



## Sensory versus personal environment as antecedents of the creative food tourism experience

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### ABSTRACT

This research contributes to the study of food tourism by analyzing the antecedents and consequences of a novel concept named creative food tourism experience (CFTE). The paper is based on the Balance Theory and the Service Triangle to propose a collaborative perspective between restaurants and their employees to contribute to the creation of creative experiences for food tourists. Specifically, this study develops a theoretical framework in which the sensory environment created by restaurants, based on food appeal and the restaurant atmosphere, and the personal environment provided by employees, in terms of service excellence, co-create the CFTE for visitors. Based on a sample of 407 food tourists, the empirical analysis shows that the suggested drivers are significant, and service excellence has the greatest impact. Memorability and, indirectly, intention to repeat/recommend are shown to be relevant outcomes of the CFTE. Practical implications for restaurant managers and the hospitality industry are also provided.

### 1. Introduction

As global tourism expands and competition between destinations increases, local cuisine as an intangible heritage is increasingly becoming a differentiating factor in attracting tourists. Local food and culinary practices represent a relevant element of the traditional culture and identity of destinations (Oliveira et al., 2020; Prayag et al., 2020) and are an increasingly important attraction for tourists. In recent years, food or culinary or gastronomic tourism has experienced strong growth, contributing to the revitalization and diversification of tourism and, consequently, to the promotion of local economies (Afaq et al., 2023). Although gastronomic tourism is difficult to quantify, industry experts estimate that this type of tourism has grown by up to 20% in recent years, putting interest in gastronomy on a par with visits to museums and historical heritage (Wolf, 2023). Spending on food and drink is estimated to account for 40% of global tourism expenditure (UNWTO, 2023a).

Definitions of food tourism vary, but all claim food as an essential element associated with tourism and/or experiences. For example, the

World Food Travel Association (2023) refers to food tourism as the act of traveling to taste a place to get a sense of the place. UNWTO (2023b) defines food tourism as a type of tourism in which the traveler experiences activities and products related to local gastronomy. In this way, food tourism constitutes an activity that allows the dynamization and diversification of the offer by living unique experiences. Food tourism includes a visit to the places where the food is produced, as well as to food festivals, restaurants and other places where to taste food, experience food related activities and learn about the local traditions, resources and culture (Ellis et al., 2018; Hall and Sharples, 2003; Okumus, 2020; Soltani et al., 2021).

Food tourism has been analyzed in relation to creative tourism, which is defined as a type of tourism based on creativity and active participation (Richards and Raymond, 2000). Visitors actively contribute and interact with the food environment by engaging in experiences in the so-called experience economy (Hung et al., 2016). In this way, the foundation of food tourism is related to creativity and experience, giving rise to the concept of creative food tourism experience (CFTE), which involves a collaborative nature (Okumus, 2020).

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Despite the collaborative nature of the CFTE, only a few studies highlight the importance of collaboration or co-creation between different stakeholders from a qualitative perspective (e.g., Richards, 2021; Taheri et al., 2021; Viljoen and Kruger, 2020) or an exploratory quantitative analysis (e.g., Rachão et al., 2021). Therefore, relevant topics remain understudied as the how the value associated with a CFTE can be co-created from a holistic perspective, i.e., where several stakeholders contribute to the development of extraordinary moments (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Taheri et al., 2021). In this regard, recent research highlights that studying the antecedents of a CFTE from a perspective where different stakeholders interact is a relevant goal that remains unexplored (Rachão et al., 2021; Richards, 2021). Similarly, recent literature calls suggest the need to improve our understanding of the main outcomes derived from a CFTE (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019), given their critical importance for improving the competitiveness of restaurants and destinations (Antón et al., 2019). The main results of the experience in the gastronomic context are related to concepts such as satisfaction and loyalty or directly to behavioral variables (Antón et al., 2019), without considering pre-behavioral variables such as the food experience memorability, which plays a key role in creative tourism (Hung et al., 2016).

To fill critical gaps that persist in the background, the main objective of this study is to deepen our understanding of the CFTE by studying its antecedents and outcomes. The present research provides further evidence in the context of food tourism paying attention to the drivers of a CFTE based on the balance among restaurants, employees, and visitors. Moreover, our study also addresses the consequences of a CFTE, paying special attention to the creation of positive lasting memories associated with the CFTE at the restaurant (memorability) and, ultimately, to the intention to repeat/recommend the food experience.

The study of the drivers of the CFTE is based on the foundation of the Balance Theory and its collaborative nature. The Balance Theory is a model based on the equilibrium that should exist between the participants in interpersonal relationships. This balance is achieved when all parts have the same harmony and reach a positive outcome at the end of the experience (Woodside and Chebat, 2001). Based on this theory, the Service Triangle reflects the interactions between three dominant parties: organization, provider/service staff, and consumer (Albrecht and Zemke, 2011; Carson et al., 1997; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000) which are jointly responsible for providing services to customers (Rachão et al., 2021). The Service Triangle provides thus a framework for understanding how the company and its employees work hand in hand to create a food experience. Despite the relevance of the Service Triangle in the service delivery process, it has not been applied to the creation of a creative experience in the context of food tourism. The application of the Service Triangle to the field of food tourism opens a new window of knowledge as a more holistic understanding of the antecedents of a CFTE is required, or in other words, the value associated with a CFTE (Ali et al., 2016).

In this line, we propose the concept of “CFTE Triangle” which contributes positively and innovatively to the hospitality sector. This study focuses on the relationships between the restaurant and the visitor and between the service staff/employees and the visitor due to the relevance of both interactions in the service delivery, as most service failures occur from the company and the service itself (Carson et al., 1997; Cheng et al., 2021). The connection between the restaurant and the visitor is analyzed in terms of the *sensory environment*. The bond between the service staff and the food tourists is represented by the *personal environment*. The sensory environment plays a key role in restaurants as it represents a new paradigm with respect to traditional promotion. Studies that analyze this concept in restaurants are scarce and do not consider the five senses (Kim et al., 2021; Satti et al., 2021). Therefore, further study of this concept is required from a holistic perspective in the restaurant industry. The personal environment plays a relevant role in services as contributes to the creation of experiences (Wang and Lang, 2019; Wang, 2021). While the customer-employee relationship has been

extensively studied (Gremler and Gwinner, 2000), to date, it has not been deeply explored in the context of creative food experiences in restaurants (Hsu and Scott, 2020; Wang, 2021). Thus, there is a real need to investigate the role of the personal environment in the delivery of a CFTE, which is measured in terms of the service excellence provided by the restaurant staff.

