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**Extending the memorable tourism experience construct:
An investigation of memories of local food experiences**

Abstract

This study proposes and tests a new model of memorable local food experiences by examining the effect of the servicescape, novelty seeking, experience co-creation, choice overload and experience intensification on memories of local food experiences. The study also examines how such experiences impact hedonic well-being. Using an online survey questionnaire, data were gathered from 321 international tourists who tasted local food while visiting Rovaniemi, Finland, in the past year. The present study's main contributions include the extension of the memorable tourism experience construct and the inclusion of experience co-creation, the servicescape and experience intensification as crucial variables that affect tourists' memorable local food experiences. This paper also extends the bottom-up spillover theory of subjective well-being by demonstrating that memories of local food experiences allow for the intrusion of the extraordinary into tourists' residual culture, thereby benefitting them while at home by promoting their well-being.

Keywords: local food experience; memories; hedonic well-being; Finland

Introduction

When tourists are asked to share and write about their holidays, they must refer to their memories (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). Thus, providing consumers with memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) is key to being competitive in the tourism industry (Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). In addition, the significance of offering memorable experiences to tourists currently has attracted the attention of both researchers and practitioners (Tung, Lin, Zhang & Zhao, 2017). According to Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012), an MTE is an experience that is remembered after an event has taken place. An MTE scale includes seven dimensions, namely hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty (Kim et al., 2012).

Numerous studies concerning MTEs have focussed on the replication of the MTE scale, i.e., a large part of extant literature elaborating the MTE construct has been devoted to direct replication in new contexts to validate prior MTEs. Following closer examination, it is apparent that far fewer studies have incorporated other factors that explicitly might exert an impact on the MTE construct compared with the number of studies that principally have replicated the scale (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Although the extensive use of this scale has augmented extant tourism literature, Kim et al.'s (2012) use of a student sample meant that their study could not represent typical tourists accurately (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). In addition, even though consensus exists that an MTE is a multifaceted concept, the specific constructs that comprise an MTE remain unclear (Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). Moreover, a need exists to explore the MTE construct comprehensively to identify other decisive variables that impact tourists' MTEs (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018), e.g., local food (Sthapit, 2017), which is this study's focus.

Another flaw attributed to the MTE scale concerns the fact that it restricts the local culture dimension to social interactions with local people, thereby neglecting the role that food plays as an essential element when experiencing local culture. The consumption of local food is considered an important part of the tourism experience (Sthapit, 2017) and is arguably the activity most likely to cause people to reflect on their past (Vignolles & Paul-Emmanuel, 2014), as it activates all the senses (Sutton, 2010) and evokes cognitive, emotional and physical recollections (Holtzman, 2006). Studies have indicated that experiencing local food will create a positive MTE and contribute further to a holistic holiday experience (Sthapit, 2018a) including destination image and loyalty (Folgado-Fernández, Hernández-Mogollón & Duarte, 2017). However, little research currently exists that directly pertains to the determinants of a memorable local food experience. Moreover, prior studies have tended to analyse food experiences at sophisticated urban destinations, with very few studies having focussed on rural destinations less known for their cuisines (Frivoll, Forbord & Blekesaune, 2016; Sthapit, 2017).

The present study seeks to fill this research gap by discussing related theoretical arguments and concepts. First, in today's experiential marketplace, many people travel to taste novel and authentic cuisines (Andersson & Mossberg, 2017; Kim, Eves & Scarles, 2009). Tourists generally are interested in and excited about tasting novel foods while at a destination (Sthapit, 2017). Local cuisines are thought to satisfy tourists' quest for both locality and newness (Fields, 2002), while tasting new foods allows tourists to savour memorable gastronomic experiences (Sthapit, 2017).

Second, contrary to being inactive spectators, many tourists today want to produce their own personal positive service experiences (Dong & Siu, 2013). Studies have indicated that experience co-creation serves to enhance the tourism experience's memorability (Sthapit, Coudounaris & Björk, 2018). From an experience co-creation perspective, customers are active

contributors in creating their individual experiences, necessitating personalised and direct interaction with the related organisation (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004), which would be a restaurant in this context.

Third, as food services represent a consumption experience, the service setting's physical environment, i.e., the substantive staging of the servicescape, is considered highly significant in terms of affecting tourists' memories of local culinary experiences (Sthapit, 2017). The *servicescape* comprises different physical elements, from ambient conditions, spatial arrangement and functionality, to signs, symbols and artefacts (Bitner, 1992).

Fourth, visitors tend to augment their service experiences, which would involve eating at a local restaurant in this context to make it more tangible, e.g., by taking photos and purchasing mementos and gifts (Dong & Siu, 2013). More specifically, photos act as valuable stimuli that allow individuals to access information stored in their long-term memory (Caton & Santos, 2008). Recent studies also have indicated that experience intensification, e.g., through buying food souvenirs, prolongs tourists' memories of their local food experiences (Sthapit & Björk, 2019).

Fifth, tourists continue to face unexpected ambiguity (Hyde & Decrop, 2011), including having numerous options available among brands from which to make final choices (Scheibehenne, Greifeneder & Todd, 2009). This phenomenon typically is referred to as 'choice overload'. Some studies indicate that those who experience choice overload are less satisfied with their decisions (Botti & Iyengar, 2004). On a related note, satisfaction is a strong predictor of a memorable experience (Sthapit et al., 2018b).

Sixth, Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018) found a positive relationship between an MTE's hedonism dimension and tourists' subjective well-being (SWB). In addition, hedonic well-being conventionally has been linked with the concept of SWB. *Hedonic well-being* concerns emotional aspects of well-being (Seligman, 2002) and involves positive emotions, including happiness and pleasure (Vada, Prentice & Hsiao, 2019).

