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Understanding food experience in sharing-economy platforms: insights from Eatwith and WithLocals

Ozan Atsız ^a, Ibrahim Cifci ^b and Rob Law ^b

^aTourism Management, Yozgat Bozok University, Yozgat, Turkey; ^bTourism Management, Istanbul University, İstanbul, Turkey; ^cSchool of Hotel and Tourism Management, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify and determine the dimensions of food experience using user-generated content on two sharing-economy websites as well as to offer insights into factors affecting food tourists' evaluation of travel experiences at a culinary destination, İstanbul. For this purpose, conventional content analysis is conducted on 459 food-experience reviews on sharing-economy websites, namely, EatWith and WithLocals. Results reveal 26 items and four themes, that is, knowledge, authenticity, local hospitality, and social interaction. Theoretical and managerial implications as well as limitations are discussed, and suggestions for further research are provided.

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Food experience; user-generated content; meal sharing economy

1. Introduction

Food, as part of the cultural attraction of a destination, plays a pivotal role in memorable tourist experiences and is regarded as a cultural experience rather than nourishment (Mkono, Markwell, & Wilson, 2013). Food is also an important cultural element that attracts tourists seeking a novel experience (Tikkanen, 2007). Food attractions are destination specific and unique to the destination where they are made or created (Sanchez-Cañizares & Castillo-Canalejo, 2015). Such attractions can be the primary motivation of travelers and influence tourists' satisfaction and loyalty to a destination by providing unique food experiences (Agyeiwaah, Otoo, Suntikul, & Huang, 2019). Food likewise offers tourists opportunities to understand the cultural values of a destination through local traditions, eating and drinking habits, and history (Agyeiwaah et al., 2019; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014). By introducing the local identity (Wilk, 1999) and creating an image of a destination (Promsivapallop & Kannaovakun, 2019), food has become a fundamental part of the tourist experience (Sthapit, 2017). Moreover, food attractions are considered as not only a cultural and pleasurable experience (Seyitoğlu, 2020a) but also an essential part of the tourist experience by offering travelers local customs and tastes beyond their daily routine (Kim, Eves, & Scarles, 2009).

Although an increasing demand for destinations that offer memorable cultural and local food experiences has emerged, numerous factors, such as politics, economics,

society, and technology, may impact tourists' decision in selecting a travel destination (Swarbrooke & Horner, 2016). Among these factors, technology has especially influenced tourist behavior (Huang, Goo, Nam, & Yoo, 2017), as tourists use online and mobile tools during their decision-making process and travels (Kempiak, Hollywood, Bolan, & McMahon-Beattie, 2017). Rapid changes in information and communication technology (Buhalis & Law, 2008) and user-generated content (UGC; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008) have enabled travelers to easily access information related to a destination's attributes and share their experiences with specific attractions. Moreover, UGC platforms enable tourists to connect, interact, and build relationships with destinations, service providers, and other travelers (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Hudson & Thal, 2013). According to Thanh and Kirova (2018), online reviews posted on UGC platforms play a crucial role in helping tourists understand and explore tourist experiences as well as others' emotional and behavioral responses to a destination (Gross & John, 2003). For this reason, an investigation of contents generated in UGC platforms can provide opportunities for hotel, restaurant, and destination practitioners to improve tourist experiences. Despite the recent upward trend in the sharing economy, various research perspectives on international tourists' experiences in Istanbul in several sectors, such as food, accommodations, transportation, and local guides, remain unexplored.

