

The Role of the Gastronomic Experience in Experiential Tourism Marketing

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Abstract

With the rise of the experience economy in the service and marketing sectors, tourism marketing has shifted away from product- and service-oriented approaches toward experience-based value creation. This transformation has positioned experiential tourism marketing at the core of contemporary tourism strategies, while simultaneously rendering gastronomy one of the most intense and meaning-laden components of the tourist experience. Owing to their sensory, emotional, cultural, and social characteristics, gastronomic experiences play a significant role in the production of experiential value and in deepening tourist–destination interaction. This study aims to address the role of the gastronomic experience within the context of experiential tourism marketing from a conceptual perspective. Drawing on the literature on the experience economy and experiential marketing, the study positions the gastronomic experience at the center of the tourism value creation process. Through a literature-based synthesis, the effects of gastronomic experiences on experiential value and behavioral outcomes are systematically discussed. Within this scope, the chapter proposes a holistic conceptual model that explains the multidimensional and context-sensitive structure of the gastronomic experience within the overall tourist experience. The study emphasizes that gastronomy is not merely a complementary tourism activity, but rather a significant value creation instrument in experiential tourism marketing.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the tourism sector has undergone structural transformations that have led it to move away from the traditional value creation paradigm based on the provision of products and services, toward a reconfiguration grounded in an experience-based economic logic. Within the literature, this shift has gained a theoretical foundation through Pine and Gilmore's (1998; 2013) experience economy approach, which demonstrates that economic value is no longer generated solely through tangible outputs or functional services, but rather through the meaning, intensity, and memorability of individuals' lived experiences. Tourism, by its very nature characterized by the predominance of intangible, contextual, and emotional elements, has thus become one of the fields in which the most salient manifestations of the experience economy can be observed (Quan & Wang, 2004; Richards, 2012). The experience economy framework fundamentally redefines the role of the tourist in tourism marketing. Within this perspective, the tourist moves beyond being a passive consumer of pre-designed services and becomes an active participant and co-creator of the experience (Schmitt, 1999; Scott, Laws & Boksberger, 2009). Experiences are therefore conceptualized not as outputs fully controllable by firms, but as dynamic processes shaped through the interaction among the tourist, service providers, the physical setting, and the social context (Quan & Wang, 2004). This shift has redirected the focus of tourism marketing away from mere product and service promises toward the design, facilitation, and interpretation of experiences. Consequently, experiential tourism marketing has emerged as a contemporary approach positioned at the core of tourism value creation.

The experiential tourism marketing literature emphasizes that the tourist experience exhibits a multidimensional structure formed through the interaction of sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social components (Schmitt, 1999; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). In this regard, the tourism experience is not limited solely to remarkable or "peak" moments; rather, everyday activities and supporting experiences also play a crucial role in shaping its holistic meaning (Quan & Wang, 2004). This multilayered structure of the tourism experience necessitates the reconfiguration of marketing strategies in a manner that encompasses the experience in its entirety. Experiential tourism marketing thus represents a value creation perspective that prioritizes tourists' sensory and emotional engagement while placing interaction and co-creation processes at its core (Scott et al., 2009; Rather, 2020). Within this transformation process, gastronomy has emerged as one of the most prominent and strategic components of experiential tourism marketing. Gastronomic experiences constitute domains in which experiential

value is produced in a particularly powerful manner due to their intense sensory stimulation, emotional resonance, cultural meaning, and potential for social interaction (Richards, 2012; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). In the tourism context, food and beverage activities extend beyond merely satisfying physiological needs and evolve into multidimensional experiential domains that deepen tourists' interaction with the destination and contribute to the construction of experiential meaning (Quan & Wang, 2004; Kivela & Crotts, 2005). From this perspective, gastronomy possesses a flexible structure that not only functions as a supportive element ensuring the continuity of the tourist experience, but also, in certain contexts, serves as the primary travel motivation and the peak point of the experience itself (Quan & Wang, 2004; Chang et al., 2020).

The contemporary literature demonstrates that the gastronomic experience exerts significant effects on tourist motivations, perceived value, satisfaction, destination image, loyalty, and behavioral intentions (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Jiménez Beltrán, López-Guzmán & González Santa-Cruz, 2016; Lai, Lu & Liu, 2020; Chen, Xu & Huang, 2024). In addition, gastronomic experiences strongly contribute to key outcomes of experiential tourism marketing, such as memorability and word-of-mouth communication (WOM/e-WOM) (Sthapit, 2019; Lai et al., 2020; Dursun, 2025). This indicates that the role of gastronomy within the tourist experience is not limited to a merely complementary activity; rather, it constitutes a critical touchpoint where experiential value is produced and marketing outcomes are shaped. Nevertheless, within the gastronomy tourism literature, gastronomic experience has predominantly been examined in the contexts of tourist motivation, destination image, or special interest tourism, while limited attention has been paid to its holistic conceptualization as a central mechanism of experiential tourism marketing (Sio, Fraser & Fredline, 2024; Richards, 2021). However, perspectives derived from the experience economy and experiential marketing suggest that gastronomy should be regarded not merely as a tourism product, but as a strategic instrument that enables experiential value creation. From this standpoint, the need for holistic approaches that conceptualize the role of the gastronomic experience in experiential tourism marketing within a multidimensional, contextual, and relational framework has become increasingly evident.

Building on this theoretical and empirical gap, the present study aims to systematically examine the role of the gastronomic experience within the context of experiential tourism marketing. The primary objective of the study is to conceptualize the gastronomic experience as a multidimensional experiential domain within the experience economy, experiential marketing, and tourism literature, and to elucidate the function of gastronomy in the

process extending from experiential value creation to behavioral outcomes. Accordingly, the study theoretically addresses experiential marketing and experiential tourism marketing, discusses the positioning of the gastronomic experience within the overall tourist experience, and proposes a comprehensive conceptual model—grounded in the existing literature—that explains the function of gastronomic experience in experiential tourism marketing.

