

## The Relationship Between Memorable Tourism Experience, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention: A Study on Ecotourists in Giresun/Türkiye

(Unutulmaz Turizm Deneyimi, Destinasyon Tatmini ve Davranışsal Niyet Arasındaki İlişki: Giresun'da Eko-Turistler Üzerinde Bir Çalışma)

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioural intentions that ecotourists have gained from their visits within the scope of ecotourism. The study was designed in accordance with the quantitative research design. The data used in the study were collected by applying a survey technique on eco-tourists visiting the Kümbet Plateau, Mavi Göl, Göksu Travertines and Kuzalan Waterfall destinations in Giresun/Türkiye, in line with the aim of the study. In this context, the population of the research consists of eco-tourists visiting these destinations, while the sample group consists of 482 participants out of 500 and they were reached between November, 2022 and February, 2023. In the analysis of the collected data, reliability, t-test, variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression analyses were used. As a result of the correlation analysis performed to determine the direction and severity of the relationship between the variables, it was determined that there was a positive and moderate relationship between the general memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists and their general behavioural intentions. It has been observed that there was a positive and high-level relationship between general memorable tourism experiences and general destination satisfaction. Another result of the correlation analysis is that there was a positive and moderate relationship between ecotourists' destination satisfaction and their general behavioural intentions. According to the results of the regression analysis, it was concluded that the memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfactions of the participants positively affected their behavioural intentions. In addition, in line with the findings obtained from the analysis of the study, suggestions were presented for the interested parties.

### Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, eko-turistlerin ekoturizm kapsamında gerçekleştirdiği ziyaretlerden edindiği unutulmaz turizm deneyimleri, destinasyon tatminleri ve davranışsal niyetleri arasındaki ilişkiyi belirlemektir. Çalışma, nicel araştırma desenine uygun olarak dizayn edilmiştir. Çalışmada kullanılan veriler, çalışmanın amacına uygun olarak, Giresun ilinde yer alan Kümbet Yaylası, Mavi Göl, Göksu Travertenleri ve Kuzalan Şelalesi destinasyonlarını ziyaret eden eko-turistler üzerinde anket tekniği uygulanarak toplanmıştır. Bu kapsamda, araştırmanın evrenini söz konusu destinasyonları ziyaret eden eko-turistler oluştururken; örneklem grubunu ise Kasım 2022 ve Şubat 2023 ayları arasında ulaşılan 500 katılımcıdan 482'si oluşturmaktadır. Toplanan verilerin analizinde, güvenilirlik, t-testi, varyans (ANOVA), korelasyon ve regresyon analizlerinden yararlanılmıştır. Değişkenler arası ilişkinin yönünü ve şiddetini belirlemek amacıyla yapılan korelasyon analizi sonucunda, eko-turistlerin genel unutulmaz turizm deneyimleri ile genel davranışsal niyetleri arasında pozitif yönlü ve orta düzeyde bir ilişki olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Genel unutulmaz turizm deneyimleri ile destinasyon tatminleri arasında ise pozitif yönlü ve yüksek düzeyde bir ilişki olduğu gözlenmiştir. Korelasyon analiz sonuçlarından bir diğeri de eko-turistlerin destinasyon tatminleri ile genel davranışsal niyetleri arasında pozitif yönlü ve orta düzeyde bir ilişki olduğudur. Çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi sonucuna göre, katılımcıların unutulmaz turizm deneyimleri ve destinasyon tatminlerinin davranışsal niyetlerini olumlu yönde etkilediği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, çalışmanın analizlerinden elde edilen bulgular doğrultusunda ilgili taraflar için öneriler sunulmuştur.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

It can be stated that factors such as scarcity of resources in nature, global warming and destruction of nature play an active role in making many people more conscious and sensitive to the environment. Especially in recent years, due to reasons such as natural disasters (February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş Centered Earthquake, other earthquakes and other natural events), epidemics (such as the COVID-19 virus that started in November 2019 and other epidemics), climatic events, and the longing to return to nature, the reverse process of migration from rural to urban began to be experienced, and people tended to migrate from urban to rural areas or acquire secondary housing. Ecotourism, which is an alternative tourism type, has become an area preferred by potential ecotourists who have almost the same thoughts or consciousness. When ecotourism is examined in general terms, it can be expressed as a tourism element that supports nature (making it sustainable by preserving nature, providing economic and social benefits for the regions where it operates and local communities, supporting cultural diversity by protecting ecosystems etc.). Therefore, the contribution of establishments operating in destinations is so important that it cannot be ignored in terms of carrying out ecotourism activities in the regions in a positive way.

When the ecotourism market is examined, ecotourism has become popular in the tourism industry for more than ten years and has become one of the fastest growing tourism types (Kasalak, 2015). With the effect of its geographical location, Türkiye has important ecotourism destinations with a rich content in terms of cultural values and natural resources (Yalçınkaya, 2021). The Eastern Black Sea Region is one of the regions that are suitable for ecotourism with its geographical conditions, climate and natural resources. The Eastern Black Sea Region has quite a variety of opportunities to do many different tourism activities such as trekking, cave tourism, river tourism, paragliding and mountaineering (Kaya and Yıldırım, 2020). At this point, ecotourism is one of the types of tourism that includes various tourism activities and can spread tourism to different destinations within the country at any time of the year. Since it is appropriate to implement alternative tourism types including different tourism activities in Giresun (one of the cities of the Eastern Black Sea Region), ecotourism activities are also carried out in this region (Turpcu and Çelikkanat Paslı, 2019).

Opportunities such as the protection of natural resources, infrastructure, superstructure, and transportation facilities are important factors for the realization of tourism activities in a region. Along with the aforementioned opportunities, the disciplined activities of the destination managers will also contribute to the increase of destination satisfaction in terms of tourists visiting the regions (Kılıç and Pelit, 2004). It can be said that with the positive results of the experiences of the tourists in the destinations, a positive perception can be formed towards these destinations. Positive destination experiences can also affect tourists' intention to revisit, their decisions and their intention to recommend the destination to others. Destination satisfactions of ecotourists as a result of the experiences they have gained in ecotourism activities in the regions they participate in and their behavioral intentions, affect the development of destinations positively or negatively. Establishments operating in these destinations should also consider that ecotourists with different demographic characteristics can participate in these activities, develop their plans and policies in this direction and carry out ecotourism activities in the same direction. Thus, it is clear that ecotourism can contribute economically to local people and establishments in line with these positive results.