Sharing-economy platforms are considered as the most important means for sharing knowledge and tourism experiences (Privitera & Abushena, 2019). Furthermore, such platforms offer tourists a glimpse into the daily lives of locals (Maitland, 2010) and enable them to obtain knowledge about the local food culture by facilitating interactions with local residents (Demir, 2020). Mhlanga (2020) stated that these areas enhance tourist experiences by providing travelers a sense of authenticity. According to Privitera and Abushena (2019), the meal-sharing economy facilitates cultural exchanges between locals and tourists and provides affordable meals and authentic experiences for tourists through interactions. Moreover, the importance of these platforms is paramount to urban and local tourism economies. According to the findings of a study conducted by Zurek (2016), tourists were allowed to be guests or customers in a local's home, restaurant, or classroom and learn about cooking processes and food ingredients. In the end, the participants posted reviews about their experiences, thereby generating content online. These reviews and comments can help service providers better understand tourist behaviors, feelings, ideas, and travel patterns. Despite the importance of such comments for service providers, most studies that explore consumer comments on food experiences generally focus on tourist experiences in restaurants posted on social media (Lei & Law, 2015; Onorati & Giardullo, 2020). A comprehensive understanding on tourist food experiences from the sharing-economy perspective is lacking. Understanding the nature, determinants, and dimensions of food experience in the sharing economy can help service providers improve their service offerings.

Istanbul, a heritage and cultural destination famous for traditional Turkish foods, was chosen as the research area. It is one of the most visited tourism destinations in Turkey with approximately 15 million visitors (from 195 countries) and tourist flows are increasing from past to present (Istanbul Provincial Directorate of Culture and Tourism, 2020). A report emphasized that Istanbul is also among the top international destinations (10th) based on tourist arrivals in 2018 and has been the third most visited country in Europe following London and Paris (Yasmeen, 2019).

With rich culture and cuisine, Istanbul is among the most chosen destination by food tourists (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Furthermore, Turkish cuisine is considered a key attraction for tourists and is placed in the third rank after Chinese and French cuisine. Moreover, Istanbul has a major role in surviving, spreading, and developing the Turkish cuisine culture (Batu & Batu, 2018). A study conducted by Rimmington and Yüksel (1998) concluded that the Turkish cuisine is a major travel motivation for tourists and foods offered in the destinations were a pivotal motivational factor that impacted tourists' overall satisfaction and behavioral intentions such as revisiting and recommending the destination. Although foods play a major role for tourists and destinations, empirical evidence and discussions on it is not at desired levels for Istanbul. Given this, this research attempted to examine food experience in the context of the sharing economy.

Although studies exploring and understanding the dimensions of food experience in various destinations are in the early phases, the increase and upsurge in such research provide vast potential to tourism destinations and tourism scholars. Thus, identifying the dimensions of the food experience of international tourists in Istanbul is essential to create effective marketing strategies for promotion, differentiation among other destinations, and destination positioning (Hendijani, 2016). Previous research on food experiences is predominantly concerned with the motivations and characteristics of travelers who prefer to travel to encounter food attractions. However, studies on food experiences from the perspective of sharing-economy platforms are limited. Although this aspect is gaining considerable attention from scholars, knowledge or text on this issue in the relevant literature is scarce. Therefore, the present research is designed to fill this gap. In this sense, the specific objective of this study is to understand and explore the food experiences of international travelers visiting Istanbul and using sharing-economy platforms such as Eatwith and Withlocals.

2. Literature review

The food sector is one of the leading segments in the hospitality and tourism industry and generates significant revenue (Cohen & Avieli, 2004). Due to the traditional notion that food is only a 'supporting resource,' its potential has been neglected for long periods in the tourism literature (Godfrey & Clarke, 2000; Quan & Wang, 2004). Previous studies have estimated that tourist expenditure on food and beverages accounts for 40% or more than one-third of total travel costs (Boyne, Williams, & Hall, 2002; Hall, Mitchell, & Sharples, 2003); however, it is well known that certain visitors travel overseas exclusively for gastronomic experiences.

This section reviewed the literature on food experience and its dimensions in tourism and hospitality context. Then, it demonstrated the role of food experience in sharing-economy platforms.

2.1. Food experience

Food is among the most significant tourist attractions owing to its ability to enhance intensive interaction opportunities with a destination's cultural elements (Sthapit, 2017). Food is also a key attraction for experiencing local culture (Wijaya, King, Nguyen, & Morrison, 2013) and a crucial factor that may enhance and contribute to memorable

tourist experiences (Adongo, Anuga, & Dayour, 2015). Experiencing different types of food in a destination, including local, regional, or national cuisines, has increasingly attracted the attention of international tourists. Thus, numerous destinations are concentrating on food attractions as a core or partial tourism product to attract potential tourists and to integrate this tourism product into the overall tourism product (Robinson & Getz, 2014). In addition, destinations are using food attractions with effective marketing strategies to promote and distinguish themselves from other destinations and for destination positioning (Hendijani, 2016).

