, history and authentic gastronomy)
Personalization	Having customized and private experiences, having closer attention from the staff/ winemaker during the experience
Aesthetics	Appreciating the architecture and decoration of local buildings/local eateries, the beauty of Curia Hotel, the small cafés, the beauty of the landscape
Authenticity	Of the experience, of the interaction with the staff/winemaker/ the locals/the rural environment, of the local food and wine

Appendix 3 – Categories of analysis and indicators resulting from the supply agents' discourse in experiences in the Bairrada and Dão regions

Categories	Indicators
Active participation	Gastronomic experiences, wine experiences, food & wine workshops, others
Interaction	Supply agents, local community, the travel group, networking, authentic experiences, storytelling
Engagement	Learning, arousal of emotions, entertainment, nostalgia, feeling like home, human proximity
Personalization	Customized experiences, details of the experiences, hospitality, nostalgia, closer attention to visitors

THE MEDIATING ROLE OF CUSTOMER SATISFACTION ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN E-MENUS AND CUSTOMERS BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS IN THE QUICK SERVICE RESTAURANTS

Tamer Hamdy AYAD ¹

Management Department, College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsaa, Saudi Arabia
Tourism Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Suez Canal University, Ismailia, Egypt
ORCID: 0000-0003-0737-4569

Ahmed M. HASANEIN

Management Department, College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, Al-Ahsaa, Saudi Arabia
Hotel Management Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Helwan University, Cairo, Egypt
ORCID: 0000-0002-0664-9017

ABSTRACT

Considering the significant role of technological developments in food service industry, there is a lack of research studies examining the role of electronic menus (e-menus) on customer satisfaction (CS) and customer behavioral intentions (CBI), especially in the Saudi Arabian food service industry. This research aims to measure customers' acceptance to use e-menus on CS and CBI in quick-service restaurants (QSRs) in Saudi Arabia. It also examines the mediating role of CS on the link between customers' acceptance of using e-menus and CBI. The study adopted a quantitative research approach using self-administered surveys distributed and gathered from a random sample of QSRs customers in Al-hasaa. The major findings from 472 valid surveys, examined using a structural equation modeling (SEM) revealed that there is a significant positive effect of customers' acceptance of using e-menus on CS and on CBI. Moreover, CS has a significant positive effect on CBI. CS has a partial mediation effect in the link between customers' acceptance of using e-menus and CBI. This reflects that e-menus (i.e., interactivity, media enjoyment, and consumption visions) play a crucial role in enhancing CS and CBI. Several contributions for scholars and practitioners are discussed.

Article History

Received 14 December 2023
Revised 27 April 2024
Accepted 26 June 2024
Published online 20 Sept. 2024

Keywords

e-menu
customer satisfaction
customer behavioral intentions
quick service restaurants

¹ Address correspondence to Tamer Ayad, Management Department, College of Business Administration, King Faisal University, 380 Al-Ahsaa, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: tayad@kfu.edu.sa

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of QSRs, where technological advancements continually shape the consumer experience, the integration of technology stands as a pivotal intersection between innovation and customer engagement (Dixon et al., 2009; Wu, 2013). Rooted in the realms of consumer behavior and food service industry, this inquiry seeks to unravel the multifaceted dynamics that underpin the choices and actions of patrons in QSR settings (Mullemwar et al., 2014; Baba et al., 2023). According to Bawazir et al. (2023), e-menus mark a revolutionary shift in the landscape of dining experiences. They diverge from conventional paper menus as they have digital interfaces accessible to customers through a range of electronic devices, including tablets, smartphones, or interactive kiosks (Daradkeh et al., 2023). These dynamic menus go beyond static listings of dishes and prices, offering a range of interactive features and multimedia elements. E-Menus often provide vivid visual representations of menu items, detailed descriptions, and, in some cases, the ability to customize orders based on personal preferences (Le et al., 2023). Furthermore, Şahin (2020) added that the integration of technology in the form of e-menus aims to enhance the efficiency of the ordering process, streamline customer interactions, and provide a more engaging and personalized dining experience. With regard to the potential for real-time updates, promotions, and interactive elements, e-menus are not merely tools for displaying culinary offerings but are integral components in shaping the modern, tech-infused landscape food service establishments (i.e., Quick Service Restaurants - QSRs) (Wu, 2013; Baba et al., 2023).

Customer acceptance of e-menus pertains to the extent to which individuals are open to adopting and using digital or electronic menu interfaces as opposed to traditional paper menus (Alharbi & Drew, 2014; Cho et al., 2019; Chong, 2022; Chasanah et al., 2023). It encapsulates the customers' openness and readiness to engage with the technology-driven dining experience facilitated by e-menus (Kim, 2016). According to Pagaldiviti and Roy (2023), customers' acceptance to use technology is influenced by various factors including the perceived usefulness and enjoyment of the digital menu system, the clarity of information presented, and the overall user experience. Customers who readily accept e-menus are inclined to see value in the technology, finding it user-friendly, efficient, and enhancing their overall dining experience (Le et al., 2023). Additionally, positive perceptions of e-menus may be influenced by features such as customization options, interactive elements, and the convenience they bring to the ordering process (Daradkeh et al., 2023). Understanding and

measuring customer acceptance of e-menus are crucial for restaurants and businesses aiming to successfully integrate digital technologies into their service offerings, as it directly impacts the effectiveness and adoption of these innovative tools in enhancing the customer's interaction with the dining environment (Chong, 2022; Chasanah et al., 2023; Le et al., 2023; Pagaldiviti & Roy, 2023).

Customer satisfaction (CS) refers to the level of contentment and fulfillment experienced by customers following their interactions with the restaurant's products, services, and overall dining experience (Hossain et al., 2018). It is a measure of how well the restaurant meets or exceeds customer expectations in terms of food quality, service efficiency, pricing, cleanliness, and other factors relevant to the QSR environment (Zaitouni, 2019). Furthermore, Zaitouni and Murphy (2023) added that the high levels of CS lead to repeated visits to business, positive word-of-mouth and recommendations, and customer loyalty, which are all crucial for the sustained success in the competitive food service industry (Hsu & Wu, 2013; Wu, 2013; Jawabreh et al., 2018; Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023).

Customer behavioral intentions (CBI) are mentioned as the anticipated actions or behaviors that customers are predisposed to exhibit based on their experiences, perceptions, and satisfaction levels with a product, service, or overall interaction (Alharbi & Drew, 2014; Irianto, 2015; Sharma & Sharma, 2019; Al-Zyoud, 2023). In the context of the food service industry (i.e., QSRs), CBI encompasses a range of post-consumption activities that customers may contemplate or plan to undertake such as revisiting (Yim & Yoo, 2020), recommending it to others (Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023), or engaging in other positive behaviors that reflect their satisfaction and overall impression (Şahin, 2020; Yim and Yoo, 2020; Jeong et al., 2022; Le et al., 2023).

Drawing upon both theories Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) for understanding the relationship between e-menus and customers' behavioral intentions in QSRs; TAM provides insights into customers' perceptions of the usefulness and ease of use of e-menus, influencing their attitudes and intentions towards adoption (Feriska et al., 2023). Meanwhile, TPB extends this understanding by incorporating subjective norms and perceived behavioral control, elucidating how social influences and perceived control over using e-menus shape customers' intentions and actual behaviors in QSR settings. Together, these theories offer a comprehensive framework for exploring the

factors driving customers' adoption and usage of e-menus, and their subsequent behavioral intentions in QSRs (Bawazir et al., 2023).

This research seeks to investigate the direct impact of customers' acceptance of e-menu attributes on Customer Behavioral Intention (CBI) and the indirect influence mediated by Customer Satisfaction (CS) within the food service industry. The research employs a theoretical framework to examine the interconnectedness between e-menu attributes and CBI through CS. The findings are expected to yield valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners within the food industry, particularly those guiding food service organizations in Saudi Arabia, on effective strategies to achieve optimal CBI through e-menu attributes and CS.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Customer Acceptance of Using E-Menus Attributes

The exploration of customer acceptance of e-menus is a dynamic and evolving area within the literature on hospitality management and consumer behavior. E-menus, as digital counterparts to traditional paper menus, have garnered increasing attention due to their potential to reshape the dining experience. Recent research (e.g., Beldona et al., 2014; Kazandzhieva et al., 2017; Yeo et al., 2017; Jayawardena et al., 2023; Pagaldiviti & Roy, 2023; Hao et al., 2024) have delved into understanding the factors influencing customers' willingness to adopt and engage with these technological innovations. Studies often emphasize the significance of perceived usefulness, ease of use, and the overall user experience in shaping customer acceptance of e-menus. According to Venkatesh and Davis (2000) and Venkatesh et al., (2012), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which has been widely applied to investigate the acceptance of various technologies, including e-menus. According to TAM theory, perceived usefulness and enjoyment are critical determinants of customers' acceptance to use e-menus in restaurants specially QSRs (Saleh, 2021; Baba et al., 2023; Bawazir et al., 2023). This model has provided a theoretical foundation for researchers examining the acceptance of e-menus, considering other factors developed from Hossain et al. (2018) such as interactivity, consumption visions by digital features.

Perceived Usefulness

The perceived usefulness (PU) constitutes a pivotal dimension in the literature on consumer behavior within the food service industry. Several studies (e.g., Gonzalez et al., 2022; Baba et al., 2023; Bawazir et al., 2023) have extensively investigated how customers perceive the utility and practical benefits of engaging with digital menus in the fast-paced QSRs environment. The study of Bawazir et al. (2023) found that TAM has been influential in exploring the role of PU in shaping users' attitudes and intentions toward technology. The study of Zaitouni and Murphy (2023) found that there is a positive correlation between PU and CS suggests that when customers find a product or service beneficial and effective, it contributes to their overall contentment. Moreover, the study of Al-Zyoud (2023) declared that PU plays a role in shaping CBI, influencing whether customers are inclined to repeat their interactions, recommend the product or service to others, or engage in other positive post-purchase behaviors. Additionally, understanding and enhancing PU are, therefore, critical aspects for businesses seeking to foster CS and encourage favorable CBI (Al-Zyoud, 2023; Feriska et al., 2023; Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023; Hao et al., 2024). Therefore, based on these discussions, we are prompted to suggest:

H1: PU positively influences CS.

H2 PU positively influences CBI.

Interactivity

Interactivity has emerged as a focal point in the literature on technology adoption and consumer behavior. Researchers have explored how the interactive features embedded in e-menus contribute to the overall dining experience in fast-paced environments (Chong, 2022). As mentioned by Jayawardena et al. (2023), interactivity encompasses elements such as touch-screen capabilities, multimedia content, and real-time customization options, all of which aim to engage customers actively in the menu exploration process. Several studies (i.e., Feriska et al., 2023; Pande & Gupta, 2023; Hao et al., 2024) have delved into the impact of interactive e-menus on customer satisfaction and behavioral intentions. The ability of customers to dynamically customize their orders and engage with visually appealing content adds a layer of engagement that extends beyond traditional menu formats (Kurniawan et al., 2020; Pagaldiviti & Roy, 2023). As QSRs increasingly integrate technology to cater to evolving consumer preferences, understanding the role of interactivity in shaping the customer

experience with e-menus becomes crucial for enhancing operational efficiency and ensuring a positive and engaging dining encounter (Wu, 2013; Baba et al., 2023). Hence, these discussions encourage us to hypothesize:

H3: Interactivity positively influences CS.

H4: Interactivity positively influences CBI.

Enjoyment

The enjoyment explores the emotional and experiential dimensions of customer interaction with digital menu interfaces. Scholars have delved into how the design, features, and usability of e-menus contribute to the overall enjoyment of the dining experience. According to Kim (2016) and Xi et al. (2018) there is a positive correlation between the enjoyment of using e-menus and customer satisfaction. Enjoyment in this context is often associated with factors such as visual appeal, ease of navigation, and the novelty of interacting with digital technology (Chasanah et al., 2023; Feriska et al., 2023; Jayawardena et al., 2023; Hao et al., 2024). According to the study of Labus & Jelovac, (2022), customers when derive enjoyment from a product or service, it substantially enhances their overall satisfaction as well as enhances their behavioral intention influencing them whether are inclined to repeat interactions, share positive experiences, or partake in other favorable post-purchase behaviors. Furthermore, acknowledging the significance of enjoyment becomes crucial for businesses seeking not only to meet customer expectations but also to cultivate a positive emotional bond (Choi & Chung, 2013; Kim, 2016; Lee et al., 2023). This revealed that enjoyment plays a central role in influencing future behaviors and interactions, emphasizing the importance of creating enjoyable and satisfying customer experiences (Pande & Gupta, 2023). Therefore, we could postulate that:

H5: Enjoyment positively influences CS.

H6: Enjoyment positively influences CBI.

Consumption Visions

The exploration of consumption visions (CV) regarding the use of e-menus in QSRs delves into how customers envision and experience the consumption process in a digitalized dining environment. Several research studies (e.g. Wu, 2013; Hossain et al., 2018; Baba et al., 2023; Feriska et al.,

2023; Hao et al., 2024) have investigated how the implementation of e-menus shapes customers' perceptions and expectations surrounding the consumption of food in fast-service settings. Another study by Lee et al. (2023) emphasized that the transformative nature of e-menus offering diverse meal experiences through platforms like iPad tablets as well as feeling satisfied with the whole experience. Understanding how customers envision their consumption journey through the lens of e-menus is essential for QSRs seeking to align their technological offerings with evolving consumer preferences, provide not only efficient service but also a novel and engaging dining experience, and control their behavioral intentions (Baba et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2023). Hence, we could postulate that:

H7: CV positively influences CS.

H8: CV positively influences CBI.

Customer Satisfaction and Customer Behavioral Intention

The relationship between CS and CBI in QSRs is a critical aspect of understanding consumer dynamics in the fast-paced dining environment. CS reflects the degree to which patrons are content with their overall experience, considering factors like food quality, service efficiency, and ambiance. In QSRs context, where speed and convenience are often paramount, satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral intentions (Wu, 2013; Hossain et al., 2018; Baba et al., 2023). Several studies (i.e., Wang & Wu, 2013; Hossain et al., 2018; Zaitouni, 2019; Al-Zyoud, 2023; Zaitouni & Murphy, 2023) approved that there is a positive correlation between CS and CBI, which highlights the pivotal role of creating a positive overall dining experience in fostering customer loyalty and encouraging favorable post-purchase behaviors in the competitive landscape. Therefore, based on these discussions, we are prompted to suggest:

H9: CS positively influences CBI.

The Mediating Role of Customer Satisfaction

CS underscores a crucial pathway in understanding the dynamics of technology adoption and its impact on subsequent customer behavior in the context of QSRs. Customer acceptance of e-menus reflects the willingness of customers to embrace and use digital menu technologies, considering factors such as perceived usefulness, interactivity, enjoyment, and consumption visions. The study of Jeong et al. (2022) concluded that CS

operates as crucial factor in the relationship e-menus attributes and CBI, representing the degree to which customers are content with their interactions with e-menus. Moreover, the study of Zaitouni and Murphy (2023) found that perceiving customers e-menus as beneficial and user-friendly, it is likely to contribute positively to their satisfaction levels. Subsequently, satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral intentions, such as revisiting, recommending it to others, or engaging in other favorable post-purchase behaviors (Jawabreh et al., 2018; Zaitouni, 2019; Jeong et al., 2022; Le et al., 2023). Consequently, based on these discussions, we are prompted to hypothesize:

H10: CS mediates the relationship between BU and CBI.

H11: CS mediates the relationship between Interactivity and CBI.

H12: CS mediates the relationship between Enjoyment and CBI.

H13: CS mediates the relationship between CV and CBI.

All of the hypotheses and relationships are visual on Figure 1.

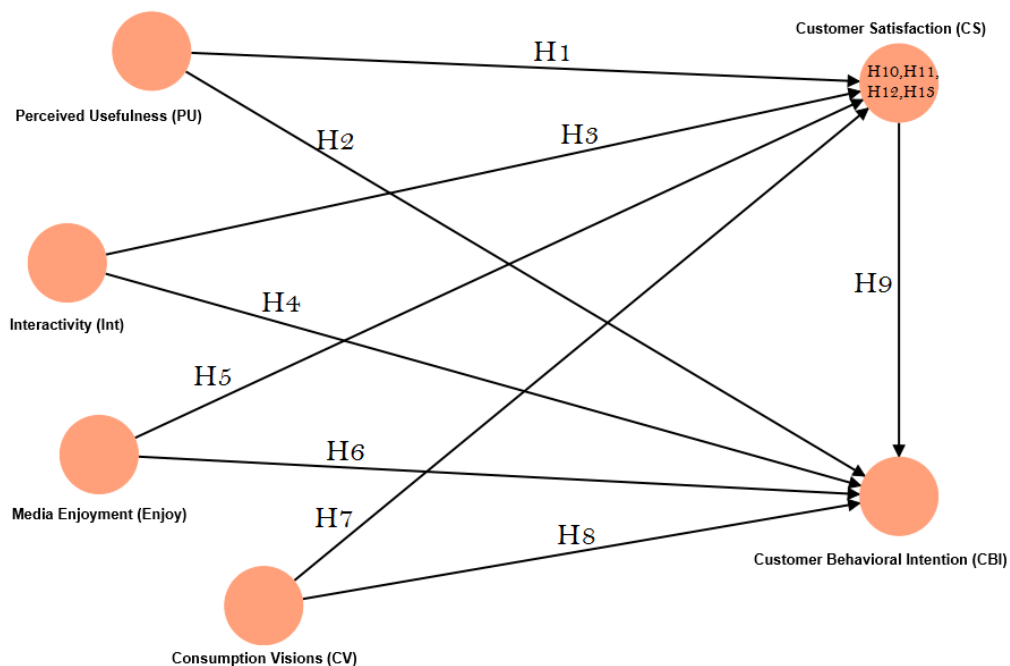


Figure 1. *Study's Theoretical Model*

METHODOLOGY

The Scale and The Study Constructs

In order to guarantee that the variables of this study were measured correctly, a number of scales were adopted, the validity of which was proven through a literature review. The customers' acceptance to use e-Menus were represented by four dimensions: perceived usefulness (3 items), interactivity (3 items), media enjoyment (4 items), and consumption visions (3 items), which were adopted from Hossain et al. (2018) and Yim and Yoo (2020). For customer satisfaction, it was measured by 3 items, derived from Hossain et al. (2018), which are: feeling very satisfied while using the e-menus, positive attitude while using e-menus, the interaction with the e-menus was very satisfying. As for customer behavioral intention, it was measured by 5 items, derived from Hossain et al. (2018), which are: I will say positive things about the restaurants that apply e-menus to other people, I recommend the restaurants that apply e-menus to someone who seeks my advice, I encourage friends and relatives to visit the restaurants that apply the e-menus, I consider the restaurants that apply e-menus my first choice to order casual dining services, and I will say positive things about the restaurants that apply e-menus to other people. All variables showed high reliability values exceeding 0.90, which supports the validity of choosing this scale.

Population and Sample Size

Customers of Saudi restaurants that implement electronic menus are the target research population of this study. Based on the fact that it is difficult to accurately determine the actual number of customers to the restaurants, determining the sample size for the current study was based on what was proven by Veal (2006), by calculating the sample size for any infinite research population, assuming that the size of the population is 20,000 individuals, and using the Herbert Larkin equation. the sample size for this study is 377 individuals (Ayad, 2017; 2022).

Data Collection

To collect primary data for this study from customers of Saudi restaurants that implement e-menus, a quantitative approach was adopted using a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was pre-tested, reviewed and modified twice by a group of food industry experts and university professors, and the questionnaire was directed to 500 customers in Saudi

restaurants that implement e-menus, during the months of January, February and March 2023. The final result of the number of completed and statistically analyzed questionnaires was 472, with a response rate of 94%. Authors got a high response rate due to their good relationship with many quick-service restaurants. The study questionnaire was designed in four parts, the first part of which was for demographic data, while the remaining three parts were devoted to the three variables of this study, which are customers' acceptance to use e-menus with its four dimensions (perceived usefulness, interactivity, media enjoyment, and consumption visions), and customer satisfaction and customer behavioral intention. Survey participants were asked to rate all items of each variable on a 5-point Likert scale.

Analysis Techniques

To analyze the study data, the statistical package SPSSvs24 and Excel Sheet 2010 were used for the purpose of analyzing descriptive data and exploring the demographic characteristics of the study sample. To examine the interrelationships between all variables and test the research hypotheses, structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM 4) was adopted as an analytical technique for this study.

RESULTS

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Convergent Validity

In order to ensure the construct reliability and validity of the model, a convergent validity test was conducted, and the reliability score results for all items were higher than 0.7, results were found to be ranged from 0.767 and 0.975, which meets the cut-off point proven by Hair et al. (2017), excluding item "CV3" which obtained a score of 0.664. Also, composite reliability (CR) scores for all variables were also above 0.7, also meeting the recommended cut-off point of Bryman and Cramer (2011) and Hair et al. (2017). As perceived usefulness scores 0.936, interactivity scores 0.970, media enjoyment scores 0.938, consumption visions scores 0.912, customer satisfaction scores 0.944, and customer behavioral intention scores 0.941, these results appear to be high. This may be due to the large sample size, and the authors conducting the survey themselves, which allowed for a better explanation of the questions and answering the questions of the respondents about any ambiguous points in the questionnaire. The average

variance extracted (AVE) results exceeded 0.5 for all tested variables, results were found to be ranged from 0.761 and 0.914, which also converges with what was recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). According to these results, it can be directly confirmed that the model is reliable and valid (see Table 1).

Table 1. *Results of Measurement Model - Convergent Validity*

Construct	Item	Loading	AVE	CR
<i>Perceived Usefulness (PU)</i>	It's very easy to use e-menus - "PU1"	0.964	0.832	0.936
	E-Menu is effective for ordering food- "PU2"	0.808		
	E-Menus-user-centered design - "PU3"	0.956		
<i>Interactivity (Int)</i>	I could navigate the e-menus with ease- "Int1"	0.961	0.914	0.970
	I could control the content according to my preferences- "Int2"	0.962		
	I found that e-menus efficiently and accurately met my specific needs - "Int3"	0.944		
<i>Media Enjoyment (Enjoy)</i>	The e-menus provided entertainment- "Enjoy1"	0.840	0.792	0.938
	The e-menus offered enjoyment- "Enjoy2"	0.945		
	The e-menus was pleasing- "Enjoy3"	0.826		
	The e-menus served as an entertaining tool- "Enjoy4"	0.941		
<i>Consumption Visions (CV)</i>	The e-menus sparked vivid mental images of food - "CV1"	0.974	0.780	0.912
	As I considered the options on the e-menus, my mind overflowed with vivid and elaborate images of the delicious dishes- "CV2"	0.975		
	The idea of savoring a dish from the e-menus was irresistibly appealing- "CV3"	0.664		
<i>Customer Satisfaction (CS)</i>	Feeling very satisfied while using the e-menus - "CS1"	0.952	0.849	0.944
	Positive attitude while using e-menus - "CS2"	0.857		
	The interaction with the e-menus was very satisfying - "CS3"	0.952		

<i>Customer Behavioral Intention (CBI)</i>	I will say positive things about the restaurants that apply e-menus to other people - "CBI1"	0.767	0.761	0.941
	I recommend the restaurants that apply e-menus to someone who seeks my advice - "CBI2"	0.811		
	I encourage friends and relatives to visit the restaurants that apply the e-menus - "CBI3"	0.912		
	I consider the restaurants that apply e-menus my first choice to order casual dining services - "CBI4"	0.912		
	I will say positive things about the restaurants that apply e-menus to other people - "CBI5"	0.946		

Discriminant Validity

In order to support the level of confidence in the results and conclusions of the model, the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading methods were applied with the aim of verifying that all variables that make up the model differ from each other, thus proving the discriminant validity of the model (Kock, 2020). All the results for discriminant validity are presented in Tables 2 and 3. The measurement model of the study is at Figure 2.

Table 2. *Latent Variables Correlations (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)*

Construct	PU	Int	Enjoy	CV	CS	CBI
PU	0.912					
Int	0.504	0.956				
Enjoy	0.512	0.477	0.890			
CV	0.610	0.862	0.613	0.883		
CS	0.432	0.728	0.702	0.673	0.921	
CBI	0.554	0.712	0.510	0.683	0.751	0.872

* The values in bold are the square root of AVE

All results in Table 2 show that each variable explains the variance of its components better than the other variables that make up the model, as the result of "PU" explanation for the variance of its components is 0.912 which is higher than all its correlation results with all other variables, also "Int" scores 0.956, "Enjoy" scores 0.890, "CV" scores 0.883, "CS" scores 0.921, and "CBI" scores 0.872, and all of these results are higher than the results of the variable's correlation results with the rest of the variables, which demonstrates the discriminant validity of the model as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) and Hair et al. (2017).