2. Conceptual Framework

As value creation in tourism increasingly evolves toward an experience-based structure, marketing approaches likewise need to be reconsidered in line with this transformation. Within this context, the following section systematically addresses the main approaches and concepts that constitute the conceptual framework of the present study.

2.1. Experiential Marketing

The structural transformation in contemporary marketing has revealed that economic value can no longer be defined solely through the physical attributes of products or the functional benefits of services. This transformation is explained through the experience economy approach, which argues that economic value is primarily generated through the experiences individuals undergo during their interactions with products and services. According to Pine and Gilmore (2013), experiences are events designed by firms but subjectively perceived by individuals, encompassing sensory, emotional, and cognitive dimensions simultaneously. In this regard, value emerges not from the offered object itself, but from the meaning and memorability of the interaction established between the individual and that offering. From the perspective of the experience economy, experiences are not treated as standardized outputs; rather, they are regarded as dynamic structures shaped by context, individual perception, and interaction processes. This perspective shifts the focus of marketing activities away from the mere provision of products and services toward the design and orchestration of experiences. This ongoing transformation has led to the development of the experiential marketing approach within the marketing literature. Experiential marketing conceptualizes the consumer not merely as a rational decision-maker, but as a holistic experiential subject characterized by sensory, emotional, cognitive, and relational dimensions. Schmitt (1999) conceptualizes experiential marketing through sensory (sense), affective (feel), cognitive (think), behavioral (act), and relational (relate) dimensions, arguing that marketing activities should be structured around these experiential modules. Within this approach, the

primary objective is not only to deliver functional benefits to consumers, but to create enduring value through meaningful and personalized experiences.

Experiences are shaped less as direct outputs of marketing strategies than as outcomes emerging at the intersection of interaction, participation, and contextual factors (Dieguez & Conceição, 2021). Accordingly, experiential marketing explains value creation not through unilateral firm-driven activities, but through co-creation processes realized together with consumers. Moving beyond short-term satisfaction, experiential marketing focuses on outcomes such as emotional bonding, identification, and long-term relationship building. Similarly, Richards (2021) emphasizes that experience research has increasingly shifted away from service quality- and satisfaction-centered approaches toward dimensions such as emotional intensity, social interaction, and co-creation of value. In this sense, experiential marketing represents an experience economy-based perspective that explains consumer value through multidimensional experiential processes and positions marketing activities around the design of these processes.

2.2. Experiential Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing has long been structured around the promotion of destinations' tangible attractions and the services they offer. However, with increasing competition, the diversification of tourist profiles, and the deepening of expectations, marketing approaches based solely on service provision have become insufficient. This transformation indicates that value creation in tourism has shifted from product- and service-oriented approaches toward experience-based approaches. From the perspective of the experience economy, tourism is conceptualized not as the sum of discrete services such as accommodation, transportation, or food and beverage, but as a series of holistic experiences lived by tourists throughout the travel process (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). One of the most significant contributions of the experience economy to tourism marketing lies in its redefinition of the tourist's role. Within this approach, tourists move beyond being passive consumers of pre-designed services and become active participants and co-creators of the experience. Quan and Wang (2004) emphasize that the tourism experience is not composed solely of striking or "peak" moments; rather, supporting experiences intertwined with everyday activities also constitute an integral part of the overall experience. This perspective necessitates the development of experiential narratives that encompass the entire journey, rather than isolated product promises, in tourism marketing.

Experiential tourism marketing translates this holistic understanding of experience into a strategic marketing framework. Scott, Laws, and Boksberger (2009) argue that tourism experiences cannot be fully predetermined or standardized; instead, they emerge through the interaction among tourists, places, service providers, and the social context. Accordingly, experiential tourism marketing focuses not on communicating service performance, but on the design and facilitation of experiences that encourage tourists' sensory, emotional, and cognitive engagement. This approach has led the marketing literature to conceptualize experience not merely as an outcome, but as an ongoing process. In the tourism context, experiential marketing explains value creation not through unilateral firm-driven activities, but through tourists' participation in and interaction with the experience itself (Dieguez & Conceição, 2021). Jiang, Ramkissoon, and Mavondo (2016) highlight that experiential tourism marketing strengthens tourists' emotional attachment to and identification with the destination, which in turn plays a decisive role in satisfaction and behavioral intentions. This suggests that, from a marketing perspective, experiences must not only be lived but also remembered and meaningfully interpreted.

Interaction and co-creation processes occupy a central position in experiential tourism marketing. Rather (2020) notes that the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral dimensions of tourist engagement directly influence perceived experiential value and destination identification. Similarly, Rather and Hollebeek (2020) emphasize that experiential marketing practices enhance customer engagement, deepen the tourist experience, and exert an indirect effect on loyalty. These studies indicate that experiential tourism marketing focuses not merely on the delivery of experiences, but on the long-term management of tourist–destination relationships. Experience economy and experiential marketing approaches demonstrate that marketing activities in tourism are increasingly oriented toward the production of meaning, emotion, and participation rather than product and service promises (Schmitt, 1999; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). In summary, experiential tourism marketing represents a holistic approach that, grounded in the experience economy perspective, extends tourism value creation beyond the provision of products and services. By positioning the tourist at the center of the experience, this approach structures marketing strategies around experience design, interaction processes, and memorability.

