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The effect of motivations for participation in intangible cultural heritage activities on destination attachment, satisfaction and revisit intention

Somut olmayan kültürel miras faaliyetlerine katılım motivasyonlarının destinasyon bağlılığı, memnuniyet ve tekrar ziyaret niyetine etkisi

Mustafa Çağatay Kızıldaş^{1*}

^{1*}Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Divriği Nuri Demirağ Vocational School, Department of Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services, caगतaykzts@cumhuriyet.edu.tr, 0000-0003-2194-6041

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to determine the effect of motivations to participate in the Alevi-Bektashi ritual semah, which is both a religious ceremony and an element of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), on destination attachment, satisfaction, and revisit intention. A survey was administered to 395 participants who had previously attended Semah ceremonies in Türkiye, and the results were analyzed using structural equation modelling. The results show that participants' spiritual, religious and identity motivations have a statistically significant effect on destination attachment, overall satisfaction and revisit intention. Additionally, it was revealed that destinations where ICH elements are exhibited are not only physical places, but that individuals can develop spiritual, emotional and identity attachments to these destinations. Unique experiences that appeal to tourists' personal interests and emotional needs have a significant impact on revisit intention. The use of ICH in tourism destination marketing makes a significant contribution to both the economic development of local communities and the transfer of cultural heritage to future generations.

ÖZET

Çalışmanın amacı hem dini bir tören hem de somut olmayan kültürel miras (SOKÜM) unsuru olan Alevi-Bektaşî ritüeli semahına katılım motivasyonlarının destinasyon bağlılığı, memnuniyet ve tekrar ziyaret niyeti üzerindeki etkisini belirlemektir. Türkiye'de daha önce semah törenlerine katılmış 395 katılımcıya uygulanan çalışma sonuçları yapısal eşitlik modellemesi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Sonuçlar, katılımcıların manevi, dini ve kimlik motivasyonlarının destinasyon bağlılığı, genel memnuniyet ve tekrar ziyaret niyeti üzerinde istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkiye sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuçlar, SOKÜM unsurlarının sergilendiği destinasyonların yalnızca fiziksel bir yer olmadığını, aynı zamanda bireylerin bu destinasyona manevi, duygusal ve kimliksel bağlılıklar geliştirebileceğini göstermektedir. Turistlerin kişisel ilgi ve duygusal ihtiyaçlarına hitap eden benzersiz deneyimler tekrar ziyaret niyeti üzerinde önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. SOKÜM'ün turizm destinasyon pazarlamasında kullanımı hem yerel toplulukların ekonomik kalkınmasına hem de kültürel mirasın gelecek nesillere aktarılmasına önemli katkı sağlamaktadır.

1. Introduction

Unlike tangible heritage, where cultural identities are expressed through physical objects, intangible cultural heritage (ICH), which encompasses all non-material elements of culture, represents the diversity of humanity's living heritage and serves as the most significant vehicle for cultural diversity (Lenzerini, 2011). The transition to the concept of intangible heritage is seen as an important phase, particularly through the recognition of folklore aspects as defined by

UNESCO (Bortolotto, 2007). ICH refers to practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and associated tools, objects, artifacts, and cultural spaces that individuals, communities, and groups consider part of their cultural heritage (Yoshida, 2004). The continuous re-creation of these aspects in response to historical and social changes, their connection to the cultural identities of the respective communities and groups, their authenticity, and their inseparable relationship with human rights further define ICH (Lenzerini, 2011). In this context, intangible cultural practices

such as language, literature, music, dance, various games, mythological elements and beliefs, handicrafts, architecture, other verbal arts, oral traditions, customs, social practices, rituals and religious events, as well as knowledge and practices related to nature and the universe, constitute the list of elements included in cultural heritage (Lenzerini, 2011; Yoshida, 2004).

Unlike tangible cultural heritage, ICH has a dynamic nature by definition (Lenzerini, 2011). Due to the rapid advancement of civilization in the modern era, migration from ancestral homelands and the internationalization of countries, such cultural elements are at risk of being forgotten (Skublewska-Paszowska et al., 2022). The emergence of challenges such as globalization and societal complexities may lead to the weakening of the connection between social identity and local space (González, 2008). The preservation and continuation of cultural identities by societies can ensure cultural sustainability and prevent cultural extinction (Lenzerini, 2011). ICH is highly significant in promoting cultural diversity, which is a fundamental requirement for sustainable development. The protection of ICH can substantially contribute to social and economic sustainability (Hsu et al., 2022). Since ICH constitutes a crucial part of the local cultural context, it provides a community with unique characteristics that distinguish it from all others, thereby granting the local community a competitive advantage (George, 2010). Cultural values are highly appealing elements for tourists and significantly influence their intention to visit a destination (Rybina & Lee, 2021). Particularly, increasing young generations' participation in ICH tourism can contribute to its preservation (Jiang et al., 2024).

In Türkiye, 28 elements are listed on UNESCO's ICH list. One of these, the "Alevi-Bektashi Ritual Semah" ceremonies, is embraced and attended by individuals identifying as "Alevi-Bektashi." According to Erol (2010), Alevism, a belief system adopted by a minority community in Türkiye, is 'a heterodox sect of Islam and a form of syncretic religious belief based on Turkish traditions'. Although ritual spaces vary significantly among different Alevi communities, Semah constitutes an integral and inseparable part of the cem rituals in Alevism and is generally performed in places of worship known as Cemevis. Because Cemevis are not present in every city, people must travel to different destinations to participate in these ceremonies. A review of the literature indicates that visiting sacred sites has become a growing trend in tourism (Cifci, 2022; Rybina & Lee, 2021; Woodward, 2004). Tourist activities in religious sites constitute a significant source of income for many religious institutions and organizations, providing essential funding for the maintenance and restoration of these sites. Moreover, such activities create employment opportunities and support local businesses, generating significant prospects for economic development in the destination (Woodward, 2004). It can be stated that all Alevi-Bektashi faith destinations in Türkiye preserve their historical and cultural structures in accordance with the Sufi Islamic tradition (Cifci, 2022). The Alevi-Bektashi Semah ritual, inscribed on UNESCO's ICH list in 2010, offers participants profound and multi-dimensional experiences. This study aims to extend beyond the general motivational

analyses commonly found in the ICH tourism literature. In this context, the study aims to investigate, within the framework of a holistic structural model, the effects of experiential factors such as meaningfulness, wellness and healing, spiritual motivation, and authentic experience, as well as psychological constructs like self-congruity (ideal and actual) and place identity, on destination attachment and overall satisfaction. Ultimately, this study seeks to explain the complex underlying mechanisms of loyalty formation towards ICH sites by revealing how these variables shape revisit intention.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Meaningfulness