Table 3. *Discriminant Validity - Cross Loading*

	PU	Int	Enjoy	CV	CS	CBI
PU1	0.964	0.524	0.876	0.628	0.716	0.603
PU2	0.808	0.295	0.709	0.387	0.677	0.295
PU3	0.956	0.518	0.863	0.614	0.626	0.563
Int1	0.373	0.961	0.345	0.752	0.602	0.796
Int2	0.364	0.962	0.335	0.789	0.606	0.789
Int3	0.672	0.944	0.651	0.714	0.850	0.748
Enjoy1	0.778	0.272	0.840	0.402	0.629	0.308
Enjoy2	0.813	0.532	0.945	0.635	0.639	0.566
Enjoy3	0.732	0.255	0.826	0.426	0.599	0.274
Enjoy4	0.795	0.532	0.941	0.644	0.633	0.560
CV1	0.617	0.396	0.631	0.974	0.777	0.831
CV2	0.633	0.393	0.636	0.975	0.797	0.822
CV3	0.296	0.381	0.281	0.664	0.393	0.561
CS1	0.664	0.563	0.807	0.618	0.952	0.590
CS2	0.635	0.622	0.673	0.627	0.857	0.330
CS3	0.660	0.562	0.802	0.622	0.952	0.589
CBI1	0.353	0.618	0.335	0.906	0.514	0.767
CBI2	0.581	0.707	0.526	0.699	0.703	0.811
CBI3	0.399	0.743	0.359	0.681	0.604	0.912
CBI4	0.368	0.717	0.305	0.771	0.558	0.912
CBI5	0.672	0.745	0.651	0.714	0.850	0.946

By reading and interpreting the results of Table 3, it can be confirmed that all scale's items of all variables load more strongly on their own constructs, and greater than their loading on all other variables of the model's constructs. We can verify this by comparing all the results written in bold with the rest of the results that were recorded with all the items that make up all the study variables that were used in building the model for this study, which confirms the discriminant validity of the model, as proved by Chin (1998).

Structural Model (Inner Model)

Coefficient of Determination (R²)

The coefficient of determination (R²) was used to measure the model's ability to predict the percentage of variance occurring in the dependent variable through the independent variable. Table 4 shows that the variance obtained from the independent variables "PU", "Int", "Enjoy", and "CV" on the dependent variables "CS" and "CBI" is high and exceeds the cut-off point recommended by Chin (1998), as "CBI" scores 0.969 which more than 0.67, and "CS" scores 0.967, which also more than 0.67 which shows the

model's capacity to forecast the proportion of variability in the dependent variable attributed to the independent variable.

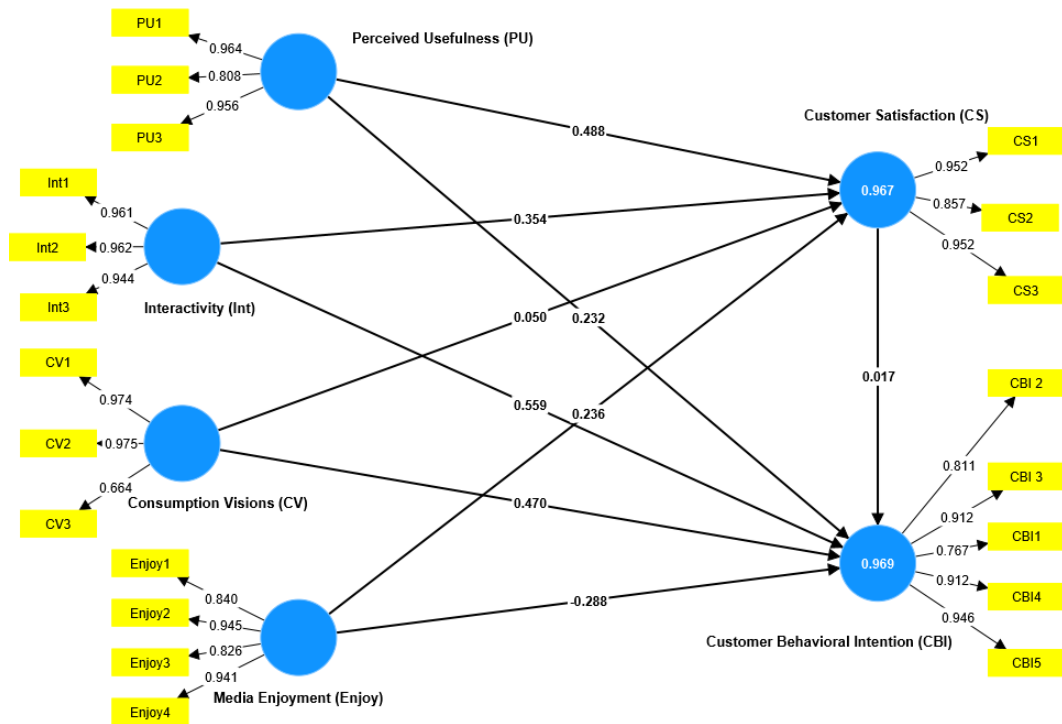


Figure 2. Measurement Model

Table 4. R² of the Endogenous Latent Variables

Construct	R-square	Results
CBI	0.969	High
CS	0.967	High

Effect Size (f²)

Effect size (f²) evaluation was used, aiming to measure the individual effect of each exogenous latent variable on the endogenous latent variable in the model. Table 5 shows the size of the effects of the exogenous latent variables of the model “PU”, “Int”, “Enjoy”, and “CV” on the endogenous latent variable “CS”, as the recorded results were found to be ranged from 0.11 (Small effect size) to 0.912 (Large effect size), and shows the size of the effects of the exogenous latent variables of the model “PU”, “Int”, “Enjoy”, and “CV” on the endogenous latent variable “CBI”, as the recorded results were found to be ranged from 0.182 (Medium effect size) to 0.921 (Large effect size). While the results also show the size of the effect of “CS” as an

exogenous latent variable of the model on “CBI” as an endogenous latent variable of the model, which scores 0.521 (Large effect size). Based on the criteria recommended by Cohen (1988), the results varied between small, medium, and large effects size between all variables of the model.

Table 5. *Assessment of Effect Size (f^2)*

Constructs	CBI	CS
PU	0.11 (Small)	0.796 (Large)
Int	0.911 (Large)	0.921 (Large)
Enjoy	0.249 (Medium)	0.182 (Medium)
CV	0.912 (Large)	0.215 (Medium)
CS	0.521 (Large)	

Goodness of Fit of the Model (GoF)

The model fit test was applied to ensure that the model proposed for this study can be considered a global fit measure model, at the level of measurement, structure, and overall performance of the model (Chin, 2010).

$$\text{GoF} = \sqrt{R^2 \times \text{AVE}}$$

$$\text{GoF} = 0.891$$

Based on the criteria of Wetzels et al. (2009) and the results of the GoF test, the goodness of fit of the proposed model is large enough to be considered sufficiently valid as a global PLS model.

Hypotheses Assessment (Significance of Path Coefficients)

A significance test for the path coefficients was conducted, with the aim of determining the extent of consistency between the proposed theoretical model and the primary data collected. All results of testing the correctness or incorrectness of the study hypotheses can be summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. *Path Coefficient of the study Hypotheses*

Hypothesis (Paths)	Effect	Std. Beta	Std. Error	T Value	P values	Results
H1 Perceived Usefulness -> Customer Satisfaction	Direct	0.486	0.112	6.922	0.000	Supported**
H2 Perceived Usefulness -> Customer Behavioral Intention	Direct	0.191	0.048	2.662	0.000	Supported**
H3 Interactivity -> Customer Satisfaction	Direct	0.388	0.076	4.826	0.000	Supported**

H4 Interactivity ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Direct	0.537	0.196	9.686	0.019	Supported**
H5 Media Enjoyment ->Customer Satisfaction	Direct	0.251	0.008	5.628	0.000	Supported**
H6 Media Enjoyment ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Direct	0.323	0.021	6.426	0.000	Supported**
H7 Consumption Visions ->Customer Satisfaction	Direct	0.003	0.114	2.112	0.000	Supported**
H8 Consumption Visions ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Direct	0.423	0.064	7.684	0.000	Supported**
H9 Customer Satisfaction ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Direct	0.132	0.074	2.662	0.019	Supported**
H10 Perceived Usefulness ->Customer Satisfaction ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Indirect	0.386	0.098	6.542	0.000	Supported**
H11 Interactivity ->Customer Satisfaction ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Indirect	0.466	0.102	9.641	0.000	Supported**
H12 Media Enjoyment ->Customer Satisfaction ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Indirect	0.221	0.114	4.628	0.005	Supported**
H13 Consumption Visions ->Customer Satisfaction ->Customer Behavioral Intention	Indirect	0.462	0.097	5.826	0.001	Supported**
Significant at P** = < 0.01						

This study suggested 9 direct hypotheses and 4 indirect hypothesis (Figure 1), the structure equation model results (Tables 6 and 7; Figure 3) showed that "PU" has a positive and significant direct impact on "CS" (Effect size= 0.796, Std. Beta = 0.486, P = 0.000), and it has a positive and significant direct impact on "CBI" (Effect size= 0.11, Std. Beta = 0.191, P = 0.000), so hypotheses H1 and H2 were supported. On the same context, "Int" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" (Effect size= 0.921, Std. Beta = 0.388, P = 0.000), and it has a positive and significant direct impact on "CBI" (Effect size= 0.911, Std. Beta = 0.537, P = 0.019), so hypothesis H3 and H4 was supported. Also, "Enjoy" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" (Effect size= 0.182, Std. Beta = 0.251, P = 0.000), and it has a positive and significant direct impact on "CBI" (Effect size= 0.249, Std. Beta = 0.323, P = 0.000), so hypotheses H5 and H6 were supported. On the same context, "CV" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" (Effect size= 0.215, Std. Beta = 0.003, P = 0.000), and it has a positive and significant direct impact on

"CBI" (Effect size= 0.912, Std. Beta = 0.423, P = 0.000), so hypotheses H7 and H8 were supported. Moreover, "CS" has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" (Effect size= 0.521, Std. Beta = 0.132, P = 0.019), so hypothesis H9 was supported. In addition, the SEM results proved the mediation impact of "CS" in the relationships between "PU" and "CBI" (Std. Beta = 0.386, P = 0.000), between "Int" and "CBI" (Std. Beta = 0.466, P = 0.000), between "Enjoy" and "CBI" (Std. Beta = 0.221, P = 0.005), and between "CV" and "CBI" (Std. Beta = 0.462, P = 0.001), and the lower and upper level of bootstrapped confidence interval for all variables were both greater than zero, which means that zero did not fall in-between the two values, and P value was = 0.000, as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008), which support the mediating impact of "CS", so hypotheses H10, H11, H12, and H13 were supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was established to examine the interrelationship between the customers' acceptance of using e-menus with its four dimensions (perceived usefulness, interactivity, media enjoyment, and consumption visions) and customer satisfaction and customer behavioral intention in quick-service restaurants in Saudi Arabia. In addition, to examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction on the relationship between customers' acceptance of using e-menus and customer behavioral intention. The interrelationships among all variables were tested.

The results showed that "PU" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" among customers of quick-service restaurants in Saudi Arabia, which is largely in line with the study of Zaitouni and Murphy (2023) who found that "PU" of self-service technologies (e.g., e-menus) had a positive influence on "CS" in restaurant industry in USA. Moreover, the results showed that "PU" has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" among customers of quick-service restaurants, consistent with Al-Zyoud (2023). In addition, the results showed that "Int" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" among customers of quick-service restaurants, which is largely consistent with what was addressed by Kurniawan et al. (2020) who declared that "Int" plays a crucial role in "CS" towards online menu in restaurant and cafe as well as, "Int" has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" among customers of quick-service restaurants, which is consists with the study of Baba et al. (2023).

In addition, the results showed that "CV" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" among customers of quick-service restaurants in

Saudi Arabia, which is largely in line with Lee et al. (2023) who found that the e-menus offering diverse meal experiences through platforms like iPad tablets as well as feeling satisfied with the whole experience. Moreover, the results showed that "CV" has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" among customers of quick-service restaurants, which is consistent with the study of Baba et al. (2023) who declared customers' "CV" of self-ordering technology plays an important role in their "CBI" in terms of kiosks in Malaysia. Likewise, the results showed that "Enjoy" has a positive and significant impact on "CS" among customers of quick-service restaurants, which is largely consistent with what was addressed by Lee et al. (2023) who found that customers enjoy with food delivery apps has a pivotal role into their "CS" in Korean food industry. Moreover, enjoy has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" among customers of quick-service restaurants, consistent with Pande and Gupta (2023) who declared that "Enjoy" of customers towards using robots has a significant influence on their "CBI" in the Indian context. Moreover, the results proved that "CS" has a positive and significant impact on "CBI" among customers of quick-service restaurants in Saudi Arabia, largely in line with Al-Zyoud (2023). Furthermore, the results emphasize the mediating role of "CS" on the relationship among all independent variables: perceived usefulness, interactivity, media enjoyment, and consumption visions and the dependent variable "CBI", which confirm the mediating impact of customer satisfaction on the relationship between customers' acceptance of using e-menus and customer behavioral intention in quick-service restaurants in Saudi Arabia.

The study reached a number of results that have an impact and importance on the theoretical and practical aspects of the quick-service restaurants industry. It contributed to supporting the shortcomings in the literature on the role of using e-menus and customer satisfaction and customer behavioral intention in quick-service restaurants, as well as contributes to the limited literature on the mediating role of customer satisfaction in the relationship between customers' acceptance of using e-menus and customer behavioral intention. This study offers practical insight implications that advance the quick service restaurant industry, particularly in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The findings affirm the significant and impactful role of electronic menus, customer satisfaction, and customer behavioral intentions in quick service restaurants, advocating for an enhanced dependence on electronic menus in the future. Moreover, there's potential for further development by leveraging existing technological tools like augmented reality, virtual reality, 3D imaging, and

anticipating future advancements. These avenues also pave the way for future research in this domain. These findings yield valuable insights for both scholars and practitioners within the food industry, particularly those guiding food service organizations in Saudi Arabia, on effective strategies to achieve optimal "CBI" through e-menu attributes and "CS".

CONCLUSIONS

This study endeavours to explore the direct influence of customers' willingness to utilize e-menus, focusing on four key dimensions: perceived usefulness, interactivity, media enjoyment, and consumption visions, alongside their impact on customer satisfaction and behavioural intention in quick-service restaurants across Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, it examines the indirect effects of perceived usefulness (PU), interactivity (Int), consumption visions (CV), and media enjoyment (Enjoy) on customer behavioural intention (CBI) via customer satisfaction (CS). Data were gathered from 472 customers patronizing quick-service restaurants in Saudi Arabia. Descriptive analysis was conducted using the statistical package SPSS version 24 and Excel Sheet 2010 to profile the respondents. Additionally, structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM V.4) was employed to scrutinize the direct and indirect relationships among variables and to validate the research hypotheses. The results of the SEM analysis revealed that the four dimensions of customers' acceptance of e-menus (PU, Int, CV, Enjoy) significantly and positively influence both customer satisfaction and behavioural intention in quick-service restaurants. Moreover, the findings demonstrated that customer satisfaction fully mediates the relationship between customers' acceptance of e-menus (PU, Int, CV, Enjoy) and their behavioural intention in quick-service restaurants. These insights may offer valuable guidance for scholars and practitioners in the food industry, particularly in Saudi Arabia, in devising effective strategies to enhance customer behavioural intention through e-menu attributes and customer satisfaction.

Like many prior studies, the present research possesses certain constraints and limitations that pave the path for future investigation avenues. Subsequent studies could delve into demographic attributes like gender and age, either as moderators or through conducting multi-group analyses to discern variances in the scrutinized relationships. Moreover, further exploration could explore alternative potential mediators, contrasting their outcomes with our own. Caution should be exercised when generalizing the findings of this study, given its exclusive focus on

Saudi Arabian customers. Thus, future research endeavours could re-evaluate the current model across diverse cultural contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This work was supported through the Annual Funding track by the Deanship of Scientific Research, Vice Presidency for Graduate Studies and Scientific Research, King Faisal University, Saudi Arabia [Project No. GrantA076].

REFERENCES

- Alharbi, S., & Drew, S. (2014). Using the technology acceptance model in understanding academics' behavioural intention to use learning management systems. *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications*, 5 (1), 143-155. <http://doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2014.050120>
- Al-Zyoud, M. F. (2023). Fresh mindset, hygiene perception, QR code menu, and intention to re-dine among Jordanian consumers. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 1-16. <http://doi.org/10.1080/15378020.2023.2214068>
- Ayad, T. H. (2017). Examining the relationships between visit experience, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among tourists at the Egyptian Museum. *Journal of Association of Arab Universities for Tourism and Hospitality*, 14 (2), 93-104. <http://doi.org/10.21608/JAAUTH.2017.48147>
- Ayad, T. (2022). Tourism Graduates-Are They Employable?. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 101, 100-123. <http://doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2022.101.007>
- Baba, N., Hanafiah, M. H., Mohd Shahril, A., & Zulkifly, M. I. (2023). Factors Affecting Consumer Acceptance of E-Menu in The Klang Valley Restaurant Sector in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*. 13. <http://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-08-2021-0226>
- Bawazir, A. A., Kamal, A. A. B. M., Mee, G., Lean, L. L., Kai, N. S., Nor, S. M., ... & Noordin, A. (2023). Factors Affecting Consumer Acceptance of E-Menu in The Klang Valley Restaurant Sector in Malaysia. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 13 (6). <http://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v13-i6/17108>
- Beldona, S., Buchanan, N., & Miller, B. L. (2014). Exploring the promise of e-tablet restaurant menus. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 26 (3), 367-382. <http://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-01-2013-0039>
- Bryman, A., & Cramer, D. (2011). *Quantitative data analysis with IBM SPSS 17, 18 and 19: A guide for social scientists*. Routledge-Cavendish/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Chasanah, N., Indrayanto, A., Krisnaesanti, A., Mustafa, R. M., Restianto, Y. E., Naufalin, L. R., Dinanti, A., & Iskandar, D. (2023). Measuring the customer acceptance of website technology using TAM framework. *AIP Conference Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0113161>
- Chin, W. W. (1998). *The partial least squares approach for structural equation modeling*. In G. A. Marcoulides (Ed.), *Modern methods for business research* (pp. 295–336). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Chin, W. W. (2010) *How to Write Up and Report PLS Analyses*. In: Esposito Vinzi, V., Chin, W. W., Henseler, J. and Wang, H. (Eds.), *Handbook of Partial Least Squares: Concepts, Methods and Applications* (pp. 655-690). Springer, Heidelberg, Dordrecht, London, New York. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-32827-8_29
- Cho, M., Bonn, M. A., & Li, J. (2019). Differences in perceptions about food delivery apps between single-person and multi-person households. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 77, 108–116. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2018.06.019>

- Choi, G., & Chung, H. (2013). Applying the technology acceptance model to social networking sites (SNS): Impact of subjective norm and social capital on the acceptance of SNS. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 29 (10), 619-628. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2012.756333>
- Chong, K. L. (2022). Factors affecting the consumers' embracement of manual self-ordering system (order chit) in restaurants. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 25 (1), 33-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15378020.2021.1911565>
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed.). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, USA.
- Daradkeh, F. M., Hassan, T. H., Palei, T., Helal, M. Y., Mabrouk, S., Saleh, M. I., Salem, A. E., & Elshawarbi, N. N. (2023). Enhancing Digital Presence for Maximizing Customer Value in Fast-Food Restaurants. *Sustainability*, 15 (7), 5690. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su15075690>
- Dixon, M., Kimes, S. E & Verma, R. (2009). Customer preference for restaurant technology innovations. *Cornell Hospitality Report* 9 (7), 4- 16.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3151312>
- Feriska, L., Surya, A., Yohanes, M., & Anita, T. L. (2023). Managing Repatronage Intention with Technology Acceptance Model. *Proceedings of 2023 International Conference on Digital Applications, Transformation & Economy (ICDATE)*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICDATE58146.2023.10248556>
- Gonzalez, R., Gasco, J., & Llopis, J. (2022). Information and communication technologies in food services and restaurants: a systematic review. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(4), 1423-1447. [10.1108/IJCHM-05-2021-0624](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-05-2021-0624)
- Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C. M. and Sarstedt, M. (2017) *A Primer on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)* (2nd Edition). Sage Publications Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Hao, F., Guo, Y., Zhang, C., & Chon, K. K. S. K. S. (2024). Blockchain = better food? The adoption of blockchain technology in food supply chain. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 36 (10), 3340-3360. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2023-0752>
- Hossain, M. S., Zhou, X., & Rahman, M. F. (2018). Examining the impact of QR codes on purchase intention and customer satisfaction on the basis of perceived flow. *International Journal of Engineering Business Management*, 10, 1847979018812323. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1847979018812323>
- Hsu, L., & Wu, P. (2013). Electronic-tablet-based menu in a full service restaurant and customer satisfaction - a structural equation model. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*, 3 (2), 61-71.
- Irianto, H. (2015). Consumers' attitude and intention towards organic food purchase: An extension of theory of planned behavior in gender perspective. *International journal of management, economics and social sciences*, 4 (1), 17-31.
- Jawabreh, O., Al Jaffal, T., Abdelrazaq, H., & Mahmoud, R. (2018). The impact of menus on the customer satisfaction in restaurants classified in Aqaba special economic zone authority (ASEZA). *Journal of Tourism, Hospitality and Sports*, 33, 29-39.
- Jayawardena, C., Ahmad, A., Valeri, M., & Jaharadak, A. A. (2023). Technology acceptance antecedents in digital transformation in hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 108, 103350. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2022.103350>
- Jeong, M., Kim, K., Ma, F., & DiPietro, R. (2022). Key factors driving customers' restaurant dining behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34 (2), 836-858. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-07-2021-0831>
- Kazandzhieva, V., Ilieva, G., & Filipova, H. (2017). *The impact of technological innovations on hospitality service*. Contemporary Tourism-Traditions and Innovations, Sofia University.
- Kim, J. (2016). An extended technology acceptance model in behavioral intention toward hotel tablet apps with moderating effects of gender and age. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 28 (8), 1535-1553. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-06-2015-0289>

- Kock, N. (2020). Multilevel analyses in PLS-SEM: An anchor-factorial with variation diffusion approach. *Data Analysis Perspectives Journal*, 1 (2), 1-6.
- Kurniawan, R., Sutawan, A., & Amalia, R. (2020). Information System Ordering Online Restaurant Menu At Hover Cafe. *Aptisi Transactions on Management (ATM)*, 4 (1), 32-40. <https://doi.org/10.33050/atm.v4i1.1082>
- Labus, P., & Jelovac, D. (2022). Restaurants: Applying an Extended Technology Acceptance Model. *Acta turistica*, 34 (1), 51-82. <https://doi.org/10.22598/at/2022.34.1.51>
- Le, T. T., Bui Thi Tuyet, N., Le Anh, T., Dang Thi Kim, N., Trinh Thi Thai, N., & Nguyen Lan, A. (2023). The effects of online restaurant menus on consumer purchase intention: evidence from an emerging economy. *British Food Journal*, 125 (7), 2663-2679. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-10-2022-0916>
- Lee, W. S., Song, M., Moon, J., & Tang, R. (2023). Application of the technology acceptance model to food delivery apps. *British Food Journal*, 125 (1), 49-64. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-05-2021-0574>
- Mullemwar, V., Virdande, V., Bannore, M., Awari, A., & Shriwas, R. (2014). Electronic menu card for restaurants. *International Journal of Research in Engineering and Technology*, 3 (4), 341-345. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15623/ijret.2014.0304061>
- Pagaldiviti, S. R., & Roy, B. K. (2023). *The Future of Restaurants*. In Advances in environmental engineering and green technologies book series (pp. 63–74). <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-9094-5.ch004>
- Pande, S., & Gupta, K. P. (2023). Indian customers' acceptance of service robots in restaurant services. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 42 (12), 1946-1967. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2022.2103734>
- Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2008). Asymptotic and resampling strategies for assessing and comparing indirect effects in multiple mediator models. *Behavior Research Methods*, 40 (3), 879–891. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.40.3.879>
- Şahin, E. (2020). An evaluation of digital menu types and their advantages. *Journal of Tourism & Gastronomy Studies*, 8 (4), 2374-2386. <https://doi.org/10.21325/jotags.2020.716>
- Saleh, N. S. (2021). Technology Acceptance: Theories and Applications in Digital Tech. *Human Sustainability Procedia*, 1 (2), 22-30.
- Sharma, S. K., & Sharma, M. (2019). Examining the role of trust and quality dimensions in the actual usage of mobile banking services: An empirical investigation. *International Journal of Information Management*, 44, 65–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.09.013>
- Wang, H. Y., & Wu, S. Y. (2013). Factors influencing behavioural intention to patronise restaurants using iPad as a menu card. *Behaviour and Information Technology*, 33(4), 395–409. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929x.2013.810776>
- Veal, A. J. (2006). *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism*. 3rd Edition, Prentice Hall, London.
- Venkatesh, V., & Davis, F. D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: Four longitudinal field studies. *Management science*, 46 (2), 186-204. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926>
- Venkatesh, N., Thong, N., & Xu, N. (2012). Consumer Acceptance and Use of Information Technology: Extending the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 36 (1), 157. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41410412>
- Wetzels, N., Odekerken-Schröder, N., & Van Oppen, N. (2009). Using PLS Path Modeling for Assessing Hierarchical Construct Models: Guidelines and Empirical Illustration. *MIS Quarterly*, 33 (1), 177. <https://doi.org/10.2307/20650284>
- Wu, H. C. (2013). An empirical study of the effects of service quality, perceived value, corporate image, and customer satisfaction on behavioral intentions in the Taiwan quick service restaurant industry. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 14 (4), 364-390. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1528008X.2013.802581>
- Xi, W., Jin, M., Gong, H., & Wang, Q. (2018). *Touch or shake? The interaction effect between hand gesture and reward setting on the enjoyment of gamified marketing*. In GamiFIN (pp 100-107).
- Yeo, V. C. S., Goh, S. K., & Rezaei, S. (2017). Consumer experiences, attitude and behavioral intention toward online food delivery (OFD) services. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 35, 150–162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2016.12.013>

- Yim, M. Y. C., & Yoo, C. Y. (2020). Are digital menus really better than traditional menus? the mediating role of consumption visions and menu enjoyment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 50 (1), 65-80. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.01.001>
- Zaitouni, M. (2019). *A Comparison of Self-Service Technologies (SSTs) in the US Restaurant Industry: An Evaluation of Consumer Perceived Value, Satisfaction, and Behavioral Intentions*. Electronic Theses and Dissertations. 6596. University of Central Florida.
- Zaitouni, M., & Murphy, K. S. (2023). Self-Service Technologies (SST) in the US Restaurant industry: An evaluation of consumer perceived value, satisfaction, and continuance intentions. *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 1-32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15378020.2023.2229582>

DEVELOPING A NEW SCALE FOR SERVICE QUALITY IN INTERCITY BUSES: IBUSQUAL

Sedat ÇELİK¹

*Department of Tourism Management, School
of Tourism and Hotel Management, Şırnak
University, Türkiye*
ORCID: 0000-0002-4541-6355

Aysen ERCAN İŞTİN

*Department of Gastronomy and Culinary
Arts, School of Tourism and Hotel
Management, Şırnak University, Türkiye*
ORCID: 0000-0002-7622-361X

Fikret ERTAŞ

Ecotourism Guide & Master Student, Şırnak University, Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0002-3634-7319

ABSTRACT

Service quality is an important output for most industries. Since occupancy rates are very important for intercity bus companies (IBCs), the perception of service quality (SQ) is critical. Despite this, it is apparent that scale studies measuring the perception of SQ in bus companies are insufficient. In this context, the aim of this study is to develop a scale that can evaluate the SQ of IBCs. Quantitative research method was used in the study. Data were collected with survey from intercity bus users and a pretest (n: 153) and then a main study (n: 461) were conducted. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the IBUSQUAL scale comprises seven dimensions (employee behavior (EB), office services (OS), promised service (PS), rest area (BRA), passenger interactions (PI), free shuttle services (FSS), and bus comfort (BC)) and 30 items. The fit indices of IBUSQUAL were reliable, and construct validity, reliability, and discriminant validity were ensured. The scale is important in terms of revealing that passenger interaction should also be taken into account to measure the SQ perception of IBCs.