2.3. Gastronomic Experience

In the tourism context, the gastronomic experience is conceptualized not merely as a functional activity referring to food and beverage consumption,

but as a multilayered experiential domain encompassing sensory, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions. From the perspective of the experience economy, gastronomy has moved beyond being a complementary element of the tourism product to become an experience component that generates value in its own right. In this respect, the gastronomic experience is positioned as one of the key elements that deepen tourists' interaction with the destination, contribute to the construction of experiential meaning, and render the travel process memorable (Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Quan & Wang, 2004; Richards, 2012; Sthapit, 2019). Within the literature, the gastronomic experience is commonly defined as a multisensory structure. Sensory components such as taste, smell, visual presentation, tactile elements, and the auditory environment directly influence the perceived value of the gastronomic experience (Quan & Wang, 2004; Schmitt, 1999). However, it is emphasized that the gastronomic experience is not limited solely to sensory dimensions; rather, it is also shaped through cultural meanings, social interactions, and contextual elements. In this sense, the gastronomic experience constitutes an important experiential domain through which tourists engage with the local life, culture, and identity of the destination (Richards, 2012).

The experiential tourism literature draws particular attention to the role of the gastronomic experience within the holistic structure of the tourist experience. While positioning gastronomy among supporting experiences, Quan and Wang (2004) argue that such experiences play a critical role in tourists' interpretation of their overall travel experience. For tourists, gastronomic experiences often represent a departure from everyday life, standing outside the realm of the "ordinary" and thereby reinforcing the extraordinary dimension of the experience. This indicates that the gastronomic experience is not merely a component of the tourist experience, but a determinant of its intensity and depth. The role of the gastronomic experience in experiential value creation becomes even more pronounced when examined through emotional and memory-related processes. In this context, the gastronomic experience is conceptualized not as a momentary and transient consumption activity limited to the time of experience, but as a multilayered phenomenon integrated with memory, emotion, and recollection processes. Food-related experiences trigger tourists' emotional responses through intense sensory stimulation; in particular, positive emotions such as joy and interest are reproduced through recollection processes even after the experience has ended. This demonstrates that the experiential value of the gastronomic experience is not confined to immediate gratification, but is sustained over time through mental re-experiencing (Sthapit, 2019; Dursun, 2025).

Recent empirical studies support this central role of the gastronomic experience in the tourism value creation process, revealing that gastronomic experiences shape tourists' perceptions of the destination, enhance perceived value and satisfaction, and, through these mechanisms, foster behavioral outcomes such as loyalty and revisit intention (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Mora et al., 2021). At the same time, the gastronomic experience is directly related to tourist motivations and has become an increasingly decisive factor in destination choice (Córdova-Buiza et al., 2021). Within this value creation process, the social dimension of the gastronomic experience emerges as a key component that enhances experiential depth. The fact that food experiences are often lived through sharing, collective consumption, and social interaction strengthens the emotional intensity and meaning of the experience, transforming the gastronomic experience beyond the framework of individual pleasure into a collective experiential domain. The reinforcing effect of this social context enhances memorability and contributes to the continuity of experiential value (Scott et al., 2009; Sthapit, 2019).

2.4. The Role of the Gastronomic Experience in Experiential Tourism Marketing

The emergence of experiential tourism marketing has demonstrated that value creation in tourism cannot be explained solely through physical attractions or service offerings. Within this transformation process, gastronomy has become one of the key components of experiential marketing due to its distinctive characteristics. This positioning of gastronomy is not the result of a coincidental development; rather, it stems from its structural attributes, which closely align with the core principles of the experience economy. Gastronomic experiences stand out as one of the domains in which experiential value is produced most intensively, owing to their sensory richness, emotional associations, cultural embeddedness, and potential for social interaction (Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Richards, 2021).

One of the primary reasons gastronomy has assumed a central role in experiential tourism marketing lies in the fact that gastronomic experiences require direct bodily and sensory engagement. While many components of the tourism experience may remain at the level of observation or limited interaction, gastronomic experiences strengthen the embodied dimension of experience through intense sensory interactions such as tasting, smelling, and sharing. This characteristic transforms the gastronomic experience into a domain that generates experiential value through concrete lived experiences rather than abstract promises (Schmitt, 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004). Within the experience economy framework, such experiences possess a high potential

in terms of memorability and emotional intensity. Although eating and drinking practices constitute a natural part of everyday life, they acquire renewed meaning within the tourism context under different spatial, cultural, and social conditions. This process of re-signification enables the gastronomic experience to move beyond the “ordinary” and be transformed into experiential value. In this respect, gastronomy may function as a supporting experience that ensures the continuity of the tourist experience, while in certain contexts it may also become the primary motivation for travel and constitute the peak moments of the experience itself (Quan & Wang, 2004; Richards, 2021).

Similarly, gastronomic experiences directly shape tourists’ perceived value, satisfaction levels, and destination evaluations, thereby laying the groundwork for key experiential marketing outcomes such as loyalty, revisit intention, and recommendation behaviors (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Mora et al., 2021). These relationships indicate that gastronomy is not merely a complementary element in experiential tourism marketing, but a critical touchpoint at which experiential value is produced. Another factor that renders gastronomy strategic from the perspective of experiential tourism marketing is the capacity of gastronomic experiences to generate cultural meaning. Food is not merely a consumable product; it serves as a carrier of local identity, historical accumulation, and cultural practices. Through gastronomic experiences, tourists establish direct contact with the cultural fabric of the destination, and this contact strengthens the symbolic dimension of the experience. In this regard, gastronomy shows a strong alignment with the experiential marketing objective of “meaning creation” (Richards, 2012; Richards, 2021). The central role of the gastronomic experience in experiential marketing is further reinforced through emotional and memory-related processes. Food experiences elicit emotional responses through intense sensory stimulation, and these responses are reproduced through recollection processes even after the experience has ended. This enables the experiential value of the gastronomic experience to persist over time, not only at the moment of consumption but also through memorability (Sthapit, 2019; Pine & Gilmore, 2013). Consequently, memorability—one of the core objectives of experiential marketing—is strongly supported through gastronomic experiences.

