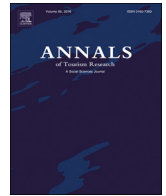


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Festival quality, self-connection, and bragging

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ABSTRACT

Festivals provide opportunities for experiential consumption, attracting both first-time and repeat visitors. However, current understanding of the perceptual and behavioural differences between these groups remains incomplete. This study investigates how experiential purchase quality influences experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth, for both first-time and repeat visitors, using a mixed-method approach. The qualitative (n = 32) and quantitative (n = 909) results together reveal that the combinations of experiential purchase quality dimensions stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth in repeat visitors differ significantly from those for first-time visitors, emphasising the need for festival managers to pay close attention to how different visitor groups perceive and prioritise experiential purchase quality dimensions. The findings thus extend current understanding of how braggart word-of-mouth emerges in an experiential consumption context.

Introduction

Established festivals in culturally important places are often reinvented and repurposed to encourage inbound tourism. Accordingly, festival research has flourished, with studies exploring visitor motivations, behaviours, and characteristics; service quality; and visitor satisfaction and loyalty contributing significantly to wider tourism discourse (Lee, Lee, & Yoon, 2009). To this end, tourism planners have long recognised the different perceptions and behaviours of first-time and repeat visitors engaging with experiential tourism services (Yolal, Chi, & Pesämaa, 2017).

For example, Fakeye and Crompton (1991, p.11), found the perceptions of non-, first-time, and repeat tourists differ because “first-hand experience reduces stereotyping and leads to a change in image, shifting travellers’ images...to more qualified perceptions of the destination”. To this end, Li et al. (2008, p. 278) suggest “first-timers’ behaviours are more tourism/travel oriented, while repeaters’ demonstrate a recreation/activity orientation. First-timers are more active travel planners, while repeaters indicate more positive post-trip evaluations”. Within the festival context, the industry has sought to develop offerings that encourage repeat visits, increasing their potential economic impact and sustainability (Kruger & Saayman, 2013). However, while multiple factors motivate visitors to attend festivals for the first time, repeat attendance is contingent on enjoyable first-time visits (Lee & Beeler, 2006). Consequently, repeat and first-time festival visitors attribute different levels of importance to: exploration; place offering; attractions; fun; escapism; atmosphere; and the uniqueness of festivals (Kruger & Saayman, 2013; Lee et al., 2009).

Irrespective of first-time versus repeat attendance, festivals serve as vessels for experiential consumption and identity construction

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– underpinned by experiential purchases (Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Morey, Griffin, & Riley, 2017). Experiential purchases are social, intangible, memorable, and defined by Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, p. 1194) as “...those made with the primary intention of acquiring life experience[s]”. The quality of experiential purchases is thus comprised of “subjective, internal consumer responses and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli” (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009, p. 53). Experiential purchase quality inspires loyalty, influencing the perceived value of consumption (Wu, Cheng, & Ai, 2018), and is associated with identity formation and self-connection where “an experience may occur after the purchase as part of a self-generated, internal, psychological process” (Schmitt, Joško Brakus, & Zarantonello, 2015, p. 167). As such, experiential purchase quality encourages key behavioural outcomes in consumers, including the aforementioned ‘self-connection’, which is contingent on whether experiential purchases contribute to consumers’ sense of oneness with destinations, services, or brands (Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

Song et al. (2017, p. 72) suggest that “motivation to repair [consumers]...self-image makes them more likely to “show off” a positive self-image”, particularly with experiences they connect strongly with. Such individuals perceive themselves as interesting and intelligent, and strong *individual-experience* connections can increase their tendency to engage in self-enhancing word-of-mouth (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Previous studies also argue that consumers transmit word-of-mouth about experiential purchase quality to impress others (Angelis, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, & Costabile, 2012). Festivals offer opportunities for aspirational consumption (Gratton, Raciti, & Arcodia, 2011), where attendance can afford visitors enhanced social status and prestige – encouraging word-of-mouth that errs more towards the boastful than the informative (Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

Nonetheless, Mason and Paggiaro (2012) contend that festivalscape underpins visitors’ emotional experience, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions, with external stimuli influencing emotional responses and, ultimately, behaviour. Thus, our understanding of experiential festival consumption remains incomplete. Recognising this, this study explores whether there are differences in how first-time and repeat visitors evaluate experiential purchase quality, and how this impacts upon experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth in the festival context. Identifying these differences is crucial for service design and delivery, supporting festival managers and tourism planners in their mission to increase visitor numbers by developing sustainable offerings that both attract new visitors and encourage repeat visitors to return in future (Kruger & Saayman, 2013). To explore the interplay between these concepts, with focus on the differences between first-time and repeat visitors, this study turns towards the annual Cappadox festival held in Cappadocia, Turkey. Cappadox is distinct as it offers the opportunity to engage in experiential consumption within a historic cultural setting. The study is thus underpinned by the following question: *How does the interplay between experiential purchase quality, experience self-connection, and braggart word-of-mouth differ between first-time and repeat festival visitors?*

The manuscript continues as follows. First, literature on experiential purchase quality and two relevant associated outcomes (experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth) is reviewed. Next, the research design is discussed, clarifying the mixed-method approach and analysis procedure employed. Subsequently, findings are presented and discussed with emphasis placed on implications emerging from the combined qualitative and quantitative data. Finally, future research opportunities are identified.

Literature review

Experiential consumption is motivated by a broad corpus of concerns, including: variety-seeking, pleasure-seeking, creativity, uniqueness, and identity-seeking. Therefore, it is not a transactional practice bereft of emotion. Individuals do not act impassively when consuming experiential products and/or services, with this process “driven by a need and desire for emotion, self-expression, playfulness, and excitement” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p. 2). Consumers experience a greater sense of well-being when undertaking experiential, as opposed to material, purchases and the emotional elements of consumption serve to stimulate this (Lee & Oh, 2017). Satisfaction is therefore superseded by recognition that consumers’ emotional responses to experiential purchases may better determine their post-travel behaviours, including their intention to revisit or recommend an experience to others (Gannon, Baxter, Collinson, & Maxwell-Stuart, 2017).

Seminal work on purchase classification has received increased attention in recent years (Carter & Gilovich, 2012; Wu et al., 2018). Here, “experiential purchases are purchases made for the primary intention of attaining a life experience...living through an event or series of events. Material purchases are made for the primary intention of ownership and possession...getting something that can be retained over time” (Tully & Sharma, 2017, p.963). Gilovich, Kumar, and Jampol (2015) and Carter and Gilovich (2012) argue that experiential purchases enable consumers to develop social connections; closely tied to the self but also signalling cultural participation to others. Experiential purchases allow consumers to undertake *lived* activities which, in turn, are more likely to be shared with others in order to stimulate feelings of relatedness (Gilovich et al., 2015).