Therefore, this study contributes to the literature as follows. For the first time, the creation of a CFTE is analyzed from the basis of the Balance Theory and under an innovative proposal from the definition of the “CFTE Triangle”, where the restaurant interaction with the visitor is represented by the food appeal and restaurant atmosphere as key constituents of the restaurant sensory environment; the relationship of the employees with the visitors is represented by the personal environment achieved through service excellence; and where the visitors create their own food experience as a result of the influence of and interaction with both agents (restaurant and employees). We prove how the Balance Theory and Service Triangle are useful for behavior models in food tourism experiences. Second, this research adopts the creative tourism scale developed by Ali et al. (2016) and Wang et al. (2020) for food tourism that includes a combination of five factors (escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning), providing a deeper understanding of the multidimensionality of a CFTE. Third, the research model is enhanced by studying the impact of the CFTE on the visitors’ memorability of the tourism experiences at the restaurants. Memorability plays an important role in the opinion about a touristic experience (Wang et al., 2020) and in the decision-making process of travelers (Afaq et al., 2023; Antón et al., 2019).

## 2. Theoretical foundations

Food is a relevant travel motivation in the decision-making process of visitors, especially for those who are enthusiastic about food, known as “foodies” (Gomez-Rico et al., 2022; Knollenberg et al., 2021). Foodies or food tourists are motivated to try new dishes and enjoy unique gastronomic experiences (Su et al., 2020). Thus, food and tourism are connected, and because of this connection, there is an increase in the arrival of tourists who want to live gastronomic experiences (UNWTO, 2023a; Wolf, 2023). Generally speaking, food tourism is defined as a food experience in a tourist destination (Hiamey et al., 2021) and is related to creative tourism, which is based on a unique form of tourism that allows visitors to participate actively in learning experiences. Specifically, creative tourism has emerged as a variant of cultural tourism in which travelers actively engage in the daily life of a destination and collaborate in the creation of tourism experiences (Richards, 2020). This concept was introduced by Richards and Raymond (2000) and has gained traction due to its defining characteristics of creativity, active participation, and community integration. Its growing acceptance can be observed in both academic and practical contexts. Creative tourism has been embraced and promoted by scholars who have presented various definitions that share common elements, such as active participation or authentic experiences (Cheng and Chen, 2023; Wang et al., 2020). Creative tourists are likely to engage in activities related to arts and crafts, design, cooking and food culture, nature exploration, and so on.

Moreover, the increasing desire for local tourism offerings that provide greater value has highlighted the importance of interaction between participants and local residents, as well as the inclusion of co-creation processes in destination choices. Currently, more research on co-creation in tourism is focused on the food tourism sector, specifically the evolving dynamics of co-creating food tourism experiences (Prayag et al., 2020). Creative tourism, with its inherent characteristics, addresses the diverse needs and motivations of modern travelers. It has the potential to offer a wide range of experiences, complementing existing forms of tourism such as cultural, nature, and gastronomic tourism (Richards, 2020). In this line, food tourists are increasingly perceived as active participants (Jolliffe, 2016), and some restaurants are

differentiating their offerings by giving visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential through active participation in learning experiences and providing both a unique experience adapted to the travelers' requirements based on service quality and a unique sensory environment. In this way, food tourism can constitute a type of creative tourism that contributes to the economic objectives of destinations, as well as sustainable development in terms of local and cultural identity (Oliveira et al., 2020).

As indicated in the previous section, this research aims to achieve a further understanding of the value creation in a CFTE by analyzing its antecedents based on the joint configuration among different players and the CFTE outcomes in terms of memorability of the experience and intention to repeat/recommend. To achieve this goal, this research is based on the Balance Theory and Service Triangle to explain the creation of the food visitor experience, focusing on the role played by the company and its employees in relation to the tourists.

The Balance Theory was developed by Heider (1958) and expanded by authors such as Newcomb (1968) and Insko (1984), among others. Balance Theory is a coherent theory that is appropriate for analyzing relationships between people and/or entities, as it has been demonstrated in numerous empirical studies (Crandall et al., 2007). This theory represents a triad of "person a", "person b", and "company" and it is based on interpersonal relationships between three elements or human beings that have a particular bond and the importance of creating patterns that characterize these human interactions. This theory states that there is an equilibrium if all the parts have the same harmony (Carson et al., 1997). These authors suggested that people search for balance in their personal interactions. Thus, Balance Theory is a scheme that is based on the fit among different agents (Basil and Herr, 2006), and a positive result indicates balance (Cartwright and Harary, 1956). The more matches are presented among these agents, the more likely the emotional balance will be and the more positive the customer experience will be (Heider, 1958). Thus, the joint configuration among different stakeholders contributes to the formation of the customer experience (Crandall et al., 2007).

From the Balance Theory, the Service Triangle can be represented, also suggesting the connections between three persons and/or entities (Albrecht and Zemke, 2011; Carson et al., 1997; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). The Service Triangle is an approach that favors the delivery of quality services. It is an interactive model of service management that reflects the relationship among three stakeholders and how this relationship contributes to the service quality (Bahri and Herawan, 2020). Taking into account the collaborative nature of the CFTE, we use the Service Triangle which is a strategic model emphasizes the interconnectedness of three key components, and goes beyond the traditional SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985) or DINESERV (Stevens et al., 1995) applied to restaurants (Cheng et al., 2021; Le et al., 2023; Nuyken et al., 2022) when measures service quality. Within this framework, the company, employees, and consumers create a triangle that allows the understanding of the service delivery experience through their relationships. These three agents play important roles as their connections imply relevant marketing effects in determining the enterprise's success (Cheng et al., 2021; Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000).

The consequences of these relationships among stakeholders affect the perception of the full experience (Carson et al., 1997). Based on the Service Triangle, this research proposes a "CFTE Triangle" where restaurants, employees, and visitors interact to create food experiences, presenting relevant academic and practical implications. The Balance Theory and the Service Triangle constitute an interesting guide for understanding the formation of a CFTE from a collaborative perspective (Tsai and Wang, 2017; Woodside and Chebat, 2001).

The creation of the food experience is the result of the co-creation process in which consumers are actively involved (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Wang et al., 2020). This is really important in the hospitality industry, where the experience is generated sequentially and at the different points of contact that occur in the service provision (Hwang

and Seo, 2016). In the hospitality industry, selling a product is not enough; it is necessary to provide it with a special atmosphere, and exquisite attention that meets or even exceeds expectations (Gilmore and Pine, 2002). Authors such as Kwansa (2004) and Satti et al. (2021) indicate that from the perspective of traditional marketing, restaurants' experiences and their effects on the visitors' feelings and perceptions have not been studied. That is why it is necessary to focus on the sensory and personal side, which is crucial in creating experiences in the hospitality industry. The consumer experience is the result of a set of values, among which are sensory experiences relative to taste, sight, touch, hearing, or smell, as well as social relationships based on the personal service provided (Han and Hyun, 2017; Hwang and Seo, 2016; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). Accordingly, in this research, we analyze the role of the sensory environment from the perspective of the restaurant and the personal environment from the perspective of the employee in the creation of food tourism experiences for visitors.