Moreover, gastronomic experiences represent one of the rare domains that concretely embody the interaction and co-creation dimension of experiential tourism marketing. Practices such as sharing food, engaging with local producers, participating in cooking experiences, and social dining environments encourage tourists to actively participate in the experience. Such participation enhances experiential depth and provides a foundation for the development of emotional bonds between tourists and destinations

(Scott et al., 2009; Rather, 2020; Rather & Hollebeck, 2020). In this sense, gastronomy directly aligns with the relationship-oriented and long-term value creation objectives of experiential tourism marketing. Accordingly, the gastronomic experience constitutes the strategic core of experiential tourism marketing as an experiential domain that both enhances experiential intensity and supports the repeatability of the tourist experience.

3. Methodology

This study constitutes a literature-based review designed within the framework of a qualitative research approach, aiming to conceptually examine the role of the gastronomic experience in the context of experiential tourism marketing. The research seeks to evaluate the accumulated theoretical and empirical knowledge in the fields of tourism experience and gastronomic experience from a holistic perspective and to develop a conceptual model based on this body of knowledge. Accordingly, the study is structured within the interpretive paradigm and follows a logic of conceptual analysis and synthesis. Throughout the research process, studies addressing the positioning of the gastronomic experience within the tourist experience, its role in experiential value creation, and its relationships with behavioral outcomes were systematically reviewed. The literature review was conducted without restriction to a specific time period, using international academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. In line with the theoretical focus of the study, key terms including “gastronomic experience,” “food experience,” “gastronomy tourism,” “experiential tourism marketing,” “food tourism experience,” “destination image and gastronomy,” “experiential value in gastronomy tourism,” and “experiential value in food tourism” were employed during the search process. Specific criteria were applied in the selection of studies. Accordingly, studies that address the gastronomic experience within the tourism context; focus on experiential, sensory, emotional, cultural, social, or behavioral dimensions; and discuss the relationships between gastronomic experience and perceived value, satisfaction, destination image, loyalty, or behavioral intentions were included in the analysis. In contrast, studies that examine gastronomy solely from the perspectives of nutrition, food safety, or operational aspects, and that do not establish a connection with the tourism experience or experiential marketing context, were excluded. The selected studies were analyzed using a descriptive and content-oriented analysis approach (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2018, pp. 239–242). During the analysis process, the key concepts addressed in the studies, the theoretical frameworks employed, and the main findings were evaluated comparatively.

4. Findings

This section examines key studies addressing tourism experience and gastronomic experience within the context of experiential tourism marketing from a holistic perspective. Rather than presenting quantitative or qualitative empirical findings, the results aim to evaluate the accumulated knowledge in the literature through a conceptual synthesis. Accordingly, studies focusing on the positioning of the gastronomic experience within the tourist experience, its role in experiential value creation, and its relationships with behavioral outcomes are jointly considered. Although studies addressing tourism experience and gastronomic experience have been conducted using diverse methodological approaches and contextual frameworks, they converge around certain common focal points. The main emphases of these studies and their key findings are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Studies on Tourism Experience and Gastronomic Experience

Study	Focus	Key Findings
1. Karadayi et al., 2026	The study examines the effects of gastronomic experiences on tourist consumption behavior. It addresses the relationships between food experience, perceived value, and behavioral intentions. A quantitative research design was adopted, and structural modeling was applied using survey data. The gastronomic experience was conceptualized as a multidimensional construct.	The analyses show that the gastronomic experience significantly enhances perceived value. Perceived value plays a determining role in satisfaction and behavioral intentions. In particular, the emotional and symbolic dimensions of the experience are highlighted. The findings indicate that gastronomy is a strategic element that enriches the tourist experience and that gastronomy-based marketing strategies can strengthen destination competitiveness.
2. Pinke-Sziva, Smith, Csapody & Szakály, 2025	The study investigates the role of gastronomy as a special interest tourism product in urban destinations. It is based on survey data collected from 537 tourists visiting Budapest. The relative importance of gastronomy compared to other urban activities, tourists' food preferences, and perceptions of local products are analyzed. Gastronomy is examined alongside cultural and night-time economy contexts.	The findings indicate that gastronomy-based experiences have become more dominant than cultural attractions for urban tourists. Tourists primarily prefer local and traditional foods; however, casual dining, street food, and fast food also receive high demand. Satisfaction levels are high, yet gastronomic experiences do not always facilitate cultural bonding. Visitors demonstrate a higher willingness to pay for restaurants using local products. The study reveals gastronomy as a strategic lever for city branding and sustainable tourism strategies.

