

Gastronomic experiences on tourists' life satisfaction and happiness: The case of Porto

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Abstract

The tourists' gastronomic experiences are important in developing a destination branding strategy, especially if this translates into greater happiness and tourists' life satisfaction. We intend to study the influence of five gastronomic/food experience variables on the tourists' life satisfaction and happiness. After inquiring 352 tourists in Porto, the data were analysed through SEM and SPSS/AMOS software. The results validate the hypotheses concerning refreshment and hedonic/novelty experiences, which improve tourists' satisfaction and happiness. The adverse experiences reduce the tourists' happiness, and lastly, tourists' life satisfaction with the gastronomic/food experience improves their happiness. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Gastronomic/food experience; life satisfaction; happiness; destination branding, tourism

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1. Introduction

Place branding and destination branding have been fields of particular interest to management and marketing researchers in tourism (Hanna, Rowley, & Keegan, 2021a; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Scarborough & Crabbe, 2021). Although the two concepts are identical, they have some differences. Place branding can be understood as applying brand strategies and other marketing techniques to economic, social, political, and cultural development of cities, regions, and countries (Anholt, 2010). Destination branding can be understood as an aspect of place branding in which the local entity under consideration is viewed from the perspective of tourists and the tourism industry (Hanna, Rowley, & Keegan, 2021b). Destination branding supports the development of a unique destination image and a solid destination brand, thus allowing a strong and favourable positioning of the destination in the international market.

Research on tourism gastronomic experiences lacks an empirical examination of the relationship between tourism motivation, gastronomic experience, and life satisfaction and happiness. When we talk about destination branding, we must consider the multidimensional consumption of the tourism system of which local gastronomy is part (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015). Okumus (2021) argued that empirical evidence on the extent to which gastronomic experience and food are used as a marketing destination tool is scarce. Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul, and Huang (2019) have also posited that culinary tourism researchers have approached tangential aspects of gastronomic experience, image, satisfaction, motivation, and loyalty. Therefore, the object of this work is to envisage Porto as a gastronomic destination. As such, we will consider destination branding and gastronomic experience as the supporting concepts for the theoretical development of the proposed conceptual model. Using theories of consumer experiences (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Schmitt, Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2014) and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2019), this study aims to develop and test a theoretical model of destination branding that integrates the concepts of gastronomic brand experience, life satisfaction, and tourist happiness.

The research of extraordinary experiences has become one of the central postmodern consumer cultures related to experiential marketing research (Hosany, Sthapit, & Björk, 2022; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, Campo, & Molinillo, 2020; Khan & Fatma, 2021). The research in this field has been intensified in recent years due to the experiential focus on the market (Kumar & Kaushik, 2018) and research on marketing and consumer behaviour (Schmitt *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, in consumer behaviour research, consumers are no longer considered rational agents that process information but also human beings with emotions that are affected by hedonic reactions (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). However, some researchers emphasize the necessity for innovative theoretical approaches to study the growth of a new consumer behaviour era (Cantone, Cova, & Testa, 2020; Skandalis, Byrom, & Banister, 2019).

The academic literature in tourism and brand management suggests that instruments of place and destination are important in building tourism environments and city/place branding (Hanna *et al.*, 2021b; Kavaratzis & Hatch, 2021; Ruiz-Real, Uribe-Toril, Gázquez-Abad, & Management, 2020). Local food and wine products are progressively positioned as central elements in city/place branding (Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, & Wang, 2019; Muñoz-Martinez & Florek, 2021; Pizzichini, Temperini, & Gregori, 2020). Competition between tourism destinations is fierce, and gastronomy is highlighted as a differentiating and attractive factor because when evaluating the reasons for individuals to visit a particular destination, food plays an enormous part in the decision-making process (UNWTO, 2017). It is not possible to dissociate food from tourism (and vice versa). Tourists get a clearer impression of local values and customs through a gastronomic experience, like cooking classes, visiting a food festival, or farm-to-table dining experiences (Hanna, Rowley, & Keegan, 2021). Thus, the concept of gastronomy/food

tourism “encompassed cultural practices and include in its discourse the ethical and sustainable values of the territory, the landscape, the sea, local history, values and culture heritage” (UNWTO, 2017).

The importance of gastronomic tourism is not only seen in an *ex-ante* context as it is a motivation for choosing a tourism destination. Its importance is also noted in the *ex-post*, as memorable local gastronomic/food experiences can affect tourists' intentions to recommend (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015), and also destination loyalty and expenditures (Disegna & Osti, 2016) being, generally, significant explanatory factors for tourism in the city of Porto (Reis, Vieira, & Borges, 2021; Santos, Ramos, Almeida, & Santos-Pavón, 2019). In this sense, food tourism or food and tourism have occurred as an important topic for recent tourism research (Kline, Lee, & Knollenberg, 2018), allowing the possibility of contributing to the existing literature in this field.

Gastronomic/food tourists travel primarily due to their interest in food. They are encouraged by the need to experience the food of a particular local or a specific type of food (Getz, 2019). Gastronomic/food consumption in tourism is a sensorial experience that partially improves tourism travel's experiential part (Richards, 2021). Food tourism includes offering unique food experiences and food in the destination's marketing (Garibaldi & Pozzi, 2018; Okumus, 2020). Thus, gastronomic tourism experiences include visiting producers, festivals, restaurants, tasting delicacies, and participating in activities such as cooking workshops, but it can never be only interpreted as a trip to a particular restaurant or cellar (Bertan, 2020; Pratt, Sontikul, & Ageiwaah, 2020). As tourists' motivation, experiencing gastronomy/food is now at a similar level to visiting a city's cultural and historical heritage and natural or artificial beauty (Richards, 2021). Nowadays, gastronomy/food tourism has a crucial responsibility in managing the destination's promotion, thus contributing to other sectors such as agriculture, wine, and food. In this line, according to “The Second Global Report” on Gastronomy Tourism (UNWTO, 2017), the gastronomy/food tourism segment “offers enormous potential in stimulating local, regional and national economies and enhancing sustainability and inclusion.”