The present study responds to the call by Tung and Ritchie (2011) for more research to uncover the specific elements that make certain experiences memorable, i.e., the triggers for these memories. Thus, this study tests a new model of memorable local food experiences by examining how tourists' internal factors, such as novelty-seeking traits and choice overload, combine with external, contextual factors in a food service setting servicescape in which experiences are co-created and intensified to effect memorable local food experiences. It also aims to consider how such experiences impact hedonic well-being. In this study's context, local food experiences relate to food experiences that are undertaken in a local restaurant setting. This is one of the study's major limitations, as local food experiences can take place beyond a restaurant setting, e.g., at campsites, in tents or in boathouses, as Sthapit (2017) found. In addition, local food here denotes delicacies made from local ingredients, as well as cuisines linked to the destination. A subtle, albeit important, difference exists between the focus of previous research and that of the present study. Prior studies largely have concentrated on the replication of the MTE scale and have examined conventional outcome variables, such as the intention to return to the destination. However, this study focuses on incorporating other dimensions into the MTE construct, which is linked further to other possible outcome variables, such as hedonic well-being, to enhance its complexity and depth.

Theoretical framework and hypothesis development

The theoretical framework used in this study provides definitions of seven key concepts – novelty seeking, experience co-creation, servicescape (substantive staging), choice overload, experience intensification, memorable local food experience and hedonic well-being – as well as their interconnections (Figure 1).

Novelty seeking

Novelty-seeking behaviour is a multidimensional concept that comprises excitement, fear, awe and boredom mitigation. The search for novelty often is perceived as an innate quality in travellers (Lee & Crompton, 1992). Furthermore, the desire to seek novelty is a significant motivator in relation to food-consumption experiences when travelling (Chang, Kivela & Mak, 2011). Novelty impacts tourists' food choices (Mak, Lumbers, Eves & Chang, 2012), as novelty-seeking tourists are more eager to taste new foods (Sthapit, 2017). Thus, novelty-seeking behaviour may alter tourists' inclination toward discomfort with unfamiliar food (food neophobia), inducing them to try new foods that they would not eat in their everyday lives, which is known as *neophilia* (Chang et al., 2011). Food neophilia refers to the tendency to seek something new to taste (Sthapit, 2017). Food neophiliacs display a different taste physiology and are motivated to consume new foods, allowing them to gain greater enjoyment from experiencing new foods (Kim, Suh & Eves, 2010). Novelty seeking is a core input for memories (Kim et al., 2012). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Novelty seeking will enhance memories of local food experiences.

Experience co-creation

Service-dominant logic (S-D logic) provides the basis for understanding the concept of experience co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). According to Edvardsson, Tronvoll and Gruber (2011), from an S-D logic perspective, service signifies the foundation for all monetary exchanges, as well as the use of resources allied to competence, e.g., knowledge and skills, to the actor's advantage. Experience co-creation is the process through which customers and organisations collaborate to create experiences (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy & Prebensen, 2016). Experience co-creation requires the customer's active involvement and engagement in activities (Minkiewicz, Evans & Bridson, 2014). In fact, active participation is considered to be a path toward the enhanced memorability of experiences (Brunner-Sperdin, Peters & Strobl, 2012). According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), co-creation provides occasions for collaboration between businesses and consumers so that both parties profit from the activity, willingly partake in the activity and recognise their own and the other party's roles as contributors to customer practices and processes. Some studies indicate a positive linkage between co-creation and memorable vacation experiences (Mathis et al., 2016; Sthapit et al., 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2: Experience co-creation will enhance memories of local food experiences.

The servicescape and substantive staging

A *servicescape* is a physical setting incorporating different atmospheric cues that offer individuals with several sensory stimuli (visual, olfactory and auditory) to help create an overall perceptual image of the service organisation. This setting can impact cognitive, emotional and physiological conditions, including behaviour (Bitner, 1992). A servicescape includes two distinct components: substantive and communicative staging. This study focuses on substantive staging, i.e., functional and mechanical cues that influence the physical formation of the service environment (Dong & Siu, 2013). The substantive staging component incorporates both interior and exterior elements (Bitner, 1992), and it includes spatial layout (Bitner, 1992), equipment arrangement (Ryu & Jang, 2007), facilities (Lucas, 2003), symbols

and objects (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996) and ambience, including dining equipment (Ryu & Jang, 2007). Prior studies indicate a positive relationship between the substantive staging of a servicescape and a memorable experience (Sthapit, 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: The substantive staging of a servicescape will enhance the recall of memories of local food experiences.

Choice overload

Choice overload refers to the fact that ‘although the provision of extensive choices may sometimes still be seen as initially desirable, it may also prove unexpectedly demotivating in the end’ (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000, p. 996). Thus, choice overload denotes a scenario wherein the complexity of the decision-making process that an individual encounters surpasses his or her intelligence (Toffler, 1970). Having large choice sets causes decision makers to process too much information (Wood & Lynch, 2002), which can lead to annoyance when they are not interested in receiving such large volumes of information (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). Consequently, consumers actually may feel less conversant and confident enough to make good choices when too many alternatives are available from which to select (Schwarz, 2004). Choice overload links the number of available alternatives and choice-related experiences (Scheibehenne et al., 2010), e.g., dissatisfaction (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000). Furthermore, according to Sthapit et al. (2018), satisfaction is a significant predictor of memorable experiences. This gives rise to the following hypothesis:

H4: A lack of choice overload will enhance the recall of memories of local food experiences.