As such, it is vital to identify differences between experiential purchase quality and service quality in tourism discourse. Unlike service quality, experiential purchase quality is subjective; framed by a holistic evaluation of oneself, with psychological outcomes emerging from participation in tourism activities (Wu et al., 2018). Scholars have investigated visitors’ perceptions of experiential quality and its psychological outcomes in diverse tourism contexts, including heritage (de Rojas & Camarero, 2008), sport (Wu et al., 2018), and theme parks (Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015). However, to provide festival marketing managers with greater strategic direction, understanding the different perceptions of first-time and repeat visitor segments is crucial. First-time and repeat visitors may not have the same *lived-through experience* of festivals, and moulding offerings cognizant of the differences in their experiential outcomes can encourage first-time visitors to revisit in future while retaining a committed cohort of repeat visitors (Kruger & Saayman, 2013).

Unlike service quality, however, experiential purchase quality resulting from *lived-through experiences* and its effect on experiential outcomes is rarely considered in the festival context. Moreover, dynamic in nature, and characterised by the provision of bundled services, festival consumption embodies the heady combination of ‘feeling’, ‘thinking’ and ‘doing’ (Giovannardi, Lucarelli, & Decosta, 2014). To this end, the importance of service quality is stressed in experiential marketing and tourism discourse (Wu et al., 2018),

where the quality of an experience is central to contemporary consumption practices undertaken therein, influencing multiple behavioural outcomes in the process (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). The literature review thus continues by discussing the dimensions of experiential purchase quality, followed by two key outcomes relevant to this study (experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth).

Experiential purchase quality

The value derived from experiential purchases is manifest in three ways. First, due to difficulty in repeating them verbatim, experiential purchases are beholden to consumers' memories, where they are reinterpreted, reinforced, and reflected upon more fondly over time (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Second, experiential purchases can ratify individuals' self-identity, where consuming experiences supersedes the material possession of things (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). Third, experiential purchases are typically underpinned by social interaction, with *shared* experiences often more meaningful than those undertaken in isolation (Gannon et al., 2017). Pelletier and Collier (2018) therefore conceptualise experiential purchase quality as an aggregated formative construct for a *lived-through experience* composed of: fun, social congruence, servicescape quality, escapism, and uniqueness; capturing both the emotional and cognitive components of experiential purchases. However, it is important to highlight that the interplay between experiential purchase quality dimensions may differ across research settings, with this remaining underexplored within festival and tourism consumption (Wu et al., 2018). Ultimately, for experiential purchases to be considered high quality, consumers must consider them *fun*. From a consumer perspective, the level of fun perceived as likely to emerge from experiential purchases also influences pre-purchase decision-making and post-purchase evaluations (Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

However, fun alone does not guarantee experiential purchase quality. Experiential consumption is often social, underpinned by consumer-consumer interactions. This characterises festivals, where collective consumption and cognisance of place shape the experience (Giovanardi et al., 2014). Being surrounded by likeminded individuals contributes to experiential purchase quality, but so too does recognition of the importance of shared outcomes and collective consumption (Gannon et al., 2017). This *social congruence* therefore contributes to experiential purchase quality as, for experiential purchases to be considered valuable; consumers must derive pleasure from seeking outcomes consistent with those of their peers (Giovanardi et al., 2014). To this end, “purchased experiences are essentially social in nature and...cannot fully divest [themselves] from social interaction” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p. 8).

Servicescape quality also underpins experiential purchase quality. This concerns the evaluation of the physical and social consumption environment. Physical servicescape includes layout and atmosphere, with emphasis placed on: cleanliness, comfort, food quality, signage, and accessibility (Wu et al., 2018). Design and aesthetics can also increase consumer perceptions of servicescape quality, further contributing to experiential purchase quality (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). However, experiential servicescapes do not exist in isolation and, as with *social congruence*, those designed to foster *positive* social interactions stimulate experiential purchase quality. Indeed, the ‘captive’ nature of festivals may lead to more customer-customer and employee-customer interactions - further influencing experiential purchase quality (Mason & Paggiaro, 2012).

The final two dimensions, *uniqueness* and *escapism*, are often the most difficult to isolate. Uniqueness embodies how distinct and original consumption experiences are perceived to be (Franke & Schreier, 2008). Consumers prescribe greater value to experiences undertaken at festivals that are distinct and exclusive, contributing to their perceptions of experiential purchase quality (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Escapism refers to “the perceived level to which experiential purchases allow consumers to remove themselves away from the demands of daily life (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p. 8). Escapism transcends the physical aspects of experiential consumption (e.g., servicescape quality) while complementing *uniqueness* in contributing to experiential purchase quality. Thus, value is derived from consumption deemed fulfilling, engaging, and fundamentally dissimilar to normality. Here, the greater the extent to which experiential purchases offer consumers a sense of escapism, the greater the perceived experiential purchase quality (Mathwick, Malhotra, & Rigdon, 2002). However, consumer perceptions of experiential purchase quality do not exist in a vacuum; instead, a range of anticipated outcomes relevant to festival and destination managers are influenced by the aforementioned experiential purchase quality dimensions.

Experience self-connection

Experience self-connection represents the “cognitive and emotional bond between the (experience) and the self” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p.464). Consumers foster self-identity from, and emotional connections to, experiential purchases perceived as being of sufficient quality. One's *sense-of-self* is strengthened by purchases couched within experiences, as opposed to those with material outcomes (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). This is true for festival visitors, where the emotional connection to experiential purchases contained therein forms a significant part of the consumer's self-concept (Gratton et al., 2011). As typically social occasions, self-connection manifest through experiential purchase quality at festivals stems from consumers' desire for social interaction (Gannon et al., 2017). To this end, self-connection with experiential purchases at festivals is strengthened by their inherent sociality, where shared consumption fosters communal identity and “[feeling] closer to others who have purchased the same experience” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p.9).

The benefits of curating experiences with high experiential purchase quality are significant. For example, research demonstrates the positive influence experience self-connection has on repeat purchases, repeat visits, and price sensitivity (Dwivedi, Johnson, Wilkie, & De Araujo-Gil, 2018). Here, “the stronger a bond between the purchase and the consumer's sense-of-self, the more likely a repurchase may occur and the more tolerant the consumer may be to an increase in prices” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p. 9). Connection to experiential purchases can also increase consumer loyalty. Thus, the importance of fostering an environment bestowed

with high quality experiential purchases is important for festival managers, and it stands to reason that visitors may experience high levels of self-connection underpinned by Pelletier and Collier's (2018) five dimensions of experiential purchase quality. In doing so, experiential purchase quality can stimulate festival sustainability and success as visitors are likely remain loyal and return in future, derive experiential value, and actively recommend attendance to others (Dwivedi et al., 2018).

Braggart word-of-mouth

Experiential purchase quality inspires positive behavioural intentions. One such, word-of-mouth, is encouraged by managers as it provides more organic, consumer-driven promotion of their offerings. While beneficial to organisations, some word-of-mouth recommendations are centred on the individual *sharing* as opposed to the audience *receiving* the message (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Here, individuals can develop and preserve positive self-perceptions by showcasing involvement in experiences their peers deem aspirational, and by failing to highlight any negative experiences or purchases (Angelis et al., 2012).