In this study, it is aimed to reveal the relationship between memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions by determining the opinions of ecotourists visiting the Kümbet Plateau, Mavi Göl, Göksu Travertines and Kuzalan Waterfalls in Giresun. The absence of such a study on these destinations in Giresun shows that this study is original. According to the results obtained from the study, it is thought that such a study is needed in terms of contributing to the plans and policies to be made for the improvement of these destinations. In this respect, it is also thought that the study will contribute to future academic studies and literature on the subject. In the following parts of the study, firstly the conceptual framework for a better understanding of the concepts, and then the method, findings and conclusion-suggestions of the research are included.

## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The concept of ecotourism has emerged from the widespread and growing interest in nature and, accordingly, the awareness of the importance of preserving the quality of the natural environment. The idea of visiting, experiencing and protecting natural areas from harmful effects has become socially accepted and marketable. Accordingly, the concept of

“*ecotourism*”, which has become popular today, has emerged with the combination of the terms “*ecology, biosphere and eco-sensitivity*”, which are associated with the appropriate term “*eco*” and evoke positive images (Orams, 1995). One of the most common definitions in the literature is that of Ceballos-Lascuráin, whose studies are often considered the beginning of ecotourism. Ceballos-Lascuráin (1987: 14) defined ecotourism as “*travel to relatively unspoiled or uncontaminated natural areas to admire, to enjoy and to study the landscape and wildlife, as well as to see the cultures present in these areas*” (Blamey, 2001: 6). Although it has been a subject that has been studied for many years, it is possible to state that a common consensus on the concept of ecotourism has not been reached yet. For instance, Fennell (2001) conducted a study that analyzed 85 definitions of ecotourism to provide an empirical basis for further discussion of ecotourism definitions. As a result of his study, he concluded that the five most commonly cited variables in understanding ecotourism are “*place of ecotourism*”, “*conservation*”, “*culture*”, “*benefits to local people*” and “*education*”. In his later study, Fennell (2014) detailed the findings of his previous studies and, taking into account the results of the study, and he emphasized that using a single definition of ecotourism would carry the risk of too many restrictions to fully understand the term; so that the term cannot be fully explained, and therefore, many things in the ecotourism definition should be left to the reader's interpretation. Therefore, although it is difficult to find a single definition of ecotourism, basically, the concept of ecotourism can be described as a type of tourism that aims to benefit society, the environment and the economy with its realization in the natural environment and through sustainable education practices (Diamantis, 2004).

Factors such as the routine life and troubles brought by city life, the desire to get rid of stress, the desire to wonder and experience natural life, direct a significant part of people to these areas and thus nature tourism becomes more popular. Therefore, many private or public institutions are turning establishments such as agriculture, forestry and fisheries into tourism-oriented businesses (Buckley et al., 2003). For example, enabling ecotourists to have this experience in the context of farming in terms of agriculture. Another different example is that people participate in hazelnut harvesting activities without being paid in order to gain experience during the hazelnut harvest in Giresun, the city where this study was also conducted. Ecotourism is the whole of activities that include natural resources, cultural heritage, rural living spaces and sustainable tourism. In this context, ecotourism takes place in

natural and cultural areas with different elements of the natural and cultural landscape (such as water, landscape, topography, flora, fresh air) and various leisure activities are carried out suitable for all kinds of environments (Kiper, 2013). In terms of the economic development and sustainability of destinations, the experiences of ecotourists from their visits to these areas are also very important. Because these experiences, which can also be called memorable tourism experiences, are a powerful factor that can directly or indirectly affect the future behavioral intentions (decision, revisit, word of mouth advertising etc.) of consumers.

During the planning stages of a tourism experience, various arrangements such as transportation, transfer, food and beverage and accommodation are organized. Within the scope of these plans, different emotions and experiences such as anxiety, excitement and happiness occur in touristic consumers. Therefore, these feelings and expectations can vary greatly from person to person, depending on the degree of personal involvement with their travel plans (Kim et al., 2012). Typically, tourists seek an engaging, unique and memorable tourism experience. Tourists visit tourist destinations and establishments by purchasing vacations for various reasons such as getting away from routine life, escapism and seeking authenticity (Cohen, 1979). A tourist's tourism experience is influenced not only by the tangible products and services experienced, but also by the fact that some experiences are catchy and memorable (Cornelisse, 2014). If visitors are satisfied as a result of their experiences in tourism movements, these tourism movements can be expressed as a memorable tourism experience (Keskin et al., 2020).

In relation to past experiences, Larsen (2007: 15) defines memorable tourism experience as “*personal events related to past trips that are strong enough to remain deeply in long-term memory*”. Kim et al., (2012) state that within the scope of memorable tourism experiences, people should understand what they will remember and make it a priority in order to understand what makes an experience memorable and to increase it. It is possible to state that the memorable tourism experience generally consists of different dimensions. For instance, according to Kim et al. (2010), a memorable tourism experience consists of seven dimensions: “*hedonism*”, “*novelty*”, “*local culture (social interaction)*”, “*refreshment (revival)*”, “*meaningfulness*”, “*involvement (interest)*” and “*knowledge*”. On the other hand, memorable tourism and/or destination experiences can also lead to some changes in tourists' intentions.