In tourism, meaningfulness is a psychological phenomenon that involves developing a connection with a destination and engaging with its emotional components (Rejikumar et al., 2021). Meaningfulness encompasses dimensions such as ethno-cultural, ecological, eudaimonic, spiritual, economic, destination brand equity, and ethical governance. The first three dimensions hold significant importance for individuals as they contribute to the formation of meaningful relationships and interactions with oneself, others, and the environment surroundings (Wattanacharoensil et al., 2024). Meaningfulness in travel refers to experiences in which individuals can explore their sense of direction in life, gain self-awareness, and sustain relationships with others (Tiware et al., 2024). Activities such as social interactions, proximity to nature, and spiritual discoveries enhance an individual's physical and mental well-being, alleviating both physical and psychological stress. This, in turn, makes an activity more meaningful (Rejikumar et al., 2021). Certain destinations offer numerous spiritual experiences that nourish individuals' inner worlds and provide an overall sense of meaningfulness (Jose et al., 2024). A satisfying tourism experience can be understood not only through pleasure but also by how tourists personally find meaning in their holiday activities (Aydın & Ömüriş, 2020). Thus, it is believed that higher levels of experience engagement will provide consumers with a more memorable and meaningful experience (Zatori et al., 2018). Such positive feelings make visits more meaningful for tourists who are actively seeking to find conscious meaning in their activities to achieve a sense of accomplishment (Rejikumar et al., 2021). When tourists develop meaningful relationships with ICH, their sense of intrinsic value increases (Gao et al., 2022), focusing tourists' views on their future behaviour in relation to that destination (Roszczyńska-Kurasinska et al., 2021). This crucial psychological factor affecting tourists plays an important role in influencing their attachment to the destination (Rodrigues & Loureiro, 2022). However, as Liu et al. (2025) have noted, research on intangible cultural heritage tourism has rarely examined the meaningfulness perceived by tourists. Based on this, the hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H₁: *Meaningfulness significantly affects destination attachment.*

2.2. Wellness and Healing

Shifts from mass tourism typically result in special interest tourism activities that cater to the increasingly demanding

tourists, their motivations, and individual program preferences (Jelinčić & Matečić, 2021). For this reason, intangible elements of tourism destinations are gaining significant importance. The ICH elements of a country or region are increasingly surpassing the material aspects that are vital for the tourism industry and determining its competitive strength (Sotiriadis, 2017). As people search for their roots, deepen their personal lives and identities, and strive for spiritual growth, it is believed that their personal health will improve and their quality of life will increase. Similarly, for heritage destinations, community pride, solidarity, and empowerment can emerge as indicators of improved quality of life as a result of tourism (Timothy, 2024). Especially in the post-pandemic world, with increasing competition, there is a rising trend toward travel that promotes healing, inner strength, and transformation. Considering the rich cultural and natural resources, ICH destinations can be seen as having the potential to offer spiritual tourism (Xia et al., 2024). If the goal is to be spiritually well, travel can be seen as an ideal environment where spirituality can be sought and sometimes found. Motivations for spiritual tourism largely draw on religious connections with, uncovering specific driving forces that highlight religious observation, ritualized practices, reaffirmation of identity, and cultural performance (Cheer et al., 2017). Perspectives on spirituality in tourism often emphasize its therapeutic nature, suggesting that tourism could be a meaningful option for improving health, relaxing the body, nourishing the soul, and enhancing overall well-being (Huang et al., 2020). ICH participants generally develop positive emotions, finding peace and happiness in a spiritual sense. A review of the literature indicates a relationship between well-being, satisfaction, and destination attachment in travel for the purpose of healing (Chen et al., 2016). Although the literature demonstrates the healing effects of ICH, its wellness and healing dimensions have predominantly been addressed within the context of health tourism, leaving a notable gap in general ICH research. For this reason, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{2a}: There is a significant relationship between wellness and healing and destination attachment.

H_{2b}: There is a significant relationship between wellness and healing and overall satisfaction.

2.3. Spiritual and Religious Motivation

The spiritual quest involves the process of discovering the sacred, sustaining the relationship with what is perceived as sacred, and, when necessary, transforming that relationship (Pargament, 2013). People's perceptions of spirituality can be rooted in specific cultural, religious, and social contexts. Religious and cultural groups develop different understandings of spirituality with both overlapping and opposing characteristics (Rich & Cinamon, 2007). People visit sacred places to observe religious rituals and engage in spiritual experiences. Visiting these sites is closely linked to spirituality and faith (Huang et al., 2020). Faith tourism plays a significant role in attracting tourists to sacred spaces for the performance of rituals (Almuhri & Alsawafi, 2017). In this sense, the number of temples, sites, and geographical locations considered sacred by various belief traditions worldwide is

vast. In general, religious sites offer visitors a wide range of experiences, including religious services, performances, ritualized practices, reaffirmation of identity, and musical recitals (Cheer et al., 2017). These experiences can trigger emotions such as satisfaction and attachment to the destination for participants with spiritual and religious motivations (Ashton, 2018; Liro, 2024). Although spiritual and religious motivations are important precursors to destination attachment and satisfaction, they have generally been studied in the context of religious tourism in literature. Given this gap in the literature, it is considered that they have not been sufficiently researched in the context of ICH and that important contributions will be made to the literature in this regard. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{3a}: Spiritual and religious motivation significantly affects destination attachment.

H_{3b}: Spiritual and religious motivation significantly affects overall satisfaction.