This is *self-enhancing*, encapsulating all “word-of-mouth behaviours concerning the experience driven, implicitly or explicitly, by one's desire for positive recognition from others and to boost one's own self-esteem” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p.9). As such, this sharing behaviour is termed *braggart/boastful* word-of-mouth (Angelis et al., 2012). Braggart word-of-mouth is primarily concerned with the “spread of communication for the direct purpose of enhancing the self” (Pelletier & Collier, 2018, p.9), as opposed to sharing information centred on evaluating firms, products, or services (Packard, Gershoff, & Wooten, 2016). Therefore, high perceptions of experiential purchase quality, which foster a greater sense of experiential self-connection, may stimulate braggart word-of-mouth (Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

Packard et al. (2016, p.26) consider this boastful sharing an “epidemic”, with the pursuit of prestige and status proving an incentive to engage in braggart word-of-mouth (Angelis et al., 2012). This is surprising, as a propensity to brag is traditionally considered negative (Packard et al., 2016). Yet, experiential consumption bucks this trend, with some consumers transmitting word-of-mouth about the quality of experiences to self-enhance or impress others (Angelis et al., 2012). This may stem from the limited, contextual, and temporal nature of experiential consumption (Pelletier & Collier, 2018), with the aforementioned prestige attributed to individuals whose luck, commitment, wealth, and/or status is demonstrated through involvement in aspirational consumption subsequently shared via braggart word-of-mouth (Angelis et al., 2012).

Given the established interplay between experiential purchase quality and its outcomes, Fig. 1 illustrates the proposed research model. As with Pelletier and Collier (2018), experiential purchase quality is a causal configuration (comprising five dimensions) to predict experience self-connection. **Arrow A** represents the causal effect of experiential purchase quality on experience self-connection, while **Arrow B** suggests that a combination of experiential purchase quality and experience self-connection may stimulate braggart word-of-mouth. Using a mixed-method approach, the conceptual model was assessed for first-time and repeat visitors to Cappadox.

First-time and repeat festival visitors

Understanding potential differences between first-time and repeat visitors is crucial when developing destination marketing management strategies (Yolal et al., 2017). The decision to revisit a destination is influenced by multiple factors (e.g., loyalty, familiarity, price sensitivity, service quality), with the influence of each found to differ between first-time and repeat visitor groups (Lau & Mc Kercher, 2004; Tanford & Jung, 2017). For example, Shavanddasht and Allan (2018) compared the views of tourists visiting Ardebil, Iran and found that first-time visitors were less satisfied, emotionally involved, and loyal than repeat visitors. However, while research reveals key differences between first-time and repeat tourists more generally, understanding of the

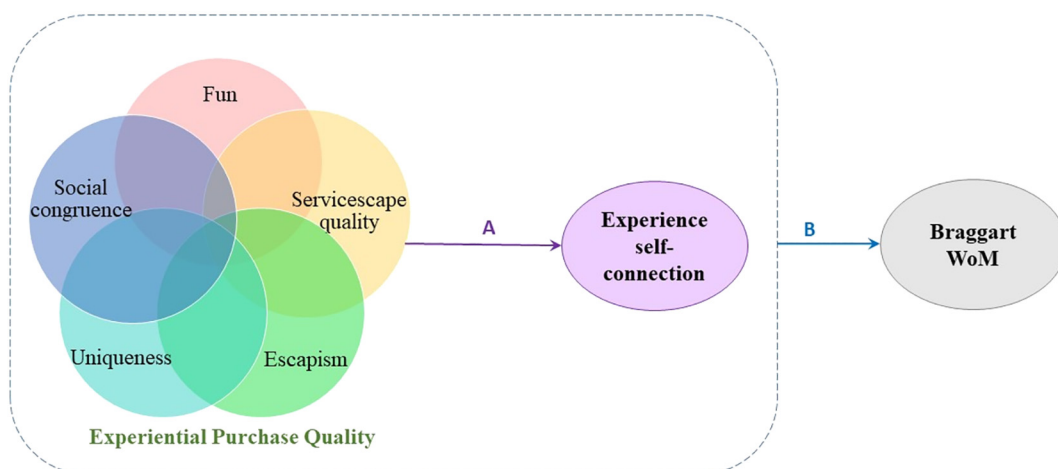


Fig. 1. Proposed conceptual model.

differences in perceptions and behaviours of first-time and repeat festival visitors remains less extensive (Tanford & Jung, 2017).

Nonetheless, Kruger, Saayman, and Ellis (2010) do compare the loyalty of first-time and repeat festival visitors, concluding that the former are primarily motivated by relaxation, socialisation, and content. In contrast, repeat festival visitors were typically more loyal, stay longer, and spend more. Further, Anwar and Sohail (2004) found that repeat festival visitors place greater importance on attraction factors (i.e., accessibility, quality, and price) than first-time visitors, whom Lee et al. (2009) suggest value the availability and quality of tangential elements (e.g., food and souvenirs). Yet, both first-time and repeat visitors are vital in developing sustainable festivals (Kruger & Saayman, 2013), with further research comparing their different motivations, perceptions, and behaviours required. Based on the established differences between first-time and repeat tourists more generally, and our embryonic understanding of the differences between first-time and repeat festival visitors, the conceptual model presented in Fig. 1 was tested with attention paid to these two groups.

Methodology

Data collection and context

Data was collected from the Cappadox festival in Cappadocia, Turkey. This weeklong annual event has a broad cultural focus brought to life by music, art, nature, and creative workshops showcasing Turkish culture to a mixed international and domestic tourist audience. Cappadocia is a UNESCO World Heritage Site situated in Turkey's Central Anatolia region, renowned for its volcanic landscape and inhabited cave-dwellings (Taheri, Gannon, Cordina, & Lochrie, 2018).

Despite Cappadocia's international recognition and historic provenance, Cappadox is a more contemporary offering. Founded in 2015, the festival is in its fourth year, with a commensurate growth in visitor numbers supported by internationally-recognised corporate sponsors. As such, Cappadox aims to cater for everyone, with a mixed programme of concerts, workshops, social events, and opportunities for individual reflection couched within the natural beauty of the region. To investigate experiential purchase quality, self-connection, and braggart word-of-mouth in the context of festival attendees, we used a two-stage mixed-method combining quantitative and qualitative data (Kakoudakis, McCabe, & Story, 2017). Constrained by the timeframe during which the festival is held, data was collected concurrently, on-site, over six days in June 2018. Questionnaire and semi-structured interview datasets were evaluated in parallel (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The combination of methods offered a pragmatic insight into the interplay between experiential purchase quality, experience self-connection, and braggart word-of-mouth. This provided greater depth and detail than either method in isolation, offering a platform to integrate quantitative exactitude with narrative complexity (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In practice, the qualitative data complemented and extended the quantitative results.