For instance, while tourists who are satisfied with their visit may increase their intention to revisit, unsatisfied tourists may lose their intention to revisit, as well as cause them to be a bad propaganda tool for the tourist destination or establishments in question (Zhang et al., 2017). Therefore, the ability (knowledge) of touristic destinations or establishments to offer memorable tourism experiences has a critical importance in terms of gaining competitive advantage (Kim, 2014). At this point, it would be useful to address customer satisfaction before moving on to the concept of destination satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is an integral part of the execution and continuity of any business in the field of tourism. The future success of an establishment depends on customer satisfaction within the scope of the goods and services offered by the establishment and the perceived service quality. Therefore, it is vital for every entrepreneur to understand and know how the customer experience is affected and what factors are important for customer satisfaction (Bergman and Klefsjö, 2010). The focus of establishments on how to please their customers is an important road impression for the success of establishments (Oliver, 1999). In this context, establishments need to retain their customers for their success, profitability and sustainability. Customer satisfaction plays a fundamental role in retaining customers. Otherwise, when the expectations of the touristic consumers visiting the establishments are not met and their experiences are negative, dissatisfaction will arise and the customers will tend to leave the establishment and this may cause the establishments to lose their customers (Kaygusuz, 2005). Increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty in destinations is a more practical and effective approach than creating overall customer satisfaction. Ensuring overall destination satisfaction level can be facilitated with this approach (Ünal, 2018). Therefore, destinations contain many tourism products and destination satisfaction can only be achieved when tourists are satisfied with all services within the destination. It is obvious that the satisfaction or dissatisfaction that occurs as a result of the experiences of the consumers can also have a significant effect on their behavioral intentions.

Behavioral intention is recognized as an important factor in explaining an individual's behavior. Thus, an individual's strong intention to perform a particular behavior is likely to increase his performance on that subject as well (Ajzen, 1991). According to Warshaw and Davis (1985), behavioral intention is the degree to which an individual consciously plans to

perform or not to perform a certain action in the future. In terms of tourism, behavioral intention is defined as the intention of tourists to revisit the same destination or to recommend it to others within the scope of satisfaction with the travel and destination experience (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Tsai (2016) defines behavioral intention as “*the subjective tendency of tourists to take certain actions after evaluating the general experience obtained after participating in tourism activities*”. While Chi and Qu (2008) argue that high visitor satisfaction is the ultimate goal of marketing strategies, but behavioral intention is a better predictor, Ladhari et al. (2008) argue that behavioral intention is behavioral tendencies that emerge from consumers' experiences. Different methods can be used to determine behavioral intention. However, in this study, “*word of mouth advertising*” and “*revisit intention*” dimensions of behavioral intention were used, as used by Gohary et al. (2018).

In this context, the main hypotheses of the study were developed in line with the conceptual framework created above;

**H<sub>1</sub>:** *There is a significant relationship between the memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of ecotourists visiting Giresun.*

**H<sub>2</sub>:** *The memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfactions of ecotourists during their visit to Giresun have a significant effect on their behavioral intentions.*

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

In this study, which was designed according to a quantitative research design, it was aimed to reveal the relationship between memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of ecotourists visiting Giresun. For this aim, the questionnaire form developed in the study (*examining Iranian tourists' memorable experiences on destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions*) conducted by Gohary et al. (2018), was used and the necessary permissions to use the scale were obtained from the authors via e-mail. The questionnaire basically consists of two parts. In the first part, 7 items are given to determine the individual characteristics (age, gender, marital status, number of children, education level, monthly income and professional status) of the participants. In the second part of the questionnaire, there were a total of 33 items regarding ecotourists' memorable tourism experiences (7 dimensions and 24 items), destination satisfaction (3 statements) and

behavioral intentions (2 dimensions and 6 items). The statements in the questionnaire (except for individual characteristics) were designed in accordance with a 5-point Likert-type rating. Accordingly, the participation levels of the ecotourists for each item were graded as “1=Strongly Disagree”, “2= Slightly Agree”, “3= Moderately Agree”, “4= Strongly Agree”, “5= Completely Agree”. Due to the fact that the study area is spread over four different destinations, located at different distances from the city center and it was difficult to reach ecotourists visiting these areas in terms of time, accessibility, distance and cost, a certain number of destinations were selected by random method instead of each ecotourism destination in Giresun. In this context, a total of 500 questionnaires were distributed in the destinations attracting the most tourists in Giresun (Kümbet Plateau, Mavi Göl, Göksu Travertines and Kuzalan Waterfall), which was chosen as the sample group of the study. Due to reasons such as missing and/or incorrect filling in the returned questionnaires, 18 questionnaires were eliminated and a total of 482 questionnaires were evaluated for analysis. For the statistical analysis of the study data; frequency and percentage distributions for the demographic characteristics of ecotourists, One Way Anova and t test for the differences between of the variables, and the correlation and regression analysis were used for the relationship/effect between of memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of the participants. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the validity and reliability of the scale used in the study was calculated. In this direction, the reliability coefficients of the sub-dimensions of the scale were found respectively as;  $\alpha=0.947$  for the hedonism dimension;  $\alpha=0.936$  for the novelty dimension;  $\alpha=0.923$  for the local culture dimension;  $\alpha=0.948$  for the refreshment dimension;  $\alpha=0.938$  for the meaningfulness dimension;  $\alpha=0.921$  for the dimension of involvement;  $\alpha=0.926$  for the knowledge dimension;  $\alpha=0.949$  for the destination satisfaction dimension;  $\alpha=0.931$  for the word-of-mouth advertising dimension, and,  $\alpha=0.941$  for the revisit intention dimension. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the scale was found to be  $\alpha=0.976$  in general. Considering the values obtained, as Ural and Kılıç (2006) pointed out it can be interpreted that the subdimensions and whole scale are highly reliable ( $0,80 < \alpha < 1$ ). In the following part of the study, the findings and interpretations obtained from the analysis of the data are given.



#### 4. FINDINGS

In the study, first of all, descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage distributions) regarding the demographic characteristics of the participants were included. In this direction, the frequency and percentage distributions of 482 visitors for age, gender, marital status, number of children, education level, average monthly income (TL) and their occupational characteristics are shown in Table 1 in detail.

According to Table 1, 41.1% of the 482 participants were female visitors and 58.9% were male. When the age variables of the participants are examined, it is seen that the participants between 30-35 years constitute the highest participation with 23.7%. On the other hand, participants aged “54 and over” provide the least participation with 3.7%. When evaluated in terms of marital status, 61.2% of the participants were married and have children, as were the middle-aged participants. On the other hand, 23.0% of the participants were single, 15.8% were married and have no children.