Article History

Received 29 October 2023
Revised 18 June 2024
Accepted 25 June 2024
Published online 9 August 2024

Keywords

intercity bus company
service quality
scale development

¹ Address correspondence to Sedat Çelik (Assoc. Prof.), Department of Tourism Management, School of Tourism and Hotel Management, Şırnak University, Türkiye. E-mail: sedattcelik@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

The ability to attract and retain passengers in transportation systems is important for the sustainability of the company (de Oña et al., 2013). The most important way to achieve this is to increase SQ. SQ is the “customer’s judgment about the product/service” (Tavmergen, 2002, p. 24). Berry et al. (1990, p. 29) draw attention to the importance of customer perception by stating that “customers are the only judges of SQ” and that an evaluation is made by comparing the customer’s expectations and perceptions. In today’s competitive environment, providing quality service is recognized as a fundamental strategy for success and survival. In the 1980s, academic and managerial efforts focused on determining what SQ meant to customers and developing strategies to meet their expectations (Zeithaml et al., 1996, p. 31). The pursuit of quality was likely the most significant consumer trend of the 1980s, as consumers now demand a higher level of product quality than ever before (Parasuraman et al., 1985, p. 41). The importance of SQ has increased with increasing competition in recent years (Johnson & Sirikit, 2002).

Ultimately, the increase in SQ encourages the use of transportation systems. This situation reduces the use of private vehicles and contributes to the reduction of environmental, air quality, and traffic problems (Govender & Pan, 2011; Wen et al., 2005). In addition, many studies (Cheunkamon et al. 2022; Çelik & Çizel, 2017; Kozak, 2001; Tosun et al., 2015) show that “transportation” is one of the most crucial aspects of SQ, especially in tourist destinations as a logistic system. For these reasons, measuring SQ is an important tool for managers to determine the level of SQ and make market demand forecasts (Lin et al., 2008). Satisfaction is significantly affected by SQ (Cronin et al., 2000; Shamsudin et al., 2020), customer commitment (Harrison-Walker, 2001), customer loyalty (Etuk et al., 2021; Ricardianto et al., 2023; Shi et al., 2014), and behavioral intention (Hu & Jen, 2007).

Although there are studies on SQ in transportation enterprises, they are limited. The studies were carried out for transportation vehicles such as railways (Prasad & Shekhar, 2010), urban public transport (Bajčetić et al., 2018; Houria & Farès, 2019; Sukhov et al., 2021), intercity bus service (Hu & Jen, 2007; Freitas, 2013; Lin, 2018), Jeepney (Ong et al., 2022) and planes (Shah et al., 2020). However, it has been observed that intercity bus companies (Barabino et al., 2011; Bajčetić et al., 2018; Houria & Farès, 2019) primarily evaluate urban bus transportation within the framework of quality criteria. It has been emphasized by Freitas (2013) that the criteria

and qualifications used in this context are not sufficient for measuring the quality of intercity passenger transportation services.

In addition, in some studies (Mapunda, 2021; Mikhaylov et al., 2015), a scale has been developed to determine SQ in bus companies based on SERVQUAL measurements. However, although it has been mentioned as an important aspect of the service encounter for a long time, there are almost no studies examining the effects of customer-to-customer (CtoC) interactions on SQ (Moore et al., 2005, p. 483; Wu, 2008, p. 1502), especially in transportation businesses, which have been ignored in the service literature. This situation is also seen in studies other than scale development studies (Sakti et al., 2021; Shamsudin et al., 2020). However, one of the factors that determines both satisfaction and quality is customer interaction. At this point, Wirtz and Lovelock (2021, p. 27) emphasize the necessity of a customer portfolio to provide a customer experience, stating that “we need to use marketing communications to attract the right customer segments to the service facility and train them on the right behavior once there.” In a similar approach, Gummesson (1993) demonstrates the importance of customer interaction by saying that “hiring the right customers is as important as hiring the right staff” (as cited in Grove & Fisk, 1997). CtoC interaction is an integral part of the service experience and a crucial component that shapes the customer service experience (Zgolli & Zaiem, 2017, p. 46). “The phenomenon of CtoC interaction, which was implemented in the context of services only 20 years ago, is a theme that draws the attention of both academics and practitioners to the general proposition that the development of a strong interaction between consumers improves the service experience” (Zgolli & Zaiem, 2017, p. 45). In transportation companies, this situation can be handled with passenger interaction. Passenger interactions are expressed as actions taken by passengers during the time they spend from the starting point to the destination (Kadam & Bandyopadhyay, 2020).

The presence of other customers in a service environment can affect interaction quality and the customers’ service experience (Grove & Fisk, 1997). When this situation is considered in terms of service businesses, it is much more significant for intercity bus companies since passengers sit next to or closely behind one another. The purpose of this study is to develop a reliable and valid scale that also takes into account passenger interaction to determine the quality levels of intercity bus companies. Utilizing a systematic literature review, Bakar et al. (2022) analyzed the SQ of bus performance in Asia. They researched 41 articles and identified 12 dimensions of service quality in bus performance. These dimensions do not

include passenger interaction attributes. Also, Mazzulla and Eboli (2006) created an index for SQ by collecting data from those who prefer the bus and those who do not. However, passenger interaction was not considered in that index. Therefore, the significance of this study lies in its ability to provide suggestions for bus companies to establish SQ standards and develop applicable strategies. As a result, bus companies will be able to measure SQ more accurately. In addition, it will allow for the evaluation of customers' perceptions of SQ. In this way, companies will be able to act more rationally in understanding and meeting changing customer expectations, thereby providing a successful competitive advantage. The IBUSQUAL scale that emerged from the research is significant since it reveals the previously unmeasured customer interaction with transportation companies. After an explanation of SQ and SQ scales, studies on SQ in bus companies were mentioned, followed by a discussion of methods and findings and the presentation of recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Service Quality

Before talking about SQ, it is useful to mention the concept of quality. As in many definitions, it can be observed that there are different perspectives on the concept of quality. The American Society for Quality (ASQ, 2022, p. 4) stated, "In technical usage, quality can have two meanings: 1) the characteristics of a product or service that bear on its ability to satisfy stated or implied needs; 2) a product or service free of deficiencies." In addition, quality is "fitness for use," according to Juran (1951), and "conformance to requirements," according to Crosby (1980, p. 15). In the light of these definitions, SQ can be defined as "the judgment arising from an evaluation process in which consumers' perceptions of the service they receive and their expectations are compared" (Chawla & Sharma, 2017, p. 48). Therefore, quality service can be defined as a service that exceeds consumers' expectations (Parasuraman et al., 1985, p. 42).

In other words, if the expectations are kept constant, a higher evaluation of SQ is observed when a perception of a higher performance level for the service received occurs, and a negative or lower evaluation of SQ is observed when a perception of low performance occurs (Boulding et al., 1993, p. 8; Grönroos, 1984, p. 36–37). In the literature on SQ, expectations are viewed as desires or wants (i.e., what a service provider believes they should provide rather than what is actually provided). It is formed based on a firm's previous experience, competitors, the marketing mix, and word-

of-mouth (Lewis, 1993, p. 5). As can be seen, the definitions related to SQ focus on meeting the needs and requirements of customers and how well the service provided meets their expectations.

In the related literature, researchers (Grönroos, 1984; Parasuraman et al., 1985) have investigated the effect of performance on expectations in the post-consumption evaluations of the product, sometimes by making comparisons and sometimes by asserting that satisfaction with quality services depends on the approval or disapproval of expectations (Smith & Houston, 1982). In this context, researchers used various scales to make an evaluation between service and service expectations. The most studied scales in the literature are Grönroos' SQ model, the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales, and the LODGSERV (Çiğdemli & İştin, 2018) SQ measurement model.

The Grönroos model was proposed by Grönroos as a result of a study conducted on service business managers in 1984 to develop a SQ model. The starting points of the study in this context were the following: 1) to define how SQ is perceived by consumers, and 2) to determine how SQ is affected. Two types of quality have been suggested in the Grönroos model: technical and functional quality. Technical quality refers to what the consumer actually receives from the service, while functional quality refers to how the service is received or delivered. In addition, Grönroos (1984, p. 38–40) suggested that image can be considered a dimension of quality depending on the perception of technical and functional quality.

Based on the definition of SQ by Parasuraman et al. (1988) the SERVQUAL scale is the most common scale used to measure SQ. The objective of Parasuraman et al. (1988) is twofold: the development of a multi-item scale to measure SQ and a discussion of the features and potential applications of the scale. On the SERVQUAL scale, SQ was examined in five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responseveness, assurance, and empathy (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

The SERVQUAL scale was later taken into account by Cronin and Taylor (1992), and the SERVPERF scale was developed. They claimed that the SERVPERF scale was sufficient to measure performance compared to the SERVQUAL scale (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p. 64). In addition, the SERVQUAL scale was insufficient in that consumers did not have any expectations about the service before purchasing it, nor did they know what to anticipate (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p. 55–56). The purpose of comparing the SERVQUAL and SERVPERF scales is to determine which indexes are superior measures of SQ (Cronin & Taylor, 1992, p. 128).

Knutson et al. (1990) developed a new scale for the hospitality industry under the name “LODGSERV.” The LODGSERV scale is specifically designed to measure customer expectations based on hotel experience. Five main dimensions (reliability, trust, responsibility, physical characteristics, and empathy) were developed for the LODGSERV scale (Knutson et al., 1990, p. 278). Knutson et al. (1990) made two important contributions by recommending and validating the LODGSERV measurement. First, both the LODGSERV and SERVQUAL scales were developed as consistent five-dimensional scales, which further confirms the reliability of Parasuraman et al.’s (1988) study. Again, Knutson et al. (1990) concluded that the process of developing LODGSERV could be replicated for other segments of the hospitality industry, especially restaurants and clubs (Liu et al., 2017, p. 120).

Examining the scales in the literature on SQ reveals that quality measurement is examined in the context of internal and external factors. Internal factors express the circumstances for the business (how the service is provided, physical features and equipment, personnel appearance and behavior, personnel knowledge and skills, etc.), and external factors express the circumstances for the consumer (the consumer’s perception of the service received, customer expectations, customer satisfaction, etc.). In addition to these factors, another important factor affecting SQ is customer interactions within the service environment. Although service environment is a significant factor affecting SQ, it is not accounted for in the scales. However, the environments in which the service is delivered can encourage positive emotional responses while strengthening customer perceptions and customer retention. Therefore, service environments play an important role in service delivery (Lin & Liang, 2011, p. 352). The service environment (customer interaction, etc.) must be well managed to improve SQ (Rust & Oliver, 1994).

As in other service areas, the role of the service environment plays a crucial role in public transportation (Pareigis et al., 2011, p. 112). In their qualitative research to determine the important dimensions of the service process defined by customers, Pareigis et al. (2011) revealed that a customer has the potential to affect the service experience of other customers. Even Pareigis et al. (2011, p. 115–117) stated that customers leaving garbage and free newspapers, speaking loudly, and asking questions have an impact on the service process.

Service Quality in Bus Companies

This section discusses the SQ studies conducted in bus companies. Silcock (1981) studied the effectiveness of bus service in the context of quality according to a predetermined schedule and a schedule along a given route. Similarly, Pullen (1993) stated that measures of operational performance of bus services can be categorized as efficiency (service quality, service utilization, and cost-effectiveness) and effectiveness (operating costs, vehicle use, workforce efficiency, and energy efficiency), and SQ measures can generally be considered a subset of effectiveness measures. In addition, in many studies (Mapunda, 2021; Sánchez Pérez et al., 2007; Shamsudin et al., 2020), SQ was measured in bus companies by forming the basis of the SERVQUAL scale. In addition, studies have been carried out on both intercity bus companies (Freitas, 2013; Özdemir & Mısırlı, 2020; Wen et al., 2005) and public transport companies (Islam et al., 2014; Shamsudin et al., 2020; Yaya et al., 2015). However, only one scale development study for intercity bus companies (Hu & Jen, 2006) was found, and it was considered inadequate. In addition, the majority of the studies employed quantitative research, while only one employed qualitative research methods (Pareigis et al., 2011). The vast majority of studies (Duman et al., 2007; Hu & Jen, 2007; Mazzulla & Eboli, 2006; Pavlina, 2015; Shamsudin et al., 2020; Ubaidillah et al., 2022; Wen et al., 2005) have found that SQ has a significant impact on satisfaction, behavioral intention, and loyalty. In another study, Chang and Yeh (2017) investigated the relationships between corporate social responsibility (CSR), SQ, company image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty and found that SQ has an effect on company image, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

Studies closely related to the subject are given in Table 1. Examining the literature reveals that passenger interactions, which are one of the important points of our study, were not addressed in previous studies. In their qualitative studies, only Pareigis et al. (2011) investigated the dimensions of the service environment using qualitative methods, and the “other customer” dimension emerged as one of these dimensions (customer processes, the physical environment, contact personnel, provider processes, and the wider environment). As a matter of fact, the study by Pareigis et al. (2011) reveals the necessity of considering passenger interaction in studies on SQ. This reveals the importance of this scale development study.

Table 1. *Bus companies service quality factors in bus studies*

Authors	Year	Dimension/sub-dimension	Transport variety
Watthanaklang et al.	2024	Reliability, empathy, responsiveness, convenience, comfort, extended of service, price	Public transport
Kelilba and Chaib de Ona	2024	Comfort, vehicle safety, vehicle cleanliness	Urban transport
	2022	Service hours, information, frequency, speed, cost, intermodality, individual space, temperature, cleanliness, safety, security, proximity, punctuality, accessibility	Public transport
Tuan et al.	2022	Availability, security & safety, cost, customer care, comfort, environmental friendliness, accessibility, passenger information, time,	Public transport
Deb et al.	2022	Vehicle condition and hygiene, information availability, safety, travel expenses, comfort, reliability and convenience,	City bus
Bakar et al.	2022	Convenience, reliability, comfort, safety & security, route & time travelled, Schedule, speed, service frequency, on time performance, service hours, headway, service coverage	Public transport
Ubaidillah et al.	2022	Tangibles, Reliability, Assurance, Empathy, Responsiveness	Public buses
Nguyen-Phuoc et al.	2021	Tangibility, Convenience, Personnel, Reliability	Public transport
Chauhan et al.	2021	Transfer environment and important facilities, transport modes and travel information, comfort, staff management and ticketing, safety and security, accessibility and signposting, convenience and quality of environment,	Bus, Train and Metro
Sukhov et al.	2021	Reliability, functionality, information, courtesy/simplicity, comfort, safety,	Public Transport
Mapunda	2021	Tangibility, Reliability, Receptivity, Assurance Empathy	Bus Rapid Transit
Shamsudin et al.	2020	Tangibility, Reliability, Receptivity, Assurance Empathy	Public Transport
Özdemir and Mısırlı	2020	Service, Service (transportation), Personnel, Responsiveness, Security	Intercity Bus Companies
Rehman et al.	2020	Affordability, bus stop availability, comfort, personal security, punctuality, board information services, environmental protection,	Intercity private bus service
Barabino et al.	2019	Availability, accessibility, information, time, customer care, comfort, environmental impact	Public Transport
de Aquino et al.	2019	Reliability, comfort, convenience, communication/information systems, technical security, accessibility, empathy	Public Transport Services
Zhang et al.	2019	Convenience, safety, operational service, comfort, Reliability,	Public transport service
Chang and Yeh	2017	Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, Empathy	Intercity Bus Companies
Mahmoud and Hine	2016	Access to service, Fare, Safety and security, Service design, Operation Information and facilities,	Public transport
Yaya et al.	2015	functional, convenience, physical environment quality	Public transport
Pavlina	2015	Service, Logistic parameters	Public Transport
Islam et al.	2014	Service provided, Access, Availability, Environment	Public transport
Grujičić et al.	2014	Enough place in the vehicle, passenger politeness, ventilation in the vehicle waiting time at stop, cleanliness in the vehicle, avoidance of traffic jam, punctuality, fellow traveler cleanliness, tickets price	Public transport
Freitas	2013	Attendance, Vehicle, Route, Security, Differential Services, Ticket Fare	Intercity road transportation
de Oña et al.	2013	Service, Comfort, Personnel	Public transport
Yılmaz	2012	Elements relating to office, elements relating to buses, the elements relating to reliability, elements relating to service cars and their officials, officials and the staff of the buses, elements relating to booking, buying ticket, and baggage, services offered during travel, elements relating to break,	Intercity bus service

Koçoğlu and Aksoy	2012	Tangibility, Reliability, Receptivity, Assurance, Empathy	Intercity Bus Companies
Pareigis et al. (Qualitative study)	2011	Other customers, physical environment, provider processes, customer processes, contact personnel, wider environment,	Public transport
Ardıç and Sadaklıoğlu	2009	Attitudes and behaviors of staff, Bus (physical characteristics), Punctuality, Accommodation and Break, Reservation, Service and Baggage Transactions, Office operations	Intercity Bus Companies
Lin et al.	2008	Tangible service equipment, Convenience of services, Operating management support, Interaction with passengers	Intercity bus Companies
Duman et al.	2007	Office-service-terminal, Travel, Break	Intercity Bus Companies
Sánchez Perez et al.	2007	Tangibility, Reliability, Receptivity, Assurance Empathy	Public transport
Eboli and Mazzulla	2007	Service planning and reliability, comfort and other factors, network design	Public Companies
Hu and Jen (Scale Development)	2006	Convenience of service, operating management support, tangible service equipment, interaction with passengers,	City bus
Wen et al.	2005	Onboard amenity, Crew's attitude, Station performance, Operational performance	Intercity bus service

METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research method was used in the research. The research population consists of passengers traveling by intercity bus in Türkiye. The research sample consists of intercity passengers traveling within Türkiye who participated in the research and are representative of the universe. The reason why the research was conducted on intercity bus users in Türkiye is that it constitutes an important market. 95.2% of passenger transportation within Türkiye is done by road. A total of 573 companies operate in the field of intercity passenger transportation in Türkiye. The number of buses used for intercity passenger transportation within the country is 9,500. The seat capacity is more than 400,000 (Keçeci, 2024). As of the end of 2022, the length of Türkiye's road network (provincial roads, state roads, and highways) is 68,640 km. In Türkiye, the length of highway per 100,000 population is 88 km, and when evaluated in terms of surface area, the length of highway per 1000 km² in Türkiye is 81 km (CSB, 2024). Based on this, the sample size should be at least 384 according to the unlimited universe formula since the universe size is over 10 thousand (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 267). Therefore, the total number of passengers participating in the research (n=461) is sufficient.

The aim of this research is to develop a SQ scale for intercity bus companies. There are numerous recommendations concerning the scale development process. For instance, Churchill (1979) recommended an eight-step process (specifying the domain of the construct, generating a sample of items, collecting data, purifying measures, collecting data, assessing reliability, assessing validity, and developing the scale). Taheri et al. (2018) suggested a four-step process (defining the content domain and

generating items, purifying the items, validating the construct and assessing reliability, and replicating). Bagozzi et al. (1991), on the other hand, recommended four basic processes (conducting a literature review, an exploratory survey, a pilot survey, and a main survey) for scale development. In this study, for the scale development process, the steps suggested by Carpenter (2018) (conducting a literature review, conducting at least one type of qualitative research, receiving expert feedback, and conducting a pre-test for scale dimensions and items) were used, and scale development studies on the subject (Dedeoğlu et al., 2020; Mapunda, 2021; Mikhaylov et al., 2015) were examined. Figure 1 shows the scale development steps.

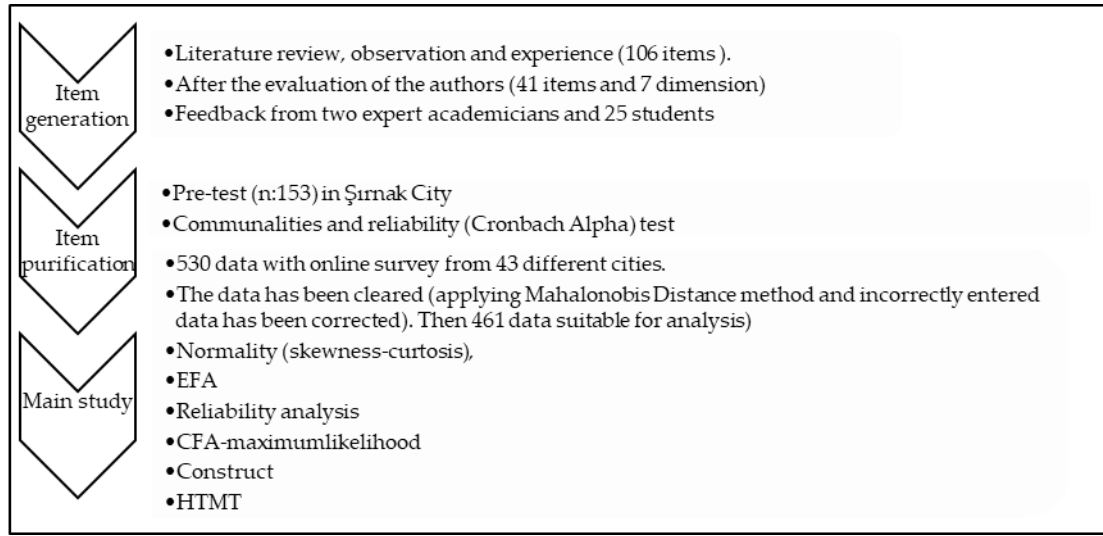


Figure 1. *Scale development process*

Phase 1: Item Generation, Construct, and Face Validity

For determining the scale items, the researchers started with a literature review of the bus experiences (Table 2) (Ardıç & Sadaklıoğlu, 2009; Duman et al., 2007; Govender & Pan, 2011; Mahmoud & Hine, 2016; Wen et al., 2005; Yılmaz, 2012). In addition, at this stage, the researchers traveled with bus companies in the provinces they were in, and questions about the missing subjects on other scales were added based on their observations. As a result of the literature review and observations, 106 questions were compiled into an itempool. After the pre-screening of the researchers (similar expression dimensions and incomprehensible questions were eliminated), the number of questions was reduced to 45. These statements were sent to two academic experts along with an expert opinion form. They recommended revising the four items. In addition, 25 people were asked to fill out a form for content and face validity. As a result of the expert opinions and the form filled out

by 25 participants, four questions were eliminated, and 41 questions were selected (Table 2). Phrases taken from other languages were translated from English into Turkish using the back translation method. Two linguists then assessed the expressions. The answer options for the questions were created using a 5-point Likert-type scale (ranging from *None* and 1 = *Very bad* to 5 = *Very good*) and a “0” option for “I have no idea.” The “I have no idea” option is used for services that the passenger has never encountered. For instance, if someone else purchased a passenger’s ticket, they may select “I have no idea” for the option “Ease of purchasing tickets and making reservations from the office.” Someone who has traveled for a short time may respond, “I have no idea,” to rest area factor questions, as they have never visited a rest area.