Thus, gastronomic tourism experiences have increased substantially worldwide, and Portugal has not been unaware of this situation. Turismo de Portugal (2017) states that gastronomy and wines are qualifying assets of Portuguese tourism. In concrete terms, the city of Porto, in addition to having been recognized, in recent years, as the “best European destination”, was recently elected one of the best destinations in Europe for food lovers (European Best Destinations, 2021).

Despite the growing importance of consumer and brand experiences in academic research (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009; Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2020; Khan & Fatma, 2021; Kumar & Kaushik, 2018; Kumar & Kaushik, 2020), there is still a limited number of research addressing consumer experience and happiness derived from the consumption of food in a city destination. Mohamed, Hewedi, Lehto, and Maayouf (2020) research their focus on the investigation of the influence of several dimensions of local food experience on tourist food satisfaction and intention to revisit. Tsai and Wang (2017) explore four types of experiential values as antecedents of a place's food images and how this affects behaviour intention toward food tourism. Folgado-Fernández, Hernández-Mogollón, and Duarte (2017) research discusses the influence of tourists' food/gastronomic experiences on destination image and the effect on destination and event loyalty, applied to a gastronomic event in Spain. Lin (2014) tests the causes of cuisine experience and psychological well-being on hot springs tourists' revisit intentions and how the self-health perception moderates the relationship between these two constructs. However, to our knowledge, no studies relate consumer experience, happiness, and well-being in gastronomic/food city destinations.

Tourists tend to define their level of life satisfaction and happiness with a destination they visit through a set of experiences, especially in places with great historical and cultural weight (Sthapit, Coudounaris, & Björk, 2019). These experiences can include gastronomic experiences.

The main purpose of this research is to analyse the effect of the gastronomic/food experience in the destination city – Porto – on the tourists' life satisfaction and happiness. We intend to fill a gap in the field as it is the first time that this model has been studied and tested, namely the gap found by Hosany *et al.* (2022) in their literature review on memorable tourism experiences (MTE) in which they advocate the need for the consideration of adverse aspects in memorable experiences. On the other side, this model tests the direct effects of several dimensions of memorable tourism experiences on life satisfaction and consumer happiness. Only the work of Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018) uses tourists' subjective well-being as the output of a memorable experience. It does not separate the construct into life satisfaction and happiness dimensions. To reach this objective, we collected primary data from a sample of tourists in Porto.

Findings are expected to have both theoretical and managerial implications. From the theoretical perspective, our research contributes to the proliferation of destination tourists' happiness studies, aiming to understand the role of the different dimensions of gastronomic destination experience in life satisfaction and tourists' happiness in Porto city. Gaining insights into tourists' gastronomic/food experiences can provide valuable inputs that could help to improve Porto's attractiveness as a gastronomic destination. Furthermore, understanding the relationship between tourists' gastronomic experiences and their life satisfaction and happiness can be considered to evaluate tourists' loyalty and willingness to return in the future.

This paper starts with the theoretical background that allowed the definition of the hypotheses to be tested. After that, we describe the method, the measures used to describe our constructs, the questionnaire, and the tests applied to ensure the viability of our analysis. The results are shown in section 4, and in section 5, we present the discussion and provide the conclusions. It ends with a description of the limitations and highlights for future research lines.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Destination Branding, Experience, Life Satisfaction, and Happiness

Chan and Marafa (2018) suggest that a multi-dimensional understanding of destinations offers diverse chances to know the principle of destination branding. Furthermore, experiences that align with the tourists' core values are more likely to incite prolonged involvement in activities or experiences. In other words, since the activity aligns with the values, the tourists will most likely have a positive experience. Consequently, the chances of revisiting or recommending it to friends, family, and on social networking sites will be significantly greater (Baloglu, Busser, & Cain, 2019).

Tourists' consumption of local food while on holiday was mainly an issue related to utilitarianism. However, today it has grown beyond just a need for survival to include the need to enhance the holiday experience (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015). Scientific research has also shown that food tourism is a means for tourists to participate and discover the geography and culture of destinations other than the familiar (Lin, Marine-Roig, & Llonch-Molina, 2022; Soonsan & Somkai, 2021). de Jong and Varley (2018) divide gastronomic tourism research into two broad areas: (1) gastronomic heritage, where aspects of cultural, local community opinion and food festivals are pursued, and (2) gastronomic experiences, where aspects connected with tourists' attraction are linked with the destination's gastronomy.

Exploring different resolutions for different positioning of tourism destinations has been examined by numerous researchers (Camilleri, 2018; Richards, 2021; Santos, Santos, Pereira, Richards, & Caiado, 2020). Hence, the gastronomic experience can be a way to distinguish a place or a tourism destination from the competition. Dixit (2021) highlights that different stakeholders and academics have acknowledged food and other gastronomic events as important elements of the tourism product. Food/gastronomy provides a way for destination diversity. Govers and Go (2009) consider experiences as an essential aspect in describing destination branding as it relates to multi-sensory, emotive, and fantasy attributes of hedonic or experiential products seen in a tourist destination.

The self-determination theory (SDT), established by Deci and Ryan (2008), posits that the disposition of a consumer's inspiration to take part in an experience, in this situation, can influence the consequences of the gastronomic experience. Gillet, Vallerand, Lafrenière, and Bureau (2013) state that if the consumer experience is positive, it may improve the life satisfaction of the human being. Similarly, Knobloch, Robertson, and Aitken (2017b) suggest that consumer experiences influence life quality and well-being in tourism. The broaden and build theory (B&B) adds to the SDT theory that people who go through positive emotions will be more creative and seek new experiences in the future (Baloglu *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, they will expand their thinking and develop a sense of engagement and enjoyment of life.