Qualitative phase

Each semi-structured interview lasted around 30 min. Overall, 32 (international and domestic) visitors (aged 20–58) were interviewed (Table 1). Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim in either English or Turkish depending on the participant's fluency. Echoing translation theory method, we paid close attention when translating Turkish responses into English. The qualitative analysis was funnelled thematically (Wells, Gregory-Smith, Taheri, Manika, & McCowlen, 2016). Two pilot interviews, exploring visitors' views of Cappadox, took the form of open-ended conversations. These began generally (e.g., 'how has your visit been so far?'), leading to more in-depth conversations, which encouraged interesting stories regarding Cappadox.

The research team went back-and-forth from the data from one participant to the next, systematically searching for similarities and differences. Analysis began with initial coding, establishing the building blocks of data revealed by the participants. Next, we evaluated these codes and their associated extracts, grouping related data into sub-categories nested within wider themes. Finally, we confirmed the results and established whether they were consistent with the literature. The coding structure and finalised transcripts were shared between the research team, with the data double-checked by native English and Turkish academics to ensure validity and integrity (Wells et al., 2016).

Quantitative phase

A visitor questionnaire was also used to collect data. Convenience sampling was employed, as it proved impossible to implement random sampling in the significant open, outdoor festival space. The self-administrated questionnaire was administered across different areas of the festival. Consistent with previous studies, the research team were positioned in high traffic areas (Organ, Koenig-Lewis, Palmer, & Probert, 2015). The questionnaire was pilot tested with 40 respondents, with questions subsequently modified to clarify language. Overall, 909 responses were collected. Of these, 60.5% were male and 39.5% female; 5.8% were 56+, 12.3% were 46–55, 30.9% were 36–45, 39.1% were 26–35, and 11.9% were 18–25 years old. Regarding nationality, 70.2% were Turkish, 6.6% Asian, 5.1% from the Middle-East, and 19.2% European. Regarding education, 8.2% had basic education, 9.9% completed high school, 35.4% held college degrees, 29.4% completed undergraduate studies, and 17.2% completed postgraduate studies. We compared early and late responses to test for non-response errors, finding none, and visitors were informed that their answers remained anonymous, minimising social desirability bias. We also placed independent and dependent scales in different areas of the questionnaire (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Table 1
Interviewee-profiles.

Name ^a	Age	Gender	Marital-status	Occupation	Nationality	Repeat/first-time
N1	44	Male	Divorced	Salesman	German	Repeat
N2	52	Female	Married	Shop-assistant	Turkish	Repeat
N3	38	Male	Married	Technician	Turkish	First-time
N4	31	Female	Single	Saleswoman	Turkish	Repeat
N5	45	Female	Single	Teacher	German	First-time
N6	52	Male	Married	Shop-assistant	Turkish	First-time
N7	28	Female	Single	Warden	Turkish	Repeat
N8	58	Male	Married	Teacher	Turkish	First-time
N9	30	Female	Single	Student	French	Repeat
N10	45	Male	Divorced	Office-worker	Turkish	Repeat
N11	34	Female	Married	Marketer	German	First-time
N12	28	Female	Single	Nurse	Turkish	Repeat
N13	28	Male	Married	Student	Turkish	First-time
N14	47	Male	Married	Human-Resources	German	Repeat
N15	29	Male	Single	Officeworker	Azeri	Repeat
N16	55	Female	Divorce	Marketer	Turkish	First-time
N17	32	Male	Engaged	Shop-assistant	Turkish	Repeat
N18	25	Male	Single	Student	Turkish	Repeat
N19	33	Male	Married	Lecturer	Turkish	First-time
N20	42	Male	Divorced	Security	Turkish	Repeat
N21	54	Female	Married	Human-Resources	Turkish	First-time
N22	50	Male	Married	Seasonal	Turkish	First-time
N23	32	Male	Married	Marketer	Turkish	Repeat
N24	26	Female	Single	Student	Azeri	Repeat
N25	44	Male	Divorced	Office-worker	Turkish	First-time
N26	24	Male	Single	Student	Turkish	Repeat
N27	28	Female	Married	Saleswoman	Turkish	First-time
N28	26	Female	Single	Office-worker	Turkish	Repeat
N29	33	Male	Divorced	Cleaner	Turkish	First-time
N30	25	Female	Single	Seasonal	Azeri	First-time
N31	45	Male	Divorced	Office-worker	Turkish	Repeat
N32	20	Female	Single	Student	Turkish	First-time

^a Anonymised.

Measures, reliability and quantitative analysis

Measurement scales were adapted from previous studies. The dimensions of experiential purchase quality (fun, escapism, social congruence, servicescape quality, and uniqueness) were adapted from Franke and Schreier (2008), Mathwick et al. (2002), and Pelletier and Collier (2018). Experience self-connection was adapted from Pelletier and Collier (2018), as was braggart word-of-mouth (Table 2). Regarding psychometric properties, Cronbach's alpha was used to check reliability and exploratory factor analysis, using principle component analysis, was applied to test scale item composition (Table 2). All constructs were internally consistent (> 0.6), with two items - one from uniqueness (*this experience was unlike any other*) and another from braggart word-of-mouth (*makes me feel important*) - discarded. All items ranged from 0.535 to 0.856, with sufficient loading under respective dimensions. All eigenvalues surpassed 0.1. Harman's single factor test indicated that no single factor emerged as the percentage of variance for each construct was not high ($< 14\%$). Therefore, Common Method Variance was of no concern (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Configurational modelling using fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) was used to test the proposed research model. fsQCA is set-theoretic, enabling researchers to move from symmetrical to asymmetrical thinking using Boolean algebra as the analytical basis for investigating predictor-outcome associations (Wu, Yeh, Huan, & Woodside, 2014). fsQCA calculates causal recipes (predictor combinations) leading to model outcomes. This study used fsQCA as it bridges qualitative and quantitative analyses by maximising the advantages and minimising the drawbacks of both (Woodside, 2013). Further, due to its exploratory nature, fsQCA can generate new knowledge. fsQCA calculates causal recipes to explain conditions leading to an outcome. This better-reflects the human thinking process as individuals consider the effect of multiple factors when making decisions (Woodside, 2017). Finally, fsQCA addresses the challenges of symmetrical analysis through configurational modelling more compatible with the real world, where contrarian cases are included using an asymmetrical approach (Woodside, 2017). "These advances in theory and method help to address some drawbacks of symmetrical approaches, such as heterogeneity, ignorance of occurrences of contrarian cases, data normality as an assumption of analyses, and multicollinearity issues, which led to misleading results" (Olya & Gavilyan, 2017, p. 907).

In fsQCA, crisp-set data is transformed to fuzzy-set metrics. Then, truth tables, listing all possible conditions leading to an outcome, are generated using Boolean algebra theorems (Woodside, 2017). These truth tables are refined based coverage and consistency. Consistency is a probabilistic measure (analogous to correlation coefficients in symmetrical analysis), representing the degree to which recipes are a subset of an outcome. Coverage (analogous to determination coefficients in symmetrical analysis) indicates the membership proportion of the outcome covered by the explored recipes (Olya & Gavilyan, 2017). Finally, causal recipes

Table 2
Constructs/underlying items.

