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The Effect of Aesthetic Experience on Satisfaction and Behavioral  
Intention: The Case of Kastamonu

Estetik Deneyimin Memnuniyet ve Davranışsal Niyet Üzerine  
Etkisi: Kastamonu Örneği

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## The Effect of Aesthetic Experience On Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention: The Case of Kastamonu

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### Abstract

Aesthetic experiences have always been important for people, and tourists aesthetic experiences towards the destination positively affect tourist satisfaction. This ensures that the destination is recommended to others, revisited, and similar destinations are visited. Therefore, behavioral intentions are seen as a factor that will benefit destinations for long-term competitiveness, due to reasons such as the difficulty and high cost of reaching new customers. Based on this situation, in this study, it is aimed to investigate the effect of aesthetic experience on satisfaction and behavioral intention in Kastamonu, a destination with cultural, natural, and historical riches. For this purpose, data were collected through a questionnaire. The questionnaires were conducted face to face on a voluntary basis to the tourists visiting the touristic areas in the city center between August and September 2021. As a result of the analyses made, it has been defined that the aesthetic experience has a positive effect on satisfaction. Additionally, it was determined that satisfaction affects behavioral intentions. Based on the research results, it is possible to say that the tourists who are satisfied with their visit to Kastamonu will recommend Kastamonu to other people, say positive things, and encourage them to visit Kastamonu.

### Makale Bilgisi

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### Özet

Estetik deneyimler insanlar için her zaman önemli olmuştur ve turistlerin destinasyona yönelik estetik deneyimleri, turist memnuniyetini olumlu yönde etkilemektedir. Bu durum destinasyonun başkalarına tavsiye edilmesini, tekrar ziyaret edilmesini ve benzer destinasyonların ziyaret edilmesini sağlamaktadır. Dolayısıyla yeni müşteriye ulaşmanın zor ve yüksek maliyetli olması gibi sebeplerden dolayı davranışsal niyetler uzun süreli rekabet gücü için destinasyonlara fayda sağlayacak bir etken olarak görülmektedir. Bu durumdan hareketle çalışmada kültürel, doğal ve tarihi zenginliklere sahip bir destinasyon olan Kastamonu'da estetik deneyimin memnuniyet ve davranışsal niyet üzerine etkisinin araştırılması amaçlanmaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda veri toplamak için anket tekniğinden faydalanılmıştır. Anketler, Ağustos-Eylül 2021 tarihleri arasında il merkezindeki turistik noktaları ziyaret eden turistlere gönüllülük esasına dayalı olarak yüz yüze uygulanmıştır. Yapılan analizler sonucunda estetik deneyimin memnuniyet üzerinde pozitif etkisinin olduğu belirlenmiştir. Ayrıca memnuniyetin de davranışsal niyetleri etkilediği tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarından hareketle Kastamonu ziyaretinden memnun olan turistlerin Kastamonu'yu diğer insanlara önereceğini, olumlu şeyler söyleyeceğini ve Kastamonu'ya ziyaret etmelerini teşvik edeceğini söylemek mümkündür.

## INTRODUCTION

As a result of the extraordinary growth of destination competition in recent years, the examination of tourism experiences has gained importance. In order to stay in the fiercely competitive market created by this growth, destination managers need to offer truly unforgettable experiences to their visitors (Kim - Ritchie, 2014:323). In this context, consumer-oriented product development has taken precedence over standardization. This transition has resulted in a greater focus on both services, aesthetic qualities and the figurative value of products in composing experiences to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. For this reason, aesthetic qualities are especially seen as an essential sight of customer experience and conduce to destinations such as more income and competitiveness thanks to increased market share (Breiby - Slatten, 2015:323). Seeing nature, historical sites, landscapes, and monuments as aesthetic qualities make it possible to discover, perceive and explain them. This situation provides various opportunities for tourists to explore and perceive different aesthetic qualities (Nyurenberger et al., 2019:311).