Table 2. *Items and sources*

Dimensions	Items	Items code	Sources
Bus Comfort	Noise level of the bus*	Comfort1*	Wen et al. 2005
	Interior cleaning of the bus*	Comfort 2*	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Air/climate of the bus (temperature, air, lighting etc.)*	Comfort 3*	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Comfort and width of seats	Comfort 4	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Entertainment systems (TV, media player etc.)	Comfort 5	Wen et al. 2005
	Availability of in-bus technology (Wi-fi, socket, etc.)	Comfort 6	Wen et al. 2005
	Food and beverage treats*	Comfort 7*	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Placing luggage properly*	Comfort 8*	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and
Employee Behavior	Cleanliness of the employees (assistant personnel)	Empbeh1	Wen et al. 2005
	Friendliness of employees	Empbeh2	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Employees assist passengers	Empbeh3	Wen et al. 2005
	Behavior of drivers	Empbehv4	Wen et al. 2005
	Safe driving of the driver	Empbeh5	Wen et al. 2005
	Behaviors of employees	Empbeh6	Wen et al. 2005 ; Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Consideration of complaints*	Empbeh7*	by authors
Rest Area	Equipment and maintenance of rest areas	Restarea1	Wen et al. 2005
	Cleanliness of rest areas	Restarea2	Wen et al. 2005
	Food and beverage quality in rest areas	Restarea3	by authors
	Prices in rest areas	Restarea4	by authors
	Displaying or announcing bus time on screens in rest areas*	Restarea5*	Wen et al. 2005
Promised Services	Clear and understandable departure and arrival time schedules	PromisServ1	Wen et al. 2005
	Break times	PromisServ2	Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Number of breaks	PromisServ3	Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Roundtrip route*	PromisServ4*	Mahmoud and Hine, 2016
	Departure at the time specified in the tariff*	PromisServ5*	Wen et al. 2005
	Arriving at the destination within the time specified in the tariff	PromisServ6	Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Availability of bus departure times*	PromisServ7*	Ardiç and Sadaklıođlu, 2009
	Frequency of bus services	PromisServ8	by authors

Office Services	Ease of purchasing tickets and making reservations from the office*	OfficeServ1*	Govender and Pan, 2011
	The adequacy of the number of offices	OfficeServ2	Ardıç and Sadaklıoğlu, 2009
	Accessibility to the office (location, accessibility)	OfficeServ3	Ardıç and Sadaklıoğlu, 2009
	Behavior of office staff	OfficeServ4	Ardıç and Sadaklıoğlu, 2009
	Cleanliness of the office	OfficeServ5	by authors
	Useful customer waiting area in the office	OfficeServ6	Mahmoud and Hine, 2016
Free Shuttle Services	Frequency of free shuttle service of the bus company	FreeShuttle1	Mahmoud and Hine, 2016
	Free shuttle and bus arrival and departure time coordination	FreeShuttle2	by authors
	Free shuttle service of the bus company	FreeShuttle3	Ardıç and Sadaklıoğlu, 2009
Passenger Interaction	Noise of passengers	PI1	by authors
	Cleanliness of passengers	PI2	by authors
	Behavior of passengers to other passengers	PI3	by authors
	Delay status of passengers boarding the bus	PI4	by authors

* Eliminated as a result of factor analysis

The dimensions and items created by considering the literature review and the experiences of the researchers are mentioned above. Each of the dimensions, such as the comfort of the bus, the behavior of the employees, the fulfillment of the promised services, the services of the ticket sales office, the rest area and free shuttle services are elements of SQ mentioned in the literature before. Free shuttle service is provided from bus terminals to designated stops in the city. In addition, passengers are picked up from designated stops in the city and taken to the terminal free of charge. This practice is common in Türkiye. However, when they are not in other countries, they must select "0" as the answer option on the scale. Rest areas serve as places where travelers can stop by, even for a short time, to relieve the tiredness of the road, meet their needs, and perform the necessary maintenance for their vehicles. At rest facilities, passengers can purchase services such as food, souvenirs and toilets (Ballı, 2012). In these rest areas, intercity bus drivers are required to take at least 15-minute breaks in every 4.5 hours of driving time. In addition, drivers must have 11 hours of uninterrupted rest when they drive for 9 hours in 24 hours (Highway traffic regulations, 1997). Since customer/passenger interaction affects satisfaction and loyalty, it is necessary to evaluate passenger interaction as a quality factor. Passenger interaction emerges as an important issue that needs to be investigated, as passengers travel side-by-side, back-to-back, and in crowds on buses. At this point, the passenger interaction dimension is considered a dimension of SQ. On a bus, even if the passengers do not talk to each other, they are in silent communication. A passenger making noise (talking loudly on the phone, making noise while eating, etc.), not complying with general etiquette (being affected by the road and vomiting, constantly wanting to have a conversation with the person sitting next to him, smelling bad, etc.), or not arriving on time at the departure time of a stopover can cause

discomfort to other passengers. If this discomfort becomes permanent in a bus company, passengers may change their bus company preferences. The reasons for this are not only other passengers but also companies. In reality, companies can choose their own customers with their marketing and management strategies.

Phase 2: Item Purification

After it was decided that the scale form was comprehensible, data were obtained from 153 people from the province of Şırnak by face-to-face survey method to test its reliability. The Cronbach's alpha value of these collected data was found to be 0.98, with high reliability. The convenience sampling technique was preferred in sample selection after the pre-test. Data were collected from 43 different cities using the online questionnaire (Google Forms) prepared between January 1 and June 30, 2021, and shared on social media (Facebook). A total of 530 responses were obtained. Outliers (Byrne, 2016) and erroneous surveys were eliminated, resulting in 461 surveys used for analysis. 384 individuals must be surveyed to account for a 5% error rate in sample selection (Altunışık et al., 2007). In addition, Tabachnick and Fidell (2006) stated at least 300 data should be available. In this instance, the sample size is appropriate to reveal the purpose of the research statistically. Also, to avoid common method bias, data were collected from different provinces over a long period of time (between 1 January and 30 June 2021).

Looking at the profile of the participants (Table 3), 58.6% were male, 40.1% were female, 34.1% were married, and 63.6% were single. The average age of the participants was 28 (most of them were in the 18–25 age group). Considering their educational status, 61.6% were university graduates, 8.9% were primary school and high school graduates, and 28.2% had a master's or doctoral degree. In addition, 36% of participants had a monthly income between 3,001 and 6,000 TL, and the average monthly income was 3.573 TL.

After this stage, the normal distribution was examined. The skewness-kurtosis values were considered to see if the items were multi-normally distributed (Appendix 1). According to the recommendations of George and Mallery (2010) (+2/-2), skewness (0.64 to 0.37) and kurtosis (-0.03 to 1.04) values showed the normal distribution. Using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), the distribution (structure) of the items was then examined using the principle component analysis (PCA) technique. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test value was greater than 0.50 for data adequacy and that the Bartlett's test value was less than 0.05 for examining the multiple

normal distributions of the data. In addition, varimax, one of the rotation methods, was used. Factor loadings below 0.50 were excluded (Comrey, 1988), and Kaiser's criterion was kept above 0.60 for communalities (Field, 2013).

Table 3. *Demographic profile*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Education	Primary Education	6	1.3
	High School	33	7.3
	University	284	61.6
	Master	90	19.5
	Doctorate	40	8.7
Marital status	Married	157	34,1
	Single	293	63,6
Gender	Male	270	58,6
	Female	185	40,1
Monthly Income (Turkish Lira) (Mean-3.573 TL)	No income	63	13,7
	1-3.000	157	34,3
	3.001-6.000	167	36
	6.001 and higher	74	16
Age (Mean: 28)	18-25	47,1	21,7
	26-33	23,0	10,6
	34-41	21,3	9,8
	42 and older	6,9	3,2

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis, a fundamental tool in the development and validation of psychological theories and measurements, is a multivariate statistical method that attempts to identify the minimum number of hypothetical structures (Watkins, 2018). As a result of the EFA, it was revealed that bus SQ can be measured with 30 items and seven dimensions (employee behavior (EB), office services (OS), promised service (PS), rest area (BRA), passenger interactions (PI), free shuttle services (FSS), and bus comfort (BC)) (KMO: 0.95, $p < 0.05$). Eleven items (Comfort1, Comfort2, Comfort3, Comfort7, Comfort8, Empbeh7, OfficeServ1, Restorea5, PromisServ4, PromisServ5, PromisServ7) were excluded since the load remained below 0.50, overlapping and reducing reliability. The expressions and dimensions account for 77.92% of the total variance. Communality values range from 0.61 to 0.84, whereas factor loadings range from 0.54 to 0.80. While the EB dimension (16.86%) best explains the structure, the BC dimension explains it the least, with 7.99%. In addition, it is observed that the mean of the expressions (\bar{x}) is between 1.27 and 2.83, and the standard deviations are between 1.16 and 1.48 (Table 4).

For the reliability of the scale items, Cronbach's alpha value for all the items was found to be 0.96. Cronbach's alpha values were then re-

evaluated using the split-half method. The Cronbach's alpha value for the first and second groups was determined to be 0.94. These results reveal that the reliability level of the scale items is high. In addition, Cronbach's alpha value for each dimension was examined separately for internal reliability, and it was determined that each dimension was reliable (Cronbach's alpha > 0.70) (Büyüköztürk, 2005), indicating that internal reliability was achieved (Table 4).

Table 4. *Exploring factor analysis and reliability analysis results*

Dimensions	Items	Communalities	Mean	Sd.	Factor Loadings	Variance Explained (%)	Cronbach's Alpha
Employee Behavior (EB) (\bar{x} : 2.51)	Empbeh2	.84	2.76	1.29	.800	16.86	.94
	Empbeh6	.82	2.76	1.30	.800		
	Empbeh3	.82	1.27	1.27	.783		
	Empbeh4	.71	2.71	1.37	.731		
	Empbeh1	.76	2.78	1.29	.718		
Office Services (OS) (\bar{x} : 2.64)	OfficeServ3	.79	2.77	1.34	.766	13.80	.92
	OfficeServ4	.78	2.76	1.33	.741		
	OfficeServ5	.82	2.58	1.34	.739		
	OfficeServ2	.80	2.72	1.42	.719		
	OfficeServ6	.75	2.38	1.37	.644		
Promised Service (PS) (\bar{x} : 2.63)	PromisServ3	.81	2.68	1.27	.758	11.57	.90
	PromisServ2	.84	2.74	1.30	.740		
	PromisServ6	.71	2.56	1.48	.632		
	PromisServ8	.72	2.57	1.39	.627		
Rest Area (RA) (\bar{x} : 2.24)	Restarea3	.84	2.35	1.29	.796	11.18	.90
	Restarea2	.84	2.41	1.27	.779		
	Restarea1	.83	2.42	1.28	.754		
	Restarea4	.67	1.81	1.17	.715		
Passenger Interactions (PI) (\bar{x} : 2.45)	PI3	.80	2.44	1.24	.795	8.34	.85
	PI4	.81	2.29	1.25	.747		
	PI1	.70	2.46	1.29	.544		
	PI2	.69	2.63	1.31	.543		
Free Shuttle Services (FSS) (\bar{x} : 2.13)	FreeShuttle1	.84	2.22	1.31	.772	8.16	.86
	FreeShuttle2	.82	2.15	1.29	.760		
	FreeShuttle3	.70	2.08	1.38	.619		
Bus Comfort (BC) (\bar{x} : 2.23)	Confort5	.84	2.07	1.18	.787	7.99	.85
	Confort6	.77	2.17	1.24	.713		
	Confort4	.71	2.46	1.16	.673		

KMO: 0.95. Barlett's test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square: 12362.175, df: 435, sig.: 0.00, Total Explained Variance: 77.92.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is the testing of a previously determined hypothesis or theory about the relationship between variables (Büyüköztürk, 2019, p. 133). In the next step, CFA was performed to test the accuracy of the EFA results. Convergent and discriminant validity were demonstrated with CFA. The CFA results obtained with the maximum-likelihood method with the AMOS 24 program confirm the EFA results. In

the resulting structure, factor loadings >0.60 (0.65–0.92) are seen to be above the recommended >0.50 value (Hair et al., 2019). In addition, the fit indices (χ^2/df : 3.42, TLI: 0.91, CFI: 0.92, RMSEA:0.07) shown in Table 5 indicate that the model is acceptable according to the recommendations in the literature (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). The model has been improved by connecting e9-e11 and ea3-e15 (Figure 2).

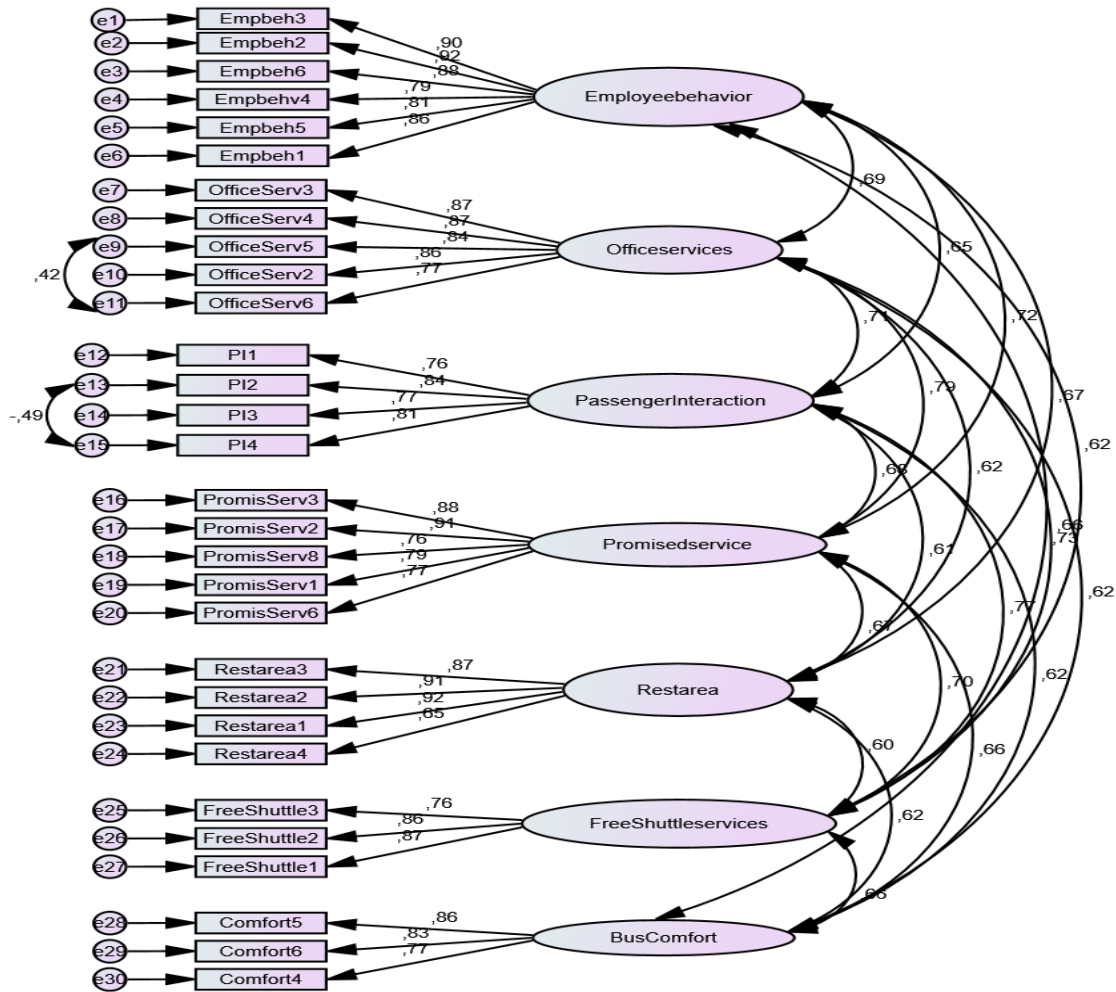


Figure 2. *Confirmatory factor analysis*

The composite reliability (CR), which indicates the internal reliability of each factor, was found to be higher than the recommended value of 0.60 (Hair et al., 2009). In addition, the average variance extracted (AVE) value of >0.50, recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), was used to measure convergent validity. Since the AVE values (0.63–0.94) for all dimensions were above 0.50, convergent validity was achieved (Table 6).

Table 5. *Confirmatory factor analysis and index*

Dimensions	Items	Std. Factor Loadings	t-value	C.R.	AVE
Employee Behavior	Empbeh3	.90	fixed		.74
	Empbeh2	.92	30.98		
	Empbeh6	.88	28.20	.94	
	Empbeh4	.79	22.72		
	Empbeh5	.81	23.94		
	Empbeh1	.86	26.68		
Office Services	OfficeServ3	.87	fixed		.71
	OfficeServ4	.87	25.08		
	OfficeServ5	.84	23.66	.92	
	OfficeServ2	.86	24.37		
	OfficeServ6	.77	20.10		
Passenger Interactions	PI1	.76	fixed		.63
	PI2	.84	17.95		
	PI3	.77	17.24	.87	
	PI4	.81	17.20		
Promised Service	PromisServ3	.88	fixed		.67
	PromisServ2	.91	28.02		
	PromisServ8	.76	20.30	.91	
	PromisServ1	.79	21.40		
	PromisServ6	.77	20.73		
Rest Area	Restarea3	.87	fixed		.71
	Restarea2	.91	28.34	.90	
	Restarea1	.92	28.81		
	Restarea4	.65	16.02		
Free Shuttle services	FreeShuttle3	.76	fixed		.69
	FreeShuttle2	.86	19.01	.87	
	FreeShuttle1	.87	19.09		
Bus Comfort	Comfort5	.86	fixed		.67
	Comfort6	.83	20.58	.86	
	Comfort4	.77	18.66		

Table 6. *Validity analysis*

Factors	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)	Employee Behavior	Office Services	Passenger Interactions	Promised Service	Rest area	Free Shuttle Services	Bus Comfort
Employee Behavior	0.94	0.74	0.53	0.95	0.861						
Office Services	0.92	0.71	0.63	0.92	0.687***	0.843					
Passenger Interactions	0.87	0.63	0.59	0.87	0.647***	0.707***	0.796				
Promised Service	0.91	0.67	0.63	0.92	0.725***	0.794***	0.675***	0.824			
Rest Area	0.90	0.71	0.45	0.93	0.671***	0.620***	0.611***	0.674***	0.847		

Free Shuttle Services	0.87	0.69	0.59	0.88	0.623***	0.658***	0.768***	0.703***	0.598***	0.832	
Bus Comfort	0.86	0.67	0.53	0.86	0.729***	0.617***	0.618***	0.661***	0.623***	0.657***	0.819

In addition, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) analysis was used to examine the discriminant validity of the structure (Table 7). When the HTMT ratios are examined, it is seen that the model has discriminant validity since all values are less than Henseler et al.'s (2015) recommendation of < 0.85.

Table 7. HTMT Analysis

Factors	Employee Behavior	Office Services	Passenger Interactions	Promised Service	Rest area	Free Shuttle services	Bus Comfort
Employee behavior							
Office Services	0.711						
Passenger Interactions	0.680	0.762					
Promised Service	0.743	0.825	0.720				
Rest area	0.669	0.641	0.661	0.695			
Free Shuttle services	0.648	0.704	0.791	0.737	0.642		
Bus Comfort	0.752	0.646	0.637	0.707	0.650	0.676	

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this study, a scale was developed to measure perceived SQ in intercity bus companies. Scales for measuring SQ in bus companies are limited (Paregis et al., 2011) and passenger interaction has not been considered in empirical studies (Hu & Jen, 2006; de Ona, 2021; Freitas, 2013; Yılmaz, 2012). However, the service environment is evaluated not only in terms of physical features, but also other design features perceived by passengers, the prevailing climate and social structure of the environment (Çelik, 2009, p. 159). Bus companies are businesses that have a greater obligation than other service businesses to remain physically close to their customers. This situation reveals the necessity of investigating the interaction between passengers. So, a scale is developed to address this literature gap.

Most of the studies (Özdemir & Mısırlı, 2020; Shamsudin et al., 2020; Sukhov et al., 2021) are based on the SERVQUAL scale. Like studies conducted in other sectors, scales for intercity bus companies do not include customer or passenger interaction (Paregis et al., 2011). Although there were important studies to measure the service quality of bus companies (Eboli & Mazzulla, 2007; Freitas, 2013; Hu & Jen, 2007; Lin et al., 2008), they

remained short in considering social interactions. In this regard, the development of a scale in this study, taking into account passenger interaction, will contribute to the literature. Another significant contribution is to the sector. It will raise awareness that all service companies, in general, and intercity bus companies, in particular, should consider customer interaction in their perceived SQ research. As a matter of fact, CtoC interaction is a variable that can affect customers' perceptions of satisfaction and repeat behavior (Huang, 2008).

As a result of the research, the IBUSQUAL scale, consisting of 30 items and seven dimensions (Employee behavior (EB), Office services (OS), promised service (PS), rest area (BRA), Passenger encounter (PE), Free shuttle services (FSS) and Bus comfort (BC)s was developed. The total variance explained by the dimensions in the scale is 77.92%. The contribution rates for each dimension are 16.86% for EB, 13.80% for OS, 11.57% for PS, 11.18% for RA, 8.34% for PI, 8.16% for FSS, and 7.99% for BC. Among these factors, EB contributes the most to the model and BC contributes the least, and each dimension has a significant contribution to the total explained variance. In this context, companies need to improve their SQ across all dimensions. Considering the answers given by the participants to the items, it was determined that the average of each dimension was below 3. This demonstrates the poor SQ of the intercity bus companies perceived by the participants. In this case, companies can increase their SQ by paying attention to employee behavior, office services, promised services, rest areas, passenger characteristics, and bus comfort.

Although the aim of this study is not to reveal SQ level, the complaints of the participants about several issues come to the fore (see Appendix). One of the issues that reduce the quality is the in-bus technology (Wi-fi, socket etc.) and entertainment system (TV, Media player etc.). In the light of this finding, it is revealed that the companies should equip the buses with the latest technology and give importance to technological entertainment system. Another critical issue is the problem of high price in resting areas. This situation is also in line with the experiences of the researchers. Food and beverage prices in resting facilities are much higher than the expected level. The companies should discuss this problem with the resting facilities and find a solution. In fact, at this point, bus companies may even choose to put their own resting facilities into operation. The companies that will do this can provide a significant competitive advantage over the others. Additionally, other important problem in the findings of this study is the frequency and timing of the free shuttle services. The free shuttle services are not coordinated with the

arrival time of the bus, and passengers may have to wait for hours as one free shuttle service waits for the arrival of several buses. In this case, companies should increase the number of free shuttle services, ensure coordination, or reduce the number of people requesting free shuttle services by putting pressure on the municipality or other decision makers for the development of urban transport infrastructure.

Since the profile of passengers in the transportation market is heterogeneous, it should be acknowledged that they may respond differently to different policies and strategies (Fu, 2022). At this point, although it is difficult for transportation companies to manage passenger-to-passenger interaction, this difficulty can be overcome with marketing strategies. With the pricing strategies, advertising, and positioning they will implement, the companies will be able to attract their target customer segment. Indeed, “positioning strategy is the choice of target market segments, which determines where the business competes, and the choice of differential advantage, which dictates how it competes” (Doyle & Stern, 2006, p. 84). According to Doyle and Stern (2006), companies can be positioned as “economy,” “mass market,” “premium,” or “luxury” based on the relationship between price and product quality. For example, when a transportation company wants to attract wealthy and educated customers, it can do so by maintaining its prices above the market average. It is commonly believed that the wealthy are individuals with high social status and a high level of education (there may be minor differences, of course). In addition, Fu (2022) classified passengers according to their satisfaction and expectations into three groups: 1) those who are satisfied with the service (rarely complain), 2) those who complain a lot, and 3) those who are neutral, stating that different marketing strategies should be created for each group due to their unique characteristics. Although it is necessary to plan strategies to increase the corporate image and customer loyalty for those who are satisfied with the service, it is also necessary to plan strategies and practices for improving the operational dimensions of SQ for those who complain a lot. Neutral individuals may occasionally behave differently. At this point, passenger complaints should be thoroughly examined (Fu, 2022).