Food experience studies address different perspectives, such as social psychology, sociology, cultural anthropology, management, and marketing (du Rand & Heath, 2006; Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Mak, Lumbers, Eves, & Chang, 2012; Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Such studies can be divided into four main perspectives, that is, activity-based; motivation-based; mixed, which is a combination of activity- and motivation-based perspectives; and destination context perspectives (Ellis et al., 2018). In the tourism experience literature, a substantial number of studies have attempted to pay increasing attention to local foods, food experiences, and food tourism in recent years (Hendijani, 2016; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Sthapit, 2017). Food represents communities' local culture along with their history, traditions, stories, symbols, geography, and people (Ellis et al., 2018; Lee & Scott, 2015). Thus, every destination or society has a different food culture that may be used in the marketing efforts of destination management practitioners (Horng, Liu, Chou, & Tsai, 2012; Okumus & Cetin, 2018) when promoting local and regional foods. Such marketing efforts include destination image creation (Jalis, Che, & Markwell, 2014), destination branding (Lai, Khoo-Lattimore, & Wang, 2019), and tourism destination differentiation (Haven-Tang & Jones, 2006). Thus, every destination tries to consider and understand the food experiences of tourists to implement effective marketing strategies. To accomplish such tasks, destination managers, local government organizations, and service providers attempt to explore the determinants of tourists' food experiences to design food-related activities to enhance their experiences and satisfaction and influence their revisit intention to the destination (Lee & Scott, 2015). This effort is because food is one of the most important elements of tourist cultural experience and consumption in a destination (Lai, 2020), which add value to tourism experiences (Rousta & Jamshidi, 2020).

Food, which is experienced locally, plays a vital role in providing tourists 'authentic' experiences and can attract tourists interested in experiencing authenticity during their visit. Thus, authenticity, or the perception of authenticity, can be regarded as an essential attribute of food experience (Sims, 2009). Furthermore, food experiences can be considered as means to search for authenticity in distinct food identities (Sims, 2009). Moreover, food attractions can foster and promote destination authenticity (Park, Reisinger, & Kang, 2008). Authenticity, which is discussed in food experience studies in the long term, is regarded by tourists as different, novel, and native attributes (Robinson & Clifford, 2012). These authentic attractions are seen as locally sourced and unique (Groves, 2001). Abarca (2004) divided food authenticity into two dimensions, that is, the authenticity of food and its processing. These determinants can provide tourists with novel and specific experiences (Kim et al., 2009) and are 'one in which individuals feel themselves to be in touch both with a 'real' world and with their 'real' selves.' (Handler & Saxton, 1988, p. 243).

Tourists are motivated by the food attractions of a cultural destination and can increase their knowledge on local and scientific foods (Bertella, 2011). Tourists desire to experience different types of food to enhance their knowledge and obtain insights into local people's eating behaviors and to explore local foods that may be unknown to them in their daily routine (Mak et al., 2012). Kim et al. (2009) concluded that experiencing local foods strengthens intellectual tastes and allows people to learn and understand the local culture of a community by learning about new local dishes. This experience enables tourists to observe and enhance their knowledge about a host country's local food culture. For example, tourists visiting a host country can obtain knowledge on table manners, how to drink a specific type of beverage, and a variety of cooking methods during their vacation.

Food experiences have the potential to promote interaction and communication or togetherness with families, residents, and other tourists (Kim et al., 2009). Togetherness with other people is one of the primary reasons tourists prefer to try local foods and plays a pivotal role in adding value to their pleasure (Ignatov & Smith, 2006). After experiencing different types of food during their visit, tourists share their opinions, preferences, and tastes with others to highlight their uniqueness (Fields, 2002).