Constructs/associated items	
Fun (EPQ)($\alpha = 0.762$)	
This experiences was	entertaining/not entertaining fun/not fun enjoyable/not enjoyable
Servicescape (EPQ)($\alpha = 0.747$)	
<i>How would you rate the quality of the physical environment where the experience took place:</i>	
Poor/excellent	
Low-quality/high-quality	
Terrible/superior	
Horrible/outstanding	
Escapism (EPQ)($\alpha = 0.751$)	
During this experience,	I didn't have to think about my usual problems I could step away from my everyday concerns I didn't have to worry about the demands of daily life I left the stress of the real-world behind
Social congruence (EPQ)($\alpha = 0.893$)	
The people I shared this experience with and I	wanted the same thing out of this experience shared the same goals had the same mind-set during the experience wanted to engage with this experience in a similar manner
Uniqueness (EPQ)($\alpha = 0.635$)	
This experience was	'one-of-a-kind' highly unique unlike any other
Experience self-connection ($\alpha = 0.885$)	
I felt	like this experience represented a part of who I am a personal connection to this experience as if this experience represented a part of me emotionally attached to this experience a bond between myself and this experience
Braggart WoM ($\alpha = 0.762$)	
<i>Talking about this experience:</i>	
Makes me feel good about myself	
Boosts my self-esteem	
Makes me feel like the centre of attention	
Makes me feel a sense of pride	
Makes me feel important	

are confirmed based on extant knowledge (counterfactual analysis). Therefore, configurational modelling was applied to explore causal recipes (of experiential purchase quality dimensions) leading to experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth (outcomes). The proposed configurational model was tested for both *first-time* and *repeat* festival visitors.

Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) was also conducted. While fsQCA investigates sufficient, but not necessary, causal conditions, NCA differs as it identifies conditions *critical* to achieving given outcomes. NCA therefore helps to identify conditions that are highly significant in terms of both theory and practice because without necessary predictors, the model outcome cannot occur and other predictors cannot play an alternative role in their absence (Dul, 2016). NCA was therefore performed to identify factors necessary to achieve experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth for both *first-time* and *repeat* festival visitors.

Findings

While the value of mixed-method research is established (Kakoudakis et al., 2017), few studies combine fsQCA and qualitative data collection techniques, with those doing so typically presenting each in isolation (Tho & Trang, 2015). However, this overlooks the narrative value of in-depth semi-structured interview responses. Therefore, the findings of this study are presented in parallel below, with the interview data employed in a manner aimed at bringing the fsQCA recipes 'to life'.

Experience self-connection

Results from the configurational modelling for predicting high levels of experience self-connection (Arrow A, Fig. 1) among *first-time* and *repeat* visitors are presented in Table 3. Two causal recipes explain conditions where first-time visitors perceive a high degree of experience self-connection (coverage: 0.38, consistency: 0.91). **Recipe 1A-F** indicates that first-time visitors who perceive high experience self-connection believed the festival was fun, unique, provided a sense of escapism, and offered opportunities for social congruence. However, these visitors were less impressed with its physical environment, believing the servicescape quality was poor. The qualitative data corroborates the interplay between these concepts and their influence on experience self-connection, downplaying the impact poorly-designed servicescapes can have on visitor perceptions if other criteria are met:

Table 3
Recipes formulating high experience self-connection.

A: Two causal recipes (coverage:0.38, consistency:0.91)	Some first-time visitors perceive high levels of experiential self-connection when:	Arrow A: Six causal recipes (coverage:0.47, consistency: 0.86)	Some repeat visitors perceive high levels of experiential self-connection when:
Fu*~SQ*Esc*Uni*SC	<i>Recipe1A-F</i> : the festival is fun, escapist, unique, and offers opportunities for social congruence—despite low servicescape quality.	Fu*SQ*~Esc*Uni*SC	<i>Recipe1A-R</i> : the festival is fun and unique, but not escapist, it should have high servicescape quality and social congruence.
~Fu*SQ*Esc*Uni*SC	<i>Recipe2A-F</i> : the festival is not fun, but has high servicescape quality, escapism, uniqueness, and social congruence.	Fu*SQ*Esc*~SC	<i>Recipe2A-R</i> : the festival does not offer social congruence; it should be fun and escapist, with high servicescape quality.
		Fu*~SQ*Esc*Uni*SC	<i>Recipe3A-R</i> : servicescape quality is low; the festival must be fun, escapist, and unique and offer opportunities for social congruence.
		~Fu*~SQ*~SC*Esc*Uni	<i>Recipe4A-R</i> : the festival is not fun and servicescape quality and social congruence are low, it should be escapist and unique.
		~Fu*~Uni*Esc*SC	<i>Recipe5A-R</i> : the festival is not fun and unique, it should be escapist and offer opportunities for social congruence.
		~Fu*SQ*Esc*SC	<i>Recipe6A-R</i> : the festival is not fun and unique, but is escapist, has high servicescape quality, and stimulates social congruence.

Note: -Fu: -fun, -SQ: -servicescape-quality, -Esc: -escapism, -Uni: -uniqueness, -SC: -social-congruence, -ExSC: -experiential-self-connection. -‘R’: -Repeat-visitors; -‘F’: -First-time-visitors-(e.g.,-*Recipe1A-R/Recipe1A-F*).

“This is a nice festival. I never thought I'd have as much fun as I did today. It's different and good for a getaway. Cappadocia is nice and historical but I think they could have spent more money on the layout...But, there are also people with the same interests here.”

(N3)

Recipe 2A-F indicates that some first-time visitors did not consider Cappadox to be fun. Yet, as they believed the festival provided a sense of escapism, was unique, stimulated social congruence, and possessed high servicescape quality, these visitors also perceived high experience self-connection. Accordingly, the interview data suggests that some first-time visitors appreciate the functional aspects of Cappadox, irrespective of its ability to stimulate feelings of excitement, entertainment, and enjoyment:

“It's my first time. The place is fantastic and has a special atmosphere. I like the workshops...It's a good place to interact with others as there are a lot different activities...I felt connected to the place and the activities...I'll encourage my friends and family to visit Cappadox with me next year. I'm a good storyteller - they'll listen to me!”

(N6)

The fsQCA results also revealed six causal recipes explaining conditions where repeat visitors perceived high experience self-connection (coverage: 0.47, consistency: 0.86). *Recipe 1A-R* reveals that repeat visitors who perceived high experience self-connection considered the festival fun and unique, with a high quality servicescape, stimulating social congruence. However, Cappadox did not arouse feelings of escapism for this group. Here, one participant enjoyed the functional, social, and emotional elements of the festival and its associated servicescape quality, despite contending that it did not eradicate the stresses of everyday life:

“It's my second year here. It's enjoyable and unique. The atmosphere is great. History, culture, entertainment, music - what else do you want? I met some friends from the last festival and made new friends...Music is magical and gathers people with the same taste...You know I'm still thinking about work stresses, but I'm [here] for fun!”