Several researchers have revealed that consumers' happiness is related to live experiences (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2013; Garner *et al.*, 2021; Loureiro, Breazeale, & Radic, 2019; Sthapit *et al.*, 2019), that is, experiences associated to tourism and gastronomic tourism destinations. Instead, tourism experiences are related to life satisfaction (Luo, Lanlung, Kim, Tang, & Song, 2018) and happiness (Chen & Li, 2018; Loureiro *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it could be stated that a life-satisfied consumer is more likely to be pleased and happy with a gastronomic/food experience in a tourist destination.

2.2. *Gastronomic Experience*

Travel destinations, more specifically, regions or city brands, have progressively integrated the benefit of exclusive cuisine and gastronomy, food-related events, and Michelin award-winning Chefs and restaurants to attract tourists. However, there are two types of tourists concerning gastronomy - one who has no particular interest in gastronomy when visiting a city, and another, who visits a city intending to discover a different cuisine by learning from local food and dishes and thus emerging in their cultural context (Cordova-Buiza, Gabriel-Campos, Castaño-Prieto, & García-García, 2021).

Gastronomy/food tourism can be generally described as the contribution of tourists in food-related interests during a trip, such as consuming local cuisine and buying regional foods (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Several studies researching foodies' travel behaviour (Okumus, 2021; Wang, Kirillova, & Lehto, 2017) considered that this kind of traveller holds different preferences, i.e., culturally authentic experiences, educational experiences concerning local or regional food and occasions to meet people while enjoying food experiences. Furthermore, food experiences are a great source of happiness and satisfaction with the overall quality of life since breaking up positive experiences into smaller and more frequent ones can increase enjoyment and positive outcomes.

Similarly, in the tourism context, if the overall experience during the trip is cheerful and happy, the meals consumed during the trip would be equivalent to the smaller experiences in this case (Kline *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, a strong link has been identified between food consumption, food experiences, and pleasant and positive emotions, increasing life satisfaction and happiness levels.

Different scales have been developed to measure memorable experiences related to tourism. For example, Kim and Eves (2012) were among the first authors to build a scale to measure memorable tourist experiences. The usefulness of the scale has been confirmed by several studies (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Sthapit *et al.*, 2019) in some tourism contexts. Their analysis reveals that individuals who perceive a tourism experience as memorable would recall seven experiential dimensions (refreshment, novelty, hedonism, local culture, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge). Bigne, Fuentes-Medina, and Morini-Marrero (2020) tested Kim's and Eves's (2012) scale by comparing memorable tourism experiences (MTE) with ordinary tourism experiences (OTE). They concluded that some dimensions of the MTE scale (hedonism, novelty, meaningfulness, involvement, knowledge, and serendipity) are significantly more frequently reported in MTEs than in OTEs but are not unique to MTEs. Adongo *et al.* (2015) discuss the reliability of Kim and Eves's (2012) scale because this scale only focuses on positive, memorable experiences. In that sense, these authors also considered eight dimensions (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, knowledge, and adverse experience) for testing memorable tourism experiences applied to a gastronomic context within the scope of tourism in Ghana.

Considering the works of Kim *et al.* (2012) and Adongo *et al.* (2015), this paper states that gastronomic experiences in a tourist destination contain five dimensions (refreshment, involvement/knowledge, hedonic/novelty, meaningfulness, and adverse experience), aggregating the contributions of both works and filling a gap found by Hosany *et al.* (2022) in their literature review on MTE in which they advocate the need for the consideration of adverse aspects in memorable experiences.

According to Kim *et al.* (2012), refreshment is the most determining factor in tourism activities and the factor that most affects travel memories. Refreshment focuses on the state of mind and intensity of experiential engagement. Thus, experiences are not only engaging but also emotionally intense. Refreshment allows escaping from routine and stressful environments. Then, we can posit that:

H1a: Refreshment (R) experience with gastronomy/food increases tourists' life satisfaction (LS) with the destination.

H1b: Refreshment (R) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' happiness (H) with the destination.

The consumption of local food typical of a particular destination allows tourists to experience the historical and cultural heritage of the destination (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Researchers have observed that food can boost the distinctiveness of destinations since it is deeply associated with local production, lifestyles, cultural festivity, and heritage (Tsai & Wang, 2017). Therefore, they are gradually focusing on the period designed to savour food as an experience that will lead to positive emotional outcomes (Mugel, Gurviez, & Decrop, 2019).

Involvement is the level of relevance that an individual attaches to an object, an action, or an activity and the enthusiasm and interest generated by this (Di-Clemente, Hernández-Mogollón, & Campón-Cerro, 2020). Involvement is a state of motivation or interest regarding something. A tourist's involvement with gastronomy leads to memorable moments associated with a local product or specific ingredients (Bataat *et al.*, 2019). This involvement leaves an emotional response aroused from the activity and enhances tourists' sensitivity to the activity and the perception of an activity's importance (Chang, Morrison, Lin, & Ho, 2021).

Knowledge can be defined as a cognitive factor of the tourism experience that involves learning and education (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). The willingness to learn influences where people go and what they do while visiting a destination (Bigne *et al.*, 2020). Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) suggest that experience consumption can have implications such as enjoyment and feelings of pleasure and that learning can arise from the flow of associations. Travel experiences offer many unique learning opportunities for tourists (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017), where learning emerges from newly acquired practical skills, knowledge, wisdom, and self-awareness (Chen, Bao, & Huang, 2014). According to Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017), the knowledge dimension relates to informative experiences, defined as getting informed, meaning some new intellectual impressions offered by experiences that enhance tourist knowledge. Thus, tourists' knowledge and involvement in gastronomic experiences are interconnected and affect individuals' life satisfaction and happiness.

H2a: Involvement/Knowledge (I_K) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' life satisfaction (LS) with the destination.

H2b: Involvement/Knowledge (I_K) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' happiness (H) with the destination.