The three elements of the triangle that must be interrelated are shown in more detail below. The first component of this triangle is the companies. Companies are responsible for presenting attractive premises to offer their products and services, as well as for carrying out appealing marketing actions to attract and retain customers (Carson et al., 1997). Specifically, restaurants design the core or basic service (food appeal) and the service infrastructure (restaurant atmosphere) to build a strong relationship quality with visitors and improve social interactions. In the creation of a CFTE, both elements constitute the restaurant's sensory environment and are essential in the provision of services to visitors (Kim et al., 2021). The second element of the triangle refers to the role of employees in the creative experience. Employees are service providers that offer companies' services to consumers. Employees are the direct point of contact with the consumer in services in general and in restaurants in particular, and elements such as empathy, responsiveness, trustworthiness, proximity, and professionalism are essential for successful services (Carson et al., 1997). Restaurant employees represent the service excellence provided to visitors (Wang and Lang, 2019) and constitute the personal environment in the creation of experiences. And finally, the consumers, who are the service recipients, perceive the efficiency or inefficiency of the service provided (Carson et al., 1997). In the case of restaurant services, visitors want to enjoy unique experiences that allow them to relax and escape from their everyday life. For this experience to be satisfactory for the consumer, the reality must be superior to previous expectations (Ali et al., 2016).

As indicated above, visitors are the central element in the creation of food experiences. CFTE is a multidimensional concept that has been measured with different dimensions. Among the scales of measurement used in the existing literature, the Kim et al. (2012) proposal stands out, which comprises seven dimensions: hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge. In addition, other authors identify other dimensions, for example, social interaction, relaxation, or stimulation (e.g., Obenour et al., 2006), among others. In our research, we have developed the analysis of the CFTE based on the measurement scale proposed by Ali et al. (2016) and Wang et al. (2020). This scale is composed of five dimensions (escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning) that were developed in the context of creative tourism. Moreover, we explore the influence of the CFTE on visitors' perceptions of memorability and intention to repeat/recommend (Wang et al., 2020). Memorability can be powerful enough to generate a strong desire to revisit or recommend the tourist experience (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016).

The following subsections present the main ideas of the theoretical framework that supports the hypotheses put forward in this study. First, the sensory environment and, in particular, food appeal and restaurant atmosphere, are presented as antecedents of a CFTE; second, the personal environment, in terms of service excellence, is shown as an antecedent of CFTE; third, the relationship between CFTE and memorability is discussed; and finally, the influence of memorability on repeat/recommendation intentions is discussed.

### 2.1. Sensory environment: food appeal and restaurant atmosphere as antecedents of the CFTE

Differentiation is key to product marketing and service delivery, and the sensory environment allows the company to offer a service that is distinct from those offered by competitors. A sensory environment engages consumers with all five senses and leads to more positive brand behavior (Satti et al., 2021). The sensory environment is a technique that allows communication with customers through the five senses creating a multisensory experience (Moreira et al., 2017). It represents a new perspective of marketing that generates a higher link between the customer and the brand due to the added value generated in the service process and contributes to the creation of long-term relationships with clients (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Satti et al., 2021).

In gastronomy, the sensory environment leads to positive feelings and perceptions and influences the creation of the overall experience. This atmosphere influences consumers through stimuli such as flavors, colors, music, fragrances, exclusive designs, or even comfortable furnishings (Satti et al., 2021). It has been proven that sensory marketing in gastronomy generates positive benefits in consumer behavior and, specifically, contributes favorably to creating the overall experience (Moreira et al., 2017). The sensory environment generates psychological responses that stimulate the multisensory brand experience and produces positive experiences by focusing on all senses (Satti et al., 2021).

The sensory environment in restaurants has been defined through two dimensions: food appeal and restaurant atmosphere. Food appeal refers to the appearance, taste, texture, satiation, or soft/hard characteristics (Hiamey et al., 2021). Food appeal is a crucial element in creating experiences for visitors to restaurants, and its definition is also extensible to quality, presentation, health characteristics, variety, or quantity (Ha and Jang, 2010; Han and Hyun, 2017; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). The atmosphere refers to the sensory environment and includes ambient factors such as music, design, color, or noise (Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). Several authors point out that the restaurant atmosphere is directly linked to the creation of experiences (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Han and Hyun, 2017; Hwang and Seo, 2016; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). Food appeal and the creation of a unique functional environment produce sensorial value for customers who feel a creative experience (Hwang and Seo, 2016).

Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

**H1a.** : Food appeal has a positive effect on CFTE.

**H1b.** : Restaurant atmosphere has a positive effect on CFTE.

### 2.2. Personal environment: service excellence as an antecedent of a CFTE

Services have characteristics that distinguish them from products, such as variability, perishability, intangibility, and inseparability (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). The personal environment represents the interactive marketing that links the service providers and the consumers. It means that employees represent the frontline service staff that provides company services to consumers (Wang, 2021). The personal environment allows companies and consumers to connect directly, solving any problem and co-creating value for both parties. In the context of the personal environment, customers participate in an active way in value creation as there is a bi-directional relationship between employees and consumers. This two-way interaction or reciprocal stimulus generates active actions in value exchange (Wang, 2021). In gastronomy as well, the personal atmosphere plays a fundamental role in the success of the customer experience (Han and Hyun, 2017; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019).

There is a close link between personal environment and service excellence (Wang, 2021). Service excellence refers to the ability of service providers to consistently meet and even exceed customer expectations, thanks to the kindness and attention to detail of professionals in the hospitality industry (Han and Hyun, 2017). There are several

authors who suggest the importance of the interface between employees and customers in the creation of experiences and, consequently, the relevance of offering personalized, unique, and excellent services (Wang and Lang, 2019). From an operative viewpoint, the role of employees is fundamental in creating experiences in the hospitality industry. For that reason, working on training programs and carrying out internal marketing actions to increase their motivation at work are the best tools to be successful (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Kim et al., 2021). The service is provided by the employees, and they represent a major antecedent of customer experiences. For tourists to get a tremendous gastronomic tourist experience, employees must make eye contact, smile, and attend properly to visitors. The relationship between service excellence and customer experience has been tested, and it is essential for restaurant success (Hwang and Seo, 2016). Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H2.** : Service excellence has a positive effect on CFTE.

### 2.3. CFTE and memorability

Generally speaking, it can be noted that tourism service providers seek to ensure that visitors have positive and remarkable memories after providing a service or visiting a destination (Gilmore and Pine, 2002). As Li et al. (2022) point out if the service experience generates positive, outstanding memories in the long-term, the experience becomes memorable, and, in this way, memorability becomes an outcome of tourism experiences.