Experience intensification

Today, tourists tend to augment their service experience and attempt to make it more tangible by taking photos and purchasing mementos and gifts (Dong & Siu, 2013). Recent studies have indicated that experience intensification, e.g., through buying food souvenirs, can serve to prolong food experiences’ memorability for tourists (Sthapit, 2017). Furthermore, in recent years, the advancement of digital technology has transformed the nature of tourism (Hyde & Decrop, 2011). In the same vein, social media sites have become popular tools that allow for on-site intensification and memorialisation of travel experiences through posting photos and messaging online (Zeng & Greisen, 2014). Furthermore, due to individuals’ increasing empowerment through information and communication technology, tourism experiences have intensified and multiplied, creating richer experiences (Gretzel & Jamal, 2009). In the context of food experiences, travellers interpret local cultures through their culinary experiences, and their depictions enjoy unrivalled exposure via social networking sites (SNS) (Yuki, 2015). The sharing of culinary experiences via SNS influences how individuals remember their tourism experiences after returning home from the trip (Wang, Kirillova & Lehto, 2017). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Experience intensification will enhance memories of local food experiences.

Memories and memorable local food experiences

Memory is an active, constructive process that links an experience to a tourist activity's emotive and perceptual outcomes (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007). In addition, an individual's memory represents an ongoing process that can incorporate the allocation of meaning to the past (Holtzman, 2006). According to Neumann (1992, p. 179), the memory of a holiday experience is a fundamental component of the self, as it 'holds a certain attraction and intrinsic reward that materialises in the moments of storytelling'.

The significance of understanding past experiences as stored in the memory (Hoch & Deighton, 1989) is evident because the motivation to purchase is high when information is drawn from consumers' past experiences. In addition, consumers tend to perceive their past experiences as valuable and reliable information sources. Moreover, memories exert a significant influence when a consumer (tourist) decides to revisit a destination (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Hoch & Deighton, 1989). According to Sthapit (2017), local food consumption contributes to memorable experiences. Such memories impact tourists' SWB after a trip (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is presented:

H6: Memories of local food experiences will enhance tourists' hedonic well-being.

Spillover concept, its bidirectional nature and hedonic well-being

The spillover theory is in line with the postmodern conceptualisation of the tourist experience (Sthapit, 2018). On one hand, Wilensky (1960) was the first to document spillover theory, according to which, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in one's social setting can be manifested in another setting as a reflection of one's skills and experience. In addition, *spillover* means the generalisation of behaviours, emotions, attitudes or stresses from one life domain to another (Wilensky, 1960), including the transfer of experiences between family and work such that one domain impacts the other (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). Moreover, spillover theory proposes that one's work influences, in a complementary as opposed to inverse fashion, non-work life domains such as family (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007), vacation and leisure (Wilensky, 1960). As a result, when employees are engaged in their work, these positive feelings and energies likely will spill over into the community domain (Golembiewski, 1995). In addition, a *positive spillover* is defined as the positive effect that work can have on other domains, thereby benefitting them and improving their functioning in the other domain (Rothbard, 2001), e.g., to promote satisfaction with life (Albrecht, 2010). However, Burch's (1969) approach to spillover theory encompasses the notion that some individuals may want to participate in similar behaviours and activities in both their home and holiday environments (Shaw & Williams, 2004).

Wilensky's (1960) approach to spillover theory emphasises work experiences' determinant effect on leisure behaviour, such as sedentary work practices such as clerical filing or secretarial work eliciting passive leisure practices such as watching TV or reading magazines (Calhoun, Rojek & Turner, 2005). Burch (1969) links daily life and tourism behaviour. The present study adopts both Wilensky (1960) and Burch's (1969) approaches to spillover theory. Spillover, in this study's context, represents experiences from one domain of life that affect those in another, and the spillover effect is understood as bidirectional, i.e., occurring in both directions.

Spillover, as a bidirectional transfer from one life domain to another, is manifested in the expression of values, affect, skills, and/or behaviour (Staines, 1980). In fact, spillover can be perceived as positive or negative based on the nature of the work (or another influencing

domain) (Chesley, 2005). What happens in the work domain can spill over into the family domain, and vice versa, because one's behaviours and attitudes are not bounded necessarily and can transfer as a result (Zedeck, 1992). Work and home roles can enhance and enrich each other through the transfer of positive moods (wherein happiness or satisfaction in one role translates to happiness or satisfaction in another), cross-domain compensation (wherein success in one role assists the individual in dealing with deficiencies or failures in another) and transfer of competencies (wherein participation in multiple roles helps buffer the negative stresses associated with the roles) (Wiese, Seiger, Schmid & Freund, 2010). Wiener, Vardi and Mukzyk (1981, p. 51) state that 'positive or negative feelings may reach out and carry over (spill over) into other facets of life'. This happens because the theoretical logic of the spillover concept (Wilensky, 1960) holds that affect is compartmentalised in a variety of life domains, such as family life, leisure life, community life and work life (Sirgy, Efraty, Siegel & Lee, 2011).

In the tourism context – according to Uysal, Perdue and Sirgy (2012) – satisfaction with a trip to a resort affects other life domains, which then influence overall life satisfaction. Uysal et al. (2012) explain the spillover phenomenon based on the bottom-up spillover theory of subjective well-being (Andrews & Withey, 1976), which holds that life satisfaction is functionally related to satisfaction with all of life's domains and sub-domains, such as health, safety, family and leisure, including travel. Their study also suggests that the greater the satisfaction with events experienced during a tourist trip, the greater the positive affect and the less the negative affect. The events occurring during a tourist trip contribute to both positive and negative affect in various life domains, which then contribute to changes in subjective well-being. In addition, another recent study by Sthapit (2018) suggests that besides satisfaction, memories of a trip as a hedonic experience enhance tourists' SWB and can be considered an antecedent that elicits a spillover from the destination to home. Sthapit (2018) further argues that these memories represent the existence of the extraordinary in residual culture. In addition, after returning from the trip, individuals remember and recreate memories of their experiences (Tung et al., 2017), enabling individuals to relive the experiences long after the event has occurred (Gilbert & Abdullah, 2004). In addition, from a broader perspective, travelling is an activity undertaken in pursuance of happiness and is considered beneficial to one's well-being (Bimonte & Faralla, 2015), while all that remains after a trip is his or her memories of that experience (Braun-LaTour, Grinley & Loftus, 2006). Holidays can enhance tourists' levels of happiness and life satisfaction, which are both considered important components of SWB (Nawijn, 2011).