(N4)

Some repeat visitors who perceived experience self-connection found the festival fun and escapist with high servicescape quality, but did not believe it provided opportunities for social congruence (*Recipe 2A-R*). Further, *Recipe 3A-R* suggests that experience self-connection is manifest when repeat visitors consider the festival fun and unique, while stimulating escapism and social congruence. However, these visitors also perceived Cappadox as having low servicescape quality. This suggests that socialisation opportunities and the overall festival atmosphere may dilute the issues some repeat visitors have with regards to servicescape design and quality:

“I said to the organisers about the design and quality last time. I wrote a letter, but as usual nobody done anything...It's still a great place; you can have fun and find new friends. It's historical - so unique and relaxing! Nonetheless, I really like the festival and my experience of being in Cappadocia again.

(N18)

Some repeat visitors did not consider the festival fun, contending that it had a poor quality servicescape and few opportunities for social congruence. Nonetheless, they perceived high levels of experience self-connection as they believed Cappadox stimulated a sense of escapism and was suitably unique (*Recipe 4A-R*):

“It has become a different place - I had more fun last time. It's to do with how t's organised and the quality of the festival. But, it's still different and I don't think there are similar events around...I'm away from stress and daily worries”

(N7)

Recipe 5A-R indicates that when repeat visitors find festivals neither ‘fun’ nor ‘unique’, they must provide opportunities for escapism and social congruence. If this combination of factors exists, repeat visitors may perceive high experience self-connection. Here, one repeat visitor suggests that escapism and social congruence supersede ‘enjoyment’ and ‘originality’:

“I was here last year...I came to see my friends and work with them. They like to work outside the office. It's good to be outside the office environment. We also met new people to talk about our project”

(N23)

Finally, *Recipe 6A-R* revealed that, while some repeat visitors believed the festival was not fun, if it was escapist with high servicescape quality and social congruence, then it also stimulated experience self-connection.

Table 4
Recipes formulating high braggart word-of-mouth.

<i>Arrow B</i> : Two causal recipes (coverage:0.41,consistency:0.88)	Some <i>first-time</i> visitors may share braggart word-of-mouth <u>when</u> :	<i>Arrow B</i> : Six causal recipes (coverage:0.53,consistency: 0.83)	Some <i>repeat</i> visitors may share braggart word-of-mouth <u>when</u> :
Fu*~SQ*Esc*Uni*SC*ExSC	<i>Recipe1B-F</i> : the festival is fun, escapist, unique, offers high social congruence and high levels of experience self-connection - despite low servicescape quality.	Fu*SQ*~Esc*Uni*SC	<i>Recipe1B-R</i> : the festival is not escapist; it should be fun and unique, with high servicescape quality and social congruence.
~Fu*SQ*Esc*Uni*SC*ExSC	<i>Recipe2B-F</i> : the festival is not fun, but has high servicescape quality, escapism, uniqueness, social congruence, and stimulates a high level of experience self-connection.	Fu*SQ*Esc*~SC*ExSC	<i>Recipe2B-R</i> : the festival does not stimulate social congruence, it should be fun and escapist, provide high servicescape quality, and stimulate high levels of experience self-connection.
		Fu*SQ*Esc*~Uni*ExSC	<i>Recipe3B-R</i> : the festival is fun and escapist, but not unique; it must have high servicescape quality and stimulate high levels of experience self-connection.
		~Fu*~Uni*~ExSC*SQ*Esc*SC	<i>Recipe4B-R</i> : the festival is not fun and unique, but visitors do not perceive high experience self-connection, it must be considered an escapist experience with high servicescape quality and social congruence.
		~Fu*~SQ*~Uni*Esc*SC*ExSC	<i>Recipe5B-R</i> : servicescape quality is low and the festival is not considered fun and unique, it should be escapist and offer opportunities to enhance social congruence. Visitors must also perceive high levels of experience self-connection.
		~Fu*SQ*Esc*Uni*SC*ExSC	<i>Recipe6B-R</i> : the festival is not considered fun, it should be escapist and unique. Further, servicescape quality and social congruence should be high, and visitors must perceive high levels of experience self-connection.

Note:-Fu: -fun, -SQ: -servicescape-quality, -Esc: -escapism, -Uni: -uniqueness, -SC: -social-congruence, -ExSC: -experiential-self-connection. -‘R’: -Repeat-visitors; -‘F’: -First-time-visitors (e.g.,-*Recipe1B-R/Recipe1B-F*).

Braggart word-of-mouth

Results from the configurational modelling for predicting high level of braggart word-of-mouth (Arrow B, Fig. 1) among *first-time* and *repeat* visitors are presented in Table 4. Similar to experience self-connection, two causal recipes describe conditions where first-time visitors expressed high levels of braggart word-of-mouth (coverage: 0.41, consistency: 0.88). **Recipe 1B-F**, suggests first-time visitors intend to brag about attending Cappadox when they perceive high experience self-connection. This group indicated that the festival was fun, unique, provided escapism, and offered avenues for social congruence. However, these visitors did not perceive the festival servicescape as being high quality:

“I’ve never been in such a place. It’s enjoyable, fresh and different. You’re in the middle of a historical place with many activities. Who doesn’t like that? I felt good about being here and finding new friends...But, I’m not sure if they have done a good job designing the place. It’s tacky and old-fashioned...It’s important for me to share my experience with my friends. They enjoy when I tell them about the events I attend”.

(N11)

Recipe 2B-F indicates that some first-time participants did not believe Cappadox was fun. However, as the festival stimulated feelings of escapism, uniqueness, and was perceived as having high servicescape quality and social congruence, this aroused experience self-connection. If festival managers design their offering accordingly, first-time visitors may engage in braggart word-of-mouth behaviour regarding their attendance:

“I’m not working today – great! I’m in this place for the first time – it’s so different. I have a good feeling about it. [Cappadox] is nice and they have spent a lot of time designing it...I had good fun with some people here and we did some activities together – I’ll tell my friends that [Cappadox] offers this...I feel fantastic about my visit. My parents are going to hear all about it when I return”.

(N22)

The fsQCA results calculated six causal recipes predicting high levels of braggart word-of-mouth for *repeat* visitors (coverage: 0.53, consistency: 0.83) (Table 4). **Recipe 1B-R** echoes **Recipe 1A-R** in terms of the conditions stimulating braggart word-of-mouth.

“I [first] came here 2 years ago...It’s a festival in a historical site with interesting activities - it’s enjoyable. It’s unique and different to other festivals. I enjoyed the tour, and also attended bands I like. The concerts were great...I met people who love my favourite bands. I felt good about coming here and will share my experience with friends. It’s all fun! I’m sure my friends would like to hear about this unique experience”.