3. Picazo et al., 2025	<p>The study focuses on the visual representation of gastronomic offerings in tourism marketing. It examines how gastronomy is portrayed in tour operators' promotional brochures. Based on signaling theory, a content analysis was conducted on 25,231 photographs from accommodation establishments in five Mediterranean countries between 2005 and 2020. Visuals were evaluated in terms of human presence, type of activity, and spatial context.</p>	<p>The analyses show that gastronomy is positioned as a secondary element in destination promotion. Food and beverage visuals appear more frequently in accommodation contexts, yet the social interaction dimension remains weak. Photographs predominantly depict passive, functional, and people-free representations. Although the number of gastronomic images has increased over time, experiential and emotional narratives remain limited. The findings suggest that presenting gastronomy in a more social and interactive manner may strengthen destination image.</p>
4. Chen, Xu & Huang, 2024	<p>The study aims to develop a scale to measure tourists' perceived attributes of gastronomic tourism destinations (PAGTD). It systematically defines the attractiveness dimensions of gastronomic destinations. The scale development process involved a literature review, in-depth interviews, web content analysis, and three separate samples (n = 608). EFA, CFA, and PLS-SEM were employed in the analyses.</p>	<p>The results indicate that perceived gastronomic destination attributes consist of five dimensions: food culture, sensory attributes of food, cooking practices, service environment, and price-quality. The developed 22-item PAGTD scale demonstrates high validity and reliability. PAGTD significantly influences tourists' pleasure, overall satisfaction, memorable experience, and behavioral intentions. The study highlights that gastronomic destinations should be managed through both core and complementary attributes.</p>
5. Sio, Fraser & Fredline, 2024	<p>The study examines the relationship between gastronomy tourism and destination image through a systematic literature review. It covers 54 peer-reviewed academic studies published between 2003 and 2020. The review analyzes theoretical frameworks, methods, research themes, geographical contexts, and sample groups.</p>	<p>The findings show a rapid increase in studies on gastronomy tourism and destination image, particularly after 2018. Most studies are conducted in Asian contexts, adopt a tourist perspective, and employ quantitative methods. The use of theoretical frameworks is limited, with Consumption Value Theory and the Cognitive-Affective-Behavioral model being the most frequently applied. The literature indicates that gastronomy strengthens destination image and positively influences satisfaction, revisit intention, and recommendation behavior.</p>

6. Jerez, 2023	<p>The study examines the role of gastronomy in destination branding from a tourism marketing perspective. It analyzes the official tourism websites of Spain's Autonomous Communities. Gastronomy is addressed in relation to cultural identity, local cuisine, and protected designation of origin (PDO) certifications. A combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis methods is employed.</p>	<p>The findings indicate that gastronomy constitutes a cornerstone of cultural identity in destination branding. Local cuisine and PDO-certified products are the most frequently used marketing elements. Michelin-starred restaurants and traditional dishes are prominently highlighted. However, marketing practices related to education, events, and pricing remain limited. The study concludes that Spanish regions should approach gastronomy marketing in a more strategic and holistic manner.</p>
7. Dixit & Prayag, 2022	<p>The study addresses gastronomic tourism experiences within the framework of experiential marketing. It discusses how gastronomy structures the tourist experience through its sensory, emotional, and participatory dimensions. Gastronomic experiences are classified into observational, experiential, and participatory forms. The study focuses on the third-generation evolution of gastronomic tourism.</p>	<p>The findings show that gastronomic tourism exhibits a highly experiential structure. While taste is the primary determinant, visual and social elements complement the experience. The contemporary approach reveals a shift from tourists as passive consumers to active co-producers. Gastronomic experiences are integrated with local identity, sustainability, and community development. The study emphasizes that experiential marketing provides a strategic framework for gastronomy-based destinations.</p>
8. Lai, 2021	<p>The study examines the effects of gastronomic experiences on tourist behavior from the perspective of the experience economy. It analyzes the relationships between food experiences, perceived value, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The gastronomic experience is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct with sensory and emotional dimensions. Both conceptual and empirical literature are discussed.</p>	<p>The findings demonstrate that gastronomic experiences enhance tourist satisfaction and positive behavioral intentions. In particular, the sensory and emotional dimensions of the experience are highlighted. Memorable gastronomic experiences play a decisive role in destination image and loyalty. The study reveals gastronomy as a strategic element in experience-based destination marketing.</p>
9. Chang et al., 2020	<p>The study investigates "cooking holiday" experiences within the context of gastronomic tourism. Focusing on Taiwan, it examines the elements through which cooking holidays should be structured. An experiential framework is developed using the Delphi method and the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). The model consists of local food, food routes, cooking experiences, and environment/atmosphere dimensions.</p>	<p>The findings indicate that cooking experiences constitute the most critical dimension of cooking holidays. The most important criteria are identified as trustworthy content, local characteristics, and a diversified curriculum. Local food and cultural context enhance experiential authenticity. The study demonstrates that gastronomic experiences strengthen destination attractiveness within creative tourism. The proposed framework offers a strategic planning tool for destination managers.</p>

<p>10. Lai, Lu & Liu, 2020</p>	<p>The study examines the effects of ethnic cuisine experiences on tourists' word-of-mouth (WOM) behavior within the experience economy framework. In the context of Chengdu cuisine, the roles of aesthetic, educational, entertainment, and escapist experiences are analyzed. Survey data were collected from 397 tourists who experienced ethnic cuisine in Chengdu. Analyses were conducted using PLS-SEM.</p>	<p>The findings show that aesthetic experience acts as a precursor to other experience dimensions. Aesthetic, educational, and entertainment experiences significantly enhance satisfaction. All four experience dimensions positively influence memory formation. Memory exerts a stronger effect on WOM than satisfaction. The study highlights the critical role of memorability in gastronomic experiences for behavioral outcomes.</p>
<p>11. Pratt, Suintikul & Agyciwaah, 2020</p>	<p>The study investigates which attributes of cooking class experiences generate satisfaction within the context of gastronomic tourism. The research is based on data collected from 300 international tourists participating in cooking classes in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Experience attributes were evaluated using Importance-Performance Analysis (IPA) in combination with Impact Range Performance Analysis (IRPA) and Impact Asymmetry Analysis (IAA). The study focuses on third-generation gastronomic experiences.</p>	<p>The findings indicate that traditional IPA results may be misleading. IRPA and IAA analyses reveal that certain experience attributes function more as dissatisfaction preventers rather than satisfaction generators. "Active participation in the venue" is classified as a frustrator, while social interaction and entertainment dimensions are identified as dissatisfiers. In contrast, "learning about local culture" and "consuming the prepared food" function as satisfiers. The study emphasizes that asymmetric satisfaction dynamics should be considered in the management of gastronomic experiences.</p>
<p>12. Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020</p>	<p>The study conceptually examines the strategic role of gastronomy in tourism destinations. It integrates the resource-based view, emergent strategy, and positioning strategy. Gastronomic identity, tourist motivation, experience, and destination image are analyzed as core concepts. The study proposes a holistic model explaining how gastronomy contributes to destination competitiveness.</p>	<p>The findings demonstrate that gastronomic identity constitutes a strategic resource for destinations. Gastronomy-based strategies are often shaped through emergent processes, which may gradually evolve into deliberate marketing strategies over time. Gastronomy may be positioned either as a complementary element or as a core attraction in destinations. The study shows that gastronomy plays a critical role in destination differentiation and the creation of competitive advantage.</p>
<p>13. Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019</p>	<p>The study examines the role of gastronomic experience in tourist motivation and its relationship with destination choice, satisfaction, and loyalty. Survey data were collected from 325 tourists visiting Seville. Structural equation modeling was employed to test the relationships among motivation, gastronomic experience, satisfaction, and destination loyalty.</p>	<p>The findings show that gastronomic motivation has a significant effect on destination choice. The gastronomic experience directly enhances tourist satisfaction. As satisfaction increases, destination loyalty and revisit intention are strengthened. Moreover, gastronomic experience is found to influence loyalty independently of satisfaction. The study highlights gastronomy as a strategic source of value within the tourist experience.</p>