Novelty is an important dimension in tourism, characterized by new and unfamiliar experiences and an important motivation for an individual's travel (Chen, Huang, & Petrick, 2016). Novelty affects tourists' food choices since they are usually more eager to taste new and different foods (food neophiliacs). Therefore, novelty embraces feelings of excitement, fear, awe, and boredom mitigation (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019). Food neophiliacs present a unique type of motivation when experimenting with and consuming new foods (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019). Hedonism reflects the emotional value of the tourist's consumption experience, represents the returns received in enjoyment and playfulness, and is an integral part of leisure experiences (Chen *et al.*, 2016). Novelty and hedonism could enhance the tourist's seeking of sensual pleasure. Therefore, a hedonic/novelty experience related to food is expected to improve the tourists' life satisfaction and happiness.

H3a: Hedonic/Novelty (H_N) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' life satisfaction (LS) with the destination.

H3b: Hedonic/Novelty (H_N) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' happiness (H) with the destination.

Eating, as an experience, involves an assortment of perceptions and sensations. Moreover, food affects how people feel and therefore it is regarded as an important part of living necessary for life satisfaction (Mugel *et al.*, 2019). Regarding the two styles of well-being, positive psychology literature supports the presence of hedonic (positive emotions and happiness) and eudaimonic (sense of fulfilment and relevance) well-being – a combination of both hedonia and eudaimonia sustains a greater quality of life and a higher degree of fulfilment with one's life when assessed (Knobloch, Robertson, & Aitken, 2017a). When a tourist experiences a meaningful activity, the outcome is more than just happiness since the eudaimonic experience is built on meaningfulness (Ryan & Deci, 2019) and an entirely satisfactory life (Li & Atkinson, 2020). Consequently, it is expected that a meaningful experience will increase the life satisfaction of the tourists.

According to Kang, Gretzel, and Jamal (2008), meaningfulness allows tourists to find meaning in their tourist experiences. Through the importance of experiences, permanent meaning-making occurs and leaves an enduring impact (Ballantyne, Packer, & Sutherland, 2011). Then, the meaningfulness of the

gastronomic tourism experience makes it memorable (Tsiotsou & Wirtz, 2012). Thus, we consider the following hypotheses:

H4a: Meaningfulness (M) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' life satisfaction (LS) with the destination

H4b: Meaningfulness (M) experience with gastronomy/food increases the tourists' happiness (H) with the destination

The process surrounding a food experience, more specifically the consumption stage of the process, generates an emotional reaction. Emotions can range from the positive spectrum (i.e., happiness, joy, pleasure, and excitement) to a negative one (i.e., anger and disappointment) (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019). Positive emotions are related to a positive perception of an experience and, therefore, the development of a positively memorable experience, and vice-versa (Agyeiwaah *et al.*, 2019). In other words, adverse emotions are associated with a negative perception of an experience. Consequently, they will lead to a negative memorable experience (Sthapit *et al.*, 2019). This type of memorable experience will significantly affect the tourists' future decision-making since adverse experiences decrease life satisfaction.

As it was previously mentioned, positive experiences have positive repercussions, such as people being more creative and continuing to desire new experiences. However, when the outcome of the experience is negative, the opposite can happen. People become more close-minded, and their desire to experience new activities in the future diminishes (Baloglu *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the author states that an adverse experience will negatively affect the tourists' happiness and life satisfaction.

H5a: Adverse Experience (AE) with gastronomy/food decreases the tourists' life satisfaction (LS) with the destination.

H5b: Adverse Experience (AE) with gastronomy/food decreases the tourists' happiness (H) with the destination.

2.3. Life Satisfaction and Happiness

Emotion is defined as "a psychological state of preparation that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts" (Yang, Gu, & Cen, 2011, p. 26). Emotional well-being refers to the intensity and frequency that individuals experience certain feelings – that could range from being pleased with a positive connotation to being displeased with a negative connotation (Baloglu *et al.*, 2019). The concept of well-being is understood as a quest for values with which the person, in the tourism context, the tourists, firmly identifies with. Emotions strongly characterize tourists' most memorable memories, so they are important for the study. In the emotional prototype, happiness is one of the five categories in conjoint with anger, fear, sadness, and disgust (Russell, 1991). Many clearly acknowledge that people want to be happy since it's a positive feeling.

However, happiness is more than just experiencing more positive feelings than adverse ones, as it involves an overall feeling of satisfaction and meaningfulness (Mogilner, 2019). Emotions, namely happiness, significantly influence the perceived evaluation that tourists make of their experiences (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2019; Chen & Li, 2018; Hosany, Prayag, Deesilatham, Caušević, & Odeh, 2015; Knobloch *et al.*, 2017a). Accordingly, positive feelings are associated with a positive perception and consequently with the development of a memorable experience (Knobloch *et al.*, 2017a; Mogilner & Norton, 2019). Nevertheless, happiness is not the only outcome of an experience. Previous research

proposes that positive emotions positively affect one's life satisfaction and quality of life (Loureiro et al., 2019).

H6: Life satisfaction (LS) increases the tourists' happiness (H) in the destination city

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model proposed based on the literature review and the initial hypotheses.