Practical Implications

Intercity bus companies can determine a strategy according to their market structure and capabilities. Determining these strategies will provide an important competitive advantage for businesses. At this point, it is useful to pay attention to Porter’s (1985) competition strategies (focus, overall cost

leadership, and differentiation). Choosing the right competitive strategies in terms of both market positioning and management will contribute to the faster growth of businesses. In addition to their positioning strategies, intercity bus companies can bring together customers who share certain characteristics (income level, education level, similar motivation, etc.), thereby decreasing the disparity between customers and increasing their similarity. This prevents negative interactions or conflicts between customers; thus, an increase in customer satisfaction is achieved. Customer satisfaction can also enable the passenger to choose the company again and recommend it to others. In this way, it provides a competitive advantage over other companies by reducing the advertising and promotion expenses of the company, increasing sales, and making the business more profitable and expandable.

There are various practices to direct customer behavior. For example, drivers who direct passengers with verbal commands engage in some regulatory activities, such as warning those who talk loudly. Passengers, who are aware that drivers are watching them, regulate their actions accordingly and engage in non-compliant behavior, such as throwing garbage on the ground, when the driver is busy on the road. Control inside the bus is not limited to just the drivers. Cameras inside the bus and warnings scattered throughout the bus environment advise passengers on the behaviors they should avoid and comply with (Mirza Girgin, 2022, p. 100). As another example, disruptions in service quality can be eliminated with the following general passenger obligation included in the transportation contract of Kamil Koç, an important bus company in Türkiye (Kamil Koç, 2023).

“The driver and staff have the authority to prevent passengers who are clearly under the influence of alcohol or drugs from traveling. The same rule applies to passengers who, for other reasons, endanger the safety of other passengers in the vehicle or significantly impair the health and well-being of other passengers. In this case, the passenger’s alternative transportation request will not be accepted.”

Considering the averages of the items used in the study (Table 4), we can conclude that the service quality is below average. In this situation, it is necessary to provide bus companies with suggestions for improving their service quality. Regarding security, drivers and assistant drivers can be trained for in-bus security, and X-ray search devices or metal detectors can be utilized at bus terminals entrances. Drivers must change shifts and adhere to speed regulations. To encourage employees to engage in positive behaviors, training and internal and external motivational tools (wages, promotions, etc.) should be implemented. Ticket sales offices must be able

to meet the needs of waiting passengers, such as by offering charging stations for mobile phones or providing a space to work on a personal computer. Bus companies should also conduct inspections of recreational facilities and prohibit any practices that degrade quality. The coordination of ticket issuance and free city shuttles is crucial. For this, a robust technological infrastructure and comprehensive coordination are required. Passengers' waiting time during the transfer should be minimized. The interior comfort of the bus should be ergonomic, and the technology infrastructure should be developed. Times of departure should be posted at bus stops, and these times should be adhered to. All promises made to the passenger during ticket sales must be kept. All of these require an investment, but it should not be forgotten that the cost of dissatisfaction exceeds the cost of investment.

Theoretical Implications

The main claim of this study is that customer interaction was not considered as a component of quality or satisfaction in the previously used scales. In addition, reliable scales are not sufficient in research on intercity bus companies. Thus, the present study will contribute to both the literature and the sector in terms of measuring the service quality provided by bus companies. Another contribution of the study was the inclusion of the "0" option in the survey's answer options, considering that the service recipients did not encounter some of the items included in the scale. If this option was not provided, the participant would have been required to rate a service they did not receive on a scale of 1 to 5. In future studies, it is important to use the "0" ("I have no idea") option for situations that are not encountered in the survey statement.

Limitations

As with all studies, this study also has its limitations. First, the developed scale is only intended to measure the SQ of intercity bus companies in the private sector. City bus companies and those operated by organizations such as government agencies or municipalities are excluded. In future studies, research can be conducted on bus companies in the public sector. From the perspective of sample representativeness, a sufficient sample size was sought to conduct statistical factor analysis with the convenience sampling method from different cities but the sample for each city was not taken into account. At this point, the primary purpose of the sample is to represent those who benefit from intercity passenger bus services. Another significant limitation is that the data were collected only in Türkiye. The

most important reason for this is that transportation and bus companies are governed by different laws in different countries. For this reason, it is recommended that the scale be adapted and used in different countries.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

For the field study, the Ethics Committee approval was obtained from Şırnak University (Date, Number: 31.12.2020, 2020/61). We would like to thank Ahmet Özben for his help in collecting the surveys.

REFERENCES

- Altunışık, R., Coşkun, R., Bayraktaroğlu, S., & Yıldırım, E. (2007). *Research methods in social sciences: SPSS applied*. Sakarya: Sakarya Publishing.
- Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1988). Structural equation modeling in practice: A review and recommended two-step approach. *Psychological Bulletin*, 103(3), 411-423.
- Ardıç, K., & Sadaklıoğlu, H. (2009). Şehirlerarası Yolcu Taşımacılığında Hizmet Kalitesinin Ölçümü: Tokat Örneği [The measurement of service quality in intercity passenger transportation: The example of Tokat]. *Atatürk University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 23(3), 167–190.
- ASQ- The American Society for Quality. (2022). Quality glossary of terms, acronyms and definitions. <https://asq.org/quality-resources/quality-glossary>
- Bagozzi, R. P., Yi, Y., & Phillips, L.W. (1991). Assessing construct validity in organizational research. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 36(3), 421-458.
- Bajčetić, S., Tica, S., Živanović, P., Milovanović, B., & Đorojević, A. (2018). Analysis of public transport users' satisfaction using quality function deployment: Belgrade case study. *Transport*, 33(3), 609–618.
- Bakar, M. F. A., Norhisham, S., Katman, H. Y., Fai, C. M., Azlan, N. N. I. M., & Samsudin, N. S. S. (2022). Service quality of bus performance in Asia: A systematic literature review and conceptual framework. *Sustainability*, 14(13), 7998.
- Ballı, E. (2012). Şehirlerarası karayollarındaki dinlenme tesislerinin bölge ekonomisine etkileri: Pozanti örneği [Economic impacts of rest facilities on intercity highways: Pozanti case]. *Journal of Economics*, 4(2), 25-33.
- Barabino, B., Conversano, C., Cabras, N.A., & Fantola, M. (2019). Selecting key quality indicator in public transport system using a robust method. *WIT Transactions on The Built Environment*, 182, 73-84.
- Barabino, B., Deiana, E., & Tilocca, P. (2011). Urban transport management and customer perceived quality: A case study in the Metropolitan Area of Cagliari, Italy. *Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management*, 6(1), 19–32.
- Berry, L. L., Zeithaml, V. A., & Parasuraman, A. (1990). Five imperatives for improving service quality. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 31(4), 29-38.
- Boulding, W., Kalra, A., Staelin, R., & Zeithaml, V. A. (1993). A dynamic process model of service quality: From expectations to behavioral intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR)*, 30(1), 7–27.
- Büyüköztürk, S. (2005). *Manual of data analysis for social sciences*. Pegem Publishing.
- Büyüköztürk, Ş. (2019). *Sosyal bilimler için istatistik*. Ankara: Pegem Yayıncılık.

- Byrne, B. M., (2016). *Structural equation modeling with Amos-basic concepts, applications and programming* (3th ed.). Routledge.
- Carpenter, S. (2018). Ten steps in scale development and reporting: A guide for researchers. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 12(1), 25–44.
- Çelik, H. (2009). Assessing the impact of atmospherics on perceived quality of bus charter services. *Istanbul University Journal of the School of Business*, 38(2), 157-183.
- Çelik, S., & Çizel, B. (2017). Factors affecting the perception of destination quality: A study in the Southeastern Anatolia Region. *Mediterranean Journal of Humanities*, 7(1), 97–121.
- Chang, Y. H., & Yeh, C. H. (2017). Corporate social responsibility and customer loyalty in intercity bus services. *Transport Policy*, 59, 38-45.
- Chauhan, V., Gupta, A., & Parida, M., (2021). Demystifying service quality of Multimodal Transportation Hub (MMTH) through measuring users' satisfaction of public transport. *Transport Policy*, 102, 47-60.
- Chawla, S., & Sharma, P. (2017). An assessment of service quality among general insurance policyholders in Punjab: An empirical study. *IUP Journal of Management Research*, 16(1), 47-73.
- Cheunkamon, E., Jomnonkwao, S., & Ratanavaraha, V. (2022). Impacts of tourist loyalty on service providers: Examining the role of the service quality of tourism supply chains, tourism logistics, commitment, satisfaction, and trust. *Journal of Quality Assurance in Hospitality & Tourism*, 23(6), 1397-1429.
- Churchill Jr, G. A. (1979). A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16(1), 64-73.
- Çigdemli, A. O. Ö., & İştin, A. E. (2018). Evaluation of the perception of customer service quality in restaurants with the DINESERV model: The case of Şırnak. *Journal of Organization and Management Sciences*, 10(2), 17–30.
- Comrey, A. L. (1988). Factor-analytic methods of scale development in personality and clinical psychology. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 56(5), 754-761.
- Cronin, J. J., & Taylor, S. A. (1992). Measuring service quality: A reexamination and extension. *Journal of Marketing*, 56(3), 55–68.
- Cronin, J. J., Brady, M. K., & Hult, G. T. M., (2000). Assessing the effects of quality, value, and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioral intentions in service environments. *Journal of Retailing*, 76(2), 193–218.
- Crosby, P. B. (1980). *Quality is free: The art of making quality certain* (Vol. 2247). Signet Book.
- CSB (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Çevre, Şehircilik ve İklim Değişikliği Bakanlığı) (2024). Karayolu- Demiryolu Ağı Yoğunluğu. Retrieved April 11, 2024 from <https://cevreselgostergeler.csb.gov.tr/karayolu--demiryolu-agi-yogunlugu-i-85788>
- de Aquino, J. T., de Melo, F. J. C., Jeronimo, T. D. B., & de Medeiros, D. D. (2019). Evaluation of quality in public transport services: the use of quality dimensions as an input for fuzzy TOPSIS. *International Journal of Fuzzy Systems*, 21, 176-193.
- de Oña, J. (2021). Understanding the mediator role of satisfaction in public transport: A cross-country analysis. *Transport Policy*, 100, 129-149.
- de Oña, J. (2022). Service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions towards public transport from the point of view of private vehicle users. *Transportation*, 49(1), 237-269.
- de Oña, J., de Oña, R., Eboli, L., & Mazzulla, G. (2013). Perceived service quality in bus transit service: A structural equation approach. *Transport Policy*, 29, 219–226.

- Deb, S., Ahmed, M. A., & Das, D. (2022). Service quality estimation and improvement plan of bus Service: A perception and expectation based analysis. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 10(3), 1775-1789.
- Dedeoğlu, B. B., Taheri, B., Okumus, F., & Gannon, M. (2020). Understanding the importance that consumers attach to social media sharing (ISMS): Scale development and validation. *Tourism Management*, 76, 103954.
- Doyle, P., & Stern, P., (2006). *Marketing management and strategy* (4. ed). Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Duman, T., Aydugan, P., & Koçak, G. N. (2007). Service quality, service value, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty relations in road passenger transportation services. *Social Science Journal of Dokuz Eylül University*, 9(1), 151-177.
- Eboli, L., & Mazzulla, G. (2007). Service quality attributes affecting customer satisfaction for bus transit. *Journal of Public Transportation*, 10(3), 21-34.
- Etuk, A., Anyadighibe, J. A., James, E. E., & Mbaka, R. (2021). Service quality and passengers' loyalty of public transportation companies. *British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies*, 4(4), 82-98.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39-50.
- Freitas, A. L. P. (2013). Assessing the quality of intercity road transportation of passengers: An exploratory study in Brazil. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 49, 379-392.
- Fu, X. (2022). What should we do to enhance your loyalty if you are (dis) satisfied with public transit service?. *Travel Behaviour and Society*, 26, 28-40.
- George, D., & Mallery, P. (2010). *SPSS for windows step by step: A simple study guide and reference*. Pearson Education India.
- Govender, J. P., & Pan, Q. (2011). Enhancement of service quality in the intercity bus transport industry. *Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of the Arts and Humanities in Southern Africa*, Southern Africa Special Edition 4, 181-202.
- Grönroos, C. (1984). A service quality model and its marketing implications. *European Journal of Marketing*, 18(4), 36-44.
- Grove, S. J., Fisk & R. P. (1997). The impact of other customers on service experiences: A critical incident examination of "getting along". *Journal of Retailing*, 73(1), 63-85.
- Grujičić, D., Ivanović, I., Jović, J., & Dorić, V. (2014). Customer perception of service quality in public transport. *Transport*, 29(3), 285-295.
- Gummesson, E. (1993). *Quality management in service organizations: An interpretation of the Service quality phenomenon and a synthesis of international research*. New York: International Service Quality Association.
- Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2009). *Multivariate data analysis* (17. Ed.). Prentice hall Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2-24.
- Harrison-Walker, L. J. (2001). The measurement of word-of-mouth communication and an investigation of service quality and customer commitment as potential antecedents. *Journal of Service Research*, 4(1), 60-75.
- Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., & Sarstedt, M., (2015). A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 43(1), 115-135.

- Highway traffic regulations (1997), Retrieved July 31, 2024, from <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=8182&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>.
- Houria, B., & Farès, B. (2019). The quality of service in urban public transport in Algeria. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 11(4), 559–575.
- Hu, K. C., & Jen, W. (2007). Passengers' behavioral intentions for intercity bus service in Taiwan: Application and comparison of the Lisrel and neural networks. *Journal of the Eastern Asia Society for Transportation Studies*, 7, 486–498.
- Hu, K., & Jen, W. (2006). Passengers' perceived service quality of city buses in Taipei: Scale development and measurement. *Transport Reviews*, 26(5), 645–662.
- Huang, W. (2008). The impact of other-customer failure on service satisfaction. *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 19(4), 521–536.
- Islam, R., Chowdhury, M. S., Sumann Sarker, M., & Ahmed, S. (2014). Measuring customer's satisfaction on bus transportation. *American Journal of Economics and Business Administration*, 6(1), 34–41.
- Johnson, W. C., & Sirikit, A. (2002). Service quality in the Thai telecommunication industry: A tool for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. *Management Decision*, 40(7), 693–701.
- Juran, J. M. (1951). *Quality control handbook*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Kadam, S., & Bandyopadhyay, P. K. (2020). Modelling passenger interaction process (PIP) framework using ISM and MICMAC approach. *Journal of Rail Transport Planning and Management*, 14, 100171.
- Kamil Koç (2023). Taşıma Sözleşmesi, Retrieved July 31, 2024, from <https://www.flixbus.com.tr/genel-tasima-kosullari-kamil-koc>
- Keçeci, A. (2024). Türkiye'de Karayolu Taşımacılığı. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Dışişleri Bakanlığı. Retrieved April 10, 2024, from <https://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkiye-de-karayolu-tasimaciligi-tr.mfa>.
- Kelilba, M., & Chaib, R. (2024). For a better management of bus service quality in the city of Constantine. *European Transport*, 96(1), 1-16.
- Knutson, B., Stevens, P., Wullaert, C., Patton, M., & Yokoyama, F. (1990). Lodgserv: A service quality index for the lodging industry. *Hospitality Research Journal*, 14(2), 277–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109634809001400230>
- Koçoğlu, C. M., & Aksoy, R., (2012). Measuring service quality by SERVPERF method: An application on bus companies. *Journal of Academic Perspective*, 29, 1–20.
- Kozak, M. (2001). Comparative assessment of tourist satisfaction with destinations across two nationalities. *Tourism Management*, 22(4), 391–401.
- Lewis, B. R. (1993). Service quality measurement. *Marketing Intelligence and Planning*, 11-25.
- Lin, J. C., & Liang, H. (2011). The influence of service environments on customer emotion and service outcomes. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 21(4), 350–372.
- Lin, J.-H. (2018). Validate Service quality measurement for city bus through simulation technique. *8th International Conference on Logistics, Informatics and Service Sciences (LISS)*, 1–6.
- Lin, J.-H., Lee, T.-R., & Jen, W. (2008). Assessing asymmetric response effect of behavioral intention to service quality in an integrated psychological decision-making process model of intercity bus passengers: A case of Taiwan. *Transportation*, 35(1), 129–144.
- Liu, A., Ma, E., & Ng, C. Y. N. (2017). Measuring service quality. In Saurabh Kumar D. (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Consumer Behaviour in Hospitality and Tourism* (pp.116–127). Routledge.

- Mahmoud, M., & Hine, J. (2016). Measuring the influence of bus service quality on the perception of users. *Transportation Planning and Technology*, 39(3), 284–299.
- Mapunda, M. A., (2021). Customers' satisfaction on bus rapid transit services in Tanzania: The servqual model perspective. In J. N. Mojekwu, W. Thwala, C. Aigbavboa, L. Atepor, and S. Sackey (Eds.), *Sustainable education and development* (pp. 194–208). Springer International Publishing.
- Mazzulla, G., & Eboli, L. (2006). A service quality experimental measure for public transport. *European Transport*, 34,42-53.
- Mikhaylov, A. S., Gumenuk, I. S., & Mikhaylova, A. A. (2015). The SERVQUAL model in measuring service quality of public transportation: Evidence from Russia. *Calitatea*, 16(144), 78-83.
- Moore, R., Moore, M.L., & Capella, M. (2005). The impact of customer-to-customer interactions in a high personal contact service setting. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 19(7), 482-491.
- Nguyen-Phuoc, D. Q., Tran, A. T. P., Van Nguyen, T., Le, P. T., & Su, D. N. (2021). Investigating the complexity of perceived service quality and perceived safety and security in building loyalty among bus passengers in Vietnam—a PLS-SEM approach. *Transport Policy*, 101, 162-173.
- Ong, A.K.S., Prasetyo, Y.T., Estefanio, A., Tan, A.S., Videña, J.C., Villanueva, R.A. Chuenyindee, T. Thana, K., Persada S.F., & Nadlifatin, R. (2022). Determining Factors Affecting Passenger Satisfaction of “Jeepney” in the Philippine Urban Areas: The Role of Service Quality in Sustainable Urban Transportation System. *Sustainability*, 15, 1223.
- Özdemir, H. & Mısırlı, I., (2020). The relationship between service quality, behavioral intention and satisfaction in intercity passenger transportation: The case of Çankırı Karatekin University. *Turkish Studies-Social Sciences*, 15(2), 281–299.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1985). A conceptual model of service quality and its implications for future research. *Journal of Marketing*, 49(4), 41–50.
- Parasuraman, A., Zeithaml, V. A., & Berry, L. L. (1988). Servqual: A multiple-item scale for measuring consumer perceptions of service quality. *Journal of Retailing*, 64(1), 12–40.
- Pareigis, J., Edvardsson, B., & Enquist, B. (2011). Exploring the role of the service environment in forming customer's service experience. *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences*, 3(1), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.1108/17566691111115117>
- Pavlina, P. (2015). The factors influencing satisfaction with public city transport: A structural equation modelling approach. *Journal of Competitiveness*, 7(4), 18–32.
- Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive advantage creating and sustaining superior performance*. The Free Press.
- Prasad, M. D., & Shekhar, B. R. (2010). Development of railqual: A service quality scale for measuring Indian railway passenger. *Management Science and Engineering*, 4(3), 87–94.
- Pullen, W. T. (1993). Definition and measurement of quality of service for local public transport management. *Transport Reviews*, 13(3), 247–264.
- Rehman, A., Aisha, S., Atta M., Xuqun, Y., & Abbas, Z. (2020). Inter-city bus service quality and the psychological well-being of travelers: A case of long-distance route in Pakistan. *International Transaction Journal of Engineering, Management, & Applied Sciences & Technologies*, 11(8), 1-9.

- Ricardianto, P., Yanto, T., Wardhono, D., Fachrial, P., Sari, M., Suryobuwono, A., & Endri, E. (2023). The impact of service quality, ticket price policy and passenger trust on airport train passenger loyalty. *Uncertain Supply Chain Management*, 11(1), 307-318.
- Rust, R. T., & Oliver, R. L. (1994). Service Quality: Insights and managerial implications from the frontier. In R. T. Rust and R. L. Oliver (Eds.), *Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice* (pp. 1–20). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Sakti, R. F. J., Widiyanto, P., & Candra Susanto, P. (2021). Service quality and customer satisfaction increasing loyalty of passengers Ro-Ro Ferry Bakauheni. *Journal of Economics, Management, Entrepreneurship, and Business (JEMEB)*, 1(1), 79–92.
- Sánchez Pérez, M., Carlos Gázquez Abad, J., María Marín Carrillo, G., & Sánchez Fernández, R. (2007). Effects of service quality dimensions on behavioural purchase intentions: A study in public-sector transport. *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, 17(2), 134–151.
- Schumacker, R. E., & Lomax, R. G. (2004). *A beginner's guide to structural equation modeling*. Psychology Press.
- Sekaran, U. & Bougie, R. (2016). *Research methods for business* (7th edition), John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Shah, F. T., Syed, Z., Imam, A., & Raza, A. (2020). The impact of airline service quality on passengers' behavioral intentions using passenger satisfaction as a mediator. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 85, 101815.
- Shamsudin, M. F., FatiniRasol, N. E., Nayan, S., Esa, S.A., & Kadir, B. (2020). The effect of service quality on customer satisfaction towards Myrapid bus services. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, 7(9), 610-619. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3812084>
- Shi, Y., Prentice, C., & He, W. (2014). Linking service quality, customer satisfaction and loyalty in casinos, does membership matter?. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 40, 81–91.
- Silcock, D. T. (1981). Measures of operational performance for urban bus services. *Traffic Engineering and Control*, 22(HS-032 837).
- Smith, R. A., & Houston, M. J., (1982). Script-based evaluations of satisfaction with services. In L. Berry, G. Shostack, and G. Upah (Eds.), *Emerging Perspectives on Services Marketing* (pp. 59–62). American Marketing.
- Sukhov, A., Lättman, K., Olsson, L. E., Friman, M., & Fujii, S. (2021). Assessing travel satisfaction in public transport: A configurational approach. *Transportation Research Part D: Transport and Environment*, 93, 102732.
- Tabachnick, G. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2006). *Using multivariate statistics*. Pearson, Boston.
- Taheri, B., Gannon, M. J., Cordina, R., & Lochrie, S. (2018). Measuring host sincerity: Scale development and validation. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(8), 2752–2772.
- Tavmergen, I. P. (2002). *Quality management in the tourism industry* (1st ed.). Distinguished Publishing.
- Tosun, C., Dedeoğlu, B. B., & Fyall, A. (2015). Destination service quality, affective image and revisit intention: The moderating role of past experience. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 4(4), 222–234.
- Tuan, V. A., Van Truong, N., Tetsuo, S., & An, N. N. (2022). Public transport service quality: Policy prioritization strategy in the importance-performance analysis and the three-factor theory frameworks. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 166, 118-134.
- Ubaidillah, N. Z., Sa'ad, N. H., Nordin, N. A., Baharuddin, N. N., Ismail, F., & Hassan, M. K. H. (2022). The Impact of Public Bus Service Quality on the Users' Satisfaction:

- Evidence from a Developing Asian City. *Review of Applied Socio-Economic Research*, 23(1), 83-96.
- Watkins, M.W. (2018). Exploratory factor analysis: A guide to best practice. *J. Black Psychol.*, 44(3), 219–246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798418771807>.
- Watthanaklang, D., Jomnonkwao, S., Champahom, T., & Wisutwattanasak, P. (2024). Exploring accessibility and service quality perceptions on local public transportation in Thailand. *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, 15, 101144.
- Wen, C.-H., Lan, L. W., & Cheng, H.-L. (2005). Structural equation modeling to determine passenger loyalty toward intercity bus services. *Transportation Research Record*, 1927(1), 249-255.
- Wirtz, J., & Lovelock, C. (2021). *Services marketing: People, technology, strategy*. World Scientific.
- Wu, C. H. J. (2008). The influence of customer-to-customer interactions and role typology on customer reaction. *The Service Industries Journal*, 28(10), 1501-1513.
- Yaya, L. H. P., Fortià, M. F., Canals, C. S., & Marimon, F. (2015). Service quality assessment of public transport and the implication role of demographic characteristics. *Public Transport*, 7(3), 409–428.
- Yilmaz, I. (2012). Perceptions of tourism students towards road passenger transportation services. *Anatolia: Journal of Tourism Studies*, 23(1), 73–85.
- Zeithaml, V. A., Berry, L. L., & Parasuraman, A. (1996). The behavioral consequences of service quality. *Journal of Marketing*, 60(2), 31–46.
- Zgolli, S., & Zaiem, I. (2017). Customer-to-customer interaction in tourism experience: Moderating role of nationality. *Arab Economic and Business Journal*, 12(1), 44-56.
- Zhang, C., Liu, Y., Lu, W., & Xiao, G. (2019). Evaluating passenger satisfaction index based on PLS-SEM model: Evidence from Chinese public transport service. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 120, 149-164.