14. Tsai & Wang, 2017	The study investigates the role of experiential value in destination branding within the context of food tourism. It examines the effects of experiential value on destination food image. The research was conducted using data collected from 360 domestic tourists visiting Tainan, Taiwan. Experiential value was modeled through consumer return on investment (CROI), service excellence, aesthetics, and playfulness dimensions.	The results indicate that among the experiential value dimensions, only CROI has a significant effect on destination food image. The effects of service excellence, aesthetics, and playfulness are not statistically supported. Destination food image exerts a strong influence on tourists' revisit and recommendation intentions. The findings suggest that perceived economic value plays a decisive role in destination branding in street food-oriented destinations.
15. Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017	The study examines the effects of food experiences at gastronomic events on destination image and loyalty. It is based on survey data collected from 616 respondents at two gastronomic festivals in Spain. Using structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the relationships among destination image, event brand, and loyalty were tested.	The findings show that gastronomic experiences positively influence destination image. Destination image significantly affects both event loyalty and destination loyalty. Event brand strengthens event loyalty and destination image; however, structural elements do not directly affect destination loyalty. The study demonstrates that small-scale gastronomic events serve as strategic tools in destination branding.
16. Fusté-Forné, 2017	The study examines the use of gastronomy in tourism marketing, focusing on how gastronomy is positioned in destination promotion. For this purpose, the official tourism promotion websites of South American countries were analyzed. The study is based on a descriptive case study approach.	The findings show that gastronomy is widely used in destination promotion. Local products, traditional dishes, and gastronomic experiences are prominently highlighted. Gastronomy serves as an effective tool for conveying cultural identity and achieving destination differentiation. The study reveals that gastronomy has become a strategic attraction element in destination marketing.
17. Jiménez Beltrán, López-Guzmán & González Santa-Cruz, 2016	The study investigates the relationship between gastronomy and tourism in the context of international tourist profiles, motivation, and satisfaction. It is based on survey data collected from 446 international tourists visiting Córdoba, Spain. The analysis focuses on tourists' socio-demographic characteristics, travel motivations, and evaluations of local gastronomy.	The findings indicate that gastronomy constitutes a significant motivational factor for travel to Córdoba. Tourists generally exhibit high education levels and strong spending capacity. Local cuisine—particularly traditional dishes—is positively evaluated in terms of service quality and atmosphere. Overall satisfaction levels are high; however, innovative flavors and variety are perceived as limited. The study demonstrates that gastronomy, together with cultural tourism, offers a strategic attraction for destination marketing.

18. Silkes, Cai & Lehto, 2013	The study examines the role of food experiences offered at festivals within the context of gastronomic tourism. It focuses on how gastronomic elements are represented in festival promotional brochures. Accordingly, content analysis was conducted on 128 festival brochures from the state of Indiana, USA. Gastronomic cues are examined within the framework of destination image formation.	The findings reveal that gastronomic elements are used in a limited and superficial manner in festival promotions. Food experiences are mostly presented at the level of basic needs, while cultural meaning is insufficiently emphasized. However, gastronomic cues possess the potential to strengthen both the cognitive and affective dimensions of destination image. The study indicates that gastronomy could be utilized in a more strategic and experiential manner in destination marketing through festivals.
19. Kivela & Crofts, 2005	The study examines whether gastronomic tourism constitutes a distinct tourism market segment. It addresses the role of gastronomy in tourist experience quality and revisit intention. The research is based on survey data collected from 1,067 tourists visiting Hong Kong. Quantitative analyses include factor analysis, regression analysis, and group comparisons.	The findings show that 20.8% of tourists' travel motivation is directly gastronomy-based. Gastronomy significantly enhances destination experience quality. Fulfillment of expectations strongly influences gastronomy-driven revisit intention. Gastronomy tourists are more knowledgeable, more selective, and exhibit a higher tendency to revisit. The study demonstrates that gastronomic tourism represents a valid and meaningful market segment in destination marketing.
20. Quan & Wang, 2004	The study develops a holistic conceptual model to explain the structure of the tourist experience. It conceptualizes the tourism experience through two dimensions: peak experiences and supporting consumption experiences. Food consumption is employed as an illustrative case to discuss the positioning of gastronomy within the tourist experience.	The findings indicate that the tourist experience cannot be explained solely through peak experiences. Food consumption may assume the role of either a supporting experience or a peak experience, depending on context. Gastronomic experiences that extend everyday life provide tourists with a sense of comfort and security, whereas gastronomic festivals and special culinary experiences may transform into peak experiences. The study reveals that gastronomy plays a variable, context-sensitive, and strategic role within the tourist experience.