In the case of gastronomic tourism, when customers make positive evaluations of the dining experience at the restaurant, the result is the generation of positive and memorable memories (Ali et al., 2016), just as it happens in destinations after a travel experience (Zatori et al., 2018). Previous research on food, food-related activities, and memory agrees that memories are intrinsically linked to sensory experiences. In other words, sensory stimuli assist in creating long-lasting memories. Thus, in line with previous research, travelers' memories associated with food experiences can be triggered by sensory attributes associated with the food (Ali et al., 2016) and the restaurant atmosphere (Antón et al., 2019). Additionally, other components of memorable experiences include (Afaq et al., 2023): exceeding service quality (Di-Clemente et al., 2020); enjoying a break from the monotonous life (Lin, Mao, 2015); having access to local culture or social interactions (Kim, 2014).

Following this line of reasoning, several factors may contribute to the memorable nature of a CFTE, such as its intrinsic uniqueness related to the sensory environment (food appeal and physical atmosphere of the setting) and the exceptional service quality in the experience co-creation (Gilmore and Pine, 2002; Hung et al., 2016), or the opportunity to learn about local gastronomy (Kim et al., 2012; Tsaour and Lo, 2020). Moreover, in many CFTEs, visitors can participate and engage in certain interactive services (Oliveira et al., 2020), which increases their opportunities for social interactions. These interactions are essential for generating favorable experiences and creating positive memories (Kuppelwieser and Klaus, 2021; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016). CFTEs also trigger a feeling of escape and recognition (Wang et al., 2020) that benefit the emotional reactions explaining memorability (Afaq et al., 2023). Therefore, having a CFTE will likely become a memorable experience since it is configured to be strong enough (from a sensory, uniqueness, interactivity, and learning perspective) to trigger long-term memory (Afaq et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2020). Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H3.** : CFTE has a positive effect on memorability.

### 2.4. Memorability and intention to repeat/recommend

The ultimate goal of creating a unique and memorable dining experience for tourists is repeating visitation and/or recommendation (Richards, 2021). Memories influence the value judgments and opinions



that visitors make about the service and experience they received (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, having unique and positive memories is an indicator of a positive experience (Lee et al., 2023). One of the effects that cause memorability in consumers is the commitment to the product or service consumed and the intention to engage in positive behavior in the future (Harrington et al., 2021). Accordingly, previous research shows that memorable experiences generate real behavioral intentions, such as the intention to return or repeat the visit to an establishment or destination (e.g., Hu and Xu, 2021). Overall, excellent and positive travel memories play a key role in determining future destination choices and provide value to both the traveler and the destination through post-travel behavioral intentions (Anaya and Lehto, 2023; Lee et al., 2022). In the case of food tourism, Cao et al. (2019) and Di-Clemente et al. (2020) confirm that memorable food experiences can generate positive emotions that contribute to behavioral intentions, such as the intention to repeat or recommend the food experience. Following this line of reasoning, we hypothesize that the memorability of a CFTE serves as an indicator of a positive experience and benefits the intention to repeat/recommend the food experience. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H4.** : Memorability of the CFTE has a positive effect on the intention to repeat/recommend the food experience.

Fig. 1 includes the model proposed for this research which contains all of the hypotheses contained in the model and represents the “CFTE Triangle” (company-employees-tourists).

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Sample and procedures

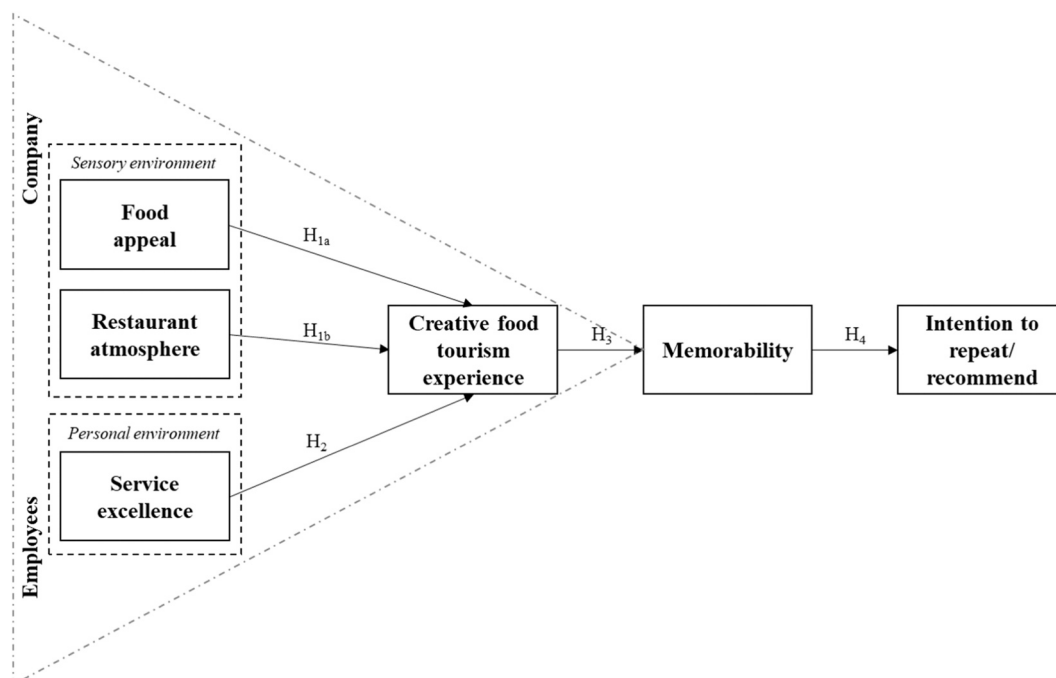
Data were collected through an online survey questionnaire using a panel (Netquest). Individuals from Spain were randomly selected from the research company’s database. Specifically, an invitation was sent to panelists to identify those who had enjoyed a creative food experience in a full-service restaurant. A creative restaurant is defined as an establishment that offers not only tasting quality and well-presented food but also refers to an interaction to achieve unique experiences that stimulate

the five senses in an exclusive environment (e.g., Michelin restaurants). The survey included control filters at the beginning of the questionnaire that allowed the selection of a representative sample of tourists who had enjoyed a CFTE in the previous six months travelling within the country to a region other than their usual place of residence.