Appendix

Descriptive statistics (Answer Options: 0-No Idea, 1-Very Bad, 2-Bad, 3-Middle/Average, 4-Good, 5-Very Good)					
Items	Variable	Mean	SD.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Comfort and width of seats	Comfort4	2.47	1.168	.14	-.70
Availability of in-bus technology (Wi-fi, socket, etc.)	Comfort6	2.18	1.245	.55	-.48
Entertainment systems (TV, media player etc.)	Comfort5	2.08	1.189	.57	-.29
Frequency of free shuttle service of the bus company	FreeShuttle1	2.22	1.317	.22	-.70
Free shuttle and bus arrival and departure time	FreeShuttle2	2.15	1.295	.29	-.61
Free shuttle service of the bus company	FreeShuttle3	2.08	1.380	.40	-.79
Prices in rest areas	Restarea4	1.81	1.174	.64	-.03
Equipment and maintenance of rest areas	Restarea1	2.42	1.283	.05	-.73
Cleaning of rest areas	Restarea2	2.42	1.271	.01	-.56
Food and beverage quality in rest areas	Restarea3	2.36	1.290	.06	-.69
Arriving at the destination within the time specified in the tariff	PromisServ6	2.56	1.485	.04	-1.04
Clear and understandable departure and arrival time schedules	PromisServ1	2.60	1.348	-.06	-.80
Frequency of bus services	PromisServ8	2.57	1.392	-.05	-.77
Break times	PromisServ2	2.74	1.307	-.21	-.71
Number of breaks	PromisServ3	2.68	1.279	-.22	-.67
Delay status of passengers boarding the bus	PI4	2.30	1.256	.10	-.67
Behavior of passengers to other passengers	PI3	2.45	1.245	-.09	-.68
Cleanliness of passengers	PI2	2.64	1.314	-.12	-.63
Noise of passengers	PI1	2.47	1.294	-.01	-.74
Useful customer waiting area in the office	OfficeServ6	2.38	1.372	.06	-.83
The adequacy of the number of offices	OfficeServ2	2.72	1.421	-.25	-.75
Cleaning the office	OfficeServ5	2.58	1.344	-.17	-.65
Behavior of office staff	OfficeServ4	2.76	1.33653	-.33	-.51
Accessibility to the office (location, accessibility)	OfficeServ3	2.77	1.34564	-.37	-.51
Cleanliness of the employees (assistant personnel)	Empbeh1	2.79	1.29142	-.31	-.62
Safe driving of the driver	Empbeh5	2.83	1.35036	-.33	-.60
Behavior of drivers	Empbeh4	2.72	1.37665	-.33	-.71
Behaviors of employees	Empbeh6	2.77	1.30513	-.29	-.65
Friendliness of employees	Empbeh2	2.76	1.29850	-.16	-.71
Employees assist passengers	Empbeh3	2.86	1.27565	-.33	-.56

A MODEL PROPOSAL FOR SUSTAINABLE CAREER MANAGEMENT IN HOSPITALITY: GROUNDED THEORY PERSPECTIVE

Volkan AŞKUN¹

*Demre Dr. Hasan Ünal Vocational School,
Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
ORCID: 0000-0003-2746-502X

Rabia ÇİZEL

*Faculty of Economics and Administrative
Sciences, Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
ORCID: 0000-0002-6381-2503

ABSTRACT

As throughout the post-pandemic world, hospitality facilities in Antalya, the destination of mass tourism in Türkiye, are struggling with the problem of labor shortage. Sustainable Career Management (SCM) efforts to recruit and retain competent and qualified young people are increasing in order to reduce the labor shortage. In this context, based on the grounded theory methodology, the study provides a holistic model of how SCM should be managed with the views of experienced managers in the hospitality sector.

Article History

Received 4 June 2024
Revised 10 July 2024
Accepted 10 July 2024
Published online 12 August 2024

Keywords

hospitality
sustainable career management
COVID-19
grounded theory
human resources

INTRODUCTION

In the post-Covid pandemic period, 50% of the employees in the tourism sector did not return to their jobs. In addition to its impacts on the sector, labor shortages and labor mobility (Kravariti & Johnston, 2020) affect employees' career choices (Baum et al., 2020; Hite & McDonald, 2020). It is time for the sector to recognize that manpower development is not an expense but an investment, not a cost but a value (Jafari & McCabe, 2024). In this sense, it is becoming increasingly important for organizations to offer sustainable career (SC) opportunities to employees in order to compete sustainably in an industry that serves people with people, such as hospitality (Kravariti et al., 2022). Organizations' holistic evaluation of micro, mezzo, and macro factors (King et al., 2021) that are effective in sustainable career management (SCM) increases their success.

¹ Address correspondence to Volkan Aşkun (Ph.D.), Demre Dr. Hasan Ünal Vocational School, Akdeniz University, Türkiye. E-mail: volkanaskun@gmail.com

The view that SCM is too multidimensional to be addressed only through individual agents is widely supported in the literature (De Vos et al., 2020; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). The SC process encompasses more than individual career management and requires the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, such as the individual's family, peers, managers, employers, decision-makers, the education system, and society. An important assumption when developing a theoretical framework for SC is that a multi-stakeholder perspective is needed to better understand individual career sustainability (Colakoglu et al., 2006; De Vos et al., 2020). In this sense, a regular cycle is needed because of the interconnection of these elements. In this cycle, employees can sustain their careers by developing a learning style with a cycle of discovery, creation, protection, and restart in individual, organizational, and environmental areas (Heslin et al., 2020).

As a result of the literature review, the main research question in this study, which sets out with the prediction that a multidimensional model will be beneficial for SCM in the hospitality industry, is how the hospitality organizations will make SCM. In this context, interviews with the managers of hospitality organizations in Antalya, Türkiye, which have 50 years of experience in mass tourism, were conducted according to the data collection, analysis, and reporting standards of the grounded theory. The research findings provide important contributions to understanding how hospitality organizations holistically evaluate micro, mezzo, and macro factors (King et al., 2021) that are effective in SCM. The study offers practical guidance for hospitality businesses facing labor shortages, such as Antalya. The findings suggest that holistic SCM practices that specifically consider micro, mezzo and macro factors can effectively attract and retain young talent. These practices include tailored career development programs, supportive work environments, and inclusive HR policies that are aligned with employee needs and corporate goals. Furthermore, the study contributes theoretically to the SCM literature by presenting a comprehensive model based on empirical data. This model extends the field by integrating a multi-stakeholder perspective, emphasizing the importance of family, peers, managers, employers, decision makers, education system and society in career sustainability. Finally, by providing a nuanced understanding of career dynamics in hospitality industry, it underlines the importance of addressing individual, organizational and environmental dimensions in SCM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A sustainable career (SC) is defined as a sequence of different career experiences of an individual, reflected by various patterns of continuity over time, passing through various social contexts, and characterized by individual actors who give meaning to the individual (van der Heijden & de Vos, 2015, p. 7). In other words, it consists of work experiences that intersect with many areas of life related to work, environment, nature, social environment, and family throughout one's life. This viewpoint arises when the nature of employment evolves at a faster pace due to socioeconomic reasons, such as the growing intricacy and worldwide reach of work and job markets. The distinguishing feature of the SC viewpoint, in contrast to other career paradigms, is its explicit and robust emphasis on the interplay of individual, temporal, and environmental factors in career management.

De Vos et al. (2020) developed a model that foregrounds health, happiness, and productivity to improve our understanding of what makes a career sustainable and to analyze what makes a career more or less sustainable. This is in fact based on Van der Heijden and De Vos' (2015) definitions that emphasize resilience, satisfaction and employability as key characteristics of a SC. It is emphasized that career management should take into account different contextual factors such as institutional, national, occupational, organizational and work group as well as the individual (Bozionelos et al., 2020; Jabeen et al., 2021). SC-related interventions, such as investing in employment-enabling activities, and issues are related to underlying norms and values regarding their timing (Chen et al., 2018; Jabeen et al., 2021). Van der Heijden and de Vos (2015) emphasize that organizational strategies for the lifetime physical, emotional or mental demands of a job should be carefully considered. Therefore, organizations must ensure that their policies and procedures are per the values, norms, expectations, and preferences of their employees (Straub et al., 2020). In other words, the relationship between employees and organizational stakeholders serves as a catalyst to ensure and enhance the long-term sustainability of people's careers. A study conducted in a multinational management consulting firm (Chudzikowski et al., 2020) reveals that career sustainability can be enhanced by aligning individuals' career interests and aspirations with those of organizations. In parallel, Hirschi et al. (2020) argue that SC can only be achieved if different areas of one's life, most importantly job and personal life, are in harmony.

It can be stated that a global crisis such as COVID-19 or political, economic, and environmental crises experienced by countries are career

shocks that affect SC (Pak et al., 2020). A study (King et al., 2021) examining the effects of COVID-19 on the hospitality industry according to three different dimensions (micro, mezzo, macro) showed that issues go beyond the individual and organizational contexts such as psychological contract, social policy, job insecurity, wage policy, migration, gender inequality, labor legislation and inability to unionize will also have an impact on careers. Considering the demands and expectations of employees, both organizations and their environment should attach importance to ethical behavior, legal systems and labor legislation, environmental sensitivity, and organizational climate (Taylor, 2022). In addition to these environmental impacts, flexible working models, in-company training opportunities, providing sufficient material and moral support for employees to live humanely, diversification of leave types, a fair and rewarding system, and work-life balance practices are influential issues in career management (Deery, 2008).

Another issue that has come to the agenda with the increasing labor shortage in the post-pandemic period is what should be the policies, strategies, and practices of organizations in the sustainable career management (SCM) of talented employees. SCM is a career policy based on the concept of SC, in which employees move between different organizations by gaining different experiences rather than working for a lifetime in a single organization, and is influenced by environmental, organizational, and personal contexts (de Prins et al., 2015). There are six elements in this policy: employability and work ability of the employee; proactively anticipating the future; inclusive, employee-specific practices; one-to-one involvement of the employee; and career support for the employee. Post-COVID-19 growing economies and the world's creation of new sectors, social policies implemented by governments, environmental influences such as the structure of the sector (Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015), and the symbiotic link between the employee's organizational and personal life can benefit from the evaluation of SCM from a pragmatic perspective (Tarique, 2021).

The demand for employees is increasing due to the declining youth population and the persistently high rate of not in education, employment, or training (NEET) (Çizel et al., 2023). With increasing global competition, employees' perceptions of the risks of changing organizations are also changing positively (Schwab & Zahidi, 2020). Especially the ease of transitioning to different sectors enables employees to see this as an opportunity. For SCM, it is important to address all effective individual, organizational and environmental factors and develop the appropriate

ecosystem for SCM (Chen et al., 2018; Jabeen et al., 2021; Van der Klink et al., 2016).

When employees decide to work for an organization, they do not only make decisions about their careers, they also make choices about how and where to contribute to their intellectual capital. There is a view in the literature that it is not only their responsibility to manage their careers (Chudzikowski et al., 2020; de Vos et al., 2020). For example, organizations that see their employees as an asset, inform them about their status in this sense and structure their systems accordingly are much less likely to lose these employees than those that do not (Kirk, 2021). In organizations where employees are seen as valuable, there is a tendency not to leave the organization (Björkman et al., 2013). However, it is very valuable for these employees that the criteria for inclusion in talent pools are fully defined. The policies to be developed by organizations on sustainability should be transparent, fair and inclusive (de Prins et al., 2015).

The need for SC planning and the development of personalized coaching, mentoring and training programs is increasing day by day. According to Van der Heijden and De Vos (2015), SC means that people benefit from positive and safe conditions over time, enjoy well-being at work and achieve overall higher life satisfaction. Therefore, decent working conditions are a prerequisite for SCs. SC development can lead to better work experiences on a subjective level. To promote access to SC, it is important to promote access to decent work and safe job transitions. In this perspective, it is important that governments and organizations provide career support to workers for SCM (de Prins et al., 2015).

The hospitality industry, especially in regions such as Türkiye, is facing significant labor shortages post COVID-19. Studies (Baum et al., 2020; Hite & McDonald, 2020) emphasize the urgent need for SCM to attract and retain talent in this evolving environment, while influential studies in the SC field (De Vos et al., 2020; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015) show that effective SCM needs to integrate micro, mezzo and macro factors and requires the active engagement of various stakeholders, including individuals, families, managers, and policy makers. While the existing literature recognizes the need for a comprehensive approach to SCM, there is a lack of integrated models that holistically address the individual, organizational, and environmental factors that influence career sustainability. While most SCM research tends to be generalized across sectors, there is a dearth of studies specifically tailored to the unique challenges and dynamics of the hospitality industry, especially in tourism-

intensive regions such as Antalya. In this sense, despite theoretical advances, there is a need for empirical studies that provide concrete data on the effectiveness of various SCM practices in the hospitality sector, while providing relevant and actionable insights that can be directly applied to contexts in regions facing post-pandemic labor shortages. As a result, this study provides a detailed, empirically validated SCM model adapted to the hospitality industry, enabling to fill the identified gaps, while at the same time being able to demonstrate the understanding and implementation of SC practices in this critical sector.

METHODOLOGY

Grounded theory (GT) has been preferred in this study because of its ability to connect with and extend other theories with the same understanding as well as the possibility of developing theories by constructing knowledge (Morse et al., 2021) or providing new information to the literature. While it is observed that empirical studies have increased with De Vos et al.'s (2020) model proposal for SCs, the fact that there is no study that tries to reveal all factors, as in this study, has led us to benefit from GT.

As can be seen in Figure 1, a multi-stage path was followed for the analysis of organizations' SCM efforts by making use of GT (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2020; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). This path is informed by the pragmatic constructivist perspective of Kathy Charmaz (Günbayı & Aşkun, 2023). In this sense, the study adopts the interpretive paradigm because the researchers aim to understand, clarify, and interpret the researched subject on the basis of hermeneutic interest (Günbayı & Sorm, 2020). The study is designed according to her roadmap for improving the quality of GT studies published posthumously, following implementation steps that allow researchers to touch the work rather than using any programs (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021).

Context of the Study

Due to its natural, historical, and cultural attractiveness, Antalya (Türkiye) has a capacity of 1,253 facilities, 331,162 rooms, and 714,190 beds as of June 10th, 2022, and hosted 56.7 million tourists in 2023 (KTB, 2023). Antalya has a variety of accommodation types, mainly in the form of all-inclusive or full-board five-star hotels, holiday villages, golf resorts, and tourism complexes. It is a seasonal tourism destination and has tourism managers with many years of experience serving tourists of different nationalities. Antalya is

facing an increasing labor shortage in the post-pandemic period, despite the growing tourism sector and increasing need for employees (Erkuş & Terhorst, 2023). For this reason, intense efforts are made to retain talented employees in the sector. We believe that these elements make the research context appropriate for the study of SCM. Due to the nature of GT, data collection and analysis were conducted simultaneously, so the next section explains in detail why and how 20 participants in Appendix 1 were included in the study.

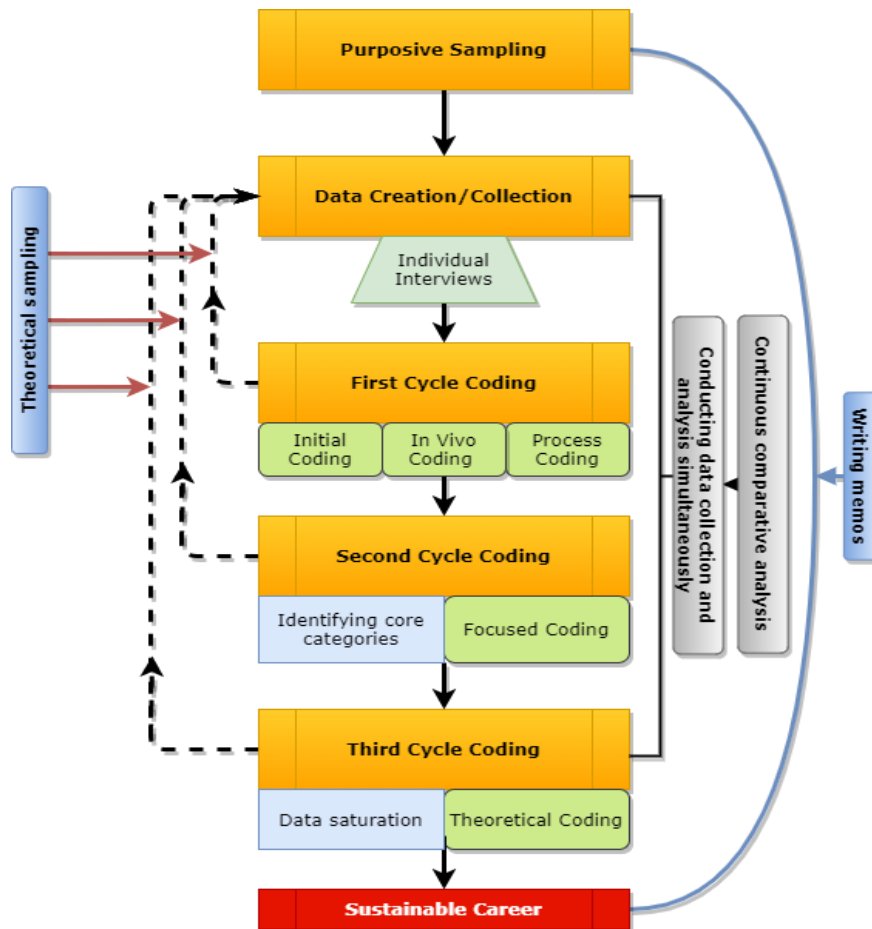


Figure 1. GT Research Design

Participants, Simultaneous Data Collection and Analysis

The section is explained with the help of Figure 1. For *purposive sampling* (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019), the first interview was conducted face-to-face on January 11, 2022, with the help of a semi-structured interview form with SC1, who is 76 years old and currently working as a consultant but has lived and experienced in Antalya (Türkiye) as a lecturer, HR specialist, director, association president, and has witnessed very different human resource dynamics. After this interview, data line-by-line coding (Charmaz, 2020)

was performed through the first cycle, *initial*, *in vivo*, and *process coding*. Following the first interview and analysis, the first *theoretical sample* consisted of HR managers who had witnessed human resource development in the sector and were thought to be effective in employee career paths. However, according to the development of *comparative analyses*, different field managers and sector consultants were reached to assess whether there were differences of opinion. In line with the GT philosophy, attention was paid to ensure that the participants had the perspectives to evaluate the issue in a way that would allow them to observe the issue from both inside (their own careers) and outside (employees' careers). Because it is important for the study that they stand at a point where they can observe the change in the careers of the employees with their own lived experiences.

All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participants and transcribed for analysis using MS Word and Excel. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and with the help of Microsoft Teams and Zoom programs, lasted 40 minutes to 2 hours-39 minutes.

Within the scope of credibility, the researchers conducted second- and third-cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016) both by making constant comparisons (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021) and with other practices in the name of strong reflexivity and 'methodological self-consciousness' (Charmaz, 2014) during the coding process. While making these coding, the application suggested by Saldaña (2016) was used and the text content was written double-spaced and justified on the left two-thirds of the page. Codes and notes were written on the right side. In addition, while coding, markings were made on the text with colored pens. Together with the primary coding, 531 initial codes emerged in the whole process. In the second coding cycle, focused coding was carried out and 12 different core categories were identified at this stage; and in the third cycle, theoretical coding (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019) was carried out, and three main categories (individual, organizational, and environmental dimensions) were identified because of both literature support and information emerging from the data.

In order to build theory throughout the study, analytical notes called memos (Charmaz, 2014; Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021) were written on colored papers assigned to each participant (Appendix 2) and were constantly updated during the process. The process of *writing memos* strengthened the researcher's ability to address the issue from both the inside and the outside, as was the case with the participants, and thus

provided the opportunity for *simultaneous comparison* between codes and categories. At the same time, the codes that emerged during the three cycles were hung on the study wall with colored post-its (Appendix 3), and small marks were left in the corner according to the color code of each participant. After these simultaneous action and process analyses, re-interviews were conducted with the help of the theoretical sample (Charmaz, 2020) with the newly adapted questions that emerged. For the theoretical sample that emerged from the analyses in the process, people who changed their career paths or did not change their career paths at all, such as from different sectors to hospitality, from hospitality to different sectors, from hospitality to the public sector, or who decided not to work for a certain period of time, etc., or according to demographic conditions such as gender, marital characteristics, etc., were interviewed. During this time, for the theoretical sample, it was also ensured that all participants had, at least once in their career journey, worked as a manager in a group hotel with over 1,000 employees. In this sense, providing information as a result of managers observing both their own career paths from the inside and employees' careers from the outside (Bryant & Charmaz, 2019; Charmaz, 2014; Morse et al., 2021) increases the quality of the study. The process, which started on January 11, 2022, with cyclical data collection, coding, constantly writing memos and updating post-its during the process, and analyzing the data simultaneously, ended on May 20, 2023, when the categories consisting of the data collected from the participants in Appendix 1 reached *data saturation* (Charmaz, 2014).

FINDINGS

From the analysis of our GT cyclical research, three main categories — individual, organizational, and environmental— and 12 different sub-categories emerged. The factors influencing the SC of employee in the hospitality industry are as shown in Table 1.

Individual Context

According to all participants, employees should “of course, first of all, have a *good education* (SC12)”. The most important technical skill is knowledge of “*foreign language* as big advantage (SC10)”, followed by *computer-technology, economics, and world politics knowledge*, respectively. This important skill is expressed by SC18 as: “Throughout my university life, I was always busy tampering with that computer, writing programs and discovering it. [...] world literacy is another dimension.”

Table 1. Components emerging from main and sub-factors

INDIVIDUAL						
Technical skills	Soft skills	Relationship management	Health	Professional competence	Identity/Role	Social support
- Good education	- Self-control	- Strong communication	- Psychological fatigue	- Agility	- Having the knowledge required by the era	- Having family support
- Foreign language	- Self-confidence	- Adaptability	- Well-being	- Independent decision-making	- Marital status	- Strong social network
- Computer-technology	- Solution-orientation	- Empathy	- Death in the family or someone's illness	- Flexibility	- Having children	- Engaging in activities
- Economics and world politics knowledge	- Analytical thinking	- Emotional intelligence	- Health problems	- High job performance		- culture, sports, art
	- Self-motivation	- Ethics		- Responsibility		
	- Self-awareness	- Love for people		- Knowing the sector and other sectors		
	- Willingness to learn					
ORGANIZATIONAL						
Management style		Workplace		HR policies and practices		
- Demonstrating the necessary value		- Working place and conditions		- In-house training		
- Influence of the manager (+/-)		- Organizational climate		- Promotion system		
- Nepotism		- Organizational culture		- Career planning		
- Mobbing/bullying		- Departmental colleague support		- Performance management		
- Marginalization/discrimination		- Institutionalism		- Fringe benefits		
		- Flexibility in working time		- Feedback		
				- Psychological support		
				- Wage policy		
ENVIRONMENTAL						
Global impact			Territorial impact			
- Shocks or crises			- Shocks/crises in the country		- Legal development	
- Digitalization			- Political decision-makers		- Geographical location	
- The emergence of new sectors			- Economy		- Education system	
- Globalization			- Labor legislation		- Values/norms	
- Migration			- Social policy		- Structure of the sector	
- Climate change			- Employment incentives			

A common statement of all 20 participants relates to the development of soft skills as the most important element for the employees' career. Rather than technical skills, prevails the view that throughout career journey soft skills, such as *self-control*, *self-confidence*, *solution-orientation*, *analytical thinking*, *work-life balance*, *self-motivation*, *self-awareness*, and *willingness to learn* are important. This is considered as a parallel finding with those of the WEF (2020) in which 8 out of 10 skills expected in future jobs are soft skills.

Given that the hospitality industry serves people with people, all participants expect *strong communication* from the employees. In addition to this, *adaptability*, *empathy*, *emotional intelligence*, *ethics*, and *love for people* are seen as necessities for people to have successful communication management. Health-related factors such as *psychological fatigue*, *well-being*, *a death in the family or someone's illness*, *health problems* can cause irrational

decisions from time to time. In other words, conditions vary from person to person and do not lead to linear results.

As professional competence in the hospitality industry: *agility, having the knowledge required by the era, independent decision-making, flexibility, high job performance, responsibility, knowing the sector and other sectors* come to the fore. Considering SC8's warning for those who will work in the hospitality industry; "The most important element when choosing the tourism sector is how relevant tourism is to you when considering your professional career", it is seen that this is a sector where political, ideological, and cultural identities should never be discriminated against. He states that people who can work in a way that does not discriminate against different religions, languages, gender, etc. can have a career in this sector. In this sense, it is important for the employee to recognize the hospitality industry and other sectors.

Identity, role or status such as *marital status* and *having children* are more important for employees in the hospitality industry than in other sectors. In particular, it is observed that the sector has more challenging factors for employees who are married, have children or have new children. "We are starting to play extra responsibilities, extra roles (SC12)" implying that changes in marital status, having children, etc. can be effective in making irrational decisions.

Statements by the SC18, "That's the magic word, family support" and SC2 "Family is so important actually" imply that social supportive factors such as *having family support*, as well as *having a strong social network* and *engaging in activities such as culture, sports, art* affect the employees' careers. Family reactions from each of the participants affected their abilities in some way. Especially for mothers with new children, the support they receive from their families is more important for them to continue their careers. For example, SC16's support from her and her husband's family and SC20's support after her husband quit his job positively affected their careers.