Two wide-ranging philosophical traditions exist concerning the understanding and attainment of a good life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). One relates to the hedonic view, while the other focuses on the eudaimonic principle (Voigt, Howat & Brown, 2010). This study focuses on hedonic well-being, which involves positive emotions, happiness and pleasure (Vada et al., 2019). *Hedonic well-being* is concerned with experiencing more pleasant emotions and satisfaction with life and it is linked conventionally with the concept of SWB (Diener, 1984). According to Sirgy and Uysal (2016), joy, contentment and pleasure enhance hedonic (psychological) happiness (Sirgy & Uysal, 2016). Gilbert and Abdullah's (2004) study indicates that holidaymaking has the potential to enhance travellers' levels of happiness, thereby leading to better hedonic well-being. In addition, Sthapit and Coudoumaris (2018) found a positive relationship between the hedonism dimension inherent in an MTE and SWB.

Potential influence of demographic and trip characteristics on beliefs

Some prior studies have recognised the significance of considering demographic and trip characteristics when studying tourism (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017). Different tourist profiles may influence different behaviours (Cambra-Fierro, Pérez & Grott, 2017). Gender has been considered an important determinant of tourist behaviour and may be of great use in segmenting markets (Um & Crompton, 1992), while McGehee, Kim and Jennings (2007) noted that the importance of gender in tourism cannot be overlooked. In fact, women and men are involved differently in the consumption and construction of tourism (Figueroa-Domecq, Pritchard, Segovia-Perez, Morgan & Villace-Moliero, 2015). For example, a study by Heung, Qu and Chu (2001) demonstrated that female leisure travellers rated the motivation factor of benefits sought significantly higher than their male counterparts did. In addition, Kim, Lee and Klenosky (2003) found that females placed more importance on the push factor of family togetherness and study, while males emphasised factors tied to appreciating natural resources, health and adventure, and building friendships. On the pull factor of key tourist resources, females perceived key tourist resources at national parks to be more important than males did. Another study by Andreu, Kozak, Avci and Cifter (2005) claimed that male tourists preferred more recreation and activity at the destination, while female tourists had stronger relaxation and escape-based motives. Moreover, McKercher and Wong (2004) identified major variances between first-time and repeat visitors' behaviours. Indeed, repeat visits can affect tourists' visitation patterns (Fuchs & Reichel, 2011). Furthermore, Mitchell and Hall (2001) reported on gender differences among winery visitors, identifying a tendency among female winery visitors to make post-winery-visit wine purchases. In the same vein, a study by Lehto, Cai and O'Leary (2004) found that travel purpose, travel style, age and gender were significant factors that influence the amount of money travellers spent on shopping and the items they preferred.

The construction and recollection of autobiographical memory is an uneven process that is influenced by an individual's demographic background. Different critical elements include gender, age and lifecycle stage (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). For example, Pillemer, Wink, DiDonato and Sanborn (2003) found that women usually recalled more specific life events than men did. In their study, women remembered more positive and unique events, rated their autobiographical memories as more vivid, and attached greater significance to their experiences. In addition, another recent study by Sthapit and Coudounaris (2017) offered support for the moderating effects of demographic variables (age, gender and nationality) between MTEs and SWB. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: Gender influences the relationship between the determinants of memorable local food experiences and memorable local food experiences.

H8: Age influences the relationship between the determinants of memorable local food experiences and memorable local food experiences.

H9: First-time visitors and those revisiting the destination may differ in the relationship between the determinants of memorable local food experiences and memorable local food experiences.

Method

Pilot test, data-collection method, research setting and instrumentation

The piloting of the questionnaire was conducted in two stages during September 2018. First, the questionnaire was pre-tested among five academic researchers. Following the

completion of the survey, a short retrospective interview lasting 10-15 minutes was conducted with each respondent about whether he or she understood who and particularly what is being surveyed, what he or she thinks is being asked for each construct and whether the questions are too vague or difficult to understand including the length of the survey. Notes were taken during the interviews, with major comments including the following: the need to change ‘food service personnel’ to ‘waiter or staff’ when measuring the experience co-creation construct for better understanding; the need to define what *local food experience* means in the survey introduction section to avoid vague understanding; and the need to adapt all scale items in local food experience contexts, e.g., in the case of novelty-seeking, changing the item from ‘I had a unique experience’ to ‘I had a unique local food experience’, from a clarity perspective. None of the respondents complained about the questionnaire’s length.

In the second stage, an updated version of the questionnaire based on the comments from first-stage piloting was tested among 25 master’s degree students at a university on the west coast of Finland. During the piloting, respondents did not complain about the questionnaire’s length and were able to complete it in a short time. It was projected that the online survey could be finished within 10 minutes. Concerning the rationale for the items selected, these items are derived from previous studies that have developed and tested the measures in terms of validity and reliability.

The sampling unit was an international tourist who had tasted local food during a recent trip to Rovaniemi in the past year. An email invitation to complete the survey was sent to 500 tourists in October 2018, inviting them to complete the survey, which was administered during a three-month period (October-December 2018) using a convenience-sampling approach. We chose Rovaniemi, Finland, as the study site.

The self-administered questionnaire comprised two parts, the first of which asked for respondents’ demographic and travel-characteristics data. The second part comprised multi-item scales intended to measure the seven aforementioned constructs. Novelty seeking was assessed using four items from Kim et al. (2012), while experience co-creation was measured using five items adapted from Mathis et al. (2016). The measurement of the servicescape comprised four items adapted from Durna, Dedeoglu and Balikcioglu (2015). Choice overload was measured using two items adapted from Sthapit et al. (2017), while the experience-intensification construct was measured using three items adapted from Dong and Siu (2013). The set of three items to assess memorable local food experiences was adapted from Oh et al. (2007). The hedonic well-being construct was measured using five items adapted from Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985). All the items were rated using a five-point Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 [strongly disagree] to 5 [strongly agree]) (Table 1).