All respondents were instructed to read and fill out the questionnaire carefully. Panelists were rewarded for each completed survey, depending on the estimated length of the questionnaire. A total of 407 completed questionnaires were collected. Table 1 presents the main sociodemographic characteristics of the sample. Related to the expertise gastronomy, we included several questions such as: “Gastronomy is an important criterion for deciding my destinations”, “I have a good gastronomic culture”, or “My interest in gastronomy is very high”. All of them present values over 6.0 (7-point Likert scale). Moreover, 72.5% has a high propensity to travel to enjoy food experiences and 74.2% are willing to spend money on creative food experiences, which reinforces the foodie profile of the survey sample.

**Table 1**  
Sample description.

Variables	Categories	Sample (%)
Gender	Male	48.9
	Female	51.1
Age	25-34 years	17.2
	35-44 years	24.8
	45-54 years	23.3
	55-64 years	19.2
	Over 65 years	15.5
Education	Secondary	10.9
	Job training	30.2
	University	58.9
	Employee and self-employed	69.0
Employment status	Unemployed	9.0
	Retired	18.8
	Other situation (student. etc.)	3.2
	Household income per month	Under €2,000
	€2,001-€3,000	18.3
	€3,001-€4,000	29.7
	Over €4,001	45.2



**Fig. 1.** Theoretical model.

### 3.2. Measures

To guarantee a robust content validity, the measurement instruments for data collection were embraced from existing scales proven by previous studies. The implemented measures were modified to be suitable for this study. Ten experts were invited to perform quality supervision of the questionnaire, which allows the elimination of those items that present ambiguity as well as redundancy (Hardesty and Bearden, 2004). Then, a pretest was headed before the online distribution of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of scales relative to antecedents and consequences of the CFTE, as well as demographic variables. The sensory environment includes food appeal and restaurant atmosphere, while the personal environment is related to service excellence (Cheng et al., 2021). These three drivers of the tourist experience were adapted from the scales of Han and Hyun (2017) and Ribeiro, Prayag (2019). CFTE was developed from the proposal of Ali et al. (2016) and Wang et al. (2020), which has been successfully applied in recent research on gastronomy. This concept was measured using a five-dimension scale that includes: escape and recognition, unique involvement, peace of mind, interactivity, and learning. On the other hand, CFTE involves outcomes of memorability and intention to repeat/recommend. Measuring the memorability of the tourism experience has been approached mainly from two perspectives: (1) examining travelers' retrospective memories after the experience to determine whether they have remarkable and outstanding memories, (2) or examining in situ the likelihood that they will remember the experience they are undergoing (Lee et al., 2022). Therefore, the literature acknowledges that memorability can be immediately generated by the food experience, in addition to the fact memorable experiences can refer to different temporal parameters: events, trips, or even just moments (Anaya & Letho, 2023). The main limitation of using retrospective memories is that this approach relies more on the long-term memory of travelers. For this reason, our study focuses on a CFTE lived by the respondents during the last six months. Memorability was measured with three items based on the proposals of Ali et al. (2016), Hung et al. (2016), Wang et al. (2020), and Zatori et al. (2018). Furthermore, the intention to repeat/recommend was developed from the proposals used by Ali et al. (2016), Antón et al. (2019), Lin and Kuo (2016), and Tsai and Wang (2017). All the measures were adjusted to be adequate in the current study. The questions were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree").

### 3.3. Data analysis

The study includes five unidimensional factors: food appeal (seven items), restaurant atmosphere (six items), service excellence (six items), memorability (three items), and intention to repeat/recommend (three items); and one multidimensional construct: CFTE, with five first-order dimensions (escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning) (seventeen items). The measuring instrument includes a total of forty-two items.

The collected data were analyzed with SPSS 24.0 software to generate descriptive statistics; and Partial Least Squares (SmartPLS v3.3.3 software) to assess the measurement and structural model, verifying the causal relationship between the constructs. PLS was applied because of: (1) its extensive application in social science disciplines; (2) the precise indexes for goodness-of-fit testing; (3) the novel method for calculating the model's prediction; (4) the complementary procedures for testing the results' robustness; and (5) the complexity of the model proposed, which presents first and second-order concepts (Hair et al., 2019). This study presents a reflective-reflective-type model. The current research considered CFTE as a composite estimated in Mode A. PLS-SEM uses Mode A for reflectively specified constructs (Sarstedt et al., 2016). To carry out the modeling of the multidimensional construct, a two-stage approach was applied. The psychometric

properties were first assessed through the assessment of the measurement model. Then, the structural relationships were analyzed using factor scores for the second-order factors of a CFTE (Ringle et al., 2012).

### 3.4. Common method variance

Procedural treatments make an effort to diminish common method bias through study design: (1) the questionnaire was designed in such a way that splits between variables were included to avoid any direct connection; (2) the anonymous character of the respondents was explicitly stated; (3) the wording of questionnaire was pretested by ten experts; (4) the Harman's one-factor test was developed to mitigate common method bias; and (5) a marker variable technique (variable with no relationship with the variables of the study) was performed, confirming that its impact on the model's endogenous variables was not significant (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Evaluation of the measurement model

To determine the model fit, the standardized root-mean-square (SRMR) was performed, presenting values below the threshold of 0.08 (Hu and Bentler, 1999), confirming the model goodness of fit. Thereafter, we tested the reliability and validity to assess the measurement model. In particular, reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha, Dijkstra-Henseler's rho, and composite reliability. All the values exceeded their recommended threshold levels indicating the satisfactory reliability of the constructs. Specifically, Cronbach's alpha was above 0.7 for all the scores (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), rho values exceeded 0.7 (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015), composite reliability value was greater than 0.7 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), and AVE values were over 0.5 (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). The factor loading scores ranged from 0.602 to 0.945, surpassing the cutoff value of 0.6 (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988) and confirming the convergent validity. One item (FA5) was removed from the analysis due to the low factor loading score. Table 2 includes the measurement model evaluation.

Table 3 presents the evaluation of the discriminant validity. Based on the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the square root of the AVE of each construct is higher than its correlations with any other construct (Fornell, Larcker, 1981). According to Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT), none of the values exceeds the cutoff value of 0.9 (Gold et al., 2001). Both criteria indicate a satisfactory level of discriminant validity.

### 4.2. Structural model

Based on the tests performed in the evaluation of the measurement model (goodness of fit measure, reliability, and validity), the structural equation model was developed to test the hypotheses of the paper). Before testing the hypotheses in this research, we confirmed that there were no collinearity problems based on the study of the variation inflation factor (VIF). We checked the  $R^2$  value of endogenous constructs to confirm the explanatory power of the model. The results suggest that memorability and intention to repeat/recommend are substantial (<0.75), and CFTE is moderate (<0.50) (Hair et al., 2019). After that, we proceed with the study of the size of the effects ( $f^2$ ). The results suggest that CFTE has a very large effect on memorability (1.099), as well as memorability on intention to repeat/recommend (1.036). Service excellence has a moderate effect on CFTE (0.158). And restaurant atmosphere and food appeal have a small effect on CFTE (0.025 and 0.046, respectively) (Hair et al., 2019). To conclude this analysis, we tested the predictive relevance through PLSPredict method, which shows that  $Q^2$  predict presents values above zero, guaranteeing the predictive relevance of the model (Hair et al., 2019).