2.4. Authentic Experience

Authenticity, a concept that affects almost all aspects of daily life, from consumer products to tourism, art preferences, and interpersonal interactions, can be defined as originality in its literal sense (Newman & Smith, 2016). The concept of authenticity should be constructed around values such as ethics, nature, honesty, simplicity, beauty, rootedness, and humanity. Authenticity should be a sustainable, ethical, pure, unspoiled, unpretentious, and inimitable natural phenomenon (Yeoman et al., 2007). Experiences related to the authentic can refer to authentic objects, places, people, cultures, and the feelings of a person that their experiences are real, genuine, and meaningful, and that they are acting authentically (Moore et al., 2021). Tourists demand authentic, experience-driven opportunities that involve more meaningful interactions with locals (Paulauskaite et al., 2017). It is therefore imperative that visitors are offered high-quality, authentic experiences in order to increase satisfaction (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018). Furthermore, immersive experiences offered in destinations have been shown to significantly increase perceived authenticity (Jiang et al., 2024).

Authenticity, which is also regarded as the representation of local culture, is a pivotal component for tourists who anticipate experiencing other cultures (Nguyen & Cheung, 2016). When tourists are able to have authentic ICH experiences, they in turn make a significant economic contribution to the destination. Moreover, engagement in authentic cultural practices has been demonstrated to result in the social empowerment of communities, characterised by an enhancement in social cohesion and the presence of shared emotions (Khanom et al., 2019). Consequently, it is imperative to incorporate authentic ICH elements in destinations (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018). A substantial body of research has demonstrated that the satisfaction of tourists is elevated to a considerable degree when they encounter authentic concepts while visiting a destination (Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018; Park et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2018; Zhao et al., 2024). However, there is a paucity of studies on authentic experience in the context of ICH tourism (Su et al., 2020). Given the significance of authenticity in the

context of ICH tourism, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄: There is a significant relationship between authentic experiences and overall satisfaction levels.

2.5. Ideal Self Congruity and Actual Self Congruity

Self-image congruence models are based on the cognitive alignment between the value-expressive attributes of a product and the consumer's self-image in relation to these attributes (Claiborne & Sirgy, 2015). Actual self-congruity refers to how consumers perceive themselves, while ideal self-congruity refers to how consumers wish to see themselves (Cifci, 2022). According to the self-congruity theory, tourists tend to associate various personality traits and images with destinations and more inclined to choose those that align with their personality traits and values (Kumar, 2016; Šegota et al., 2021). According to Šegota et al. (2021), an individual who perceives a meaningful alignment between the destination and their personal identity will be more satisfied with their visit and feel more connected to the destination. Although self-congruity has been researched in various contexts such as cruise travel (Holland, 2022), destination preference (Cifci et al., 2024; Gazley & Watling, 2015; Kim & Thapa, 2018) and destination image (Liang et al., 2024; Pratt & Sparks, 2014) have been researched in various fields, they have not been sufficiently researched in the context of religious ritual such as Semah. Individuals who identify as cultural tourists are more likely to be attracted to destinations where they can engage with ICH elements. A review of the literature indicates that the greater the perceived similarity between a destination's personality and the tourist's self-concept, the stronger the destination attachment and overall satisfaction (Cifci, 2022; Kumar, 2016; Pradhan et al., 2023; Šegota et al., 2021). Based on these insights, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H_{5a}: There is a significant relationship between ideal self-congruity and destination attachment.

H_{5b}: There is a significant relationship between ideal self-congruity and overall satisfaction.

H_{5c}: There is a significant relationship between actual self-congruity and destination attachment.

H_{5d}: There is a significant relationship between actual self-congruity and overall satisfaction.

2.6. Place Identity

Place identity is defined as a mixture of memories, concepts, interpretations, ideas, and related emotions about specific physical environments (Proshansky et al., 1983). Due to the effects of globalization, tourism faces several challenges such as increasing social complexity and the recent inadequacy of traditional boundaries. In such an environment, the connection between identity and local space may diminish (González, 2008). Tourism is inherently place-based and involves the production of place identity on various scales. Thus, ICH provides a competitive advantage and uniqueness that separates one community from all others (George, 2010). Place identity is theorized to be created and maintained by the community through intangible and tangible cultural heritage, such as symbols, icons, and rituals that imbue a place with

meaning (Kermani et al., 2016). The provision of a cultural spirit to destinations (Qiu, 2023) has the capacity to imbue travelled places with a distinctive character and evoke particular sentiments. In this context, it is hypothesized that ICH tourism has the potential to contribute to the development of a distinct identity for local places. It is evident that ICH destinations have the capacity to evoke a diverse array of emotions and interpretations among individuals, contingent upon their unique characteristics. Furthermore, emotional and cognitive bonds can be formed with destinations (Tan et al., 2018). It is evident that a conventional destination may encompass numerous values as components of the ICH assets of a region. This is because the daily lives of the inhabitants of a place are vividly portrayed here, and these constitute the essence of the community. It has been demonstrated that a number of previously unrecognized cities and villages are beginning to emerge as new tourism destinations (Zandieh & Seifpour, 2020). Kermani et al. (2016) argue that ICH assets that establish connections between past and future generations have the capacity to engender a sense of identity within the community. In a similar vein, Chu & Shi (2025) posit that tourists can cultivate a sense of place identity by comprehending the cultural depth proffered by destinations. Research shows that the utilization of the concept of place identity within the domain of heritage studies is perceived to be a matter of significant importance (Geng et al., 2023). The extant literature suggests that place identity exerts a significant influence on the overall satisfaction of tourists (Isa et al., 2022; Ispas et al., 2021). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₆: There is a statistically significant relationship between place identity and overall satisfaction.