Organizational Context

Demonstrating the necessary value to employee becomes even more important in post-COVID-19 period. Moreover, topics such as the *influence of the manager, nepotism, mobbing/bullying, marginalization/discrimination* are stated by the participants as effective factors not only in career but also in all areas of life.

SC9, who believes that “It is an asset that we need to increase its value, increase its value, like a jewel that we need to value, that we need to know its value”, sheds light on showing the necessary value, which has become an extremely important issue post COVID-19. On the other hand, “It is a good thing if my manager gives you not only responsibility but also authority. It is a very bad thing if he gives responsibility but does not give authority at all, that is, if your field of action is completely limited (SC14)” expresses that in this sense, giving responsibility to the employee can be considered as giving value in a sense.

While the hospitality industry should not accept discrimination and marginalization by its nature, possible negative career effects are observed especially for female employees. “I am currently in the legal process. My lawyer in Istanbul, the first thing he said was 'you are my second client in the tourism sector, I think being a female manager is the reason behind what you are facing' [...] I was exposed to this not only from my superiors but also from the subordinates (SC15)”. In a sense, what she experienced can be interpreted as *marginalization/discrimination* through sexism. In fact, we observe that this situation has a complete disruption effect on the person's career. “You cannot get to a point only with the environment, only with knowledge or only with love. In other words, when one of the parts is missing, none of them will work.” SC3 emphasizes the importance of *working place and conditions* together with other elements. In addition to this, *organizational climate, organizational culture, departmental colleague support, institutionalism, flexibility in working time* also emerge as important at the same point.

“An effective HR is a building block that can really take the business to great places [...] HR actually has a great importance here. HR can change the structure of the business, change its perspective. But as I said, it may or may not (SC4)”. It is seen that HR policies and practices actually enable a systemic transformation and have a strong effect on retaining existing and attracting future employees. In this sense, the prominent topics in the context of HR policies and practices are as follows; *in-house training, promotion system, career planning, performance management, fringe benefits, feedback, psychological support, wage policy*.

Environmental Context

It has been observed in recent history that *shocks or crises* such as COVID-19, which emerged on a global scale, affect the careers of employees. Although this is the common view of all participants, SC9 summarizes the

situation as follows; “This crisis [COVID-19] has unfortunately taught us how valuable our employees are and how important they are. I wish we had learned this before the crisis”. In this crisis, we actually see that organizations have given a big test, “If businesses do not support their employees financially in times of shock and crisis, people can target careers in different sectors (SC7)”. When looking at other global factors, *digitalization, the emergence of new sectors, globalization, migration and climate change* come to the fore.

Regarding the *shocks/crises in the country*, SC3 said, “Everything that happens in the country [crisis] affects us anyway. Whatever is happening in the country affects the tourism sector”, indicating that employees are affected by this and turn to different searches. For example, in the interview with SC8, it was revealed that he could not overcome the crises in the country when he worked in two corporate organizations and withdrew from the sector. He attributes this to the inability of corporate companies to compete due to the initiatives provided by *political decision-makers* to non-institutional organizations.

In a country that is trusted economically, there is less flight from uncertainty. Participants expressed this as follows; a *country's economy* “gives confidence, an element of trust (SC7)” and “A country's stance is very important [...] economically (SC6)”. At the same time, “Tourism is actually a luxury. I mean, everything ends, it will come later (S17)”. As can be seen in the discourse, if the purchasing power in the country is good, the sector can survive and offer employment opportunities to the talented people who will work here.

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that SCs for employee can be achieved through a holistic approach that includes environmental-level actions such as employment policies, organizational-level actions such as human resource development (HRD) policies, and individual-level actions that aim to support employee. Achieving long-term career sustainability depends on all stakeholders at micro, mezzo and macro levels within and beyond organizations recognizing the need for a tailored career strategy. This strategy recognizes the unique and changing nature of career pathways and aligns the changing needs of individuals, organizations and the environment (Brzykcy et al., 2019; Van der Heijden & De Vos, 2015). In this sense, we share the view that it would be valuable to offer a special prescription with our model Figure 2, provided that individuals, organizations, and governments in the

hospitality industry, with the support of the literature, do their taking into account the symbiotic relationship with the principle of SCM (De Prins et al., 2015).

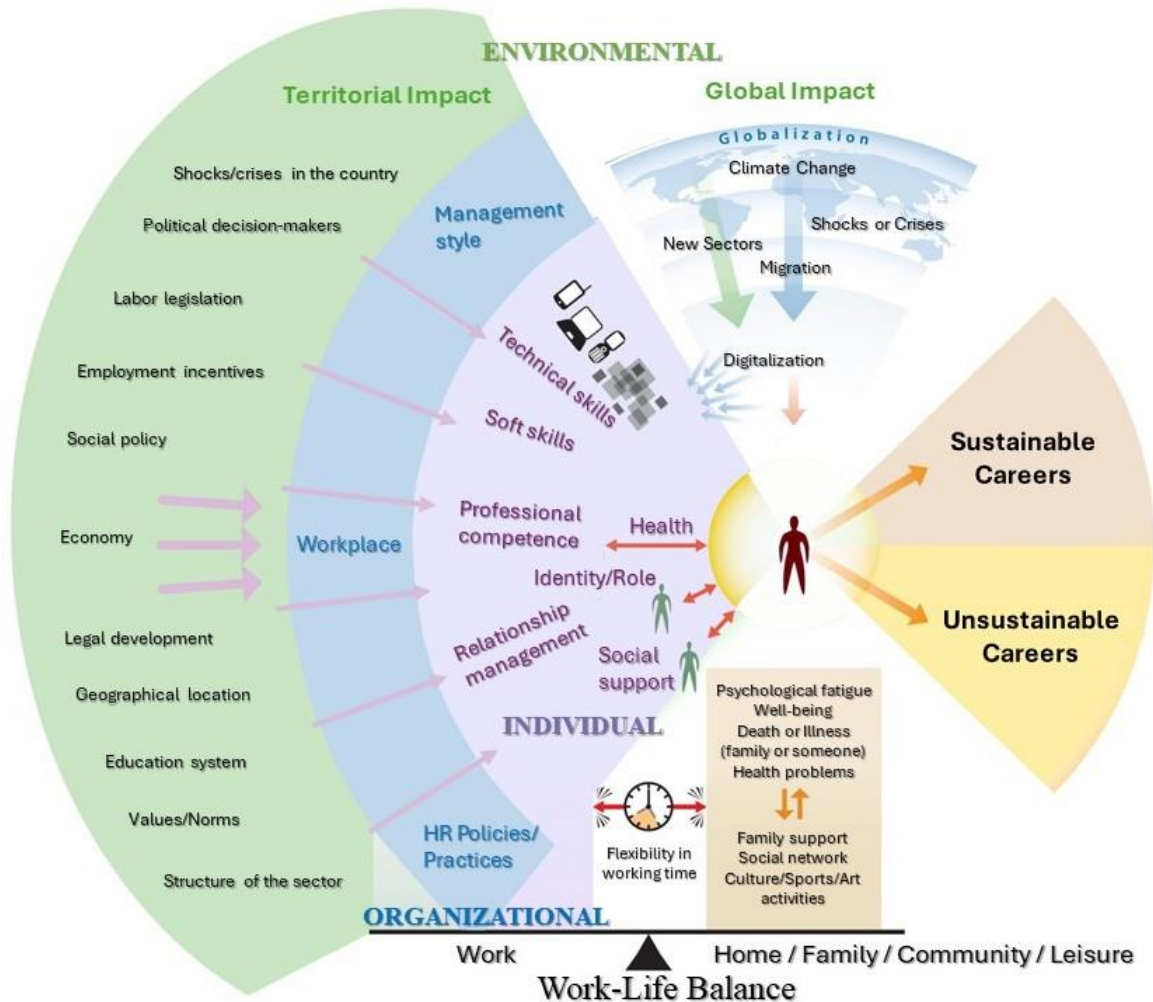


Figure 2. SC Model in Hospitality

Implications for SCM at Individual Level

In particular, it is essential to possess and strive to develop both the technical (good foreign language and computer technology skills, economics and world politics knowledge) and soft (self-control, self-confidence, solution-orientation, analytical thinking, work-life balance, self-motivation, self-awareness, willingness to learn) skills that hospitality is looking for. It is extremely important that both technical and soft skills are expected in the future (WEF, 2020). The literature suggests that the alignment between individual skills and preferences and lifelong institutional support is crucial for maintaining individual and environmental harmony (Sturges & Guest, 2004).

Furthermore, consistent with the existing research (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020), this study demonstrates that actively attempting to reduce one's workload can be advantageous for the individual. However, if important individuals within the organization do not endorse this approach, it can harm long-term career prospects and lead to a decline in organizational commitment and job performance due to a breach in the psychological contract. Supporting the careers of both employees and managers to achieve work-life balance (Bozionelos et al., 2020) plays an important role in the lifelong SCs. Secondly, the ability of employees to adapt to their environment is an important issue for career sustainability.

Career success depends on employees' ability to adjust swiftly to changing organizational and working relationship conditions without skill mismatch. The hospitality industry serves people; thus, personnel need good communication skills, empathy, ethical beliefs, and emotional intelligence to grow and maintain their professions. Participants agree that employees "need to love people". Communication skills and other relationship materials pertain to interactions with colleagues and emphasize the necessity of tourist-culturally sensitive communication (Bagheri et al., 2020). In collectivist countries like Türkiye, employee communication and social networks are increasingly significant (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013).

When we look at the studies conducted in the field of employability (Blokker et al., 2019; Bozionelos et al., 2020; Jabeen et al., 2021), agility, having the knowledge required by the era, independent decision-making, flexibility, high job performance, responsibility, and knowing the sector/other sectors under the professional competencies in our study are in line with the titles. Especially in the hospitality industry, having these competencies is necessary for both employability and SC, and employees should invest in personal development that increases intellectual capital.

Implications for SCM at Organizational Level

Organizational structure, management philosophy, and human resources management (HRM) policies can support employees. Hospitality employers often fail to foster talent (Baum, 2019). The data also demonstrate that talent career management requires understanding their demands. According to this study, the industry should value diversity and inclusion and be sensitive to discrimination/marginalization. The organization should also ensure the manager is a good leader, reduce nepotism, address mobbing/bullying, and prevent discrimination/marginalization. Nepotism

in the hospitality organizations in Türkiye, a collectivist society (Minkov & Hofstede, 2013), can contribute to employee disengagement (Kerse & Babadağ, 2018). Thus, merit-based recruitment and HRM are crucial for organizations. In response to sexism and mobbing/bullying, employees may switch industries, especially in managerial roles or transitions. Mentally exhausted people who think they can't change industries opt to move organizations or quit. Sexism in particular reflects Türkiye's 124th place out of 146 nations in international gender reporting at the organization level (WEF, 2022a).

As well as physically improving the working environment (staff cafeterias, lodgings, and social areas used by the staff), the right management approach of the managers creates effects that will make employees feel that they belong to the organization and increase their loyalty, while also contributing to their psychological well-being. It is critical to create working conditions that promote health and psychosocial well-being in the workplace, as well as to regulate working hours and income levels, in order for employees to gain access to decent work and thus promote SC development (ILO, 2020). It is emphasized that in Antalya, the context of the study, there are a limited number of hospitality enterprises that provide such opportunities.

Seasonal work is an important feature of the research context. Hospitality industries are characterized by seasonal work, low wages, and high employee turnover (Bagheri et al., 2020; Baum, 2019). Organizations can make a significant contribution to SC by creating flexible working opportunities (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020) for employees without losing their employee rights. Another important issue for practitioners is creating flexible working opportunities to help women achieve a work-life balance. This is especially the case when a woman gets married or has a new child, in which case making improvements for women to work will contribute significantly to achieving this balance. Because socially, housework and child-related issues are piled on women, this is likely to provide an opportunity for employees who will possibly interrupt or terminate their careers. Similarly, by providing nursery services to mothers with new children, organizations can succeed in retaining employee.

Professional counselling, one-on-one coaching, and mentoring may help individuals and direct managers prolong their careers in SCM (Heslin et al., 2020). Systematic training and HRD can increase career sustainability indices (Bozionelos et al., 2020; Shirmohammadi et al., 2021). Findings in Antalya, there are in-house hospitality trainings, but they are not done for

SCM and the necessity of investing in them was stressed. While in-organizational trainings are helpful, customized programs are more relevant. Providing training, support, compensation, and autonomy to employees can improve job satisfaction after the pandemic (Altınöz & Çakıroğlu, 2022; Özgül & Aykaç, 2021). The study found that hospitality workers seek career possibilities and prefer not to work for one company. Self-confident and competent people can succeed in their careers because they invest in themselves (Betz & Voyten, 1997). Managers pay more attention to SCM as employees acquire an attitude of inter-organizational mobility to fit into any reputable organization and become accountable for their career growth. Skills and knowledge development improve bargaining power within and across organizations, ensuring employability.

Top management, supervisory board members, and HRM influence HR policies. In HRD, in-company training, promotion, career planning, performance management, fringe benefits, feedback, psychological support, and remuneration policy concerns from our study are given significant emphasis. HR department should assess employees' current status and training needs provide necessary training, and create a fair promotion system, wage policies, and career planning using the 360-degree performance evaluation method (Aguinis & Burgi-Tian, 2021). Hospitality companies must consider organizational succession when planning employee careers. To maximize training benefits, feedback is crucial. We also criticize the lack of HRD career research (Shirmohammadi et al., 2021). Post COVID-19 from an SCM perspective, there is a general perception that skills shortages, greater investment in HR planning and succession planning activities, larger budgets for employer branding practices, and more attention to improving employee retention are needed. This is supported by the fact that the organization's HR policies and their implementation have an impact on motivation, commitment, and behavior (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). When there is HRD in the organization, employees have a successful career, but they can easily become frustrated if they are given different roles instead of those where they can apply their skills or develop their talents (Collings & Mellahi, 2009). Analyzing employee skills well and placing them accordingly is especially important for competent employees. In the short term, personalized career planning can be advantageous for employees and may serve as an indicator of SC (Straub et al., 2020). In this sense, it is beneficial for organizations to develop practices within the scope of HRD and help talents customize according to their needs and desires by offering multiple career options on behalf of their turnover intentions (Shuck et al., 2014).

Implications for SCM at Environmental Level

Career shocks are contextual factors because they are usually outside the individual's control (Akkermans et al., 2018). Thus, expected positive shocks are more personal, and expected negative shocks work-related (Morrell et al., 2004). Interpersonal, organizational, environmental, or geopolitical shocks can influence individuals or societies. Tourism in Türkiye halted after COVID-19, as in other countries. After then, it gradually recovered. However, employees struggled throughout this time. Many workers had poor working conditions, minimal social protection and employment benefits, and no organizing or collective bargaining rights. Some people moved to logistics to meet the demands of digitalization-driven online trade (WEF, 2022c). With freelancing and e-commerce growing, hotel workers have found alternative jobs. The analysis found the government's short-term working allowance for hospitality employees during the epidemic beneficial. Post-COVID-19, the government can handle seasonality by providing more people with 12-month permanent jobs, either by continuing the short-term working allowance or by cutting Social Security Institution payments.

Australia, Canada, Germany, the UK, and the US are the top five labor market competitors. Singapore, Switzerland, Denmark, and the UK have joined this competition (Khilji et al., 2015). Türkiye has the opposite migration situation. Less skilled migrants working for lower wages, notably in hospitality, cause career challenges for skilled locals. Government regulation and an inclusive talent migration policy are needed. Climate change may affect worker health and well-being and be related to migration. Climate, like economics, causes migration (WEF, 2022b). Clearly, governments and organizations must act immediately. Developing nations risk a lack of funding and technology to handle global concerns like climate change. This will make it harder to hire qualified workers (WEF, 2022b), affecting the hospitality industry.

An examination of the country-specific factors affecting the employee SC shows that the government needs to act. Today, the government should encourage young people to stay in the field and create decent jobs. In this sense, the government should provide opportunities (incentives) for companies to compete fairly, take the necessary steps to ensure a good national economy, properly enforce labor legislation in the hospitality industry, ensure adequate social policy (active and passive employment policies), provide adequate employment incentives, secure the legal system, make improvements to the education system, take measures

to eliminate the negative effects of seasonal work, and enact a critical tourism labor law. The complexity of the current labor legislation prevents individuals in need from benefiting from incentives, while the negative effects of seasonal work are driving educated people away from the sector in Türkiye. A "labor law" for the hospitality industry would solve many of these problems. The government should act on this issue, which sector representatives and academics have been raising for years.

Especially in developing countries such as Türkiye, decision makers have a great influence on the SC of employees in the hospitality industry, even if indirectly. In this sense, the economy of the country, the social policies implemented, the functioning of the legal, and educational system are the first topics evaluated by the participants. Aside from the macro-dimension of evaluating the topics discussed here, it is highly likely that positive or negative changes will affect organizations, and from organizations to employees. With this assessment, developed countries need to ensure regulations and transformations in line with the post-COVID-19 era in these topics, while developing countries need to implement structural reforms in the short, medium, and long term.

The government has an important role to play in ensuring that companies can compete fairly. It allows international corporate organizations, which the participants are very happy to work for, to flee the country due to this unfair competitive environment. This, in turn, has a significant impact on the decline in management quality in an uncompetitive environment, and hence the flight of employee from the sector. Government incentives and social policies (both active and passive employment policies) can protect both investors and employees. By providing adequate employment incentives and protecting employee wages and benefits, it will be possible to attract more employee to the hospitality industry.

With the correct wage policy and SCM, qualified workers may enter the sector. Hospitality investors must analyze risk and create long-term plans to train qualified system contributors at high schools and universities. In countries like Türkiye, where hospitality generates foreign currency inflows, the right wage policy to attract employees and prevent the repatriation of foreign currency spent on foreign workers requires a more comprehensive social policy and employment incentives. To meet industry needs and incorporate social and human sciences, vocational high schools and colleges must modernize their curricula. A lack of practical skills in university education is discouraging students from working in hospitality

(Barron, 2008). A foundation of transferable abilities that may be built upon is also ideal (Raybould & Wilkins, 2005). These abilities prepare hospitality graduates to work in varied situations and handle the unpredictable nature of modern work. Public institutions (polytechnics) and private higher education institutions under the Ministry of Education have organized national awareness campaigns, conferences, skills competitions, seminars, forums, and social responsibility projects to improve hospitality education in Malaysia (Hussain et al., 2020). Such practices are exemplary. Hospitality partnerships help students move to the workforce and build graduate talent (Kravariti et al., 2022). Specialized on-the-job training can boost graduates' managerial skills. One of the most striking findings is that the norms of countries, especially those that develop with their historical dynamics, affect people's careers. With the influence of norms in the country, policy decision-maker choices, social policy, education, economy, and legal development issues affect employees through positive or negative transformations (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2020; Aşkun et al., 2021). The fact that these issues are among our findings shows the success of the study in this sense. At this point, structural reforms are needed.

Finally, in the hospitality industry, employees in the post-COVID-19 sector are eager to experience different career paths by leaving the organizations, sectors, and countries that exploited them, high-stress, sometimes unhealthy, and low-productive old ways of doing business, in anticipation of transformations in their old ways of doing business. If organizations and governments ignore these aspirations of employees and dismiss them as temporary, it will be difficult to convince employees to work in the hospitality industry, and it is likely to lose them in a short time. In this sense, responsibilities need to be shared among talents, organizations, and decision makers to manage cultural expectations regarding empowerment activities such as differentiation, integration, reduced workload in SCM practices, and other important issues (Kossek & Ollier-Malaterre, 2020).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

"In a single example (study), we can never discover any force or necessary connection, any quality that links cause to effect and makes one the infallible consequence of the other. The only thing we can find is that one does indeed follow the other" (Hume, 2020). There is no fixed and precise method to arrive at the truth and there will always be a margin of error in the conclusions reached (Rovelli, 2020). This study is limited by focusing on

local hospitality industry employees working in Türkiye. It is not designed as a comparative study with other countries to better understand SC in hospitality industry. This study is also limited in that it focuses only on the careers of those working in the hospitality without including other sectors. This study is limited to hotels, agencies, and the social networking platform LinkedIn, which the researchers had access to for data collection. Additional studies are needed to improve how SC are measured.

This study provides several opportunities for further research to better understand SC with the feature of cumulative scientific knowledge progression. The information technology sector and other sectors can be included in the study, especially samples of senior managers. Also, people with different titles from different departments can be included in the study to observe the differences between them. Furthermore, a comparison study could be conducted by including international employees in the data collection process and evaluating the data in terms of significant differences between local and foreign employees. Since the research reveals the factors affecting employees' careers, it is important to support and study them not only in the tourism context but also in other contexts. In this study, 12 different sub-factors and three main factors were identified. These factors can be examined both quantitatively and qualitatively separately in different studies. On the other hand, some of the issues in the context of hospitality that emerged in the study and were not previously encountered in the literature may need to be studied in more depth. To mention a few of these; climate change, migration, the emergence of new sectors, discrimination/marginalization such as sexism, the values and norms of societies, the geographical location of countries, roles of skills such as marital status, health problems or death of someone in the family, participating culture, arts, and sports activities.

Furthermore, workshops and class discussions are just some of the many programs that can be implemented to raise awareness about SC and provide accurate information on career paths to employees in all departments in hospitality industry and other sectors. The pilot program could include an element of faculty training to help students maximize their role in career promotion. Both experimental and mixed-methods studies (Aşkun & Çizel, 2020) could be conducted to understand how employees' reactions change after being exposed to higher levels of information and encouragement about SC.

CONCLUSION

The SC perspective is characterized by an explicit consideration of the contextual elements of career management, both individual and organizational and environmental. The dynamic nature of the hospitality industry also affects people's career journeys. The labor shortage, which is expected to worsen in the post-pandemic period, necessitates understanding the career expectations of that employee or the factors influencing it, as well as implementing SC practices for employees in order to retain or attract employees.

The claim of this study is that it makes three main contributions: theoretical, practical and methodological. Firstly, the results of this research advance the field of SCs by providing a comprehensive theoretical framework. Second, the results of this research provide valuable perspectives and concrete data that should be considered by anyone who is pursuing or planning to pursue a career in hospitality. The importance of the results of this research is that the model is based on empirical data, providing a clear framework for individuals, organizations and the environment to follow when it comes to career planning in the hospitality sector. In conclusion, the approach and results of this study provide a valuable methodological contribution by effectively demonstrating the effectiveness of using GT design.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We sincerely thank emeritus professor David L. Morgan, who made a great contribution to the literature in qualitative research, for his support and guidance in establishing the grounded theory in our study. This study was developed from Aşkun's PhD dissertation, "A model proposal for sustainable career from a complex adaptive system perspective" under the supervision of Çizel.

REFERENCES

- Acemoglu, D., & Robinson, J. A. (2020). *Dar Koridor: Devletler, Toplumlar ve Özgürlüğün Geleceği*. Doğan Kitap.
- Aguinis, H., & Burgi-Tian, J. (2021). Talent management challenges during COVID-19 and beyond: Performance management to the rescue. *Business Research Quarterly*, 24(3), 233–240.
- Akkermans, J., Seibert, S. E., & Mol, S. T. (2018). Tales of the unexpected: Integrating career shocks in the contemporary careers literature. *Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 44(2018), a1503. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v44i0.1503>
- Altınöz, M., & Çakıroğlu, D. (2022). The effect of talent management on employee empowerment. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, 6(1), 106–120.
- Aşkun, V., & Çizel, R. (2020). Twenty years of research on mixed methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Studies*, 1(1), 26–40.
- Aşkun, V., Çizel, R., & Çizel, B. (2021). Complex Relationship of Countries' Innovation Level with Social Capital, Economic Value Perception and Political Culture: fsQCA. *Eskişehir Osmangazi University Journal of Economics and Administrative Sciences*, 16(2), 317–340.
- Bagheri, M., Baum, T., Ebrahimi, A., & Abbasi, A. (2020). Management in the tourism and hospitality industry: Evidence from Iran. *Anatolia*, 31(1), 88–98.
- Barron, P. (2008). Education and talent management: Implications for the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 20(7), 730–742.
- Baum, T. (2019). Does the hospitality industry need or deserve talent? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 31(10), 3823–3837.
- Baum, T., Mooney, S. K. K., Robinson, R. N. S., & Solnet, D. (2020). COVID-19's impact on the hospitality workforce – new crisis or amplification of the norm? *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(9), 2813–2829.
- Betz, N. E., & Vuyten, K. K. (1997). Efficacy and outcome expectations influence career exploration and decidedness. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 46(2), 179–189.
- Björkman, I., Ehrnrooth, M., Mäkelä, K., Smale, A., & Sumelius, J. (2013). Talent or not? Employee reactions to talent identification. *Human Resource Management*, 52(2), 195–214.
- Blokker, R., Akkermans, J., Tims, M., Jansen, P., & Khapova, S. (2019). Building a sustainable start: The role of career competencies, career success, and career shocks in young professionals' employability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 112, 172–184.
- Bozionelos, N., Lin, C. H., & Lee, K. Y. (2020). Enhancing the sustainability of employees' careers through training: The roles of career actors' openness and of supervisor support. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117(103333), 1–16.
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2019). *The SAGE Handbook of Current Developments in Grounded Theory*. SAGE.
- Brzykcy, A. Z., Boehm, S. A., & Baldridge, D. C. (2019). Fostering sustainable careers across the lifespan: The role of disability, idiosyncratic deals and perceived work ability. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 112, 185–198.
- Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. SAGE.
- Charmaz, K. (2020). With constructivist grounded theory you can't hide: Social justice research and critical inquiry in the public sphere. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 26(2), 165–176.