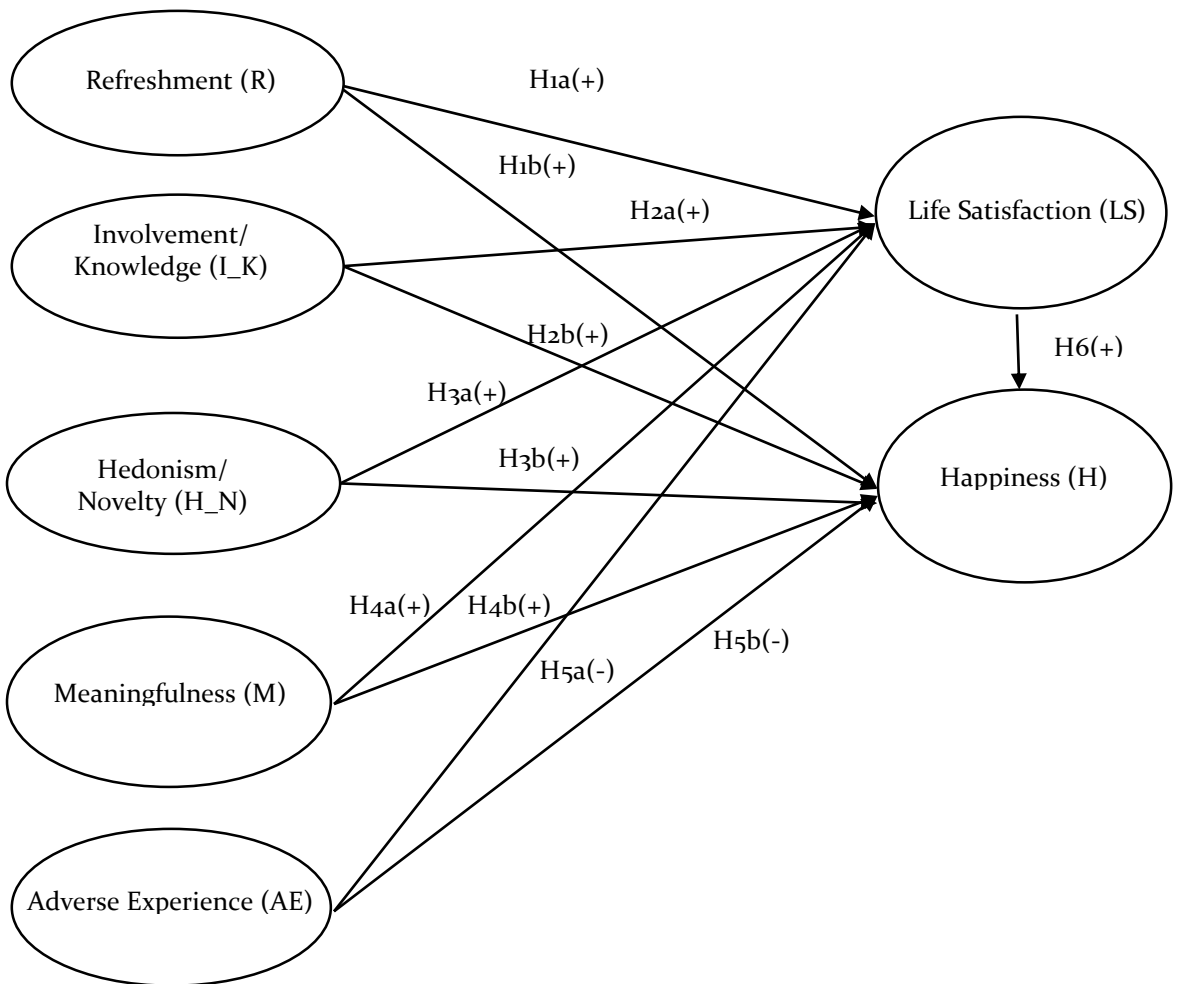


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

3. Methodology

3.1. Method

In this research, we used a quantitative methodology, and collected data using a structured questionnaire. The data were collected from a survey applied to n nationals who are visiting the city as tourists) and international tourists that were visiting the most important attractions in Porto (e.g.,

Clérigos Tower, Porto Railway Station - São Bento, near Livraria Lello, Stock Exchange Palace, San Francisco Church, Ribeira Pier, House of Music, close to the beach - Foz do Porto and so on) and came to enjoy the local food. These places in the city were chosen because they are places where tourists concentrate and where the main gastronomic sites of the city are located. We gathered a sample during the last week of May 2022 and got 453 valid answers.

The interviewers were previously briefed on how to apply the questionnaires adequately. The interviews were performed in four languages: Portuguese, English, Spanish, and French. The questionnaire was translated by native speakers of the languages concerned and subject to prior discussion with four experts in the field. Before the questionnaire presentation, the interviewers asked the respondents if they were making tourism and if gastronomy was on their list of interests when visiting the city. After receiving a positive answer, they advised about the survey length (maximum of 8 minutes) and the main objective. The procedure was reiterated on several occasions throughout the week of May.

The data obtained in this study were analysed using the two-step structural equation modelling (SEM) methodology proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and employing SPSS/AMOS 22 application. The measurement model is established by giving the variables studied in the literature and the path estimation that confirms or not the hypotheses. SEM was used to analyse the cause-effect link among the variables.

3.2. Measures

Considering Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff's (2003) recommendation to reduce the common method bias, existing scales in the main literature were adapted for this research. To measure the different dimensions of tourists' local gastronomic/food experience, we used the 25 items of the adapted scale of Adongo, Anuga, and Dayour (2015); to measure life satisfaction, we used the five items of Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) adapted scale and, finally, to measure happiness with the gastronomic/food experience, we used four items of the adapted Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999) scale.

3.3. Questionnaire

Of the 453 respondents, all respondents who said they had not enjoyed any gastronomic experience or tried local food were excluded. A total of 338 valid questionnaires were obtained from Porto tourists in May 2022. After the questions related to the socio-demographic characterization and the tourists' behaviour during the stay at the destination, the questions under study were posed. Survey items were adjusted from validated academic literature to develop this study measure. The questionnaire was analysed by a panel of experts comprising three professors in the field of tourism management and three senior marketing professionals managing local restaurants and gastronomic events in Portugal. Modifications from the original scale items were required to reveal the research aims of gastronomic experiences in a city destination. As a result, some of the items from the initial scales were eliminated because they were understood to be redundant. Respondents finished the questionnaire by responding to items on 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree" question.