Next, we assessed the hypothesized relationships in the structural model, and we were able to confirm that all the paths were significant. A

**Table 2**  
Measurement model evaluation.

Constructs/Dimensions (Mean; SD)	Items	Factor loadings (t bootstrap)	Cronbach's $\alpha$	rho	CR	AVE	
Food appeal (FA) (6.08; 0.75)	FA1	0.744 *** (21.847)	0.853	0.862	0.891	0.580	
	FA2	0.824 *** (34.467)					
	FA3	0.626 *** (16.453)					
	FA4	0.806 *** (31.615)					
	FA6	0.792 *** (29.469)					
	FA7	0.759 *** (23.569)					
	RA1	0.789 *** (31.751)					
Restaurant atmosphere (RA) (5.73; 0.92)	RA2	0.826 *** (46.272)	0.867	0.871	0.901	0.602	
	RA3	0.748 *** (23.072)					
	RA4	0.803 *** (37.332)					
	RA5	0.731 *** (27.069)					
	RA6	0.753 *** (24.730)					
	SE1	0.844 *** (28.510)					
Service excellence (SE) (6.21; 0.82)	SE2	0.836 *** (36.061)	0.924	0.927	0.941	0.726	
	SE3	0.887 *** (55.008)					
	SE4	0.850 *** (44.248)					
	SE5	0.796 *** (37.188)					
	SE6	0.898 *** (68.967)					
	Creative food tourism experience	Escape and recognition (ER) (5.09; 1.25)					ER1
ER2			0.880 *** (53.031)				
ER3			0.788 *** (25.657)				
Peace of mind (PM) (5.49; 0.99)		PM1	0.888 *** (53.814)	0.719	0.767	0.846	0.653
		PM2	0.899 *** (64.619)				
		PM3	0.602 *** (12.883)				
Unique involvement (UI) (4.88; 1.32)		UI1	0.737 *** (23.533)	0.851	0.874	0.899	0.692
		UI2	0.891 *** (69.885)				
		UI3	0.830 *** (36.967)				
		UI4	0.860 *** (54.677)				
Interactivity (IN) (6.14; 0.92)		IN1	0.860 *** (41.363)	0.889	0.891	0.931	0.819
		IN2	0.919 *** (78.480)				
		IN3	0.935 *** (98.496)				
Learning (LE) (4.51; 1.55)		LE1	0.896 *** (53.899)	0.940	0.948	0.957	0.848
		LE2	0.938 *** (95.187)				
	LE3	0.913 *** (75.482)					
	LE4	0.936 *** (108.629)					
Memorability (ME) (5.90; 1.12)	ME1	0.906 *** (69.515)	0.910	0.914	0.944	0.848	
	ME2	0.911 *** (74.046)					
	ME3	0.945 *** (133.290)					
Intention to repeat/recommend (IT) (5.69; 1.32)	IT1	0.818 *** (26.747)	0.793	0.827	0.879	0.709	
	IT2	0.921 *** (111.365)					
	IT3	0.780 *** (25.766)					

Notes: \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; SD: standard deviation; CR: composite reliability; AVE: average variance extracted.

**Table 3**  
Measurement model. Discriminant validity.

Fornell-Larcker & HTMT										
	ER	FA	IN	IT	LE	ME	PM	RA	SE	UI
ER	<b>0.847</b>	0.513	0.553	0.562	0.628	0.705	0.882	0.508	0.496	0.873
FA	0.436	<b>0.761</b>	0.580	0.580	0.333	0.620	0.616	0.690	0.742	0.450
IN	0.471	0.508	<b>0.905</b>	0.548	0.382	0.606	0.761	0.538	0.829	0.548
IT	0.449	0.486	0.461	<b>0.842</b>	0.472	0.826	0.704	0.443	0.574	0.503
LE	0.538	0.302	0.352	0.407	<b>0.921</b>	0.572	0.638	0.381	0.374	0.755
ME	0.609	0.547	0.547	0.713	0.532	<b>0.921</b>	0.790	0.508	0.633	0.719
PM	0.683	0.495	0.617	0.537	0.505	0.648	<b>0.808</b>	0.639	0.662	0.845
RA	0.435	0.600	0.473	0.369	0.346	0.453	0.490	<b>0.776</b>	0.662	0.524
SE	0.436	0.662	0.753	0.497	0.352	0.584	0.544	0.595	<b>0.852</b>	0.469
UI	0.723	0.394	0.481	0.420	0.679	0.641	0.654	0.451	0.428	<b>0.832</b>

Notes: ER: escape and recognition; FA: food appeal; IN: interactivity; IT: intention to repeat/recommend; LE: learning; ME: memorability; PM: peace of mind; RA: restaurant atmosphere; SE: service excellence; UI: unique involvement; Fornell-Larcker: the values on the diagonal are the square root of the AVEs; and the values on off-diagonal are the correlation between the constructs; HTMT: ratios are above the diagonal.

bootstrapping method with 10,000 iterations was performed to analyze the statistical significance. Analysis of the t-statistics shows that all the hypotheses have a t-value higher than 1.96. The results suggest that food appeal has a positive and significant influence on CFTE ( $H_{1a}$ :  $\beta = 0.129$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $t = 1.687$ ), as well as restaurant atmosphere ( $H_{1b}$ :  $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $t = 3.866$ ) and service excellence ( $H_2$ :  $\beta = 0.418$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $t = 6.856$ ). In particular, the greatest influence is on the provision of

service excellence to tourists. This study confirms, for the first time, that sensory and personal environments have a positive and significant influence on CFTE. The “CFTE Triangle” is materialized in the positive relationships among restaurants, employees, and the tourists’ experience. The results also provide support for the relationships between CFTE and memorability ( $H_3$ :  $\beta = 0.724$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $t = 24.974$ ). As expected, memorability enhances the tourists’ intention to repeat/

recommend ( $H_4$ ;  $\beta = 0.713$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ,  $t = 22.984$ ). These results show that all the hypotheses are supported (Table 4).