Undoubtedly, satisfaction plays a significant role in making decisions regarding the products and services offered by destinations. Tourist satisfaction is considered to be of central importance for the organization of tourism-related sectors and destination management. Because high tourist satisfaction benefits tourism goods/service providers, residents and local governments. For this reason, a significant effort is made to develop strategies and establish procedures that will increase customer satisfaction (Mingfang, 2011:187). In this context, the effect of aesthetic qualities on satisfaction and loyalty is important (Breiby & Slatten, 2018:9). The tourist's aesthetic judgment evaluates the beauty of the tourism destination in a unique way, unlike classical aesthetic evaluations in works of art. This assessment goes beyond the visual aspects and engages all the senses. It can also impact tourists' long-term attitudes and behaviors (Kirillova et al., 2014:290).

It is possible to come across many studies on aesthetic experience in the international tourism literature. It is seen that these studies are generally on determining the factors affecting aesthetic experiences, the dimensions of aesthetic experience, the role and effect of aesthetic experience (Kirillova et al., 2014; Breiby, 2014; Breiby - Slatten, 2015; Kirillova - Lehto, 2015; Nyurenberger et al., 2019; Zhou et al., 2021). However, it is possible to say that the number of academic studies on aesthetic experience is low in the national literature. The direct aesthetic experience from the aforementioned works; While Oral and Çelik (2013) examined the aesthetic experiences of tourists visiting Turkey, Yüksek, Uca, and Kalyoncu (2020) also investigated the relation between customer satisfaction and aesthetic experience in hotels. Other studies were carried out on aesthetic values (Sipahi et al., 2017; Farhadi et al., 2017). In this study, it is aimed to investigate the effect of aesthetic experience on satisfaction and behavioral intention in Kastamonu which is a destination with cultural, natural and historical riches Kastamonu hosts important touristic riches such as caves, canyons, plateaus, handicrafts, traditional mansions, especially with its rich fauna and flora (İbret, Aydınöz-Uğurlu, 2015). In addition, its three national parks (Ilgaz Mountain National Park, Küre Mountains National Park, İstiklal Yolu National Park) and 170 km long coastline bring Kastamonu province to a very advantageous position. As of 2022, there are 137 accommodation facilities and 2,151 registered cultural assets, including historical, natural, cultural and religious structures in the province (Kastamonu Governorship, 2022; Kastamonu Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2022). Considering that aesthetic and aesthetic experiences are always important for people, their effect on satisfaction and behavioral intention is the subject of the research. The study is important because it associates aesthetic experience with satisfaction and behavioral intention. In addition, considering the gap in the current national literature, it is possible to say that the study is important in terms of contributing to the literature.

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## 1. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Aesthetic and aesthetic experience can be seen as an aspect of psychology and sociology. Advocates of the subjective approach focus on aesthetic consumption's subjective and empirical aspects. The factors of aesthetic experience are alike across individuals and cultures and are a reflection of one's developmental heritage (Nyurenberger et al., 2019:311). Aesthetics has received general interest from academics in recent years. With the increasing focus on the experiential and symbolic sights of expenditure, the existing interest has started to increase (Parsons, 2002; Stecker, 2006; Markovic, 2012; Specker et al., 2017; Ertürk, 2018). Aesthetic experience, on the other hand, includes the emotions that focus separates' concentration on the product and separate their own pleasure from product evaluation (Charters, 2006:251). Aesthetic and aesthetic experiences have always been significant for people, and tourists' aesthetic experiences towards the destination positively affect tourist satisfaction. This situation enables the destination to be recommended to others, visited again, and similar destinations (Breiby - Slatten, 2018:10). Therefore, the study hypothesis was developed as follows;

H1: Aesthetic experience has a significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