4. Results

4.1. Sample Characteristics

Sample characteristics are described in table 1 with the information for the 338 respondents. The sample comprised 48.4% women, 51.6% men, and the respondents' mean age was 40.46 years old. The majority, 73.7%, were foreign tourists. According to INE (2008), the segment of tourists in the North of Portugal was 48.8% from Portugal, and the others (51.5%) reported from the USA, Brazil, Spain, Germany, and the UK. Considering our data, foreign tourists are overrepresented. However, the sending markets are

adequately represented. The remaining data is in consonance with the demographic statistics of the North of Portugal (INE, 2018).

Table 1. Sample Characterization

Gender	Percentage
Female	48.4%
Male	51.6%
Age (Mean)	40.456
Schooling	Percentage
Basic	7.3%
Secondary	31.8%
Degree	40.9%
Master or PhD	20.0%
Nationality	Percentage
Portugal	26.3%
Other countries	73.7%

4.2. Test for common method bias

The main variables in the conceptual model were operationalised measures from the current academic literature, encouraged by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) as a technical method to reduce the common method bias. Besides that, according to Podsakoff *et al.* (2003) recommendation, there are no problems with common method bias according to the Harman test for all variables. The total variance explained should be the first component that contributes to less than 50% of all constructs in the measurement model. The results were 21.7%, which allows us to deduce that the common method bias is not a problem. Even more, according to Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), respondents were not informed about the purpose of the research, and it was assured to them that their answers would be anonymous and confidential and that there were no wrong or correct answers.

4.3. Measurement model

Before running the confirmatory factor analysis, some procedures and statistics were obtained from the items. The data analysis method was used to check for missing data and outliers. The skewness values varied from -0.569 to 2.403, and the kurtosis values ranged from -0.45 to 3.125. As all skewness and kurtosis values are between -3,5 to 3,5, it is assumed that the variables are reliable with the constraints of univariate normality (Hair, Celsi, Ortinau, & Bush, 2010) (Table 2).

Furthermore, we have verified the multicollinearity between the constructs applying the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). The findings show the VIF of all items ranged between 1.896 and 3.657, which is lower than the usual cut-off of 5. This allowed us to conclude minimal collinearity among constructs and to confirm that multicollinearity was not violated (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was achieved by the maximum likelihood estimation method and Hair *et al.* (2010) conditions to assess the measurement model. The measurement model fit was evaluated with the $\chi^2/df = 2.102$, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) is 0.057, the comparative fit index (CFI) is 0.944, TLI = 0.927 and the incremental fit index (IFI) is 0.945. The findings show a very good measurement fit.

Table 2. Normality of data

	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness		Kurtosis	
				Sig		Sig
LS1: On most days, my life is close to ideal	4.09	0.761	-0.719	0.133	1.167	0.265
LS2: The conditions of my life are excellent	3.99	0.871	-0.708	0.133	0.473	0.265
LS3: I'm satisfied with my life	4.21	0.790	-0.974	0.133	1.385	0.265
HAP1: In general, I feel happy regarding this visit to Porto	4.46	0.718	-1.560	0.133	3.113	0.265
HAP2: Comparing to other visits, I consider myself happy in Porto	4.33	0.759	-1.196	0.133	2.166	0.265
HAP3: I get the feeling that the people around me are happy during their visit to the city	4.22	0.811	-0.924	0.133	0.949	0.265
H1: Exciting	4.06	0.901	-0.637	0.133	-0.245	0.265
H2: I had fun	4.20	0.833	-0.913	0.133	0.637	0.265
N2: Unique experience	3.78	1.071	-0.788	0.133	0.201	0.265
R1: I felt free	4.09	0.979	-0.916	0.133	0.320	0.265
R2: I felt refreshed	4.01	1.013	-0.752	0.133	-0.058	0.265
R3: I felt revitalized	3.94	1.022	-0.799	0.133	0.362	0.265
M1: I ate something with meaning	3.72	1.113	-0.700	0.133	0.004	0.265
M2: I ate something important	3.56	1.210	-0.569	0.133	-0.439	0.265
I1: I participated in the preparation of the food	2.31	1.469	0.662	0.133	-1.40	0.265
I2: I participated in the choice of ingredients	2.56	1.557	0.366	0.133	-1.49	0.265
K1: I learned how to prepare new foods	2.62	1.500	0.293	0.133	-1.88	0.265
AE2: The place was not clean	4.28	1.238	-1.582	0.133	1.144	0.265
AE3: The food caused me stomach problems	4.53	1.084	-2.403	0.133	3.125	0.265
N (Total)	338					

We studied three types of reliability (Cronbach Alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) and two types of validity (convergent validity and discriminant validity) of the selected scales to measure each variable. For all variables, Cronbach's alpha is over 0.646, CR values are superior to 0.759, and AVE values are outstanding at 0.614. All standardized factor loadings are significant at $p < 0.001$. The composite reliabilities exceed the minimum conditions of 0.70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Convergent validity is evaluated by the confirmatory factor loadings ranging from 0.630 to 0.899. All confirmatory factor loadings were significant at 0.001 level showing a satisfactory convergent validity. The average variance extracted (AVE) offers confirmation of the total convergent validity of every single variable. It specifies the variance described by the variable compared to the total variance that may be ascribed to measurement error, which has to surpass 0.50 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) (Table 3).