**Table 1.** Findings on Demographic Characteristics of Ecotourists (n=482)

Variables	Groups	f	%	Variables	Groups	f	%	
<b>Gender</b>	Female	198	41.1	<b>Income (TL)</b>	5500 and less	78	16.2	
	Male	284	58.9		5501-7000	74	15.4	
<b>Age</b>	18-23 years	81	16.8		7001-8500	142	29.5	
	24-29 years	68	14.1		8501-10000	102	21.2	
	30-35 years	114	23.7		10001-11500	34	7.1	
	36-41 years	110	22.8		11501-13000	13	2.7	
	42-47 years	60	12.4		13001-14500	23	4.8	
	48-53 years	31	6.4		14501 and over	16	3.3	
	54 and over	18	3.7		<b>Number of Children</b>	0	188	39.0
	<b>Marital Status</b>	Married (with children)	295			61.2	1	96
Married (No children)		76	15.8	2		116	24.1	
Single		111	23.0	3		66	13.7	
<b>Educational Status</b>	Primary	19	3.9	4 and over		16	3.3	
	Secondary	74	15.4	<b>Profession</b>	Public	35	7.3	
	High School	195	40.5		Private	387	80.3	
	Associate	98	20.3		Not working	26	5.4	
	Undergraduate	85	17.6		Student	34	7.1	
Graduate	11	2.3						
<b>Total</b>		<b>482</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>Total</b>		<b>482</b>	<b>100</b>	

When the situation of having or not having children on Table 1, which is thought to have a direct or indirect effect on people's working and private life, is examined, it is seen that 39.0% of the participants do not have children, 24.1% have 2 children, 19.9% have 1 child, 13.7% have 3 children, and, 3.3% of them have 4 or more children. The reason why the statement of whether the participants have children is included in the questionnaire is to try to determine whether they differ in terms of their participation in destination activities. When the participants are compared in terms of education level, it is seen that the participants with high school education constituted the highest participation with 40.5%. When the professions of the participants are examined, it is seen that the highest participation was 80.3% of the private sector employees. The average monthly income (TL) of the participants on the questionnaire has been designed according to the Turkish minimum wage (5500 TL) level as of July 2022. However, when the average income of the participants is compared, it is seen that the highest participation is formed by the participants with an income between 7001-8500 TL with 29.5%. It was observed that only 15.4% of the participants earned an income between 5501-7000 TL.

The frequency, percentage, standard deviation value and arithmetic mean of the scale items used to determine the participants' memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intention are given in Table 2 in detail. When the arithmetic means of the memorable tourism experience and its sub-dimensions are examined, it is possible to say that all of them were found at a relatively high level.

According to the values in Table 2, the arithmetic mean of the memorable tourism experience in the hedonism dimension was found as  $\bar{x}=3.57$ . In the novelty dimension, the arithmetic mean of the memorable tourism experience found as  $\bar{x}=3.63$ . The arithmetic mean of the memorable tourism experience in the dimension of local culture was calculated as  $\bar{x}=3.82$ . When the arithmetic mean of the memorable tourism experience in the refreshment dimension is examined, it is seen that it has also high average with  $\bar{x}=3.79$ . In the dimension of significance, the arithmetic mean of memorable tourism experiences was calculated as  $\bar{x}=3.75$ . It can be stated that the arithmetic means of involvement and knowledge dimensions, which are the other two dimensions of the memorable tourism experience, have also high level of arithmetic average with  $\bar{x}=3.72$ . When evaluated in general terms, the general

arithmetic mean of the memorable tourism experiences of the participants was also found to be at a high level with  $\bar{x}=3.71$ .

**Table 2.** Findings on Memorable Tourism Experiences, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Ecotourists

VARIABLES	DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	Distribution						$\bar{x}$	s.d.	
				Strongly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	Completely Agree			
MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE ( $\bar{x}=3.71$ ; s.d.=0.84)	HEDONISM ( $\bar{x}=3.57$ ; s.d.=0.99)	1. I was thrilled about having a new experience.	f	7	77	141	151	106	3.56	1.04	
			%	1.5	16.0	29.3	31.3	22.0			
		2. I enjoyed participating in other activities during my trip.	f	11	80	146	132	113	3.53	1.09	
			%	2.3	16.6	30.3	27.4	23.4			
			3. I really enjoyed my trip.	f	6	80	148	126	122	3.58	1.07
				%	1.2	16.6	30.7	26.1	25.3		
			4. I had an exciting and enjoyable experience.	f	8	68	151	130	125	3.61	1.06
				%	1.7	14.1	31.3	27.0	25.9		
		NOVELTY ( $\bar{x}=3.63$ ; s.d.=0.96)	5. I had an once-in-a-lifetime experience.	f	9	73	145	141	114	3.58	1.06
			%	1.9	15.1	30.1	29.3	23.7			
	6. I had a unique experience.		f	11	61	152	144	114	3.60	1.05	
			%	2.3	12.7	31.5	29.9	23.7			
			7. My trip was quite different from my previous trips.	f	9	58	147	152	116	3.64	1.03
				%	1.9	12.0	30.5	31.5	24.1		
			8. I gained new experiences during my travel.	f	12	57	130	141	142	3.71	1.08
			%	2.5	11.8	27.0	29.3	29.5			
	LOCAL CULTURE ( $\bar{x}=3.82$ ; s.d.=0.84)	9. I got good impressions about the local culture.	f	7	48	131	151	145	3.79	1.02	
		%	1.5	10.0	27.2	31.3	30.1				
10. I experienced the local culture quite closely.		f	6	51	125	153	147	3.80	1.02		
			%	1.2	10.6	25.9	31.7	30.5			
		11. The local people were friendly and warm to me.	f	6	48	118	137	173	3.88	1.04	
			%	1.2	10.0	24.5	28.4	35.9			
	REFRESHMENT ( $\bar{x}=3.79$ ; s.d.=0.98)	12. I relieved stress during the trip.	f	8	47	128	147	152	3.81	1.04	
		%	1.7	9.8	26.6	30.5	31.5				
13. I felt free from daily routine during the trip.		f	7	56	124	142	153	3.78	1.06		
		%	1.5	11.6	25.7	29.5	31.7				
14. I had a refreshing experience.		f	7	60	116	154	145	3.77	1.05		
	%	1.5	12.4	24.1	32.0	30.1					
		15. I felt better after the trip.	f	6	57	117	144	158	3.81	1.05	
			%	1.2	11.8	24.3	29.9	32.8			