(N15)

Repeat visitors intend to engage in braggart word-of-mouth when they perceive festivals as fun, escapist experiences, with high servicescape quality and experience self-connection, even if there are no opportunities for socialisation (**Recipe 2B-R**). Here, while festivals are often considered inherently interactive, some repeat visitors do not value social congruence, instead focusing on hedonic benefits, subsequently sharing this via braggart word-of-mouth:

“It’s nice like last time. It’s full of joy and the atmosphere is great. They did well designing the place and offering different services...It’s always good to have a beer outside the office. Work is good but fun is better...I normally come alone [as] I like ‘me’ time...It’s good to enjoy the music and walk around this fantastic place. Then just find a beer somewhere in the sun...It’s very much me and the place and I’ll share [the benefit of] this ‘me’ time with others.”

(N26)

Recipe 3B-R revealed that even when some repeat visitors did not consider Cappadox as unique, if they considered it fun and escapist, with high servicescape quality and experience self-connection, then they are more likely to boast about their attendance. Further, **Recipe 4B-R** demonstrates that when Cappadox was not considered either fun or unique, and when repeat visitors did not perceive high experience self-connection, they may still engage in braggart word-of-mouth if the servicescape was considered high quality, offered opportunities for social congruence, and provided a sense of escapism:

“[Cappadox] is just fine. I like the quality of the workshops - they are well-designed...It’s nice to go somewhere different, but it would be better if they provided more entertainment. It’s a bit old-fashioned...To talk with new people is always a bonus; it’s really good to make friends at concerts. [Cappadox is] an individual thing for me but I’ll share the benefits of this experience with my colleagues”.

(N31)

Recipe 5B-R suggests repeat visitors who believed Cappadox offered high levels of escapism, social congruence and experience self-connection, despite its poor quality servicescape, intend to engage in braggart word-of-mouth, even if they did not believe it was fun or unique. **Recipe 6B-R** suggests that repeat visitors may engage in braggart word-of-mouth when they perceive festivals as escapist, unique, offering opportunities for socialisation, possessing a high quality servicescape, and stimulating high levels of self-connection, irrespective of enjoyment derived from the festival’s core offering:

“I enjoyed being with others in the concerts and the tour. I met nice people. Apart from that, I think the events need big changes. [The programme of events] needs some quality! I was not impressed this year. But, I had some alone time to think about things in my life - it was refreshing, particularly as I’m going through a bad time...It was still a fantastic venue and I’ll let others know”

Table 5
NCA results.

Antecedents	Experiential self-connection		Braggart word-of-mouth	
	First-time	Repeat	First-time	Repeat
Fun	0.897	0.861	0.884	0.876
Servicescape quality	0.903	0.907	0.913	0.922
Escapism	0.931	0.907	0.938	0.898
Uniqueness	0.892	0.886	0.890	0.883
Social congruence	0.903	0.879	0.912	0.902
Experience self-connection			0.897	0.876

Note: Consistency > 0.9 indicates necessary conditions-(**bolded**).

(N28)

Necessary condition analysis (NCA)

The NCA results suggest that high levels of servicescape quality and escapism are necessary to stimulate experience self-connection in both first-time and repeat visitors (Table 5). However, social congruence is a necessary condition for first-time visitors to experience self-connection, whereas it is not required for repeat visitors. To encourage repeat visitors to engage in braggart word-of-mouth, two conditions (servicescape quality and social congruence) are necessary, whereas three (servicescape quality, escapism, and social congruence) are necessary for first-time visitors. As such, festival organisers must satisfy a wider range of necessary conditions to encourage first-time visitors to engage in braggart word-of-mouth, and to stimulate high levels of experience self-connection in first-time, when compared to repeat, visitors.

Discussion

Cultural festivals are a thriving tourism activity, with destinations competing to host visitors seeking unique events imbued with high-quality servicescapes and opportunities for socialisation (Gratton et al., 2011). Prior studies suggest that first-time and repeat visitors follow different patterns of consumption (Lau & McKercher, 2004; Li et al., 2008). Yet, few recommend how best to combine experiential purchase quality dimensions to stimulate experience self-connection in visitors cognisant of this. Further, while crucial in portraying aspirational consumption, we nonetheless have little knowledge of the conditions required to encourage braggart word-of-mouth. Therefore, this study provides a nascent exploration of the differences between first-time and repeat visitors' perceptions of experiential purchase quality dimensions in the context of festival consumption; identifying both *sufficient* and *necessary* conditions stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth therein.

An innovative mixed-method approach was applied, revealing the conditions required to improve experience self-connection and encourage braggart word-of-mouth. fsQCA, a set-theoretic analytical approach, was performed to investigate which recipes—from the aforementioned combination experiential purchase quality dimensions—lead to high levels of experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth. Interviews were conducted to obtain a narrative understanding of visitor perspectives. The results suggest that a range of recipes explain conditions where visitors experience high levels of self-connection and may subsequently boast about their experiences (Packard et al., 2016).

The findings deepen our understanding of the differences between first-time and repeat festival visitors' perceptions and behaviours. In parallel with the interview findings, the fsQCA results indicate that two recipes explain conditions where first-time visitors experience high levels of self-connection and two recipes encourage braggart word-of-mouth. If a festival is not fun or does not possess a high-quality servicescape, first-time visitors may still perceive experience self-connection and intend to engage in braggart word-of-mouth if their expectations with regards to escapism, uniqueness, and social congruence are satisfied. While only two recipes explain conditions leading to experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth, first-time visitors are nonetheless also demanding, as four experiential purchase quality dimensions are necessary to achieve the expected outcomes.

The findings echo extant literature, which contends that first-time and repeat visitors hold different perceptions towards festival consumption (Kruger & Saayman, 2013; Lee et al., 2009; Lee & Beeler, 2006). Six recipes explain conditions where repeat visitors develop experience self-connection, with a further six recipes also likely to encourage braggart word-of-mouth. Here, the perceptions and behaviour of repeat visitors are more diverse than first-time visitors as recipes for experience self-connection differ from those stimulating braggart word-of-mouth. Further, the findings suggest that repeat visitors are more flexible with regards to the dimensions of experiential purchase quality, as fun, uniqueness, servicescape quality, and social congruence receive low scores in recipes stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth. Some repeat visitors intimated a high level of these outcomes, even when three experiential purchase quality dimensions were considered unsatisfactory (*Recipe 4A-R*). For example, when compared with first-time visitors, some repeat visitors intend to engage in braggart word-of-mouth even when experience self-connection is low (*Recipe 4B-R*). This is interesting as previous studies indicate that first-time visitors seek greater variation, while repeat visitors pursue routine experiences (Lau & McKercher, 2004).

This study also represents the first attempt in recognising the necessary conditions underpinning experience self-connection and

braggart word-of-mouth for both first-time and repeat festival visitors. Servicescape quality was necessary to engender experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth for both groups, as was ‘escapism’. Social congruence is necessary to encourage both first-time and repeat visitors to engage in braggart word-of-mouth. However, while it is necessary to achieve experience self-connection for first-time visitors, social congruence is not necessary for repeat visitors. This again suggests that first-time visitors are more demanding, reflecting extant research (Yolal et al., 2017). In contrast, repeat visitors show more flexibility in perceiving high experience self-conception and engaging in braggart word-of-mouth by satisfying only two (of five) experiential purchase quality conditions.