When the studies presented in Table 1 are evaluated collectively, it becomes evident that the gastronomic experience is largely conceptualized within a multidimensional experiential structure. The literature positions gastronomy not merely as an activity limited to food consumption, but as a domain in which experiential value is produced through sensory, emotional, symbolic, and social dimensions (Schmitt, 1999; Lai, 2021; Chen et al., 2024). In this regard, the gastronomic experience plays a determining role in shaping tourist

motivations, forming destination perceptions, and evaluating the overall quality of the tourist experience (Jiménez Beltrán et al., 2016; Kivela & Crotts, 2005). Another important point highlighted by the findings is the strong relationship between the gastronomic experience and the core outcomes of experiential tourism marketing. Variables such as perceived value, satisfaction, destination image, memorability, loyalty, and revisit intention are consistently associated with gastronomic experience across different contexts and samples (Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017; Mora et al., 2021). The literature further reveals that the role of the gastronomic experience within the tourist experience is context-sensitive and variable in nature. While gastronomy may, in some cases, become the primary travel motivation and the peak point of the experience, in other contexts it functions as a supporting element that complements the tourist experience and ensures its continuity (Quan & Wang, 2004; Chang et al., 2020). This flexibility emerges as one of the key characteristics that render the gastronomic experience strategic from the perspective of experiential tourism marketing (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020; Pinke-Sziva et al., 2025).

A holistic evaluation of the studies compiled in Table 1 clearly demonstrates that the gastronomic experience functions as a central touchpoint in experiential tourism marketing. Gastronomy constitutes a critical interface where experiential value is generated, interaction between the tourist and the destination is intensified, and experiences are transformed into behavioral outcomes. From this perspective, the gastronomic experience is positioned not merely as a complementary element in experiential tourism marketing, but as a determining mechanism in the structuring of the tourist experience. Within this framework, the following section proposes a conceptual model—grounded in the existing literature—that holistically explains the position, function, and outcomes of the gastronomic experience within experiential tourism marketing.

4.1. A Conceptual Model Proposal for the Role of the Gastronomic Experience in Experiential Tourism Marketing

The model presented in Figure 1 is based on a holistic synthesis of the findings put forward in the literature at the intersection of gastronomic experience, the experience economy, and tourism marketing. The point of departure of the model is the multidimensional structure of the gastronomic experience. The literature demonstrates that the gastronomic experience is not limited solely to sensory gratification; rather, it is shaped through the integration of sensory, emotional, symbolic/cultural, and social–interactive dimensions (Schmitt, 1999; Quan & Wang, 2004; Lai, 2021; Chen et al.,

2024). These dimensions enable the gastronomic experience to be produced through both individual perceptions and social interactions, thereby enhancing the intensity and meaning of the experience. In this respect, the gastronomic experience is positioned in the model as the primary experiential input that initiates the experiential process.

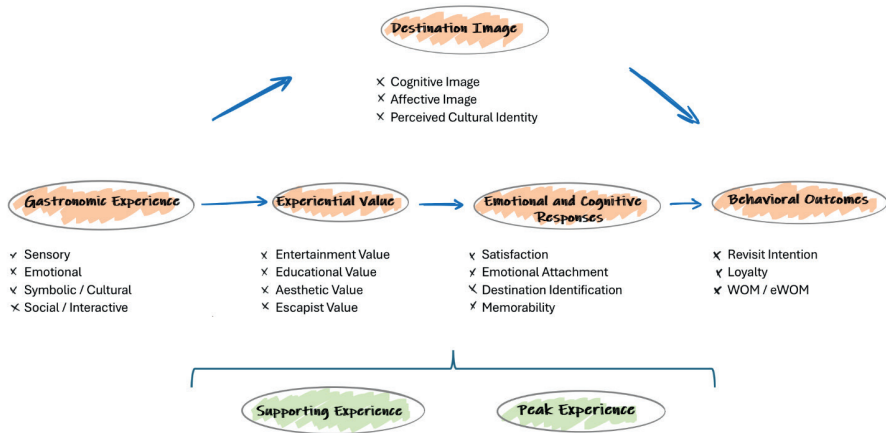


Figure 1. A Conceptual Model Proposal for the Role of the Gastronomic Experience in Experiential Tourism Marketing

In the second stage of the model, experiential value emerges as the direct outcome of the gastronomic experience. In this study, experiential value is conceptualized as a multidimensional evaluation process reflecting the extent to which the gastronomic experience is perceived by tourists as meaningful, engaging, and valuable. In line with Pine and Gilmore's experience economy approach, experiential value is structured around four core dimensions: entertainment, education, aesthetics, and escapism. The entertainment dimension refers to the capacity of the gastronomic experience to generate enjoyment, pleasure, and fun; the education dimension captures learning and awareness gained through experience; the aesthetic dimension relates to the sensory integrity of food presentation and the experiential setting; and the escapism dimension reflects the degree to which individuals detach from everyday life and become immersed in the experience (Pine & Gilmore, 2013; Lai et al., 2020). This structure indicates that the gastronomic experience represents not merely an act of consumption, but a multifaceted process of experiential value creation. Within the model, experiential value is positioned as a mediating mechanism between the gastronomic experience and subsequent evaluative and behavioral processes. In this respect, experiential

value is conceptualized as a holistic construct that cannot be reduced solely to economic benefits, but rather encompasses the meaning, authenticity, and intensity of the experience.