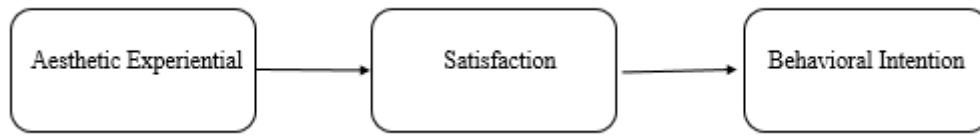
Satisfaction is seen as a fundamental business purpose. It has also been a core issue of tourist behavior. Because the more satisfied a tourist/visitor is, the more they will be willing to buy. In addition, it significantly affects the choice of destination, consumption of products and services and the decision to return (Khuong - Nguyen, 2017:95). Tourist satisfaction has been studied in the academic literature. Some researchers consider the destination image and travel motivation (Valle et al., 2006; Veasna et al., 2013; Antón et al., 2017; Esen - Bahar, 2019; Gün et al., 2019) sees them as the precursors of tourist satisfaction. While travel motivation and destination image are generally seen as the causes of tourist loyalty, tourist satisfaction or complaint is expressed as the result of satisfaction (Mingfang, 2011:187). Behavioral intention also emerges as a result of satisfaction. The level of satisfaction that customers feel for products and services also affects behavioral intentions. In other words, if the satisfaction is high, the customer's intention to revisit the same destination/business may be increased (Jin et al., 2015:86). Behavioral intentions are seen as a factor that will benefit destinations for long-term competitiveness, mainly because it is difficult and costly to reach new customers (Kömür et al., 2021:2324). Based on this information, H2 was developed as follows;

H2: Satisfaction has a significant effect on behavioral intention.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Purpose and Importance of the Research

This study aims to investigate the effect of aesthetic experience on satisfaction and behavioral intention in Kastamonu, which is a destination with cultural, natural and historical riches. When the studies are investigated in the literature, mainly the studies between satisfaction, behavioral intention and revisit intention (Jang - Feng, 2007; Seçmiş, 2012; Raza et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Timur - Oğuz, 2020; Keskin et al., 2020; Artuğer - Şahin, 2020) and the influence of aesthetic experience on satisfaction and behavioral intention is not emphasized. Therefore, it is possible to say that the study is important in terms of contributing to the literature considering the gap in the existing literature. In addition, the model developed for the purpose of the research is as follows.



**Figure 1.** Research Model

## **2.2. Data Collection Tool**

For the purpose of the research, the questionnaire technique was used to obtain data. Expressions of the aesthetic experience scale used by Breiby and Slatten (2015) in the first section, the tourist satisfaction scale used by Veasna, Wu and Huang (2013) in the second section, and the behavioral intention scale used by Prayag, Hosany and Odeh (2013) in the third section is located. In the last and fourth sections of the questionnaire, questions were included to the demographic characteristics. The statements other than the last part of the questionnaire were rated with a 5- point Likert scale (5=I strongly agree; 1=I strongly disagree). The aforementioned questionnaire was applied face-to-face to the volunteer tourists visiting the touristic areas in the city center between August and September 2021.

## **2.3. Population and Sampling**

The population of the study consists of tourists visiting the touristic areas in the city center of Kastamonu. According to the visitor statistics obtained from the internet-based Provincial Information System developed by Kastamonu Governorship, it has been determined that around 2 million 100 thousand tourists visited Kastamonu in the last five years (2017-2021) (Kastabil, 2021). It is seen that an average of 420 thousand tourists visit Kastamonu annually. Considering the travel restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic during the said five-year period, it is possible to say that the annual number of tourists visiting Kastamonu is much higher than this average number. It is seen as an acceptable size for 384 samples for population sizes of 100 thousand and above (Yazıcıoğlu-Erdoğan, 2004). Therefore, the study sample consists of a total of 384 people at a significance level of 0.05 at the 95% confidence interval, which was determined by the convenience sampling method, which is one of the non-random sampling methods. However, considering that there would be erroneous and incomplete questionnaires, 410 questionnaires were distributed, and 400 questionnaires were evaluated.