Conclusion

Theoretical contribution

Research into the quality of experiential purchases remains scarce (Verhoef et al., 2009). However, the theoretical contribution of this empirical study extends beyond considering the role of experiential purchase quality dimensions in stimulating outcomes important to managers in a tourism and festival consumption context (cf. Pelletier & Collier, 2018). Instead, as a result of the research approach, theoretical value is also derived from the manner in which this study explores combinations of experiential purchase quality dimensions leading to experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth – extending and developing those identified in extant discourse in the process (Verhoef et al., 2009). Further, literature investigates the role of experiential purchase quality in generating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth in general terms (Pelletier & Collier, 2018). However, this study demonstrates that the combinations of experiential purchase quality dimensions stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth differ across visitor groups (e.g., first-time and repeat visitors). Using fsQCA, it highlights that first-time visitors are more sensitive to the dimensions of experiential purchase quality, whereas repeat visitors typically have a degree of expectation and understanding of festival service offerings. Nonetheless, given the complex interplay between experiential purchase quality dimensions underpinning experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth, attention must be paid to developing experiential purchase quality to a standard that meets *both* first-time and repeat visitor expectations.

Managerial implications

This study proposes a series of managerial implications, echoing Pelletier and Collier (2018), who suggest experiential purchase quality dimensions are distinctive and can be formed from multiple factors for different consumers and contexts. The differences in experiential purchase quality dimensions leading to experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth discovered to exist across repeat and first-time *festival* visitors thus emphasises the practical value of this study.

Prior research into festival tourism primarily considers the importance and influence of word-of-mouth more generally (Giovanardi et al., 2014). However, this study investigates *braggart* word-of-mouth; highlighting the importance of word-of-mouth centred on improving the ‘*sharers*’ self-esteem, identity, and image as opposed to information sharing or service reviews, and the conditions necessary to encourage this aspirational shared content. For example, as demonstrated by qualitative interview (N31) and *Recipe 4B-R*, this study identifies that visitors may intend to engage in positive word-of-mouth even when they hold a negative perception of some aspects of an experiential consumption environment. Recognising the value of aspirational experiential consumption, festival managers should encourage visitors to attach festival-relevant hashtags to their shared content, with emphasis on allowing visitors to share their experiences, images, and videos taken on-site. This approach is contingent on managers ensuring that three necessary conditions (servicescape quality, escapism, and social congruence) are reflected in how their festival is designed and subsequently promoted to potential visitors, with emphasis placed on providing a frequently updated programme of events imbued with these characteristics in order to appeal to the desire for aspirational experiential consumption inherent to both first-time and repeat visitors, stimulating braggart word-of-mouth in the process (cf. Pelletier & Collier, 2018).

Further, festival managers should foster visitor-centric online communities (e.g., via Facebook or Instagram) to develop a digital repository for shared content emerging via braggart word-of-mouth, encouraging visitors to showcase their own experiences while developing off-site social congruence. In doing so, festival managers should partner with advertising agencies in order to conduct tracking studies to help them understand when, where, and why different types of visitors engage in braggart word-of-mouth. This will help them to review how their offering corresponds to the necessary conditions leading to high levels of self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth, encouraging them to refine future festival design and promotional activities accordingly.

In line with previous studies (Jin et al., 2015; Kruger & Saayman, 2013), our findings encourage festival managers to focus on developing their offering to attract repeat visitors as there are more opportunities (*six recipes*), compared to first-time visitors (*two recipes*), to stimulate experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth. For example, the lack of emphasis on socialisation evident within qualitative interview (N28) and *Recipe 6B-R* demonstrates the diverse motivations of repeat visitors, suggesting that festival attendance provides multiple hedonic benefits for this group, stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth in the process. As such, for repeat visitors, if festival organisers fail to satisfy one dimension of experiential purchase quality (e.g., uniqueness); alternative opportunities to stimulate experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth remain (i.e., *Recipes 3B-R, 4B-R and 5B-R*). We therefore suggest that festival managers develop clear incentives to appeal to repeat visitors. For example, loyalty schemes which recognise repeat visitors by providing access to exclusive activities, services, and curated itineraries, may meet their desire for unique, high quality, aspirational offerings. This should be reflected in personalised marketing communications in order to appeal to potential repeat visitors.

Further, the results indicate that fewer conditions are *necessary* for repeat visitors to attain the expected outcomes than for first-time visitors. Social congruence underpins experience self-connection and escapism stimulates braggart word-of-mouth for first-time visitors, but neither is *necessary* for repeat visitors. However, servicescape quality and social congruence are necessary conditions leading to braggart word-of-mouth in both groups. As such, while the importance of servicescape quality in stimulating experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth endures across both first-time and repeat visitors, festival managers must design their offering in a manner conducive to socialisation for first-time visitors (cf. Kruger et al., 2010). This may prove challenging as, unlike repeat visitors, first-time visitors will not have developed extant networks previously on-site. As such, some areas, events, and workshops should be promoted as being for ‘first-time visitors only’, providing opportunities for socialisation and interaction without the fear of impinging on the established networks of repeat visitors. Further, first-time visitors could be provided with badges or labels alongside their festival tickets; identifying them as ‘first-time visitors’, echoing the Disneyland experience (Armstrong, 2018), with the purpose of encouraging others to interact with them and involve them in social pursuits undertaken on-site.

Limitations and future research

Despite providing a nascent investigation into the interplay between experiential purchase quality, self-connection, and braggart word-of-mouth for first-time and repeat festival visitors, this study contains limitations. First, the data is contextually restricted, impacting upon generalisability. Data was collected from one Turkish festival, and different contexts may provide dissimilar results. Therefore, we encourage colleagues to investigate alternative festivals and compare our findings with their own. Further, Cappadox's offering is also distinctive; comprised of a variety of activities and events, it appeals to a wide audience. Findings may therefore differ if data is collected from festivals with a sole purpose (e.g., film festivals).

Third, this study investigated the influence of experiential purchase quality on festival visitors' experience self-connection and intention to engage in braggart word-of-mouth from two perspectives. We recommend that future studies consider the role of different variables (e.g., nostalgia, safety, participation) alongside established experiential purchase quality dimensions in diverse experiential tourism contexts (e.g., sports tourism, agritourism). Further, this study calculated recipes for *high* scores of experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth. We recommend future studies explore recipes for *low* scores of these outcomes using fsQCA, as these may not necessarily be contradictory. As fsQCA is a powerful approach for testing complex models using both small and large samples, we also suggest that future studies investigate respondent demographics as predictors of experience self-connection and braggart word-of-mouth. Finally, this study collected qualitative and quantitative data in parallel due to the festival's time-restricted nature. We therefore recommend that future research adopts a sequential mixed-method approach in order to elaborate upon our findings.

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