2.7. Destination Attachment

Tourists develop emotional connections with the destinations they visit. These emotional, cognitive, and functional connections with a destination can be defined as destination attachment (Halpenny, 2006). The feeling of being physically present in a particular place is often seen as an indicator of an emotional connection with that place (Kim et al., 2018). A tourist can develop an attachment to a destination due to smooth holiday activities and other exceptional features. In this context, local people, local culture, new social norms, and other related elements play a significant role in the formation of this connection and the development of destination attachment (Chubchuwong & Speece, 2016). Creating emotional attachment to destinations is one of the major destination branding challenges in today's tourism market (Veasna et al., 2013). Destination managers and marketers can use knowledge of destination attachment to help tourists enjoy the psychological process, formulate strategies, and then gain a competitive advantage for the destination (Cao et al., 2021). Encouraging the local community to actively participate in these activities and contribute to communication about the place is critical for promoting sustainable tourism and local development, creating a stable image of the destination, and ensuring its sustainability (Šegota et al., 2021). Upon reviewing the literature, when tourists are offered various opportunities and activities, they can develop an attachment to the destination, and this can significantly affect their overall

satisfaction with the destination (Veasna et al., 2013; Chubchuwong & Speece, 2016). Based on this, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₇: *There is a statistically significant relationship between destination attachment and overall satisfaction.*

2.8. Overall Satisfaction and Revisit Intention

Satisfaction can be defined as the pleasure or disappointment that arises when a person compares the perceived performance or outcome of a product with their expectations (Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020). Different tourist types have varying satisfaction motivations, such as culture, tourist attractions, accommodation, and food (Hui et al., 2007). These differing motivations trigger the evaluations that tourists may make about a destination. As in many other service sectors, the survival, development, and success of businesses in travel and tourism heavily depend on customer satisfaction (Chi & Qu, 2009).

In the increasingly competitive environment, particularly for destinations, creating loyalty has become a crucial issue (Torabi et al., 2022). In this context, the tourist's mood, interactions with service personnel, and its and the destination's unspoiled, natural, and authentic features (Cruz et al., 2019) are significant factors. These experiences can have a significant positive or negative impact on future behaviours, and positive experiences lead to higher repeat visitation rates (Cankül et al., 2024). As an extension of satisfaction, the intention to revisit is often studied in conjunction with is often studied in conjunction with it

(Cankül et al., 2024; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Torabi et al., 2022). Based on the literature, the following hypothesis has been proposed:

H₈: *There is a significant relationship between overall satisfaction and revisit intention.*

Based on the literature, the conceptual model of the relationships between the variables of the study is shown in Figure 1.

3. Methods

This study aims to identify the factors influencing participants' destination loyalty, overall satisfaction, and intention to revisit, in the context of Semah ceremonies, which are components of ICH. Based on previous studies, a scale was developed to assess destination attachment and overall satisfaction among ICH participants. The study obtained Ethical Approval from the "Scientific Ethics and Evaluation Committee of Sivas Cumhuriyet University University", with the letter numbered E-99711239-050.04-539920 and dated 11.03.2025. This scale evaluates the following dimensions: significance, health and healing, spiritual and religious motivation, authentic experience, congruence between ideal and actual self, and place identity. A questionnaire was employed as the data collection technique in this study. The first section of the questionnaire includes demographic information about the participants, while the remaining sections were constructed based on existing literature, as presented in Table 1. The relevant scale items were translated from English to Turkish by two professional translators, and

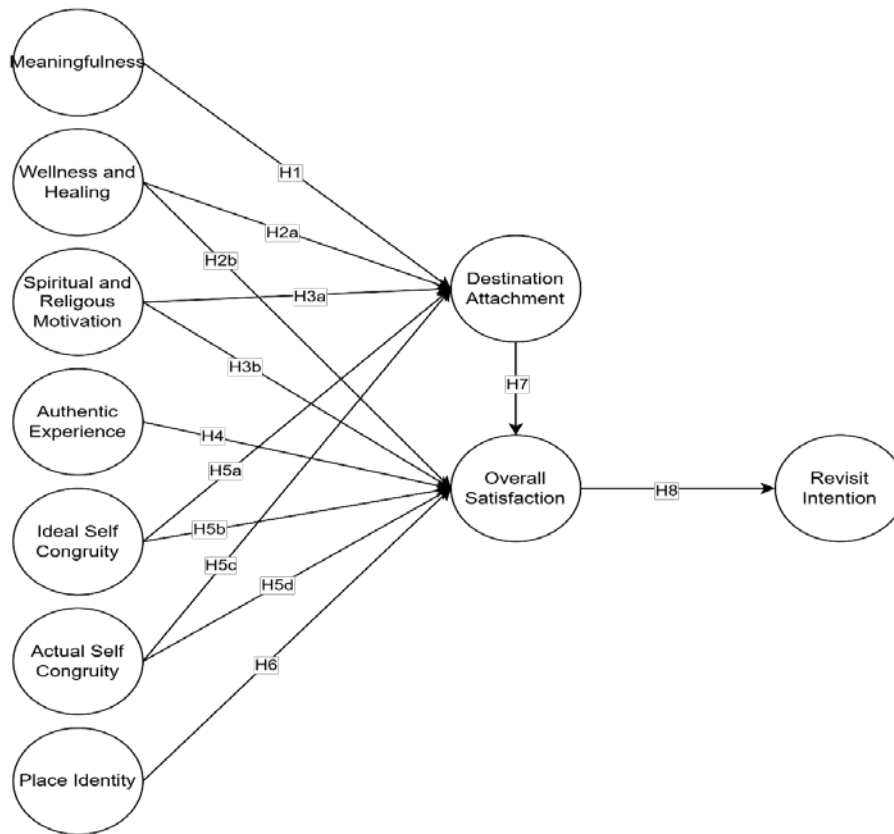


Figure 1. Research model
Source: Created by the author

Table 1. The scale developed in line with the literature

Scales	References
Meaningfulness	Zhang et al. (2018), Rodrigues & Loureiro (2022)
Wellness and Healing	Chen et al. (2016), Rybina & Lee (2021)
Spiritual and Religious Motivation	Ashton (2018), Rybina & Lee (2021)
Authentic Experience	Zhang et al. (2018), Park et al. (2019), Domínguez-Quintero et al. (2018), Dai et al. (2021), Zhao et al. (2024)
Ideal and Actual Self Congruity	Kumar (2016), Šegota et al. (2021), Cifci (2022), Pradhan et al. (2023)
Place Identity	Ríos & Moreno-Jiménez (2012), Ramkissoon & Mavondo (2015), Yao et al. (2020), Ispas et al. (2021)
Destination Attachment	Veasna et al. (2013), Chubchuwong & Speece (2016), Yao et al. (2020), Cifci (2022)
Overall Satisfaction and Revisit Intention	Cole & Scott (2004), Rajput & Gahfoor (2020), Torabi et al. (2022), Cifci (2022), Cankül et al. (2024)