**Table 2.** (continuation): Findings on Memorable Tourism Experiences, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Ecotourists

VARIABLES	DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	Distribution	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	Completely Agree	$\bar{x}$	s.d.
MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE ( $\bar{x}=3,71$ ; s.d.=0,84)	MEANINGFULNESS ( $\bar{x}=3,75$ ; s.d.=1,00)	16. I felt that I did something meaningful.	f 8 % 1.7	57 11.8	127 26.3	147 30.5	143 29.7	3.75	1.05	
		17. I felt that I did something important.	f 13 % 2.7	49 10.2	122 25.3	156 32.4	142 29.5	3.76	1.06	
		18. I felt like I was learning more about myself.	f 12 % 2.5	50 10.4	125 25.9	150 31.1	145 30.1	3.76	1.06	
	INVOLVEMENT ( $\bar{x}=3,72$ ; s.d.=1,02)	19. I tripped a place that I really wanted to visit.	f 13 % 2.7	49 10.2	119 24.7	154 32.0	147 30.5	3.78	1.07	
		20. I enjoyed activities that I really wanted to do.	f 11 % 2.3	62 12.9	121 25.1	145 30.1	143 29.7	3.72	1.09	
		21. I was interested in the main activities offered to tourists.	f 22 % 4.6	62 12.9	107 22.2	151 31.3	140 29.0	3.67	1.15	
	KNOWLEDGE ( $\bar{x}=3,72$ ; s.d.=1,04)	22. I gained a lot of information during the trip.	f 10 % 2.1	57 11.8	129 26.8	138 28.6	148 30.7	3.74	1.08	
		23. I gained new knowledge-skills from the trip.	f 14 % 2.9	52 10.8	134 27.8	128 26.6	154 32.0	3.74	1.10	
		24. I experienced new challenges.	f 19 % 3.9	60 12.4	121 25.1	127 26.3	155 32.2	3.70	1.15	
DESTINATION SATISFACTION ( $\bar{x}=3,82$ ; s.d.=1,04)	25. I believed that being a tourist in Giresun was the right thing.	f 9 % 1.9	49 10.2	129 26.8	127 26.3	168 34.9	3.82	1.07		
	26. I feel good about my decision to visit to Giresun.	f 12 % 2.5	48 10.0	114 23.7	142 29.5	166 34.4	3.83	1.08		
	27. I am very satisfied with my decision to visit Giresun.	f 14 % 2.9	51 10.6	11 23.0	136 28.2	170 35.3	3.82	1.11		

**Table 2.** (continuation): Findings on Memorable Tourism Experiences, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions of Ecotourists

VARIABLES	DIMENSIONS	ITEMS	Distribution	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree	Completely Agree	$\bar{x}$	s.d.
BEHAVIORAL INTENTION ( $\bar{x}$ =3.57; s.d.=1.17)	WORD-OF-MOUTH ADVERTISING ( $\bar{x}$ =3.60; s.d.=1.52)	28. I would recommend others to travel to Giresun.	f	20	71	121	144	126	3.59	1.14
			%	4.1	14.7	25.1	29.9	26.1		
		29. I always told positive things about traveling to Giresun.	f	19	81	123	138	121	3.54	1.15
		%	3.9	16.8	25.5	28.6	25.1			
		30. I 'talk up' Giresun to my friends.	f	24	65	141	134	118	3.53	1.14
		%	5.0	13.5	29.3	27.8	24.5			
	REVISIT INTENTION ( $\bar{x}$ =3.55; s.d.=1.08)	31. I really want to visit Giresun again.	f	24	65	138	131	124	3.55	1.15
		%	5.0	13.5	28.6	27.2	25.7			
		32. I would love to come to Giresun again.	f	17	71	141	12	124	3.56	1.12
	%	3.5	14.7	29.3	26.8	25.7				
		33. I think I will come back to Giresun again in the near future.	f	20	8	129	123	130	3.55	1.17
		%	4.1	16.6	26.8	25.5	27.0			

The arithmetic mean of destination satisfaction, which is one of the other variables of the study, was also found to be high with  $\bar{x}$ =3.82. The arithmetic mean of the behavioral intention variable, which is the last variable of the study, is also relatively high with  $\bar{x}$ =3.57. When the arithmetic mean of word-of-mouth advertising ( $\bar{x}$ =3,60) and revisit intention ( $\bar{x}$ =3,55) dimensions, which are sub-dimensions of behavioral intention, is examined, it is seen that the average of both dimensions is also relatively high.

Correlation and regression analyze were used to determine the relationship/effect between memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of 482 ecotourists examined within the scope of the study. The results of the correlation analysis performed to determine the direction and severity of the relationship between the variables are shown in Table 3 in detail.

**Table 3.** Correlation Matrix of the Relationship Between Memorable Tourism Experiences and Behavioral Intention of Ecotourists

Variables	Correlation Coefficient/ Significance/ Determination Coefficient	Word-of-Mouth Advertising	Revisit Intention	Behavioral Intention
Hedonism	r	0.399**	0.513**	<b>0.497**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.159	0.263	<b>0.247</b>
Novelty	r	0.372**	0.495**	<b>0.471**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.138	0.245	<b>0.221</b>
Local Culture	r	0.364**	0.496**	<b>0.466**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.132	0.246	<b>0.217</b>
Refreshment	r	0.339**	0.512**	<b>0.458**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.114	0.260	<b>0.209</b>
Meaningfulness	r	0.335**	0.472**	<b>0.437**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.112	0.222	<b>0.190</b>
Involvement	r	0.362**	0.518**	<b>0.475**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.131	0.268	<b>0.225</b>
Knowledge	r	0.343**	0.479**	<b>0.445**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.117	0.229	<b>0.198</b>
<b>Memorable Tourism Experience</b>	r	0.425**	0.588**	<b>0.549**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.180	0.345	<b>0.301</b>

\*\*\*: p<0.01

The level of the relationship between the variables can be interpreted as weak or low if the correlation coefficient (r) is between 0-0.29, moderate if it is between 0.30-0.64, strong or high if it is between 0.65-0.84, and, very strong or very high if it is between 0.85-1 (Ural and Kılıç, 2006). When the values in Table 3 are examined, it is seen that there were positive and moderate relations between the memorable tourism experiences and its' sub-dimensions and behavioral intention and its' sub-dimensions. In general, it is possible to state that there is a positive and moderate relationship between the memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists and their general behavioral intentions (r=0.549). In other words, 30.1% of the total variance

in the level of general behavioral intention of ecotourists is due to memorable tourism experiences and its sub-dimensions ( $r^2=0.301$ ).