Table 1

Results

Sample Characteristics

This study was conducted using 321 samples of international tourists who have tasted local food while visiting Rovaniemi, Finland, in the past year to examine the relationships between the servicescape, novelty seeking, experience co-creation, choice overload, experience intensification, memories of local food experiences and hedonic well-being. All the respondents had tasted local food in Rovaniemi. Most respondents were male (56.4%), and 53.7% were 35 to 44 years old. German nationals comprised the largest percentage of tourists (25.5%). Most respondents were married (95.0%), some (17.8%) travelled to Rovaniemi for the first time, and 82.2% were repeat visitors, with many visiting for a second time (41.4%).

Many respondents spent three days at the destination (37.8%) and travelled in groups of four people (44.7%).

Estimating the path model

A maximum-likelihood confirmatory factor analysis was performed for the estimation of the path model using AMOS 24. The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results showed a good fit for the model (Table 2). The model's chi-square fit value (χ^2/df) was 2.607, with 226 degrees of freedom. The Bentler Comparative Fit Index (CFI) was 0.948. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.071, with the expected cross-validation index (ECVI) as high as 2.304.

The model fit was very good, with χ^2/df below 3; CFI at 0.95, well above the 0.700 threshold; and the RMSEA at 0.071, below the critical value of 0.08 (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). Among other statistics, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), normed fit index (NFI), relative fit index (RFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis coefficient (TLI) and parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) values were 0.869, 0.918, 0.900, 0.948, 0.936 and 0.752, respectively. The GFI and NFI values, being above 0.8 and 0.9, respectively, were considered very good. In addition, as long as the incremental indices (NFI, TLI, CFI and relative non-centrality index) are greater than 0.90, the measurement model has a good fit (Hair et al., 2014).

The above estimation of the model based on the seven constructs is very good. According to Kenny (2005), when the number of cases is greater than 200 ($N = 321$), Hoelter's critical N is 143 and the chi-square is statistically significant (0.05; Table 2), the model fit is very good. With the CFI at 0.95 and the parsimony comparative fit index (PCFI) at 0.776, these values fulfil the two assumptions of a model that accomplishes a desired level of explanation (parsimony) (Rigdon, 1996).

Based on Hair et al. (2014), the largest estimated variables for each construct were constrained first. Second, to improve the model further, the error terms between items with very high covariance or modification indices greater than 20.000 were correlated in the model. For example, the following error terms between items were correlated in this model, i.e., e_{24} to $e_{23} = 154.023$, e_{13} to $e_{12} = 66.048$, e_2 to $e_1 = 43.808$, e_{25} to $e_{24} = 24.326$, e_{25} to $e_{23} = 55.509$ and e_9 to $e_7 = 20.303$. Table 2 (parentheses) shows that the model fit estimates were not good without correlating the errors of the variables that exhibited high covariance. When checking the observation farthest from the centroid (i.e., the Mahalanobis distance), observation No. 136 had a high Mahalanobis d-squared value of 177.793. Therefore, we removed this case from the sample, thereby reducing the total sample size used in the analysis from the initial total of 322 cases to 321. The removal of this one case elicited further improvement in model estimates, including the findings' reliability and validity. Finally, two variables were removed from the model. In particular, we extracted the variables X12 (decor) and X13 (smell) due to their standardised regression weights being 0.426 and 0.449, respectively, which were both less than 0.5. The removal of these variables further improved the measurement model's statistics.

The relationships tested in this study (testing of hypotheses) are based on the findings from the covariances' output of the structural equation modelling (SEM). The statistical findings – such as NFI, CFI, RFI, IFI and TLI values – indicate that the measurement model has a very good fit with the data used (Table 2).

Table 2

To check for the existence of a multicollinearity problem, this study develops the

correlation matrix based on the output of the SEM analysis. The findings indicate that the correlations' values are below 0.7; therefore, no multicollinearity problem exists (Table 3).

Table 3

Based on Table 3, we calculated the square roots of the average variance extracted (AVE), which were larger than the correlations between a construct and all the other constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is established if the following condition holds: $AVE_i > \max_{j \neq i} r_{ij}$ (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015, p. 117). This test demonstrated the discriminant validity and reliability of the analyses.

Table 4 indicates the results from testing the hypotheses using SEM analysis, including the standardised path coefficients of the latent variables and their standard errors, critical ratios and p-values. In addition, Table 4 shows that four of the nine hypotheses were supported. The two hypotheses that were not supported entailed the relationship between novelty seeking and memorable local food experiences and the relationship between a lack of choice overload and memorable local food experiences, which were insignificant. Moreover, the loadings for three relationships were positive and statistically significant at the 99% confidence level: experience co-creation and memorable local food experiences; experience intensification and memorable local food experiences; and hedonic well-being and memorable local food experiences. The loading for one relationship was negative, although it was significant at the 95% confidence level: servicescape and memorable local food experiences. Again, the loadings for the remaining two relationships – novelty seeking and memorable local food experiences and lack of choice overload and memorable local food experiences – were insignificant.