In the stage following experiential value, the model proposes the evaluation of the experience through emotional and cognitive responses. Through perceived experiential value, gastronomic experiences may generate responses such as satisfaction, emotional attachment, and destination identification among tourists (Jiménez Beltrán et al., 2016; Mora et al., 2021). This stage represents a critical evaluative process in which the experience is not confined to the moment of consumption but is remembered, reproduced, and imbued with meaning through memory-related processes (Sthapit, 2019; Lai et al., 2020). Another key component of the model concerns the effect of the gastronomic experience on destination image. The literature demonstrates that gastronomic experiences strengthen the cognitive and affective image of destinations and contribute to the construction of a differentiating narrative by integrating with the destination's cultural identity (Folgado-Fernández et al., 2017; Jerez, 2023; Sio et al., 2024). In this context, destination image is incorporated into the model as a complementary component that is nourished by the gastronomic experience and reinforces behavioral outcomes. At the final stage of the model, the effects of the gastronomic experience materialize through behavioral outcomes. Through perceived experiential value, emotional and cognitive responses, and destination image, the gastronomic experience lays the groundwork for outcomes that are critical to tourism marketing, such as revisit intention, destination loyalty, and word-of-mouth communication (WOM/e-WOM) (Kivela & Crofts, 2005; Berbel-Pineda et al., 2019; Lai, 2021).

Finally, the proposed conceptual model addresses the role of the gastronomic experience within the tourist experience through a context-sensitive framework. In line with the approach of Quan and Wang (2004), gastronomy may function as a supporting element of the tourist experience in some contexts, while in others it may become the primary travel motivation and the peak point of the experience itself. This contextual flexibility enables the gastronomic experience to be positioned not merely as a complementary activity, but as a strategic element that determines the intensity and meaning of the experience. In this respect, the gastronomic experience serves as an important leverage mechanism that supports destination differentiation and value creation in experiential tourism marketing (Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020; Pinke-Sziva et al., 2025). Within this framework, the proposed model positions the gastronomic experience at the core of experiential tourism marketing and holistically explains its multilayered effects extending from value creation to behavioral outcomes.

5. Conclusion and Implications

This study has aimed to holistically examine the role of the gastronomic experience in the context of experiential tourism marketing by addressing gastronomy's strategic position in tourism value creation within a conceptual framework. Drawing on the experience economy and experiential marketing perspectives, the study positions the gastronomic experience not merely as a complementary tourism activity, but as a central mechanism through which experiential value is generated, interaction between tourists and destinations is intensified, and marketing outcomes are shaped. The literature-based findings clearly demonstrate that the role of gastronomy within the tourist experience is context-sensitive, multidimensional, and dynamic in nature.

One of the main theoretical contributions of the study lies in its systematic explanation of the function of the gastronomic experience in experiential tourism marketing through the experiential value creation process. The literature indicates that gastronomic experiences significantly enhance perceived experiential value through sensory, emotional, symbolic, and social dimensions, and that this value plays a determining role in key marketing outcomes such as satisfaction, destination image, memorability, and behavioral intentions. These findings suggest that gastronomy in experiential tourism marketing should be evaluated not only in terms of "what is offered," but also in terms of "how it is experienced." In this way, the study integrates the gastronomic experience with the experience economy perspective and deepens theoretical discussions on the experiential nature of value creation in tourism marketing.

The conceptual model developed in this section conceptualizes the role of the gastronomic experience in experiential tourism marketing as a multilayered process. Within the model, the gastronomic experience is positioned as a core experiential input that triggers the formation of experiential value; through this value, emotional and cognitive evaluations are shaped and ultimately translated into behavioral outcomes. This approach is significant in that it conceptualizes the role of the gastronomic experience within the tourist experience not as a static element, but as a dynamic process located at the center of the value creation chain. Furthermore, in line with Quan and Wang's (2004) distinction between supporting and peak experiences, the model emphasizes that gastronomy may, in certain contexts, become the primary motivation for travel, while in others it may function as a complementary element that ensures the continuity of the experience. This contextual flexibility emerges as one of the key characteristics that render the gastronomic experience strategic from the perspective of experiential tourism marketing.

The findings of the study also offer important implications for practitioners. From the perspective of experiential tourism marketing, gastronomy marketing should not be regarded as an activity limited solely to the promotion of local dishes or restaurants. Rather, gastronomic experiences should be structured within an experiential framework by integrating elements such as storytelling, sensory design, social interaction, and co-creation. Destination management organizations and tourism stakeholders should focus on strategies that associate gastronomy with the cultural identity of the destination, encourage tourists' active participation, and generate memorable experiences. Gastronomy festivals, food routes, cooking workshops, and experiences involving interaction with local producers—when designed with these elements in mind—can be considered effective tools for strengthening destination image and loyalty by enhancing experiential value.

Moreover, the experiential quality of visual and digital content plays a critical role in the marketing of gastronomic experiences. Instead of passive, people-free, or purely product-oriented representations of gastronomy, content that foregrounds social interaction, emotions, and experiential narratives is more likely to align with the objectives of experiential tourism marketing. Such an approach contributes to the effective use of gastronomy as a functional leverage mechanism in destination branding. Due to its conceptual nature, this study also entails certain limitations. As the findings are based on a literature-driven synthesis, the proposed conceptual model requires empirical validation. Future research may test the relationships included in the model across different destination types, tourist profiles, and gastronomic experience contexts using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In particular, the mediating role of experiential value and the effects of variables such as memorability and emotional attachment on behavioral outcomes may be examined through methods such as structural equation modeling. In addition, the relationship between gastronomic experience and sustainability, local development, and community-based tourism represents an important avenue for future research within the experiential tourism marketing perspective.

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