The results of the correlation analysis performed to determine the direction and severity of the relationship between behavioral intention and its sub-dimensions and destination satisfaction are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Correlation Matrix of the Relationship Between Destination Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention of Ecotourists

Variable	Correlation Coefficient/ Significance/ Determination Coefficient	Word-of-Mouth Advertising	Revisit Intention	Behavioral Intention
<b>Destination Satisfaction</b>	r	0.368**	0.506**	<b>0.474**</b>
	p	0.000***	0.000***	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	0.135	0.256	<b>0.224</b>

\*\*\*: p<0.01

According to the values in Table 4, it has been determined that there was a positive and moderate relationship between ecotourists' destination satisfaction and word of mouth advertising ( $r=0.368$ ) and revisit intention ( $r=0.506$ ), which are behavioral intention sub-dimensions. It has been determined that there is a positive and moderate relationship between ecotourists' destination satisfaction and general behavioral intention ( $r=0.474$ ). More precisely, it is understood that 22.4% of the total variance in the level of general behavioral intention views of ecotourists is due to destination satisfaction ( $r^2=0.224$ ).

The results of the correlation analysis performed to determine the direction and severity of the relationship between memorable tourism experience and its' sub-dimensions and destination satisfaction are given in Table 5 in detail.

**Table 5.** Correlation Matrix of the Relationship Between Memorable Tourism Experiences and Destination Satisfaction of Ecotourists

Variables	Correlation Coefficient/ Significance/ Determination Coefficient	Destination Satisfaction
Hedonism	r	<b>0.597**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.356</b>
Novelty	r	<b>0.590**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.348</b>
Local Culture	r	<b>0.587**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.344</b>
Refreshment	r	<b>0.576**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.331</b>
Meaningfulness	r	<b>0.636**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.404</b>
Involvement	r	<b>0.716**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.512</b>
Knowledge	r	<b>0.842**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.708</b>
<b>Memorable Tourism Experience</b>	r	<b>0.759**</b>
	p	<b>0.000***</b>
	r <sup>2</sup>	<b>0.576</b>

\*\*\*: p<0.01

According to Table 5, it has been determined that there was a positive and moderate relationship between hedonism ( $r=0.597$ ), novelty( $r=0.590$ ), local culture ( $r=0.587$ ), refreshment ( $r=0.576$ ) and meaningfulness ( $r=0.636$ ) dimensions, which are the sub-dimensions of ecotourists' memorable tourism experiences, and destination satisfaction. There is a positive and high-level relationship between memorable tourism experiences in the dimension of involvement ( $r=0.716$ ) and knowledge ( $r=0.842$ ) and destination satisfaction. On the other hand, it has been determined that there was a positive and high-level relationship between the general memorable tourism experience of ecotourists and their destination satisfaction ( $r=0.759$ ). Therefore, it is possible to state that 57.6% of the total variance in the



level of destination satisfaction of ecotourists is due to memorable tourism experiences ( $r^2=0.576$ ).

Within the scope of the study, regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between behavioral intention included in the analysis as a dependent variable and memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfaction included in the analysis as independent variables, with a mathematical model. Multiple regression analysis was used to explain the relationship between ecotourists' memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions with a mathematical model, and the analysis results are presented in Table 6 in detail.

**Table 6.** Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of the Relationship/Effect Between Ecotourists' Memorable Tourism Experiences, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioral Intentions

Independent Variables	Standard Beta Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Standard Error S( $b_j$ )	t	Significance (p)	Determination Coefficient ( $R^2$ )	ANOVA
Fixed	<b>0.694</b>	<b>0.202</b>	<b>3.430</b>	<b>0.001</b>		
Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)	<b>0.549</b>	<b>0.081</b>	<b>7.659</b>	<b>0.000***</b>	<b>0.306</b>	<b>F=107.085</b> <b>p=0.000***</b>
Destination Satisfaction (DES)	<b>0.474</b>	<b>0.066</b>	<b>2.315</b>	<b>0.021</b>		

\*\*\*:  $p < 0.01$

According to the values in Table 6, the multiple linear regression model for the relationship/effect between the dependent variable (behavioral intention) and the independent variables (memorable tourism experience and destination satisfaction) can be mathematically represented as follows;

$$\text{Behavioral Intention} = 0.694 + 0.549 \times \text{MTE} + 0.474 \times \text{DES}$$

The multiple regression model to determine the effect of ecotourists' memorable tourism experience and destination satisfaction on their behavioral intentions was found to be significant at the 0.01 significance level ( $F=107.085$ ;  $p=0.000 < 0.01$ ). When the determination

coefficient ( $R^2$ ) in the model was examined, it was determined that 30.6% ( $R^2=0.306$ ) of the changes in the behavioral intention were caused by the memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfaction. When evaluated in general, it is possible to state that, according to the results of the correlation and regression analysis performed to determine the relationship/effect between the variables, results that support the main hypotheses developed in accordance with the aim and subject of the study have been reached (“*H1: There is a significant relationship between the memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of ecotourists visiting Giresun*”; “*H2: The memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfactions of ecotourists during their visit to Giresun have a significant effect on their behavioral intentions*”).