## **3. FINDINGS**

### **3.1. Demographic Features**

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The data on the demographic features of the tourists are given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Findings Related to the Demographic Features of the Participants

	f	%		f	%
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Age</b>		
Woman	217	54.25	18-28	70	17.5
Man	183	45.75	29-39	91	22.75
<b>Marital status</b>			40-50	128	32
The married	224	56	51-61	89	22.25
Single	176	44	62 and above	22	5.5
<b>Education</b>			<b>Income</b>		
Primary education	61	15.25	8506 TL and below	302	75,5
High school	160	40	Over 8506 TL	98	24,5
Undergraduate	130	32.5			
Graduate	49	12.25			
<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>

According to Table 1, it was determined that 54.25% of the participants were woman, and 45.75% were man. It is seen that the age ranges are predominantly 29 years old and above, and the majority of them are married participants. When the levels of education are investigated, it has been determined that the majority of the high school students (40%) and the undergraduate level come second (32.5%). Additionally, it is seen that the income of a significant part of the participants (55.25%) is between 2825-4500 TL.

### 3.2. Factor Analysis Results

Principal component analysis and varimax rotation options were used as explanatory models by performing explanatory factor analysis regarding the aesthetic experience scale used in the research. Care was taken that the correlation coefficients for each statement in the scale were not less than 0.30, and the analysis results are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Factor Analysis Results for the Aesthetic Experience Scale

<b>Aesthetic Experience</b>	Cover.	Factor Load	Self Value	Clar . Vary.	Alpha
<b>Cleaning</b>			2,686	15,797	0.841
Kastamonu has an untouched natural environment.	4.42	.92			
I saw very little garbage during my trip in Kastamonu	4.12	,783			
The businesses I get service from in Kastamonu are clean.	4.21	,842			
Kastamonu has clean drinking water resources.	4.08	,758			
<b>View</b>			2,514	14,787	0.807
Kastamonu's natural areas have beautiful views.	4.38	,721			
During my travel, I saw landscapes in Kastamonu.	4.01	,835			
Kastamonu has cultural areas which have made landscape design.	4.22	,782			

**Table 2.** Factor Analysis Results for the Aesthetic Experience Scale (cont.)

<b>Harmony</b>			2,477	14,569	0.822
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Kastamonu has accommodation facilities close to nature.	3.96	,694			
The design of the enterprises in Kastamonu is compatible with the external environment.	4.16	,796			
The architecture of the enterprises in Kastamonu is compatible with the region's image.	4.18	,856			
<b>Art and Architecture</b>			2,432	14,304	0.832
Kastamonu architecture enhances the nature experience.	4.10	,563			
Guiding signs in the natural environment are sufficient.	3.79	,841			
Perspective on artworks in Kastamonu enhances experiences with nature	4.10	,632			
<b>Originality</b>			1,743	10,256	0.812
Kastamonu offers good opportunities to taste local dishes.	4.21	,761			
Vegetation surrounds Kastamonu's natural environment.	4.32	,600			
Kastamonu offers good opportunities to observe wildlife.	3.64	,671			
Businesses in Kastamonu reflect tradition.	4.18	,788			

Variance Explained : 69, 713 KMO : 0.879 Bartlett's Test,  $p < 0.000$

As a result of the analysis, a five-dimensional structure was obtained. The building in question was formed in the form of cleanliness, landscape, harmony, art and architecture, and originality. The variance explanation rate of this structure was measured as 69.713%. The cleanliness dimension is prominent, with 15,797% of the total variance. Moreover, it was defined that the Cronbach Alpha values for the dimensions were above 0.80.