Table 4

Construct reliability and average variance extracted

Based on Hair et al. (2014), to check convergent validity, one should consider factor loadings, AVE and reliability. The factor loadings of all 26 variables were well above 0.5, which were within the range of .577 to .999. In addition, 75% of the factor loadings were above 0.7, and the AVE extracted from each construct exceeded 50%, demonstrating that convergent validity was established. In other words, the variance extracted for the seven constructs was above 50% (novelty seeking = 0.572, experience co-creation = 0.677, servicescape = 0.843, experience intensification = 0.655, lack of choice overload = 0.721, memorable local food experiences = 0.861 and hedonic well-being = 0.648). The AVE was 0.711. Given that each construct had a variance extracted greater than 0.5, and as the AVE equals 0.711, this fulfilled the discriminant validity criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

In addition, the reliability of each construct was calculated via a CFA. The calculations revealed that the model's constructs were found to have a reliability above 0.7 (novelty seeking = 0.839, experience co-creation = 0.906, servicescape = 0.915, experience intensification = 0.850, a lack of choice overload = 0.837, memorable local food experiences = 0.949 and hedonic well-being = 0.922). The average construct reliability was 0.888, which is very high.

Besides the above calculations, the Cronbach's α for the constructs, based on 321 cases, revealed high reliability for each construct (novelty seeking = 0.849, experience co-creation = 0.910, servicescape = 0.915, experience intensification = 0.848, lack of choice overload = 0.831, memorable local food experiences = 0.948 and hedonic well-being = 0.921). These estimates suggest a satisfactory degree of reliability, as the mean construct reliability estimate based on Cronbach's α was 0.889, which is well above the critical value of 0.7.

Moderation analysis

Using AMOS 24, this study revealed that the moderating effects of gender (male vs. female), age (below 43 years old vs. 43 and older) (43 years old is the median for the sample of 321 cases) and number of visits (first time vs. repeat visitors) all exerted a positive effect on the relationships between novelty seeking and memorable local food experiences, and between a lack of choice overload and memorable local food experiences. In particular, the effects from all three moderators – namely females, travellers ages 43 and up, and repeat visitors to Rovaniemi – caused the relationship between novelty seeking and memorable local food experiences, and the relationship between lack of choice overload and memorable local food experiences to change from insignificant to significant.

Conclusion, managerial implications, limitations and future research

This study's objective was to exemplify the antecedents and consequences of memorable local food experiences in a rural tourism destination context.

The empirical results support four out of nine hypotheses. First, the relationship between novelty seeking and memorable local food experiences is insignificant. However, based on the moderation analysis findings, the relationship differs across gender, age and trip characteristics. In other words, for females, 43-year-old travellers (and older) and repeat visitors to Rovaniemi, the novelty-seeking effect on memorable local food experiences is more significant than for males, travellers younger than 43 and first-time visitors to the destination. The former can be considered to be novelty seekers who are comfortable with tasting different Lappish cuisines during their repeat visits. Repeat visitors' exposure to local Lappish cuisine might have increased their motivation to taste other novel foods. However, the latter are those who seek familiarity when consuming food at a tourist destination, preferring to experience known local foods.

Second, a positive correlation existed between experience co-creation and memorable local food experience. During the co-creation process, customers can become involved either passively or actively; thus, those who co-create their food experiences by actively interacting with service personnel to learn about local specialties might have a more memorable experience. In other words, tourists who are more inclined toward active participation and who get engaged in the experience might tend to have a more memorable local food experience. This result supports some prior research indicating co-creation as a significant predictor of remembering an experience (Campos, Mendes, Oom Do Valle & Scott, 2016; Hung, Lee & Huang, 2014; Sthapit et al., 2018).

Third, the association between the substantive staging of the servicescape and tourists' memorable local food experiences was significant and positive (H3). If the service setting's architecture is attractive and cheerful, it further contributes to the memorability of tourists' culinary-gastronomic experiences. This supports findings from studies indicating that a favourable perception of an environment creates feelings of enjoyment and creates favourable subjective memories (Dong & Siu, 2013; Sthapit, 2017). Thus, the results highlight the physical environment's significance when consuming local foods at a tourism destination.

Fourth, the path from the experience-intensification construct to the construct of memorable local food experiences was positive (H4). Therefore, the findings build on Kim et al. (2012). The findings suggest that tourists who purchase food souvenirs and take pictures when tasting local cuisines intensify their experience by doing so, allowing them to have a more memorable experience. In other words, the more intense the on-site food experience is, the more memorable it is likely to be. In fact, such acts of intensification might serve as the

basis for remembered experiences. The findings support those of some prior studies indicating that memories of a trip experience are elicited by both photos and objects (Lean, 2012; Sthapit, 2017).

Fifth, the relationship between a lack of choice overload and memorable local food experiences is insignificant, but the findings from the moderation analysis revealed that this relationship differs across gender, age and trip characteristics. In other words, for females, 43-year-old (and older) travellers and repeat visitors to Rovaniemi, the effect from a lack of choice overload is more significant in relation to memorable local food experiences than for males, travellers younger than 43 and first-time visitors to Rovaniemi. For the former, the lower the number of choices, the higher the memorability of a local culinary-gastronomic experience is expected to be. However, the latter group's tourists desire choosing between varied alternatives to satisfy their diverse tastes, thereby contributing to memorability. From a conceptual perspective, on one hand, for some individuals, having more options might be preferable because many choices can increase an individual's sense of personal control (Rotter, 1966; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988). Two lines of reasoning justify this: People have highly differentiated tastes and needs, and more choices let them satisfy their own particular wants, can increase autonomy and can cater to diverse preferences, consequently contributing to consumers' increased satisfaction (Hoch, Bradlow & Wansink, 1999; Kuksov & Villas-Boas, 2009). For these individuals, a general perception that it is better to have more choices (Kahn & Wansink, 2004; Schwartz, 2004; Taylor, 1989; Taylor & Brown, 1988) might hold true. On the other hand, for others, more choices might not be good necessarily (Chan, 2015) and may exceed their cognitive resources (Simon, 1955; Toffler, 1970), thereby making it hard to justify choosing one option and experiencing post-choice regret and dissatisfaction. Therefore, both cases might impact tourists' memories of local food experiences, and future studies might need to divide the concept into two parts – more choices and few choices – to gain a holistic understanding of the phenomenon.