Source: Created by author.

the clarity of the items was reviewed for comprehension. The data for this research were collected from 15 March to 30 April 2025. The study utilized non-probability sampling methods, specifically purposive sampling followed by snowball sampling. In the first stage, participants who had attended Semah ceremonies in Alevi community centers in Sivas and Divriği districts and who had experienced this ritual at least once outside their place of residence were contacted. In the second stage, these participants were asked to recommend other individuals who met the same criteria. This combined method was chosen due to the necessity of reaching a specific target population that is difficult to identify and access. This approach was considered the most feasible for the research problem. After data cleaning, a total of 395 questionnaires were deemed suitable for analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Characteristics

The gender distribution indicates that 59.24% are male (n=234) and 40.76% are female (n=161). Regarding the age range 24.30% are in the 35-44 age range (n=96), 22% are in the 45-54 age range (n=87), and 25.8% are in the 25-34 age range (n=102). When examining the frequency of participation in the Semah ceremonies, it is observed that 62.5% participate once or twice a year (n=247), 12.1% participate once every few years (n=48), and 16.2% participate 3-4 times a year (n=64).

4.2. Factor Analysis

The collected data was subjected to exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to determine the factor structures in the research.

As shown in Table 2, the CR values are above 0.90, and the AVE values are all above 0.50. It can be stated that the obtained findings ensure high convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Following the exploratory factor analysis, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to verify the identified ten-factor structure. Subsequently, in Table 3, the confirmatory factor analysis was evaluated based on the most commonly used standard fit indices in the literature.

Table 2. Findings regarding exploratory factor analysis

Factors	λ	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Meaningfulness		.947	.947	.96	.90
M1	.865				
M2	.853				
M3	.849				
Spiritual and Religious Motivations		.959	.959	.96	.83
SRM1	.856				
SRM2	.843				
SRM3	.841				
SRM4	.839				
SRM5	.822				
SRM6	.800				
Wellness and Healing		.961	0,962	0,97	0,89
WH1	.785				
WH2	.801				
WH3	.791				
WH4	.770				
Authentic Experience		.945	.947	.95	.81
AE1	.763				
AE2	.822				
AE3	.825				
AE4	.810				
AE5	.754				
Overall Satisfaction		.946	.950	.96	.90
OS1	.735				
OS2	.783				
OS3	.823				
Destination Attachment		.932	.932	.95	.83
DA1	.745				
DA2	.744				
DA3	.723				
DA4	.742				
Place Identity		.948	.950	.96	.86
PI1	.783				
PI2	.768				
PI3	.802				
PI4	.814				
Ideal Self-Congruity		.924	.925	.95	.86
ISC1	.844				
ISC2	.836				
ISC3	.864				
Actual Self-Congruity		.904	.904	.94	.83
ACS1	.816				
ACS2	.814				
ACS3	.810				
Revisit Intention		.957	.958	.96	.88
RI1	.796				
RI2	.797				
RI3	.873				
RI4	.883				

Source: Created by author.

CFA results showed that the measurement model was acceptable. The ratio of chi-square value to degrees of freedom was less than 3 ($X^2= 1030.45$, $df= 657$). In addition, other fit indices were found to be satisfactory (RMSEA= 0.038, CFI=0.99, NFI=0.98, NNFI=0.99, IFI= 0.98, RFI=0.98, SRMR=0.035) (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003).

To assess potential multicollinearity issues in the proposed structural model, variance inflation factor (VIF) values were examined at the construct level. The results are presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, VIF values ranged from 1.486 to 2.209. All VIF values are well below the commonly accepted threshold of 3, indicating the absence of serious multicollinearity problems in both the measurement and structural models (Hair et al., 2019). Therefore, the constructs can be considered independent predictors without substantial bias due to collinearity.

Table 3. The fit values of the proposed model

Fitness Criteria	Fit Values	Proposed Model
χ^2/df	$0 \leq \chi^2/df \leq 5$	1.56
RMSEA	$0 \leq RMSEA \leq 0.10$.038
SRMR	$0 \leq SRMR \leq 0.10$.035
NFI	$0.90 \leq NFI \leq 1$.98
NNFI	$0.95 \leq NNFI \leq 1$.99
IFI	$0.90 \leq IFI \leq 1$.98
RFI	$0.90 \leq RFI \leq 1$.98
CFI	$0.95 \leq CFI \leq 1$.99

Source: Created by author.

4.3. Structural Equation Model and Hypotheses Testing

Figure 2 displays the findings of the SEM conducted to test the proposed model and hypotheses established within the research framework.

As shown in Figure 2, based on the SEM analysis conducted, the examination of the constructs used in the study reveals a statistically significant relationship between $M \rightarrow DA$ ($\beta=0.242$, $t=5.768$, $p<0.001$), thus supporting H_1 . This indicates that when visitors perceive ICH destinations as meaningful, they develop destination attachment. Subsequently, the relationships between $SM \rightarrow DA$ and $SM \rightarrow OS$ were examined ($\beta=0.122$, $t=2.364$, $p<0.05$; $\beta=0.118$, $t=2.814$, $p<0.05$), and both hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b} were supported. These findings suggest that when visitors experience spiritual and religious elements at ICH destinations, they tend to develop attachment to the destination and leave with satisfaction. Furthermore, the relationships $WH \rightarrow DA$ and $WH \rightarrow OS$ were found to be significant ($\beta=0.181$, $t=3.886$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=0.169$, $t=3.380$, $p<0.05$), supporting H_{3a} and H_{3b} . This implies that when visitors feel spiritually healed and perceive improvements in their well-being during their visit, they are more likely to develop destination attachment and report higher satisfaction.