### 3.3. Testing the Research Model

After the factor analysis was done, the implementation process of the structural equation model was started. Structural equation is an effective method for testing theoretical models as a whole and explaining the cause-effect relation between variables (Ayyıldız–Cengiz, 2006). Structural equation, in its simplest form, is an analysis that tests the level of agreement between the research model and the data (Byrne, 1998). Before testing the hypotheses, the goodness-of-fit statistics for the model were evaluated, and the results of analysis are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Research Model Fit Indices

Goodness of Fit	Acceptable Fit	Model
$\chi^2$	-	144,679
df	-	50
$\chi^2/df$	1-3	2,894
CFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.978
GFI	$\geq 0.90$	0.947
AGFI	$\geq 0.85$	0.917
RMSEA	$0.03 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.08$	0.068
RMR	$0 \leq RMR \leq 1$	0.023
NFI	$0 \leq NFI \leq 1$	0.967

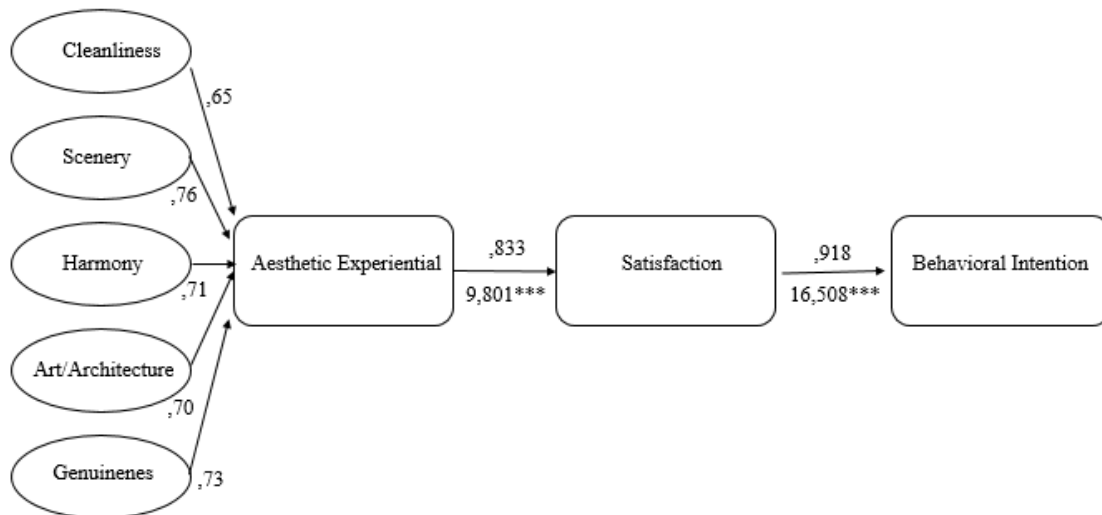
Structural equation has an algorithm based on the comparison between the covariance matrix presented by the data and the covariance matrix produced by the research model. Therefore, the model-fitness value is shaped by how consistent these two different covariance matrices are (Doğan, 2018, 212). When the values in Table 3 are investigated, it is seen that the  $\chi^2/df$  value is 2,894. In addition, while the GFI and CFI values are above 0.90, the GFI value is above 0.85, the RMSEA value is between 0.03 and 0.08. In addition, it is seen that the RMR and NFI values are between 0-1.

After examining all these indices, it was determined that the structural model had acceptable values. AVE and CR values for all of the scales also given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Calculated CR and AVE values for the scales

	Expressions	Factor Load	AVE	CR
Aesthetic Experience	Cleaning	0.650	.0655	0.824
	View	0.758		
	Art and Architecture	0.698		
	Harmony	0.714		
	Originality	0.731		
Satisfaction	Visiting Kastamonu was a good experience for me.	0.681	0.910	0.968
	I feel good about my visit decision to Kastamonu.	0.764		
	I really enjoyed Kastamonu.	0.864		
	I am happy with my decision to visit Kastamonu.	0.911		
Behavioral Intent	I will recommend other people to visit Kastamonu.	0.932	0.910	0.968
	I will say affirmative things about Kastamonu to others.	0.954		
	I will hearten my relatives and friends to visit Kastamonu.	0.976		