Sixth, a local culinary experience's memorability exerts a significant direct effect on hedonic well-being, a finding that confirms H6, which is congruous with a recent study indicating that tourists' memories of their trip experiences impact their SWB (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018).

Overall, the aforementioned results indicate that a memorable local food experience largely occurs through experience co-creation, the servicescape and experience intensification. In addition, the findings support studies indicating that formation and recall of memory comprise a non-uniform process that is influenced by the individual's demographic characteristics, e.g., gender and age (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017; Tung & Ritchie, 2011), as well as trip characteristics (first-time visitor vs. repeat visitor) (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2017).

The present study's main contributions include the extension of the MTE construct and the inclusion of experience co-creation, the servicescape and experience intensification as crucial variables that affect tourists' memorable local food experiences. The findings also extend the bottom-up spillover theory of SWB (Andrews & Withey, 1976). According to their theory, satisfaction with a trip affects other life domains, which then influence an individual's overall life satisfaction. In addition, life satisfaction pertains to satisfaction with all life domains and sub-domains, such as health and safety, including travel (Uysal et al., 2012). The findings suggest that a positive link exists between memories of local food consumption and tourists' SWB. Such memories allow for the intrusion of the extraordinary into tourists' residual culture, thereby benefitting them while at home, e.g., by promoting their well-being.

Although highly destination-specific, the findings suggest that staffs at local restaurants need to interact with tourists actively, allowing them to experience value during experience co-creation. Customers should not be viewed as passive agents, but rather as active producers of

their own consumption experiences. In fact, the service personnel should be highly involved when customers want to co-create their experiences by actively interacting with the staff to learn about the local delicacies and food culture. Employees should recommend suitable local Lappish cuisines from a selection to best satisfy tourists' individual tastes. Such on-site participatory experiences involving social interaction and focussed mental engagement will help capture and maintain customers' interests and attention, both of which are very important in co-creation (Andrades & Dimanche, 2014). This also might help the customer make optimum use of the time spent at the restaurant and increase value. During on-site co-creation, the customer should be at its centre, while interaction should be considered a resource to help tourists have a memorable experience. However, service personnel should avoid generalising memorable local food experiences and assuming that all tourists are interested in active interactions during their food experiences – that a memorable experience is dependent on each tourist's individual level of engagement. This study calls for a shift in local restaurant staffs' role – from service providers to memorable-experience co-creators. Therefore, local restaurants should ensure high levels of training to ensure quality staff-guest interactions.

A focus on the servicescape also is needed. Local restaurants should decorate their physical settings with cultural elements, such as lighting and background music, while the spatial layout and functionality should be appropriate so that tourists feel comfortable and more immersed in the environment. The restaurant's architecture should be unique and stunning compared with that of its competitors to wow guests during their visits and contribute to memorable local food experiences. Moreover, selling food souvenirs with descriptions of what makes the food authentic to the destination should be promoted in local restaurants to intensify tourists' food experiences. In the same vein, local restaurants' staffs should be encouraged to share pictures of tourists consuming local food on the restaurant's social networking sites to generate social media sharing. Staffs also should help tourists create digital memories of their on-site local food experiences to enhance experience intensification, e.g., by encouraging them to take pictures of local specialities and the restaurant's interiors, as well as selfies with the restaurant's staff. These digital memories will help tourists visualise their local food experiences after returning home from the trip.

However, this study has some limitations. It is highly destination-specific and employs convenience sampling, rendering the findings non-generalisable to either the destination under investigation or any other tourism destination. The present study also adopted a web-based survey questionnaire, and this research limitation might be overcome by adopting a greater array of research methods, e.g., focus groups, observations, diaries obtained from sampled individuals who record their experiences on-site and, in particular, in-depth interviews (Sthapit et al., 2018). Storytelling during in-depth interviews allows respondents to concentrate and recall experiences from memories, giving researchers a profound sense of understanding details in these qualitative data (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). In addition, storytelling during the post-consumption phase stimulates reflection, highlighting the ways in which respondents (tourists) pay attention, recall their perspectives and present their ideas (Tung et al., 2017).

Furthermore, the fact that the survey was only available in English could have excluded non-English speakers from participating in the study. In the future, translating the survey into different languages and collecting data from domestic tourists might be useful. In addition, the time lapse between visiting Rovaniemi and completing the survey was one year, which might have impacted survey responses. Data should be gathered soon after the trip to avoid the creation of false memories.

Further research should explore the memorable local food experience dimensions in more detail. While the present study is limited to five dimensions, it would be interesting to investigate other decisive variables relevant to food-tourism practices and memorability, such

as uniqueness, authenticity (Sthapit, 2017), deliberate vs. incidental, travel stages, foodie risk-taking, interdependent co-created relationships, authenticity, sociability (Williams, Yuan & Williams. Jr., 2019), emotions (Tung et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2019) and choice-overload (Sthapit, Kozak & Coudounaris, 2019). Future studies also should test the model by including eudaimonic well-being for a more holistic understanding of the well-being construct.