### 4.3. Robustness checks

We evaluated the robustness of the PLS-SEM structural results with complementary methods. Explicitly, we conducted multigroup studies based on two variables: age (under forty-seven years old: 210 cases; over forty-seven: 197 cases and studies (non-university studies: 167 cases; university studies: 240 cases) to determine whether there were any differences between the groups regarding the hypotheses proposed in the CFTE model. G\*Power was used to estimate the sample size based on statistical power, confirming a value higher than the threshold of 0.08 (Cohen, 1988). We assess the multigroup analysis using three methods: parametric, Welch, and permutation test (Henseler et al., 2016). The multigroup analysis based on age and studies reveals no significant differences between groups for all the hypotheses. Further information about multigroup analysis is available upon request.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. Theoretical contributions

Cultural learning experiences represent increasingly important travel motivations for tourists versus traditional sightseeing demands (Wang et al., 2020). Food tourism is a type of tourism activity in which visitors enjoy experiences related to local gastronomy (Wolf, 2023). The literature definitions of food tourism underline the existence of an experience that allows the tourist to learn about the local culinary resources and culture (Stone et al., 2022). From this perspective, food tourism can be considered a learning experience in itself. In this respect, recent data from the World Food Travel Association confirm that food tourists experiment a strong learning experience as a result of participating in food-related activities (Stone et al., 2020). Accordingly, food tourism is also increasingly becoming a significant incentive in the choice of destinations (UNWTO, 2023a).

Creative tourism offers visitors the opportunity to engage in authentic experiences (UNESCO, 2006) and develop participative learning (Richards and Raymond, 2000). From this perspective, food-tourism is considered one of subcategories of creative tourism which focuses on the tourists' participation and learning from food-making and tasting activities during their travels. In other words, food tourism is a form of creative tourism that contemplates the demand perspective and the co-creation of experiences that reinforce the tourist's learning process about the local culture and traditions (Wang et al., 2020). This study contributes to the general understanding of food tourism by identifying the key antecedents of a CFTE from a perspective where various stakeholders can interrelate, as well as the main outcomes of a CFTE, since this issue remains unexplored.

To approach the enjoyment of a CFTE in this study we consider a dining experience in a Michelin restaurant. Restaurants awarded with this recognition are judged on several criteria, including the presence of a theme concept that helps to elevate the guest's dining experience and creates value for itself, thus contributing to the visitors escape and

recognition. For example, the opportunity to interact with the chefs and watch them as they create the dishes. Demonstration of a chef's distinct style or personality in their cooking is another key criterion for becoming a Michelin restaurant. In Michelin restaurants chefs act as artist reinterpreting traditional foods or experimenting with new and innovative cooking methods, techniques and concepts which introduces emotion in the tourists' experience, raises involvement and contribute to unique dining experiences. Similarly, the art of storytelling through the dishes is considered by the anonymous judges. Thus, a great dish is not just about the flavors but also telling a story through its ingredients and presentation. Though all these activities Michelin restaurants provide a CFTE in terms of escape and recognition, peace of mind, involving, interactivity and learning. Table 2 illustrates the mean values of the CFTE dimensions, showing that the mean scores in all the categories are above the midpoint of the scale, and very similar to the mean values of the CFTE dimensions reported in the Wang et al. (2020) study.

The current study adds value to the existing literature on food tourism in four ways. First, this research proved that Heider's (1958) Balance Theory was appropriate for understanding the creation of food experiences by considering three different actors: restaurants, employees, and visitors. This theory was applied in a novel context, opening a new window for understanding the antecedents of a CFTE. The model proposed in this research examines the drivers of the CFTE from a collaborative perspective providing a new perspective of analysis that contributes to ongoing developments in this industry. This paper adds to the understanding by including the co-creation value in the formation of the CFTE, thanks to the positive relationships among restaurants, employees, and tourists. This fact reinforces the idea of collaborative innovation in the context of creative gastronomic tourism (Carvalho et al., 2021). Based on the Balance Theory and the Service Triangle, we define the "CFTE Triangle" to enhance knowledge of the three pillars of the Balance Theory. The "CFTE Triangle" promotes the understanding of the food experience from a holistic perspective and represents the first application of the Service Triangle to the concept of CFTE (Carson et al., 1997). From the perspective of the Service Triangle, the ideal state of service delivery exists when positive relationships converge between the service company and the service provider, the service provider, and the consumer, and between the service company and the consumer. When these three relationships constitute a balanced triad, an optimal state is reached in which the customer has no need to reevaluate or distance himself/herself from the service experience (Albrecht and Zemke, 2011).

Second, the positive effect of food appeal on CFTE, as well as restaurant atmosphere and service excellence, highlight the importance of these three antecedents in the creation of food experiences (Ha and Jang, 2010). Traditional marketing overlooks the restaurant experiences and their influences on the visitors' feelings and perceptions (Satti et al., 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize the sensory and personal aspects, as both are essential in creating experiences in the hospitality industry (Han and Hyun, 2017; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). This study is based on current marketing tools that aim to attract and retain customers (Kwansa, 2004), which are particularly appropriate for generating creative experiences (Wang et al., 2020). On the one hand, food appeal and restaurant atmosphere are part of the sensory environment

**Table 4**  
Structural model.

	Hypothesized path	Estimate	T-value	Contrast	R <sup>2</sup> / R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	F <sup>2</sup>	Mean	5%	95%
H1a	FA → CFTE	0.129 **	1.687	Do not reject	44.5% / 44.0%	0.025	0.137	0.015	0.266
H1b	RA → CFTE	0.211 ***	3.866	Do not reject		0.046	0.211	0.122	0.301
H2	SE → CFTE	0.418 ***	6.856	Do not reject		0.158	0.413	0.310	0.511
H3	CFTE → ME	0.724 ***	24.974	Do not reject	52.4% / 52.3%	1.099	0.725	0.674	0.770
H4	ME → IT	0.713 ***	22.894	Do not reject	50.9% / 50.8%	1.036	0.715	0.660	0.764

Notes: FA: food appeal; CFTE: creative food tourism experience; RA: restaurant atmosphere; SE: service excellence; ME: memorability; IT: intention to repeat/recommend;  $t(0.05; 4999) = 1.645$  \*;  $t(0.01; 4999) = 2.327$  \*\*;  $t(0.001; 4999) = 3.092$  \*\*\*; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .



in the contribution of the CFTE from the company perspective (Moreira et al., 2017). Despite the importance of the sensory environment in services, there are very few studies that look at all five senses and, therefore, analyze this concept from a holistic perspective in the restaurant industry (Satti et al., 2021). This study builds for the first time an empirical analysis of the sensory environment developed by restaurants as a key element in the formation of experiences from the study of food and the restaurant environment. On the other hand, service excellence represents the personal environment in the contribution of the CFTE. Employees are the frontline service staff who provide company services to clients. This study highlights the role of employees in creating successful experiences in creative restaurants from a collaborative perspective (Hwang and Seo, 2016). Both the sensory and personal environments lead to the third vertex of the “CFTE Triangle”: the visitors. This research contributes to the concept of the experience economy (Cheng et al., 2021; Hung et al., 2016) by proposing the active participation of visitors in collaboration with companies and employees in the creation of the CFTE.