- Charmaz, K., & Thornberg, R. (2021). The pursuit of quality in grounded theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 18*(3), 305–327.
- Chen, T., Shen, C., & Gosling, M. (2018). Does employability increase with internship satisfaction? Enhanced employability and internship satisfaction in a hospitality program. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education, 22*, 88–99.
- Chudzikowski, K., Gustafsson, S., & Tams, S. (2020). Constructing alignment for sustainable careers: Insights from the career narratives of management consultants. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 117*, 103312.
- Çizel, R., Aşkun, V., Durmaz, Ş., Yağmur, A., & Gürsoy, S. (2023). Ne eğitimde ne istihdamda (NEET) olma ile ilişkili faktörlerin OECD bağlantılı ülkelerde karşılaştırmalı analizi: Bulanık küme nitel karşılaştırmalı analiz (fsqca). *Sosyoekonomi, 31*(57), 437–475.
- Colakoglu, S., Lepak, D. P., & Hong, Y. (2006). Measuring HRM effectiveness: Considering multiple stakeholders in a global context. *Human Resource Management Review, 16*(2), 209–218.
- Collings, D. G., & Mellahi, K. (2009). Strategic talent management: A review and research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 19*(4), 304–313.
- De Prins, P., De Vos, A., Van Beirendonck, L., & Segers, J. (2015). Sustainable HRM for sustainable careers: Introducing the 'Respect Openness Continuity (ROC)' model. In A. De Vos & B. I. J. M. Van der Heijden (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers* (pp. 319–334). Edward Elgar.
- De Vos, A., Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M., & Akkermans, J. (2020). Sustainable careers: Towards a conceptual model. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 117*, 103196.
- Deery, M. (2008). Talent management, work-life balance and retention strategies. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 20*(7), 792–806.
- Erkuş, H., & Terhorst, P. (2023). Imagined futures of post-Covid-19 tourism in Antalya. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR), 11*(1), 171–190.
- Günbayı, I., & Aşkun, V. (2023). Grounded teori ya da temellendirilmiş kuram, gömülü teori, kuram oluşturma vs. Kullanımı adına yol haritası. *İnönü Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 24*(3), 1671–1697.
- Günbayı, I., & Sorm, S. (2020). *Social Paradigms in Guiding Management Social Development and Social Research*. Pegem Academy.
- Heslin, P. A., Keating, L. A., & Ashford, S. J. (2020). How being in learning mode may enable a sustainable career across the lifespan. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 117*, 103324.
- Hirschi, A., Steiner, R., Burmeister, A., & Johnston, C. S. (2020). A whole-life perspective of sustainable careers: The nature and consequences of nonwork orientations. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 117*, 103319.
- Hite, L. M., & McDonald, K. S. (2020). Careers after COVID-19: Challenges and changes. *Human Resource Development International, 23*(4), 1–11.
- Hume, D. (2020). *İnsanın Anlama Yetisi Üzerine Bir Soruşturma* (Çev. F. B. Aydar, Ed.). Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları.
- Hussain, S., Li, Y., & Li, W. (2020). Influence of platform characteristics on purchase intention in social commerce: Mechanism of psychological contracts. *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 16*(1), 1–17.
- ILO. (2020). *Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020: Technology and the Future of Jobs*. International Labour Office.
- Jabeen, Q., Nadeem, M. S., Raziq, M. M., & Sajjad, A. (2021). Linking individuals' resources with (perceived) sustainable employability: Perspectives from conservation of

- resources and social information processing theory. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 24(2), 233-254.
- Jafari, J., & McCabe, S. (2024). Emergence: Annals and the evolving research and publishing landscape in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 104, 103720.
- Kerse, G., & Babadağ, M. (2018). I'm out if nepotism is in: The relationship between nepotism, job standardization and turnover intention. *Ege Academic Review*, 18(4), 631-644.
- Khilji, S. E., Tarique, I., & Schuler, R. S. (2015). Incorporating the macro view in global talent management. *Human Resource Management Review*, 25(3), 236-248.
- King, C., Madera, J. M., Lee, L., Murillo, E., Baum, T., & Solnet, D. (2021). Reimagining attraction and retention of hospitality management talent- A multilevel identity perspective. *Journal of Business Research*, 136, 251-262.
- Kirk, S. (2021). Sticks and stones: The naming of global talent. *Work, Employment and Society*, 35(2), 203-220.
- Kossek, E. E., & Ollier-Malaterre, A. (2020). Desperately seeking sustainable careers: Redesigning professional jobs for the collaborative crafting of reduced-load work. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117, 103315.
- Kravariti, F., & Johnston, K. (2020). Talent management: A critical literature review and research agenda for public sector human resource management. *Public Management Review*, 22(1), 75-95.
- Kravariti, F., Voutsina, K., Tasoulis, K., Dibia, C., & Johnston, K. (2022). Talent management in hospitality and tourism: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 34(1), 321-360.
- KTB (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism). (2023). *Turizm İstatistikleri*. Retrieved August 20, 2023, from <https://yigm.ktb.gov.tr/TR-9851/turizm-istatistikleri.html>
- Minkov, M., & Hofstede, G. (2013). *Cross-Cultural Analysis: The Science and Art of Comparing the World's Modern Societies and Their Cultures*. SAGE Publications.
- Morrell, K., Loan-Clarke, J., & Wilkinson, A. (2004). The role of shocks in employee turnover. *British Journal of Management*, 15(4), 335-349.
- Morse, J. M., Bowers, B. J., Charmaz, K., Clarke, A. E., Corbin, J., Porr, C. J., & Stern, P. N. (2021). *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation Revisited*. Routledge.
- Özgül, E. K., & Aykaç, E. (2021). The effect of talent management applications on job satisfaction in five star hotels: Belek case study. *Journal of Turkish Tourism Research*, 5(2), 1150-1166.
- Pak, K., Kooij, D., De Lange, A. H., Meyers, M. C., & van Veldhoven, M. (2020). Unravelling the process between career shock and career (un)sustainability: Exploring the role of perceived human resource management. *Career Development International*, 26(4), 514-539.
- Raybould, M., & Wilkins, H. (2005). Over qualified and under experienced: Turning graduates into hospitality managers. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 17(3), 203-216.
- Rovelli, C. (2020). *Miletli Anaksimandros ya da Bilimsel Düşüncenin Doğuşu* (Çev. A. Altınörs, Ed.). Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları.
- Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. SAGE.
- Schwab, K., & Zahidi, S. (2020). *Global Competitiveness Report: Special Edition 2020*. World Economic Forum.
- Shirmohammadi, M., Hedayati Mehdiabadi, A., Beigi, M., & McLean, G. N. (2021). Mapping human resource development: Visualizing the past, bridging the gaps,

- and moving toward the future. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 32(2), 197–224.
- Shuck, B., Twyford, D., Reio, T. G., & Shuck, A. (2014). Human resource development practices and employee engagement: Examining the connection with employee turnover intentions. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*, 25(2), 239–270.
- Straub, C., Vinkenburg, C. J., & van Kleef, M. (2020). Career customization: Putting an organizational practice to facilitate sustainable careers to the test. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 117, 103320.
- Sturges, J., & Guest, D. (2004). Working to live or living to work? Work/life balance early in the career. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 14(4), 5–20.
- Tarique, I. (2021). *Contemporary Talent Management: A Research Companion*. Routledge.
- Taylor, S. (2022). *Resourcing and Talent Management: The theory and practice of recruiting and developing a workforce*. Kogan Page.
- Van der Heijden, B. I. J. M., & De Vos, A. (2015). Sustainable careers: Introductory chapter. In *Handbook of Research on Sustainable Careers* (pp. 1–19). Edward Elgar.
- Van der Klink, J. J., Bültmann, U., Burdorf, A., Schaufeli, W. B., Zijlstra, F. R., Abma, F. I., Brouwer, S., & van der Wilt, G. J. (2016). Sustainable employability – definition, conceptualization, and implications: A perspective based on the capability approach. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 42(1), 71–79.
- WEF. (2020). *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*. World Economic Forum.
- WEF. (2022a). *Global Gender Gap Report: Insight Report*. World Economic Forum.
- WEF. (2022b). *The Global Risks Report 2022: 17th Edition*. World Economic Forum.
- WEF. (2022c). *Travel & Tourism Development Index 2021: Rebuilding for a Sustainable and Resilient Future*. World Economic Forum.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Participants' characteristics

	Gender	Marital Status	Position	Age	Working Experience	Interview time (h:m)	Sectors	Top Reasons for Work and Sector Transitions
SC1	Male	MC	Consultant	76	59	2:39	H	institutionalism, manager
SC2	Male	MC	HR Manager	50	30	1:12	H	sector structure
SC3	Female	Single	Manager	45	26	1:08	H	family support, colleague support, sector structure
SC4	Male	MC	HR Manager	48	26	1:08	H -EP - H	crises in the country, family support, nepotism
SC5	Female	Single	HR Manager	38	18	0:57	H -EP - H	crises in the country, global crisis
SC6	Female	MC	HR Manager	34	11	1:31	OS -H - EP - AS	new child, digitalization, flexibility in working time
SC7	Female	MC	Manager	38	15	0:45	AS -H	demonstrating the necessary value, work-life balance, institutionalism, ethics, wage policy
SC8	Male	MC	HR Manager	57	39	1:01	H -AS - H	global crisis, family support, marriage
SC9	Male	MC	HR Manager	50	27	1:06	OS -H	institutionalism, manager, work-life balance
SC10	Male	SC	Manager	51	28	1:46	OS -Public - H - AS - H	flexibility in working time, new child, marriage, organizational culture
SC11	Male	SC	Manager	55	35	2:21	AS -H	manager, family support, crises in the country
SC12	Male	MC	HR Manager	48	24	0:55	OS -H and EP	flexibility in working time, health problems, institutionalism
SC13	Male	MC	HR Manager	39	16	1:06	H -OS - Public	manager, health problems, nepotism
SC14	Female	Single	Manager	44	22	1:13	OS -H - Public	illness in the family, manager, discrimination
SC15	Female	Single	HR Manager	35	12	1:17	AS -H – Open to Work	mobbing, discrimination
SC16	Female	MC	HR Manager	48	25	0:45	OS -H	manager, new child, working place and conditions
SC17	Male	MC	Consultant	48	25	1:12	H - Academy and EP	work-life balance, health problems, nepotism
SC18	Male	MC	Consultant	55	30	1:09	AS -H - AS - H and EP	death in the family, working place and conditions
SC19	Male	MC	HR Manager	44	22	0:40	H	family support, marriage
SC20	Female	MC	HR Manager	43	20	1:25	H	manager, organizational climate, family support

AS: Another Sector; EP: Entrepreneurship; H: Hospitality; MC: Married with Children; OS: Other Sectors; SC: Single with Children

Appendix 2. Memos



Appendix 3. Post-It Codes



THANKS TO REVIEWERS

The editors of Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research (AHTR) would like to thank the reviewers who have contributed to the success of the journal. We recognize the scholars who have completed reviews in 2024 and we appreciate their valuable time and effort to review the papers for AHTR.

Abdulkadir Şeker, *Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Türkiye*
Abdulla Al-Towfiq Hasan, *Patuakhali Science and Technology University, Bangladesh*
Abdullah Akgün, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Abdullah Uslu, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Adis Puška, *Government of Brčko District, Bosnia and Herzegovina*
Ahmad Albattat, *Management and Science University, Malaysia*
Aleksandar Erceg, *Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Croatia*
Amol S. Dhaigude, *S P Jain Institute of Management and Research (SPJIMR), India*
Andre Luis Policani Freitas, *Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense Darcy Ribeiro, Brasil*
Antonia Correia, *University of Algarve, Portugal*
Asli Tasci, *University of Central Florida, USA*
Aydan Bekar, *Mugla Sıtkı Kocman University, Türkiye*
Bahattin Özdemir, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Çağıl Hale Özel, *Anadolu University, Türkiye*
Caner Ünal, *Antalya Bilim University, Türkiye*
Chee Wee-Tee, *Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia*
Davut Uysal, *İzmir Katip Çelebi University, Türkiye*
Derya Demirdelen-Alrawadieh, *Oxford Brookes University, UK*
Emrullah Erul, *Izmir Katip Çelebi University, Türkiye*
Eniser Atabay, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Evinç Doğan, *Boğaziçi University, Türkiye*
Fani Efthymiadou, *Bogazici University, Türkiye*
Farooq Haq, *Canadian University Dubai, United Arab Emirates*
Febriana Riestyaningrum, *Southwest University, China*
Germà Coenders, *University of Girona, Spain*
Gita Gayatri, *Universitas Indonesia, Indonesia*
Gokay Kirtıl, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Gökhan Akel, *Antalya Belek University, Türkiye*
Güney Çetinkaya, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Harry Coccossis, *University of Thessaly, Greece*

Hung-che Wu, *University of Nevada, USA*
I-Chi Chen, *Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaysia*
İlhan Günbayı, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Ireneusz Żuchowski, *International Academy of Applied Sciences in Lomza, Poland*
Jean Paolo G. Lacap, *City College of Angeles, Philippines*
Jolita Vveinhardt, *Vytautas Magnus University, Lithuania*
Karthik Namasivayam, *Michigan State University, USA*
Kavitha Haldorai, *Florida State University, USA*
Kyle Maurice Woosnam, *University of Georgia Athens, USA*
Lamiaa Hefny, *Pharos University in Alexandria, Egypt*
Leyla Atabay, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
LokSin-Kuar, *Universiti Tunku Abdul Rhaman, Malaysia*
Maria Jesus Bonilla Priego, *Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain*
Mariana Carvalho, *Polytechnic Institute of Coimbra, Portugal*
Marija Lakicevic, *University Kragujevac, Serbia*
Mark Speakman, *Universidad Autonoma de Guerrero, Mexico*
Marlon Santiago Viñán-Ludeña, *Universidad Católica del Norte, Chile*
Maya Ivanova, *Varna University of Management, Bulgaria; Zangador Research Institute, Bulgaria*
Meltem Ince Yenilmez, *Izmir Democracy University, Türkiye*
Metin Sürme, *Gaziantep University, Türkiye*
Murat Kizildag, *University of Central Florida, USA*
Mustafa Tepeci, *Manisa Celal Bayar University, Türkiye*
Nikolaos Stylos, *University of Bristol, UK*
Nilgün Demirel İli, *Iğdır University, Türkiye*
Nirajan Bam, *Miami University, Ohio, USA*
Nuray Türker, *Karabuk University, Türkiye*
O. Can Yılmazdoğan, *Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Türkiye*
Okki Trinanda, *Universitas Negeri Padang, Indonesia*
Öznur Akgiş İlhan, *Kırşehir Ahi Evran University, Türkiye*
Panagiota Dionysopoulou, *Hellenic Open University (HOU), Greece*
Pankaj Jain, *University of Memphis, USA*
Paul Fallon, *University of Central Lancashire, United Kingdom*
Payal Mehra, *Indian Institute of Management Lucknow, India*
Petr Štumpf, *University of West Bohemia, Czechia*
Ruohan Tang, *Liaocheng University, China*
Sajjakaj Jomnonkwao, *Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand*
Sakkarin Nonthapot, *Khon Kaen University, Thailand*
Seden Dogan, *University of South Florida, USA*
Serhat Adem Sop, *Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University, Türkiye*
Sezer Karasakal, *Antalya Bilim University, Türkiye*

Sharina Abdul Halim, *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Malaysia*
Siripen Dabphet, *Naresuan University, Thailand*
Stella Kladou, *Hellenic Mediterranean University, Crete -Greece*
Şükrü Fırat Çiftçi, *Kırklareli University, Türkiye*
Tafadzwa Matiza, *North West University, South Africa*
Tekiner Kaya, *Neusehir Haci Bektas Veli University, Türkiye*
Tennur Yerlisu Lapa, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Tevfik Demirciftci, *Colorado Mesa University, USA*
Thang Quyet Nguyen, *HUTECH University, Vietnam*
Timothy Webb, *University of Delaware, USA*
Vahid Ghasemi, *Universidade Europeia, Portugal*
Veronika N. Kholina, *RUDN University: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia*
Vicente Ramos, *University of the Baleric Islands, Spain*
Vithala R. Rao, *Cornell University, USA*
Volkan Aşkun, *Akdeniz University, Türkiye*
Yuksel Ekinci, *University of Portsmouth, UK*
Yuqing Geng, *Shanghai Dianji University, China*

JOURNAL AIMS AND SCOPE

AHTR aims at initiating and stimulating advances in hospitality and tourism research. Therefore, it publishes papers that promote new ideas, models, approaches and paradigms by contributing to the advances in knowledge and theory of hospitality and tourism.

The journal covers applied research studies and review articles, both in a format of full-length article and research notes. Applied research studies are expected to examine relationships among variables relevant to hospitality and tourism by employing appropriate analytical or statistical techniques. High quality review articles that address latest advances and develop theoretical knowledge or thinking about key aspects of hospitality and tourism are accepted. Research notes are short articles that report advances in methodology, exploratory research findings or extensions/discussions of prior research. AHTR will also welcome commentary in response to published articles.

All papers are subject to double blind peer review process based on an initial screening by the editor criteria for evaluation include significant contribution to the field, conceptual quality, appropriate methodology and clarity of exposition.

As a forum for advancing the research in hospitality and tourism field, the journal encompasses many aspects within the hospitality and tourism including but not limited to;

- Hospitality and Tourism Management
- Information Systems and Technology
- Global Issues and Cultural Studies
- Innovations in Hospitality and Tourism
- Financial Management
- Marketing Management
- Developments of Conceptual Models and Constructs
- Future Trends in the Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Resources Management
- Operational Management
- Strategic Management
- National and International Legislation
- Restaurant Management
- Beverage Management
- Consumer Behaviour
- The Relationship between Hospitality and Tourism
- Recreation Management
- Leisure Studies
- Hospitality and Tourism Education
- Travel and Transportation
- Tourist Guiding

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submission

To submit a manuscript, please visit: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ahtr>

Submissions should be sent with separate Microsoft Word type of files, respectively: (1) Title page, (2) Main Document and References. Manuscripts which are submitted to AHTR should not be submitted for the consideration of publication at the same time for another journal.

Article Structure

Manuscripts should be written in English and not exceed 10,000 words. For research notes, length limit of the manuscript is 3,000 words.

Title page consists of the title of manuscript which is not more than ten words (in bold uppercase letters in Times News Roman 12 type size), author(s) name, present position, complete postal address, telephone/fax numbers and e-mail address of each author. Corresponding author and ordering of the author(s) should be indicated. Acknowledgements, if there are, can be cited here.

In the **abstract** authors should in brief, but clear manner, state the main purpose of the research, the significant results obtained as well as conclusions they have derived from the study. It is essential for the abstract to be conceptualized in a manner that it provides an audience with a clear insight into the topic and main points of the manuscript. An abstract should be free of references (whenever possible) and English-spelling errors. **Length of the abstract should not exceed 200 words.**

After the abstract part, **maximum 6 keywords** should be provided. When deciding on the keywords authors should bear in mind that these would be used for indexing purposes.

Main Document should start with title of the manuscript (in bold all uppercase letters in Times News Roman 12 type size), abstract and keywords. A manuscript should be conceptualized into following parts: *Introduction, Literature review, Methodology, Results and Discussions and/or Conclusion.*

Introduction part of the study should provide a general overview of the importance of the topic that is going to be covered in the manuscript. Readers should have an insight into the topic and reasons for conducting the current study. After introducing the topic, the **research aim should be clearly stated.** At

the end of the introduction part, the presentation of the paper structure should be provided with a short description of what is going to be addressed in each part of the manuscript. Authors are advised to avoid reviewing the literature and detail description of the methodology in this part of the paper.

Literature review: At this part of the manuscript, previous similar studies conducted in the related field should be reviewed. Authors should in briefly elaborate on topic and concepts, theoretical models and framework as well as methodology being used, with the appropriate overview of the results obtained from these studies. It is important to clearly point out to the gap in the literature and contribution that the current study will have on the overall body of knowledge. Based on what is presented in the current part of the manuscript, related **hypothesis or research questions** should be derived and presented.

Methodology part should be reserved for description of research design and method used to answer to study's research questions. It is expected that the appropriate literature for using the related method is presented. In addition, it is essential to pay attention to the issues such as explaining the characteristics of settings in which the study is conducted, sampling techniques as well as data collection method. The information on how were the questionnaires or interview questions derived should be provided in detail. In addition, the research analysis used in the current study, as well as the reasons for using this particular analysis should be presented. Descriptions mentioned in this part can be avoided in the case of an opinion piece.

Results: After the description of the methodology, results derived from the conducted data analysis should be presented at this part. The type of analysis was used as well as statistical tests, reliability and validity tests, should be properly explained at this part of the study. After that presentation of the results should come. Findings and hypotheses evaluations should be presented according to the research approach and analysis, with the appropriate elaboration on the same. Tables, graphics, and figures should be presented at this part as well. Authors should make sure not to overuse the tables, but to combine several statistical data into one table where possible.

Discussions and/or Conclusion: In this part, a brief overview of the results obtained in the study is presented. This part should start with a short turn on the research problem and how the findings of the current study address this problem. At the end of the conclusion part, theoretical and practical implications for future research and practitioners in the field should be provided.

Major headings in the main document should be written in all uppercase letters and subheadings should be typed in bold upper and lowercase letters. Headings

must be concise, with a clear indication of the distinction between the hierarchy of headings.

Manuscripts should not contain any direct reference to the author or co-authors that will reveal the author's identity. Information about authors should only be cited on the title page for the purpose of blind reviewing.

Tables and Figures should be numbered and titled in a consistent manner in the main text. Tables and figures should be embedded in the main document. Footnotes to tables below the table body can be placed and indicated with superscript lowercase letters.

Acknowledgments should be included on the title page, as a footnote to the title or otherwise. Individuals or institutions who provided help during research should be listed here. Authors may use this part of the manuscript to thank those who contributed to the work on the current paper, to institution or people who provided financial support or permission to use the data analysed in the manuscript.

Footnotes should be kept to a minimum for the flow of the text. Thus, footnotes should not be used more than five. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively throughout the article. Many word processors build footnotes into the text, and this feature may be used. Footnotes should not be included in the Reference list.

Formatting: Writing style of the overall main document should be Times News Roman 12 type size. Manuscripts should be written double-spaced (including references). Keep the layout of the text as simple as possible. Most formatting codes will be removed and replaced on processing the article. Manuscripts should be spell-checked and grammatically correct before final submission. Please include page numbers within your submission.

References should be presented in APA style. Authors should cite publications in the text: (Adams, 1965) using the first author's name or (Chalip & Costa, 2012) citing both names of two, or (Chalip et al., 2012) when there are three or more authors. Every reference which is cited in the text should be also present in the reference list (and vice versa). For web references, as a minimum, the full URL should be given and the date when the reference was last accessed. Any further information, if known (DOI, author names, dates, reference to a source publication, etc.), should also be given. Web references can be listed separately (e.g., after the reference list) under a different heading if desired, or can be included in the reference list. At the end of the paper a reference list in alphabetical order should be supplied:

Reference to a Journal Publication:

Guo, Y., Liu, H., & Chai, Y. (2014). The embedding convergence of smart cities and tourism internet of things in China: An advance perspective. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 2(1), 54-69.

Lu, P. H., & Su, C. S. (2018). A study of the factors influencing customers' impulse buying behavior in restaurants. *Advances in Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 6(1), 47-67.

Reference to a book:

Goldstone, P. (2001). *Making the world safe for tourism*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Kotler, P. (2006). *Marketing for hospitality and tourism*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.

For correct referencing through APA, below links can be advised for more information; <http://supp.apa.org/style/PM6E-Corrected-Sample-Papers.pdf>

Copyright

Author(s) should confirm the Copyright Contract and send it back to the editorial office. If their article is accepted for publication at AHTR, this process should be completed before its publication. By the contract, authors confirm that articles submitted to the journal have not been published before in their current or substantially similar form. All published articles are copyrighted by Akdeniz University, Faculty of Tourism.

Publishing Ethics

Author(s) are expected to consider some ethical issues before, during and after their scientific works such as voluntariness, privacy, ethnic, racial and cultural sensitivities of the survey participants and originality of the work. The authors should ensure that they have written entirely original works, and if the authors have used the work and/or words of others, that this has been appropriately cited or quoted. Plagiarism in all its forms constitutes unethical publishing behaviour and is unacceptable.