The relationship $AE \rightarrow OS$ ($\beta=0.128$, $t=2.415$, $p<0.05$) also indicates that offering authentic products and experiences at ICH destinations enhances visitors' satisfaction levels. Accordingly, H_4 was supported. Regarding self-congruity variables variables, the paths $ISC \rightarrow DA$ and $ISC \rightarrow OS$ ($\beta=0.179$, $t=3.621$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=0.117$, $t=2.306$, $p<0.05$), and $ASC \rightarrow DA$ and $ASC \rightarrow OS$ ($\beta=0.276$, $t=6.939$, $p<0.001$; $\beta=0.105$, $t=2.110$, $p<0.05$) were found to be significant, thus supporting hypotheses H_{5a} , H_{5b} , H_{5c} , and H_{5d} . These results suggest that both actual and ideal self-concepts play a significant role in the selection of ICH destination types (e.g., the activities they participate in). Visitors are more likely to

develop attachment and experience higher satisfaction when their personality traits align with ICH activities. The effect of place identity on overall satisfaction was also found to be significant, as evidenced by the relationship $PI \rightarrow OS$ ($\beta=0.137$, $t=2.445$, $p<0.05$). This indicates that attributing a specific identity to ICH destinations and perceiving a congruence with that identity enhances visitor satisfaction, thereby supporting H_6 . The relationship between $DA \rightarrow OS$ ($\beta=0.175$, $t=2.764$, $p<0.05$) demonstrates that when ICH visitors develop destination attachment, their overall satisfaction levels increase, and thus H_7 is supported. Finally, the relationship $OS \rightarrow RI$ ($\beta=0.470$, $t=11.354$, $p<0.001$) was found to be statistically significant and strong, indicating that H_8 is supported. This finding suggests that visitor satisfaction with both the destination and the local community significantly increases their intention to revisit. In other words, when visitors leave the destination with a high level of satisfaction, they are more likely to become loyal tourists.

5. Conclusions and Discussion

ICH holds a unique value, and it is crucial to explore and appreciate this heritage. ICH tourism is widely recognized by the international community as an important tool for supporting cultural diversity and sustainable development (Jiang et al., 2024). The importance and economic potential of cultural heritage tourism have been recognised worldwide and is at the forefront of the development strategies of many cities aiming to enhance the tourist experience (Popescu et al., 2020).

ICH elements such as festivals and rituals have the potential to enhance social sustainability by providing opportunities to bridge gaps between different groups and fostering an environment conducive to living together (de Jong & Varley, 2018). With ICH, it is possible to brand a destination and provide significant economic returns to the region. In this context, it is evident that ICH experiences, such as participation in Semah ceremonies, serve to reinforce the spiritual and emotional bonds that individuals establish with the destination. ICH has been demonstrated to engender instant gratification, whilst concurrently metamorphosing the destination into a meaningful locale that tourists aspire to revisit. The findings suggest that ICH offers a destination experience not only on a physical level but also on an identity and emotional level. Indeed, experiences characterised by high emotional satisfaction and a sense of belonging have

Table 4. Variance inflation factor (VIF) values for the structural model

	ACS	AE	DA	ISC	M	OS	PI	RI	SM	WH
ACS		1.385			1.699					
AE					1.921					
DA					2.209					
ISC		1.377			1.486					
M		1.356								
OS							1.000			
PI					2.070					
RI										
SM		1.675			1.671					
WH		1.694			2.081					

ACS: Actual self-congruity, AE: Authentic experience, DA: Destination attachment, ISC: Ideal self-congruity, M: Meaningfulness, OS: Overall satisfaction, PI: Place identity, RI: Revisit intention, SM: Spiritual and religious motivation, WH: Wellness and healing

Source: Created by author.