Third, this research provides new insights into the study of CFTE as a multidimensional concept. In particular, this study adopts the measurement scales developed by Ali et al. (2016) and Wang et al. (2020) to the food experience context and considers the creative experience from a demand perspective, while most studies focus on the supply perspective. Accordingly, this investigation contributes to the definition and measurement of the CFTE by identifying five elements (escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning) that must be taken into consideration when restaurateurs develop their strategies.

Fourth, this research provides more insight into the study of the influence of the CFTE on memorability (Li et al., 2022) and, ultimately, on the intention to repeat/recommend (Cao et al., 2019; Di-Clemente et al., 2020; Harrington et al., 2021; Richards, 2021) in the hospitality industry. This research proves that the co-creation of the CFTE promotes memorability in creative tourism and, consequently, in the intention to repeat/recommend (Hwang and Seo, 2016). Therefore, CFTE is a good predictor of memorability. However, there are not many studies that analyze the impact of memorability on future tourist behavior (Hu and Xu, 2021), and even fewer establish the effect of a CFTE on this construct. And this study contributes to deepening this relationship.

### 5.2. Practical and managerial implications

The results of this research present relevant implications for restaurant managers and for the hospitality industry in general. First, the results of this study show that service excellence provided by employees is the main antecedent of the CFTE, in line with previous research (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Wang and Lang, 2019). Therefore, the human factor is a key element in achieving a successful dining experience. For this reason, working on relevant service delivery issues such as employee knowledge of the menu, encouraging service personalization, and member of staff professionalism are key issues that need to be enhanced.

Second, as it has been proved with the results of this research that not only the personal environment in terms of service excellence improves the CFTE, but also the sensory environment. Restaurant atmosphere, followed by food appeal, also plays an important role in co-creating value for visitors in line with previous studies (Han and Hyun, 2017; Ribeiro, Prayag, 2019). However, our results reveal that, although these factors play a positive and significant role in the improved perception of the CFTE by the gastronomic tourist, the attractiveness of the food has the weakest effect. Although the sensory environment produces a lesser effect than service excellence, there are different aspects that can reinforce the quality of the sensory environment in the restaurant. Improvements can be suggested by working on the restaurant atmosphere as well as on the food appeal. For instance, to contribute positively to the creation of a multisensory experience in restaurants through the five

senses, we recommend the following ideas (Fig. 2). On the one hand, paying special attention to the food, both in terms of variety, presentation, quantity, and taste, as well as selecting fresh products presented at the appropriate temperature. On the other hand, in relation to the restaurant atmosphere, it is recommended to work on the restaurant lighting, smells, ambient music, comfort, cleanliness, and decorative elements.

An additional recommendation within sensory marketing is to transcend sensory marketing beyond the functional location of the restaurant. To do this, it is suggested to work with the technique called ASMR (Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response), which consists of carrying out campaigns through YouTube, especially where videos that project the five senses are broadcast. This type of campaign can be highly valued in the restaurant industry and is a way of generating a temptation to visit restaurants. For example, by means of very visual videos that focus on the food and how it is slowly cooked, projecting the sounds of the kitchen and whispering how the whole process has been developed.

Finally, restaurant managers should consider several questions related to the creation of memorability of the food experience based on the positive influence of the CFTE on this concept (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Kuppelwieser and Klaus, 2021). To create memorability among visitors, it is necessary to offer a holistic experience that perfectly combines the sensation of escapism, peace, involvement, interactivity, and learning. To this end, it is recommended to be fully aware of the characteristics and demands of the target customers in order to offer an experience tailored to their needs, always striving to exceed their expectations and achieve maximum satisfaction. Only in this way will the experience remain in the travelers' memory and they want to repeat/recommend the restaurant to their friends and family.

### 5.3. Limitations and future research lines

This research offers important contributions to restaurateurs and marketing managers for handling CFTE. However, several limitations must be considered for further research. First, this research is limited to Spanish restaurants. Future research could extend this survey to other countries. Second, creative needs may differ between different groups of food tourists and, therefore, to satisfy their desire to actively participate in learning experiences, tourists may seek activities ranging from visiting unique local restaurants or fine dining (gourmet restaurants), to attending food festivals, visiting local farms or wineries (to learn about traditional production methods), or attending cooking classes. Michelin restaurants provide a CFTE; however, the results of this study need to be confirmed by considering other food experiences where hands-on activities and the co-creation effort of the tourists can play an even more prominent role. Third, this research applied quantitative methods, and future research could be conducted qualitatively to obtain complementary information and a deeper understanding of tourists learning process during the CFTE. Fourth, the outcomes were limited to memorability and intention to repeat/recommend. Other variables such as satisfaction, brand equity, and mindset could be investigated (Ali et al., 2016; Li et al., 2021). Finally, our operational definition of memorability is limited to positive memorability, and negative experiences can also be memorable. Future research needs to examine the impact on travelers' behavior of negative memorability.

### CRedit authorship contribution statement

**Molina-Collado Arturo:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Gómez-Rico Mar:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing –

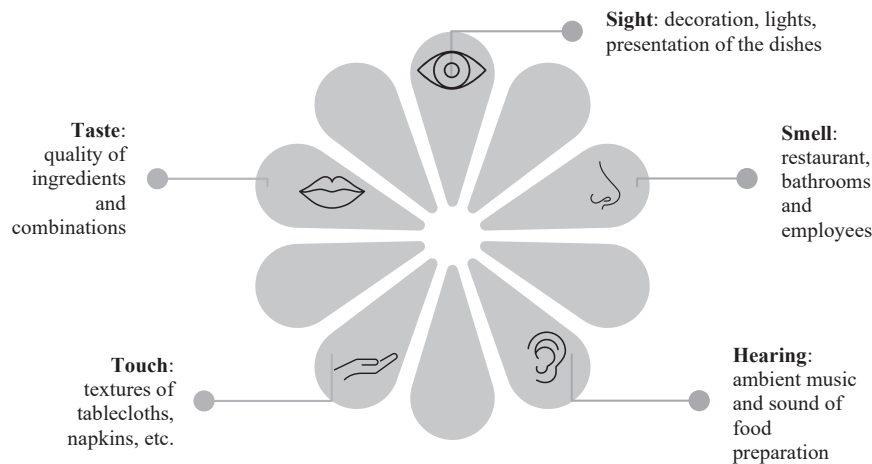


Fig. 2. Five senses in multisensory experience in restaurants.

original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Santos-Vijande María Leticia:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Santos del Cerro Jesús:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Software, Supervision, Writing – original draft, Validation, Visualization, Writing – review & editing.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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