When Table 4 is examined, the CR value for the Aesthetic Experience scale is 0.824; It was observed that the AVE value was calculated as 0.505. The CR value of the satisfaction scale was 0.883; The AVE value was 0.655, the CR value of the Behavioral Intent scale was 0.968, and the AVE value was 0.910. The fact that the CR value is greater than 0.70 and the AVE value is greater than 0.50 in all of the scales (Hair et al., 2014) shows that the scale provides reliability and convergent validity. After it was determined that the model had good fit values, the relations between the dimensions in the model were tested within the framework of the hypotheses. The path analysis of the proposed model is given in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Path Analysis of the Research Model

The values of the path analysis estimations for the proposed model are given in Table 5. As a result of the path analysis, it was determined that the structural relationship expressing the H1 hypothesis was supported by the existing data. It has been determined that aesthetic experience has a significant and positive effect on satisfaction.

**Table 5.** Path Analysis Estimates for the Proposed Model



H	Structural Relationship	Direction	Non-Standard Estimation	Standard error	t Value	Standard Estimate	P	Conc.
H <sub>1</sub>	Aesthetic Experience → Satisfaction	Positive	0.992	0.101	9,801	0.833	0,00	Acc
H <sub>2</sub>	Satisfaction → Behavioral Intent	Positive	1,205	0.073	16.508	0.918	0,00	Acc

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

When the effect of satisfaction on behavioral intention was examined, it was seen that it had a significant positive effect at the 0.001 significance level. Based on this result, the H2 hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, it is possible to say that tourists who are satisfied with their visit to Kastamonu will recommend Kastamonu to other people, say positive things and encourage them to visit Kastamonu.

#### 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, it is aimed to investigate the effect of aesthetic experience on satisfaction and behavioral intention in Kastamonu, which is a destination with cultural, natural and historical riches. For this purpose, a face-to-face survey was applied with the tourists visiting the touristic areas in Kastamonu city center.

As a result of the analysis, it was determined that the aesthetic experience has a positive effect on the satisfaction of the visitors. Businesses that offer aesthetic experiences will positively affect the satisfaction level of tourists by supplying the aesthetic needs of consumers, which are among the high-level needs in the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Oral-Çelik, 2013:181). Similarly, Breiby and Slåtten (2018) stated that aesthetic experience affects whole tourist satisfaction. Oral and Çelik (2013) also stated that there is a positive relation between the aesthetic experience of tourism products and customer satisfaction. In addition, Jeong et al., (2009) stated that aesthetic experience along with fun and dreaminess affect satisfaction. As a result of examining the effect of satisfaction on behavioral intention, it was determined that there was a positive effect between the two variables. Rasoolimanesh, et al. (2021), Uslu (2017) and İlban et al., (2016) also obtained similar results in their studies and stated that satisfaction affects behavioral intentions positively and at a high rate.

It is thought that this study will contribute to the gap in the literature by considering the variables of aesthetic experience, satisfaction and behavioral intention together. It is important for a natural, cultural and historical destination that the aesthetic experience is satisfied with the tourist's being there without changing or affecting the nature and environment offered. Because in this experience, the tourist only likes and is affected by the environment without taking any action (Büyükkuru-Aslan, 2016:342). However, while the dimensions included in the study are used in the aesthetic experiences of tourists, it is seen that different dimensions are applied between different destination types (Kirillova et al., 2014:290). Therefore, the aesthetic experience dimensions included in the study can be applied in similar destinations with Kastamonu. Investigating the indirect and direct effects of aesthetic quality on tourist loyalty also increases the market share of competitiveness and physical aesthetic value in the market (Zhang-Xu, 2020:9). In addition, in Dieck's (2018) study, the fact that aesthetic experiences are a leading variable among total experiences indicates that aesthetic experiences are powerful experiences (Aşan-Yolal, 2020, 974). In future studies, researches can be studied to examine the aesthetic experiences of tourists with different demographic characteristics.

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