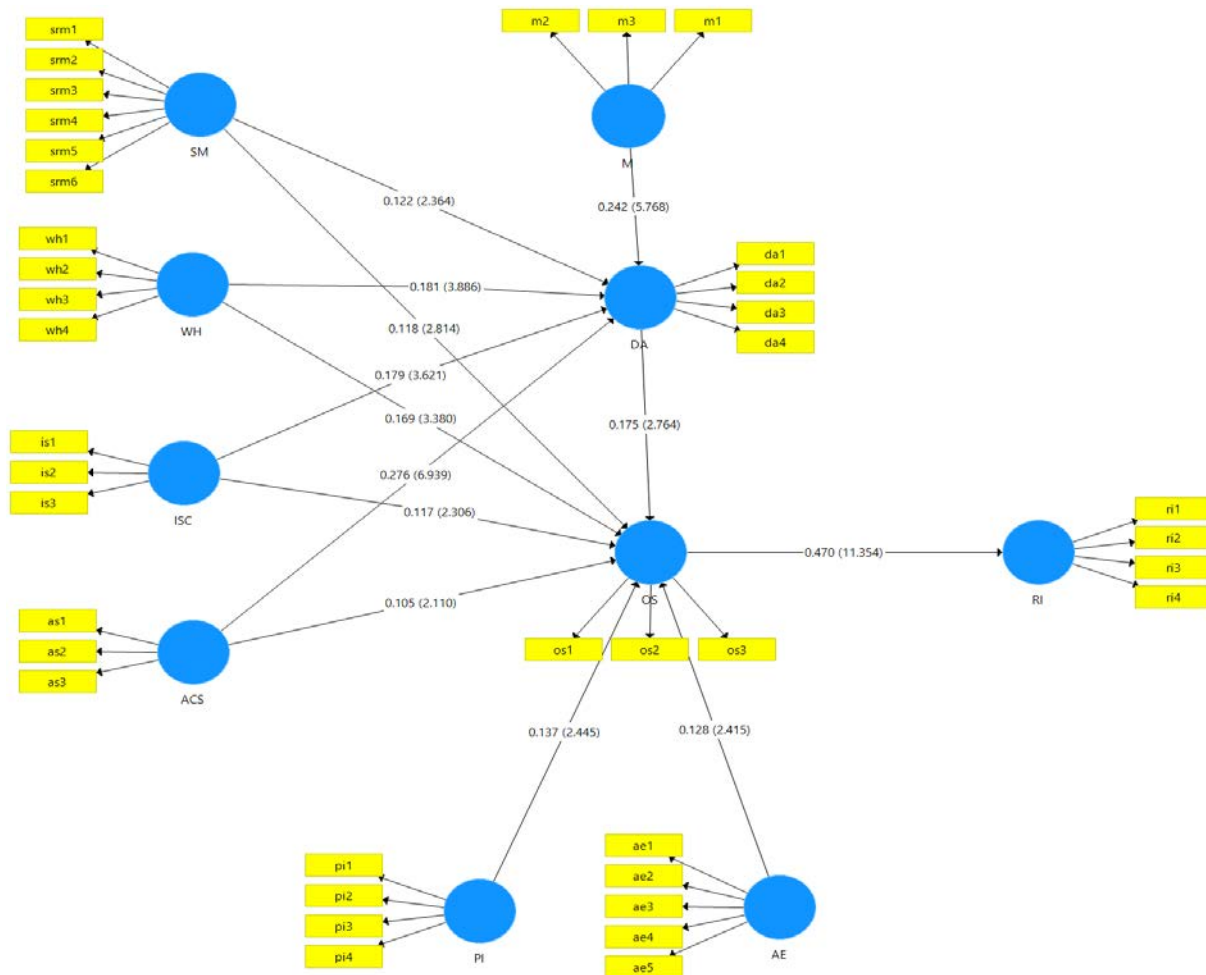


Figure 2. Structural equation model

ACS: Actual self-congruity, AE: Authentic experience, DA: Destination attachment, ISC: Ideal self-congruity, M: Meaningfulness, OS: Overall satisfaction, PI: Place identity, RI: Revisit intention, SM: Spiritual and religious motivation, WH: Wellness and healing

Source: Created by the author

been demonstrated to significantly increase the likelihood of tourists becoming loyal and returning visitors. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt a meticulous and ethical approach to the commercialization of ICH as a tourist product. The commercialization of cultural heritage has the potential to result in superficial or inauthentic representations, which may have a deleterious effect on the identity of local communities. In order to ensure the preservation of the authenticity of

heritage and the promotion of community-based development, it is essential to facilitate the active participation of local people in the process. Participatory approaches enable visitors to become integral components of the cultural experience, rather than merely passive observers. Furthermore, host communities are presented with the opportunity to reproduce and make visible their own values. Consequently, ICH tourism possesses a strategic potential not only as a means of

Table 5. Hypothesis testing results for the structural model

Hypotheses	β -value	t-value	p-value	Confidence intervals bias corrected (2.5% - 97.5%)	Result
H1: M→DA	.242	5.768	<.001	.162-.320	Supported
H2a: WH→DA	.181	3.886	<.001	.090-.267	Supported
H2b: WH→OS	.169	3.380	<.05	.068-.270	Supported
H3a: SM→DA	.122	2.364	<.05	.027-.220	Supported
H3b: SM→OS	.118	2.814	<.05	.035-.202	Supported
H4: AE→OS	.128	2.415	<.05	.027-.230	Supported
H5a: ISC→DA	.179	3.621	<.001	.085-.270	Supported
H5b: ISC→OS	.117	2.306	<.05	.017-.214	Supported
H5c: ASC→DA	.276	6.939	<.001	.198-.352	Supported
H5d: ASC→OS	.105	2.110	<.05	.080-.196	Supported
H6: PI→OS	.137	2.445	<.05	.025-.253	Supported
H7: DA→OS	.175	2.764	<.05	.056-.306	Supported
H8: OS→RI	.470	11.354	<.001	.385-.546	Supported

ACS: Actual self-congruity, AE: Authentic experience, DA: Destination attachment, ISC: Ideal self-congruity, M: Meaningfulness, OS: Overall satisfaction, PI: Place identity, RI: Revisit intention, SM: Spiritual and religious motivation, WH: Wellness and healing

Source: Created by author.

generating economic returns, but also as a carrier of cultural sustainability, identity construction and social cohesion. In this context, it can be posited that rituals such as Semah offer destinations that strengthen cultural dialogue at the point where they meet with the tourist experience and where common meaning is sought.

This study has revealed important findings regarding the factors influencing tourists' commitment to destinations, their overall satisfaction, and their intention to revisit. The results suggest that individuals' engagement with an ICH element is not solely driven by physical motivations; rather, it is shaped by profound psychological and emotional factors, such as the search for meaning, spiritual fulfillment, and identity congruence. In this context, our findings indicate that meaningfulness has a statistically significant effect on destination loyalty, aligning with previous research (Jose et al., 2024; Rodrigues & Loureiro, 2022). It is posited that when tourists establish meaningful connections with ICH destinations, they exhibit greater loyalty and stronger intentions to revisit.

Wellness and healing, along with spiritual and religious motivations, were also found to significantly influence destination loyalty and overall satisfaction, corroborating previous findings (Rybina & Lee, 2021). These results highlight the growing importance of mental and spiritual well-being in contemporary tourism. They suggest that ICH tourists may select such destinations to fulfill spiritual needs and achieve mental and emotional rejuvenation.

Consistent with earlier studies, it was concluded that tourists' self-concept significantly affects both destination loyalty (Cifci, 2022) and overall satisfaction (Cifci, 2022; Šegota et al., 2021). The impact of ideal and real self-congruence on loyalty and satisfaction reveals that tourists' connections with destinations are not superficial, but rather deeply rooted in their perceptions of personal identity. ICH tourists are more likely to be satisfied with their travel experiences and develop destination loyalty when visiting locations that align with their identities and when engaging in ICH activities that resonate with who they are.

Authentic experience was also found to significantly impact overall satisfaction (Ashton, 2018; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2018). When tourists are able to engage in authentic experiences at a destination, their overall satisfaction levels tend to increase. Therefore, understanding visitors' perceptions of authenticity and offering them genuine ICH elements is crucial.