Several studies have attempted to explore, investigate, and determine the different dimensions of food experience. Hendijani (2016) identified the components of food experience as heritage, service, food environment, variety, availability, senses, and food ingredients. According to the study, different foods can play a significant role in promoting and differentiating themselves among destination practitioners in an increasingly competitive tourism market. Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2014) conducted a study on local food experiences and explored them under five components, namely, relaxation, socialization, new experience acquisition, learning about a new culture, and obtaining food experience.

Seyitoğlu (2020a) conducted a study to identify the culinary experiences of tourists participating in guided tours in Istanbul and emphasized that food allows tourists to experience educational, authentic, and memorable aspects and interact with other people to socialize. Furthermore, local hospitality is regarded as the most crucial component of culinary experience in cultural destinations as well as in guiding and experiencing food features, such as taste, types, flexibility, and availability. Similarly, Seyitoğlu (2020b) investigated perceptions of food experiences in guided tours using UGC by examining travelers' reviews on the TripAdvisor website. The author revealed four dimensions of food experience, that is, the behaviors of tour guides, the acquisition of knowledge as a cognitive experience, the ability of a guide to communicate with tour members, and value-added experiences, which are derived from the first three dimensions.

Sthapit (2017) focused on identifying components that affect tourists' memorable food experiences and offered seven dimensions (i.e. local specialties and food attributes [taste], authenticity, novelty, togetherness and social interaction, hospitality, and servicescape, including food souvenirs). In the study, the author acknowledged that hospitality or 'the general feeling of welcome that tourists receive while visiting the area' (Chon, 1991, p. 28) is one of the significant success indicators of local food experience. Furthermore, hospitality can create meaningful experiences, and destinations should encourage tourists' experiences of local hospitality, such as enriching the social, caring, helpful, and generous features of local residents (Cetin & Okumus, 2018).

Björk and Kauppinen-Räsänen (2016) identified the multidimensionality of travelers' food-related experiences in a destination. The authors proposed five components of food experience, that is, the food; the social dimension; place, including the external environment; the service place; and time. The food component includes food characteristics, including type, quality, category, and individual perception, such as novelty and authenticity. The social component consists of tourist behaviors, and the place and service place components address the destination where tourists experience certain types of food. Finally, the time component deals with tourists' experience period.

Using grounded theory, Kim et al. (2009) provided a conceptual model consisting of multidimensional factors that may impact the local food experiences of tourists. The authors suggested that the model includes three main categories, namely, motivational factors (i.e. exciting experiences, escape from routines, health concerns, knowledge learning, authentic experiences, togetherness, prestige, sensory appeal, and physical environment); demographic factors (i.e. gender, age, and education); and physiological factors (i.e. food neophilia and neophobia). Among these factors, the motivational elements can best describe local food experiences and demonstrate tourist experiences when engaging in food-related activities.

Several studies approached food tourism from the motivational perspective (Agyei-waah et al., 2019). From the tourist motivational perspective, Kim and Eves (2012) investigated the motivational dimensions of local food experience and developed a measurement scale for examining social food motivations. The authors explored five motivational factors that influence local food experiences, such as cultural experience, interpersonal relations, excitement, sensory appeal, and health concerns. Cetin and Bilgihan (2016) likewise evaluated food as an essential component of cultural experience.

2.2. Role of food experience in sharing-economy platforms

The sharing economy is generally known as the collaborative consumption, shared, or peer-to-peer economy. Collaborative renting, swapping, and lending of services and goods for tourists have become prevalent in the accommodation, transportation, food and beverage, guided tour, and other related tourism sectors (Guttentag, 2015; Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016; Sigala, 2015; Tussyadiah & Pesonen, 2016). With the advent of the peer-to-peer economy, local communities, tourists, traditional suppliers, service providers, and policymakers in destinations are cocreating tourism experiences as well as changing and establishing a new understanding on tourism experiences in terms of value, motivational factors, and travel reasons (Heo, 2016; Sigala, 2015). These platforms enable tourists to share not only obtained knowledge on a destination but also their tourism experiences, feelings, and thoughts to interact with other users (Dedeoglu, Taheri, Okumus, & Gannon, 2020). Reviews posted on sharing-economy platforms allow service providers and destination managers to understand and explore the travel patterns, ideas, feelings, strengths, weaknesses, and behaviors of tourists (Simeon, Buonincontri, Cinquegrani, & Martone, 2017).