Anova and t-test were used to determine whether participants' memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions differ significantly in terms of demographic characteristics. According to the results of the t test, while the memorable tourism experiences and behavioral intentions of ecotourists did not show a significant difference at the 0.05 significance level in terms of the gender variable, there was a significant difference ( $t=-2.109$ ;  $F=1.002$ ;  $p=0.035<0.05$ ) in terms of the gender variable for destination satisfaction. When the source of the difference is examined, the destination satisfaction of male visitors ( $\bar{x}=3.90$ ) was found to be relatively higher than the destination satisfaction of female visitors ( $\bar{x}=3.70$ ). When the participants' views on destination satisfaction ( $F=1.218$ ;  $p=0.296>0.05$ ) and behavioral intentions ( $F=1,246$ ;  $p=0.282>0.05$ ) were examined, it was concluded that there was no significant difference in terms of age group averages. However, when the memorable tourism experiences of the participants were compared in terms of the averages of age groups, it was determined that there were statistically significant differences between the groups ( $F=2.282$ ;  $p=0.035<0.05$ ). According to the results of the multiple comparison test performed to determine from which groups the said differences originate, the memorable tourism experiences of the participants aged 54 and over ( $\bar{x}=4.09$ ) were found to be higher than the other age groups. Another variable in which the participants' demographic characteristics show significant differences in memorable tourism experience ( $F=3.087$ ;  $p=0.03<0.05$ ), destination satisfaction ( $F=2.421$ ;  $p=0.019<0.05$ ) and behavioral intentions ( $F=3.141$ ;  $p=0.03<0.05$ ) is the average monthly income. As a result of the multiple comparison test conducted to determine which groups the difference originated from, it was

determined that the differences in both memorable tourism experiences ( $\bar{x}=4.03$ ), destination satisfaction ( $\bar{x}=4.13$ ) and behavioral intentions ( $\bar{x}=4.12$ ) in terms of average monthly income were in favor of between 5501-7000 TL income earners. Additionally, memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions do not differ in terms of the participants' marital status, the number of children they have and their educational status. In the following part of the study, the results obtained from the study and the recommendations developed for the interested parties are included.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

The demands and expectations of ecotourists in ecotourism activities may vary according to some individual characteristics. Establishments providing services in the realization of ecotourism activities should strive to develop policies that will maximize the level of satisfaction provided by the services provided, their commitment to destinations and behavioral intentions. Therefore, the experiences and activities after ecotourism activities help tourists create memories about the destination and guide the decision-making process about which ecotourism destinations they will go to.

The results of the analysis performed in line with the main problem of the study show that the research hypotheses are supported. More specifically, it has been found that there were generally significant relationships between participants' memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. In the literature, the similarities between the results of similar studies (such as Kim et al., 2010; Gahory et al., 2018; Ünal and Bayar, 2020; Öktem and Akdu 2022; Çavuşoğlu et al., 2023) and the results of this study also show parallelism.

For example, Kim et al (2010) conducted a study on the structural equation modeling approach to determine the effect of memorable tourism experiences on behavioral intentions. In this study, they concluded that the dimensions of hedonism, involvement and local culture, which are the dimensions of memorable tourism experiences, have significant effects on intention to revisit and recommend.

In the literature, there are a limited number of studies in which the memorable tourism experience, destination satisfaction and behavioral intention are evaluated together on

ecotourists. The fact that such a study has not been found especially in Türkiye can be considered as an original study. One of the aforementioned studies found in the international literature is the study by Gohary et al. (2018) on the examination of memorable tourism experience, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of ecotourists in Iran Deylaman and Rig-e-Jen regions. In this study by Gohary et al. (2018), it was concluded that the memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists positively affect their destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In addition, it was concluded that hedonism, involvement, knowledge, meaningfulness, novelty, and refreshment dimensions, which are among the dimensions of memorable tourism experience, are the predictors of destination satisfaction.

Ünal and Bayar (2020), who conducted research to determine the effects of memorable experiences related to destinations on tourists' re-travel intentions, found that the increase in the number of alternative information sources and the provision of transportation/access conveniences brought increased competition with them. At this point, they stated that the destinations that want to gain an advantage will have a positive effect on the decision-making processes of the tourists in carrying out their activities in order to offer memorable experiences.

As a result of the study conducted by Öktem and Akdu (2022), in order to determine the effect of memorable tourism experience on customer satisfaction and intention to revisit, it was determined that memorable tourism experiences have positive effects on customers' satisfaction and revisit intention.

Çavuşoğlu et al. (2023) stated that by developing cost-effective methods for tourists with lower income levels, the rate of repeat visits of tourists may increase and accordingly their intention to recommend may be positively affected.

In line with the analyzes performed within the scope of the study and the literature review, some suggestions have been developed for the relevant parties and presented below ;

- The item “*the local people were friendly and warm to me*”, which has the highest arithmetic mean among the answers given by the participants to the items in the scale, draws attention. In this context, in touristic destinations, not only touristic products, but also the interest, approach and behavior of local people to tourists have an important place. Therefore, trainings

and seminars can be organized to raise awareness and to achieve a positive harmony in the relations of local people with tourists, for both the sustainability and profitability of tourism and destinations.

- It is noteworthy that the “*I enjoyed participating in other activities during my trip*” item in the hedonism dimension, and the “*I ‘talk up’ Giresun to my friends*” item in the word-of-mouth advertising dimension, have the lowest arithmetic mean. Therefore, it can be thought that the activities offered in the destinations need different activities for ecotourists or that the activities are not good enough. It can be suggested that some initiatives (for example, investments for recreational activities) can be carried out in order to positively affect and increase the memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists in the ecotourism activities that have taken place or will be carried out in the destinations that have important touristic values in Giresun.

- Facilities, constructions, and investments to be made in areas suitable for ecotourism should be planned in accordance with the sustainability of nature. If people protect nature, nature will protect people. For this reason, measures should be taken to prevent unplanned constructions and investments should be made within certain plans and policies.

- The ecotourism destinations where this study was carried out and the establishments there continue their activities both in winter and summer. However, during the collection of the study data, it was realized by the researcher that there were difficulties in reaching in winter. At this point, it may be beneficial to carry out infrastructure works and/or to provide alternative transportation opportunities so that ecotourists can easily reach these destinations in the winter season, too.

- Individuals (such as influencers, social media, and travel blog writers) who are famous on the internet and are followed by many people, especially on social media, can be invited to these destinations and lead them to promote these destinations in writing and visually.

- In regions where tourism activities take place, tourists' purchasing local products can contribute to regional development. For this reason, market areas suitable for ecotourism destinations can be built in Giresun, which will bring together ecotourists and local people who want to sell their products.