Table 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's Alpha
Refreshment (R) gastronomic experience	R1	0.759***	0.923	0.802	0.862
	R2	0.934***			
	R3	0.793***			
Involvement/Knowledge (I_K) gastronomic experience	I1	0.849***	0.879	0.709	0.804
	I2	0.773***			
	K1	0.661***			
Hedonic/Novelty (H_N) gastronomic experience	H1	0.899***	0.917	0.789	0.767
	H2	0.862***			
	N2	0.696***			
Meaningfulness (M) gastronomic experience	M1	0.764***	0.875	0.778	0.793
	M2	0.860***			
	AE2	0.630***			
Adverse Experience (AE) gastronomic experience	AE2	0.630***	0.759	0.614	0.646
	AE3	0.758***			
	LS1	0.789***			
Life Satisfaction (LS)	LS2	0.788***	0.895	0.739	0.826
	LS3	0.773***			
	H1	0.766***			
Happiness (H)	H2	0.767***	0.855	0.664	0.772
	H3	0.654***			

Note: Quality of Measurement Model $\chi^2/df = 2.102$; RMSEA = 0.057; CFI = 0.944; TLI = 0.927; IFI = 0.945
 ***p < 0.001

Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria were used to assess discriminant validity, where all AVE values should be greater than the squared inter-construct correlation estimates (Table 4).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Matrix

AVE	Construct	R	I_K	H_N	M	AE	LS	H
0.802	R	0.895						
0.709	I_K	0.179***	0.842					
0.789	H_N	0.533***	0.142***	0.888				
0.778	M	0.488***	0.254***	0.433***	0.882			
0.614	AE	0.170***	0.274***	0.104***	0.173***	0.783		
0.739	LS	0.301***	-0.078***	0.333***	0.213***	0.032***	0.859	
0.664	H	0.378***	-0.025***	0.366***	0.255***	-0.152***	0.440***	0.815

Note: Numbers in diagonal represent square root of average variance extracted; ***p < 0.001; R = Refreshment gastronomic experience; I_K = Involvement/Knowledge gastronomic experience; H_N = Hedonic/Novelty gastronomic experience; M = Meaningfulness experience; AE = Adverse gastronomic experience; LS = Life Satisfaction; H = Happiness

Then, both validity and reliability tests of the measurement model showed an appropriate degree of the variable used for the conceptual model proposed.

4.4. Structural Model and Hypotheses Test

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) applying maximum likelihood estimation and the bootstrapping method was performed to assess the validity of the conceptual model and the hypotheses. The

psychometric values of the structural model are: $\chi^2/df = 2.102$; RMSEA = 0.057; CFI = 0.944; TLI = 0.927; IFI = 0.945, which allowed us to assume that the model fit was very good.

Table 5. Structural equation model results

Hypothesis	β	SE	t-test	p-value	Support
H1a: Refreshment gastronomic experience → Life Satisfaction	0.138	0.065	2.127	0.033	Yes
H1b: Refreshment gastronomic experience → Happiness	0.159	0.058	2.727	0.006	Yes
H2a: Involvement/Knowledge gastronomic experience → Life Satisfaction	-0.099	0.042	-2.351	0.019	Yes
H2b: Involvement/Knowledge gastronomic experience → Happiness	-0.008	0.038	-0.215	0.830	No
H3a: Hedonic/Novelty gastronomic experience → Life Satisfaction	0.267	0.091	2.928	0.003	Yes
H3b: Hedonic/Novelty gastronomic experience → Happiness	0.149	0.082	1.824	0.068	Yes
H4a: Meaningfulness → Life Satisfaction	0.039	0.046	0.834	0.404	No
H4b: Meaningfulness → Happiness	0.032	0.041	0.782	0.434	No
H5a: Adverse gastronomic experience → Life Satisfaction	0.008	0.054	0.152	0.879	No
H5b: Adverse gastronomic experience → Happiness	-0.147	0.060	-2.449	0.014	Yes
H6: Life Satisfaction → Happiness	0.293	0.066	4.410	0.000	Yes

Note: β – standard regression weight; SE – standard error for unstandardized coefficient; in bold, hypotheses not supported

The results achieved in the model estimation model have confirmed that the refreshment experience with gastronomy had a positive influence on life satisfaction ($\beta = 0.138$, $p = 0.033$), thus supporting hypothesis H1a. Regarding the effects of gastronomic experience on happiness, the findings show that the refreshment experience positively affected happiness ($\beta = 0.159$, $p = 0.006$) and, supporting hypothesis H1b. Involvement/Knowledge experience decreases the influence on life satisfaction ($\beta = -0.099$, $p = 0.019$), differing from what was assumed and leading us to refuse hypothesis H2a. Involvement/Knowledge experience does not improve ($\beta = -0.008$, $p = 0.830$) the happiness of tourists in the destination, thus implying the rejection of H2b. Hedonic/Novelty experience increases ($\beta = 0.267$, $p = 0.003$) the life satisfaction of tourists, supporting hypothesis H3a. Hedonic/Novelty experience with gastronomy/food increases ($\beta = 0.149$, $p = 0.068$) the happiness of tourists, with 90% of confidence, supporting hypothesis H3b. A Meaningfulness experience does not affect ($\beta = 0.039$, $p = 0.404$) the life satisfaction of tourists, leading to the rejection of H4a. Meaningfulness experience does not impact ($\beta = 0.032$, $p = 0.434$) the tourists' happiness, which determines the rejection of H4b. Adverse gastronomy/food experience does not decrease ($\beta = 0.008$, $p = 0.879$) life satisfaction, but this relation is not statistically significant, which also implies the rejection of H5a. Adverse gastronomy/food experience decreases ($\beta = -0.147$, $p = 0.014$) the tourists' happiness, as anticipated, supporting H5b. Lastly, life satisfaction increases ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$) the tourists' happiness in the destination, supporting H6 (Table 5).

The findings show that the gastronomic/food experience of Porto tourists only validates the hypotheses related to the experience of refreshment and the hedonic/novelty experience, which improve the

tourists' life satisfaction and happiness. The adverse experiences reduce the tourist's happiness, and finally, life satisfaction increases the tourists' happiness in Porto. The gastronomy/food involvement/knowledge and the meaningful gastronomy/food experiences are not statistically important to enhance life satisfaction or the Porto tourist's happiness.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The main objective of this research is to analyse the effect of the gastronomic/food experience in the destination city - Porto - on tourists' life satisfaction and happiness. We intend to fill a gap in the field by including adverse aspects in memorable experiences. On the other hand, this model tests the direct effects of several dimensions of memorable tourist experiences on life satisfaction and consumer happiness.