Our findings regarding the effect of place identity on overall satisfaction are consistent with previous studies (Ríos & Moreno-Jiménez, 2012). When tourists engage with local culture and appreciate its uniqueness, they begin to attribute a distinct identity to the destination. If this identity aligns with their own, their overall perception of the destination is positively influenced.

When tourists perceive a destination as authentic through local traditions, cultural heritage, and genuine interactions, they tend to develop a stronger emotional connection, which enhances their satisfaction and enjoyment. In line with

previous research, our study confirms that destination attachment positively influences overall satisfaction (Chubchuwong & Speece, 2016; Veasna et al., 2013).

Finally, the influence of overall satisfaction on revisit intention is strongly supported by our findings and aligns with the existing literature (Cankül et al., 2024; Rajput & Gahfoor, 2020; Torabi et al., 2022). The fact that the relationship between overall satisfaction and revisit intention emerged as particularly strong within the context of a spiritual and profound experience like the Semah ritual warrants a dedicated discussion. The satisfaction here is not merely functional contentment; as supported by other findings in our model, it is an emotional and affective satisfaction stemming from a transformative, healing, and meaningful experience. Through this high involvement and emotionally intense experience, participants do not simply consume a service; they also achieve spiritual fulfillment by undergoing a personal transformation. In this context, overall satisfaction assumes the role of a central psychological mechanism. Many positive antecedent experiences, such as self-congruity, healing, and place identity, are channeled through satisfaction and converted into a strong desire to revisit. In other words, satisfaction is the critical instrument that transforms these positive inputs into a behavioural output. Therefore, satisfaction is not just an outcome, but a psychological bridge where past positive experiences are converted into a strong future behavioural intention. This finding clearly reveals how vital a holistic management approach, centred on satisfaction at every stage of the participant experience, is for the sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage sites like the Semah.

Moreover, this increased satisfaction not only enhances the likelihood of revisiting but also encourages tourists to recommend the destination to others, underscoring the importance of fostering emotional connections in tourism strategies. Additionally, analyses framed by self-congruence theory suggest that the alignment between an individual's self-perception and the perceived image of the destination strengthens tourists' emotional attachment. In this regard, destination marketing and management should focus not only on physical attractions but also on elements that resonate with visitors' identities and emotional connections.

5.1. Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, this study offers important strategic insights, particularly for ICH destination managers and marketers. It emphasizes the potential of personalizing visitor experiences and emotional connection elements to enhance destination loyalty and overall satisfaction. Destinations can increase visitor loyalty and satisfaction by offering unique experiences that cater to individuals' personal interests and emotional needs. The findings of this research offer a series of concrete and strategic recommendations for destination managers, tour operators, and policymakers regarding the sustainable management and marketing of ICH elements such as the Alevi-Bektashi Semah ritual. The core recommendation of the study is that the focus in marketing and experience design must shift from presenting the ritual as a passive cultural performance to curating a transformative

personal journey for participants. Marketing messages should focus not only on the aesthetic or historical aspects of the ritual but on its potential for participants' personal growth, self-discovery, spiritual purification, and the achievement of their ideals. The fact that the Meaningfulness factor has the strongest impact on destination attachment underscores the importance of storytelling in communication. Content that explains the philosophical depth and symbolism of the ritual will enable participants to move beyond being mere spectators, find answers in their search for meaning, and thereby strengthen their emotional bond with the place.

Participant satisfaction is not limited to the moment of the ritual. The findings on place identity and authentic experience reveal that the experience must be managed holistically. In this context, managers should avoid over-commercialization that could damage the ritual's authenticity, and the knowledge and sincerity of the performers and narrators should be prioritized. Furthermore, tranquil spaces should be created for participants to sit quietly and reflect or contemplate the experience, both before and after. Informative materials should be provided not just about what the ritual is, but also why it is performed that way, its philosophy, and its place within the local culture.

This study reveals that the Semah ritual is not merely a cultural tourism product but also possesses strong potential for spiritual and wellness tourism. Destinations can position themselves as an escape from the stresses of modern life and as a center for spiritual renewal. This niche marketing strategy can increase the destination's competitive advantage and attract a visitor profile that seeks deeper and more meaningful experiences, stays longer, and is more loyal.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to tourism theory by focusing on destination attachment and overall satisfaction. The research reveals that ICH participants' affective and cognitive motivations have direct and indirect effects on their destination attachment, overall satisfaction and revisit intentions. It reveals that ICH tourists' motivations are also shaped by deep psychological and emotional reasons, especially the search for meaning, spiritual fulfilment and identity congruence. These findings suggest that the emotional and psychological aspects of destination loyalty and overall satisfaction should be further analyzed in tourism theory. The emotional and personal factors used in the study have a significant effect on destination attachment and satisfaction. These findings suggest theoretically that the concept of destination attachment is not only limited to physical and cognitive elements, but also includes rich emotional and personal dimensions. Using self-congruence theory, this study emphasizes the relationship between how individuals see themselves and the extent to which the destination reflects this self-image. Finally, this research also makes an important contribution to sustainable tourism. ICH-oriented tourism should be designed to help tourists understand and connect with cultural heritage, rather than only providing economic gain. In this way, both the unique identity of the destination can be preserved and visitor loyalty can be increased in the long term.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The limitations of this study may have significant effects on the generalizability of the findings. Firstly, the study was conducted only in a specific geographical region and cultural context, which may limit the applicability of the results to destinations in different cultures. Additionally, the sample size and demographic diversity are limited due to temporal and financial constraints. Future studies should explore whether these findings lead to broader results by testing similar concepts in different cultural and geographical contexts. Furthermore, studies could be conducted using similar theories related to other ICH elements. These improvements could contribute more solidly to tourism theory and help in a more effective way to the development of destination marketing strategies.

Ethics Statement: Permission for the survey method used in this study was obtained from the Sivas Cumhuriyet University Ethics Committee with its decision number 9 at its meeting dated 07/03/2025 and numbered E-99711239-050.04-539920. In case of detection of a contrary situation, TO&RE Journal has no responsibility, and all responsibility belongs to the author(s) of the study.

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