- Environmental pollution is one of the important issues that can negatively affect the success and effectiveness of destinations. However, considering the possibility of throwing garbage on the ground in destinations due to the increasing number of visitors, visitors should be warned regularly, awareness-raising activities should be carried out, and sufficient number of garbage containers or garbage bins should be placed as it will increase the risk of environmental pollution.

This study was conducted to determine the memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists from their visits, their satisfaction levels from destinations and their behavioral intentions, and to reveal the relationship/effect between these variables. The fact that it is the first study to evaluate these variables together and applied to ecotourists in Giresun can be considered as another indicator that this study is original. In this respect, in line with the results and suggestions obtained from the study, it is thought that it will contribute to the planning and policy studies to be made for the improvement of the aforementioned destinations. In addition, it can be thought that the study will shed light on future academic studies on the subject and contribute to the literature in this sense. Considering that the study was carried out only in Giresun and the sample group was limited to ecotourists, future studies can be carried out on different sampling criteria in different destinations and/or different regions.

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- Etik Kurul İzin Belgesi:** Giresun Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Fen ve Mühendislik Bilimleri Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu'nun 02.11.2022 tarih ve 28/03 sayılı kararı doğrultusunda, çalışma etik açıdan uygun bulunarak etik kurul onayı alınmıştır.
- Katkı Oranı Beyanı:** Yazarlar makaleye eşit oranda katkı sağlamış olduklarını beyan eder.
- Çıkar Çatışması Beyanı:** Yazarlar arasında herhangi bir çıkar çatışması bulunmamaktadır.

## **Extensive Summary**

### **The Relationship Between Memorable Tourism Experience, Destination Satisfaction and Behavioural Intention: A Study on Ecotourists in Giresun/Türkiye**

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It can be stated that factors such as scarcity of resources in nature, global warming and destruction of nature play an active role in making many people more conscious and sensitive to the environment. Especially in recent years, due to reasons such as natural disasters (February 6, 2023 Kahramanmaraş Centered Earthquake, other earthquakes and other natural events), epidemics (such as the COVID-19 virus that started in November 2019 and other epidemics), climatic events, and the longing to return to nature, the reverse process of migration from rural to urban began to be experienced, and people tended to migrate from urban to rural areas or acquire secondary housing. Ecotourism, which is an alternative tourism type, has become an area preferred by potential ecotourists who have almost the same thoughts or consciousness. When ecotourism is examined in general terms, it can be expressed as a tourism element that supports nature (making it sustainable by preserving nature, providing economic and social benefits for the regions where it operates and local communities, supporting cultural diversity by protecting ecosystems etc.). Therefore, the contribution of establishments operating in destinations is so important that it cannot be ignored in terms of carrying out ecotourism activities in the regions in a positive way.

When the ecotourism market is examined, ecotourism has become popular in the tourism industry for more than ten years and has become one of the fastest growing tourism types (Kasalak, 2015). With the effect of its geographical location, Türkiye has important

ecotourism destinations with a rich content in terms of cultural values and natural resources (Yalçınkaya, 2021). The Eastern Black Sea Region is one of the regions that are suitable for ecotourism with its geographical conditions, climate and natural resources. The Eastern Black Sea Region has quite a variety of opportunities to do many different tourism activities such as trekking, cave tourism, river tourism, paragliding and mountaineering (Kaya and Yıldırım, 2020). At this point, ecotourism is one of the types of tourism that includes various tourism activities and can spread tourism to different destinations within the country at any time of the year. Since it is appropriate to implement alternative tourism types including different tourism activities in Giresun (one of the cities of the Eastern Black Sea Region), ecotourism activities are also carried out in this region (Turpcu and Çelikkanat Pahlı, 2019).

The aim of this study is to determine the relationship between the memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioural intentions that ecotourists have gained from their visits within the scope of ecotourism. The study was designed in accordance with the quantitative research design. The data used in the study were collected by applying a survey technique on eco-tourists visiting the Kümbet Plateau, Mavi Göl, Göksu Travertines and Kuzalan Waterfall destinations in Giresun/Türkiye, in line with the aim of the study. In this context, the population of the research consists of eco-tourists visiting these destinations, while the sample group consists of 482 participants out of 500 reached between November, 2022 and February, 2023. In the analysis of the collected data, reliability, t-test, variance (ANOVA), correlation and regression analyses were used. In this context, the main hypotheses of the study were developed as;

*“H1: There is a significant relationship between the memorable tourism experiences, destination satisfaction and behavioral intentions of ecotourists visiting Giresun.”*

*“H2: The memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfactions of ecotourists during their visit to Giresun have a significant effect on their behavioral intentions.”*

As a result of the correlation analysis performed to determine the direction and severity of the relationship between the variables, it was determined that there was a positive and moderate relationship between the general memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists and their general behavioural intentions. It has been observed that there was a positive and high-level relationship between general memorable tourism experiences and general destination

satisfaction. Another result of the correlation analysis is that there was a positive and moderate relationship between ecotourists' destination satisfaction and their general behavioural intentions. The multiple regression model to determine the effect of ecotourists' memorable tourism experience and destination satisfaction on their behavioral intentions was found to be significant at the 0.01 significance level ( $F=107.085$ ;  $p=0.000<0.01$ ). When the determination coefficient ( $R^2$ ) in the model was examined, it was determined that 30.6% ( $R^2=0.306$ ) of the changes in the behavioral intention were caused by the memorable tourism experiences and destination satisfaction. When evaluated in general, it is possible to state that, according to the results of the correlation and regression analysis performed to determine the relationship/effect between the variables, results that support the main hypotheses developed in accordance with the aim and subject of the study have been reached.

This study was conducted to determine the memorable tourism experiences of ecotourists from their visits, their satisfaction levels from destinations and their behavioral intentions, and to reveal the relationship/effect between these variables. The fact that it is the first study to evaluate these variables together and applied to ecotourists in Giresun can be considered as another indicator that this study is original. In this respect, in line with the results and suggestions obtained from the study, it is thought that it will contribute to the planning and policy studies to be made for the improvement of the aforementioned destinations. In addition, it can be thought that the study will shed light on future academic studies on the subject and contribute to the literature in this sense. Considering that the study was carried out only in Giresun and the sample group was limited to ecotourists, future studies can be carried out on different sampling criteria in different destinations and/or different regions.