We study the impact of the adapted dimensions of Adongo's *et al.* (2015) and Kim and Eves (2012) on the gastronomic experience scale (refreshment, involvement/knowledge, hedonic/novelty, meaningfulness, and adverse experience) in a city - Porto - on tourists' happiness and life satisfaction. Our findings concluded that the dimensions of gastronomic experience that present a considerable and positive effect on life satisfaction and happiness were refreshment and hedonic/novelty.

Refreshment may be understood as a sensory appeal deriving from eating local cuisines outside one's residence (Kauppinen-Räsänen, Gummerus, & Lehtola, 2013). Refreshment is related to the state of mind and the depth of experiential engagement of tourists (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015). Our study indicates that recalled eating and food experiences are symbolised by being free, refreshed, and revitalized.

The direct and positive effect of the hedonic/novelty dimension on tourists' life satisfaction and happiness reinforces the results found by Chen *et al.* (2016). An interesting result was the validation of the hypothesis concerning the fact that adverse experience negatively affects happiness. This result is in vein with Sthapit *et al.* (2019) and Agyeiwaah *et al.* (2019) work, thus concluding that the dimension of adverse experiences should be taken into account when analysing its impact on the gastronomic experiences of tourists, a finding that fulfils a gap found in the literature review (Hosany *et al.*, 2022).

An unexpected result was the involvement dimension's negative effect on life satisfaction. This may be because tourists are not strongly involved with local gastronomy, leading to low involvement and knowledge of the food in the destination city (Batat *et al.*, 2019; Chang *et al.*, 2021). It could also be a result of tourists having little knowledge about the local food, and this lack of knowledge could cause some anxiety or discomfort to the tourist.

As expected, life satisfaction positively affects tourists' happiness in their gastronomic experiences (Loureiro *et al.*, 2019). This result shows that life satisfaction and happiness should be considered separately as output variables of a gastronomic experience. Furthermore, it was found that the different dimensions considered to measure the effects of memorable gastronomic experiences on these two constructs are distinct. Refreshment and hedonic/novelty affect both life satisfaction and tourist happiness, involvement/knowledge negatively affects only life satisfaction, adverse experience negatively only affects happiness, and meaningfulness does not affect any of the output variables.

6. Theoretical Contribution

This work broadly contributes to the literature by advancing knowledge of memorable gastronomic tourist experiences (Hosany *et al.*, 2022). More specifically, this research contributes to the literature by

showing that the dimensions of memorable gastronomic tourism experiences do not have the same impact on life satisfaction and tourist happiness. This result is interesting and relevant because it shows that we need to include adverse experiences in the effect of tourist life satisfaction and happiness. That meaningfulness is a dimension that is not significant in the scope of gastronomic experiences.

This work also shows that life satisfaction and happiness are two different constructs and need to be studied separately. Some memorable tourism experience dimensions impact life satisfaction, in general, or happiness, in particular (Mogilner & Norton, 2019).

It should be noted that the sample was collected in the low season period and immediately after the end of the confinement, and we know that the lockdown lasted long enough to uphold the change, not only in consumption habits and routines, but also in the individual's structure of needs and motivations (Sigala, 2020). Tourists wanted to leave home, visit new tourist destinations, live together and have new experiences. We concluded that a good gastronomic experience contributed to the satisfaction of tourists, and consequently, to increase their levels of happiness. We also know that emotional factors related with happiness affect the length of stay (LOS) in a destination (Vieira *et al.*, 2021), and consequently there will be a positive impact in economic terms. These types of factors must be included in the analysis of the attractiveness of a tourist destination in addition to other attributes, namely heritage richness, culture, climate, prices, among others.

7. Managerial Implications

Concerning managerial implications, this research gives recommendations and a framework for developing and implementing gastronomic experiences, enabling several stakeholders to boost the tourism possibility of local gastronomy in a specific destination. In this case, a destination should provide remarkable, positive, refreshed, and revitalized food-related experiences, which the tourist may yet intend to relive and recommend.

About hedonic/novelty experience with gastronomy/food we have verified in our results that novelty embraces a state of excitement, fun, and a unique moment. In terms of practical implications, the destination should provide unique moments of gastronomic experiences without any possibility of similarity or proximity to another type of experience. Only then can the consumer have moments of fun and excitement.

Another important result is that life satisfaction increases tourists' happiness in the destination. Considering that Mogilner and Norton (2019) state that tourists' interests tend not only to enjoy individual experiences quickly but also unforgettable long-term fulfilment, it is possible to confirm the important role of gastronomic activities in the satisfaction and happiness levels of tourists. Tourists' happiness is not smooth, and it changes, giving distinct kinds of tourism services and travel activities (Chen & Li, 2018; Gillet *et al.*, 2013). This acknowledgment may be helpful in managing gastronomic/food tourism. Bearing in mind these results, this paper has confirmed that gastronomy/food, to be successful, must be represented by four key factors: positive, exclusive, renewed, and revitalizing. As a consequence, the tourist will have fun, be satisfied, and feel happy.

8. Limitations and Future Research

This research presents a few limitations that could be future research topics. The major limitations are the convenience sample, as the data were gathered from tourists who stayed in Porto through a specific period; the data collection period (May 2022), although there are already quite a few tourists in the city, is far from the July / August period, which may have affected the results; furthermore, it was only

centred in one city. Future research should pay due attention to other cities, countries, and collect the data in different periods. We also point out that a cross-sectional survey has weaknesses when investigating satisfaction and happiness. Future research may use longitudinal methodologies to identify other reasons that may influence well-being. And finally, when the data were collected, it didn't occur under a pandemic context. Since 2020, the tourism sector, and consequently, gastronomic tourism, has been one of the most affected areas by this contextual environment. Thus, it becomes even more relevant to understand the role of post-pandemic gastronomic tourism and its influence on satisfaction and happiness with the tourist destination.

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