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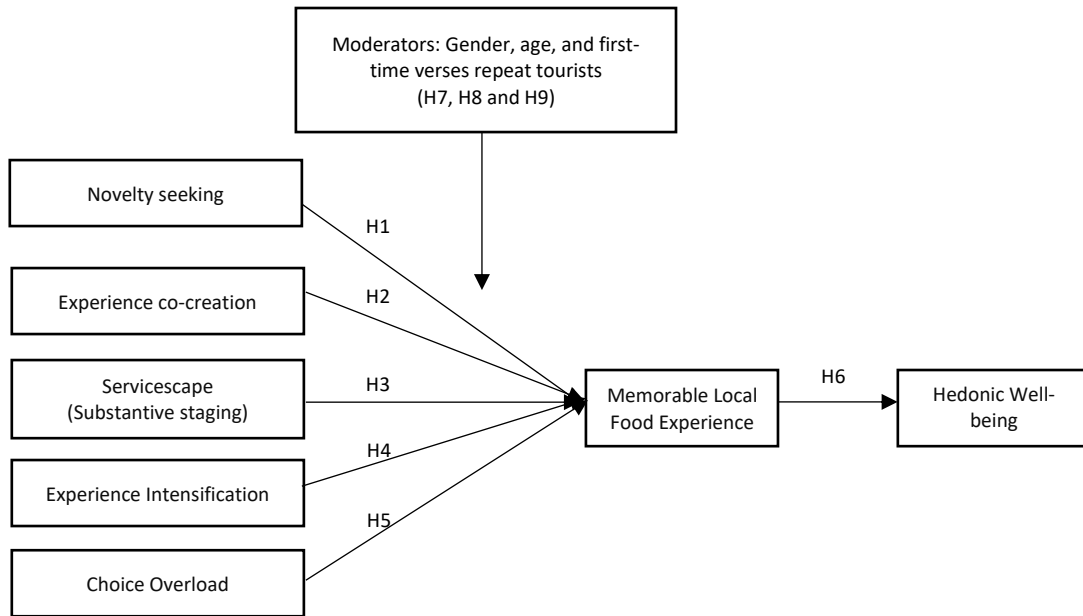


Figure 1 The conceptual model

Table 1 Operationalization of constructs used in this study

Novelty seeking	X1 I had once-in-a-lifetime local food experience X2 I had a unique local food experience X3 My local food experience was different from previous trips X4 I experienced something new
Experience co-creation	X5 Working alongside of a waiter or staff allowed me to have a great social interaction during my local food experience, which I enjoyed X6 I felt comfortable working with a waiter or staff, during my local food experience X7 The setting of the restaurant allowed me to effectively collaborate with the waiter or staff allowed during my local food experience X8 My local food experience was enhanced because of my participation in the experience X9 I felt confident in my ability to collaborate with the waiter or staff during my local food experience
Servicescape	X10 The architecture of the restaurant was attractive X11 The atmosphere of the restaurant was cheerful X12 The decor of the restaurant was fashionable X13 The restaurant had a nice smell
Choice overload	X14 I did not feel overloaded when choosing local food while in Rovaniemi X15 I could effectively choose the local food while in Rovaniemi
Experience intensification	X16 I purchased food souvenirs while in Rovaniemi X17 I took memorable pictures while in Rovaniemi X18 Pictures could help me keep my local food experiences of Rovaniemi
Memorable local food experience	X19 I have wonderful memories of local food experience in Rovaniemi X20 I won't forget my local food experience in Rovaniemi X21 I will remember my local food experience in Rovaniemi
Hedonic well-being	X22 In most ways, my local food experience in to Rovaniemi was close to ideal X23 The conditions of this local food experience in Rovaniemi were excellent X24 I am satisfied with my local food experience in to Rovaniemi X25 I achieved the most important things on this trip to Rovaniemi X26 I would not change the plans I made for this recent trip to Rovaniemi

Table 2 Model fit summary*

Model Fit Parameters	Estimates of Parameters of Default Model				
CMIN	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
	74(73)	589.289 (1094.974)	226(278)	.000(.000)	2.607(3.939)
GFI	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI	
	.061(.066)	.869(.780)	.826(.722)	.655(.618)	
Baseline Comparisons	NFI, Delta1	RFI, rho1	IFI, Delta2	TLI, rho2	CFI
	.918(.850)	.900(.825)	.948(.884)	.936(.863)	.948(.883)
Parsimony-Adjusted Measures	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI		
	.819(.855)	.752(.727)	.776(.755)		
RMSEA	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE	
	.071(.096)	.064(.090)	.078(.102)	.000(.000)	
ECVI	ECVI	LO 90	HI 90	MECVI	
	2.304(3.866)	2.092(3.561)	2.540(4.195)	2.343(3.908)	
	HOELTER, .05	HOELTER, .01			
HOELTER	143(94)	152(99)			

*Note: In parentheses we include the initial model fit estimates which are very good without correlating the errors of the variables that had high covariance (N=322). The estimates of parameters outside parentheses are based on N=321.

Table 3 Correlation matrix and average variance extracted (AMOS 24, based on 321cases) *

	NC	EC	SS	EI	LCO	MLFE	HWB
Novelty Seeking	(.572)						
Experience Co-creation	.044	(.677)					
Service Scape	.251	.102	(.843)				
Experience Intensification	.095	.320	.144	(.655)			
Lack of Choice Overload	.429	.143	.305	.007	(.721)		
Memorable Local Food Experience	.087	.362	-.138	.393	-.088	(.861)	
Hedonic Well-Being	-.060	.183	-.012	.271	.024	.380	(.648)

*Note: AVE in brackets () on the diagonal.

Table 4 Test of hypotheses based on SEM*

Hypotheses	Hypothesised Relationship	Estimate	SE	C.R.	p-values	Status of Hypotheses (at 99% and 95% confidence levels)
H1	Novelty Seeking to Memorable Local Food Experience	.094	.066	1.419	.156	Non-supported
H2	Experience Co-creation to Memorable Local Food Experience	.458	.079	5.796	.000	Supported
H3	Service Scape to Memorable Local Food Experience	-.111	.048	-2.289	.022	Supported
H4	Experience Intensification to Memorable Local Food Experience	.313	.053	5.845	.000	Supported
H5	Lack of Choice Overload to Memorable Local Food Experience	-.080	.055	-1.435	.151	Non-supported
H6	Memorable Local Food Experience to Hedonic Well-Being**	.353	.057	6.227	.000	Supported

* The tests of hypotheses are based on the final dataset (321 cases) with 17 missing values of variables.

* Dependent Variable: Hedonic Well-Being.