Sharing-economy platforms enable tourists not only to gain economic benefits but also post experiences and reviews on such platforms (Breidbach & Brodie, 2017). Thanh and Kirova (2018) demonstrated that online reviews posted by users on such platforms play a significant role in providing insights into tourist experiences and helping service

providers and researchers explore the components and dimensions of tourist experience. Therefore, an investigation of UGC on sharing-economy platforms, such as Airbnb, Eatwith, and Withlocals, can provide opportunities to service providers and destination managers to understand and improve tourist or guest experiences. Tourists use such platforms to generate content online for various reasons, such as to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a product/service (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018) or desire to socialize (Leung, 2009), to post about service quality and prices (Liu & Lee, 2016), provide accessibility, build trust, exert social influence, share perceived benefits (Dieck, Jung, Kim, & Moon, 2017), and select the best attractions, food, and destinations (Cox, Burgess, Sellitto, & Bultjens, 2009).

According to Muñoz and Cohen (2017), the sharing economy is commonly referred to as 'a socioeconomic system enabling an intermediated set of exchanges of goods and services between individuals and organizations which aim to increase efficiency and optimization of under-utilized resources in society' (p.1). Such goods and services are offered in different areas, including accommodations, transportation, home restaurants or locals' homes, and local tours (Sigala, 2015). This service offering promotes interaction between locals and guests or tourists. For example, Uber allows tourists to move from one place to another with a local driver, AirBnB enables tourists to stay in a local resident's apartment, and Eatwith and Withlocals are real-time dining applications that allow tourists to dine with locals in their home or at a local restaurant (Ketter, 2019). Although Uber and AirBnB are well-known sharing-economy platforms, Eatwith and Withlocals are two examples of meal sharing-economy platforms that are only recently being utilized.

Modern tourists want to experience the daily life and culture of locals (Maitland, 2010) by staying in their homes. Meal-sharing platforms allow such tourists to obtain knowledge about local culture and food and interact with locals (Demir, 2020). Moreover, meal sharing-economy platforms have become increasingly important in the hospitality and tourism industry and are commonly used by international tourists (Privitera & Abushena, 2019). These platforms help tourists cook and have a meal with locals. In such experiences, tourists can learn about food ingredients and cooking methods and obtain knowledge on local culture through food experiences. Hosts can welcome different guests to his/her home and bring various people together, thereby facilitating social interactions with other guests (Zurek, 2016). Such platforms mainly consist of two sides, that is, a host, who is referred to as 'an individual or a business who or which supplies food and drink to guests in their own home or a non-registered venue, with the contact with the guest arranged via an online platform,' and a guest, who is referred to as 'an individual who consumes the food and drink supplied by the host.' (Hotrec, 2018, p. 6).

Studies on food experience in the sharing-economy literature have been published. Privitera and Abushena (2019) emphasized that modern tourists use sharing-economy platforms to experience local cultures and authenticity. In a research on ideals, achievement, and the self-expressed motivations of Eatwith users, Ketter (2019) concluded that users widely participate in such platforms to express ideals, achievements, and motivations. In a study on the motivations of hosts and guests on meal sharing-economy platforms, Gul (2018) found that guests have four main motivations, that is, trying actual/quality foods, meeting people, feeling sincerity, and attaining cultural experiences. By contrast, locals use such platforms to meet different people, start their own business, earn money, and experience cultural values. In the study, social relationships between

hosts and guests are established after a food experience. For example, when a negative event occurs in a destination, past guests would ask about their hosts' situation by sending an e-mail. Tourists likewise seek authenticity, and the search for genuine aspects, with increased meaningful interactions with locals on sharing-economy platforms, makes tourism experiences memorable (Paulauskaite, Powell, Coca-Stefaniak, & Morrison, 2017). In considering the importance of authenticity in food experiences (Sims, 2009), meal sharing-economy platforms are tourists' best means to encounter authentic experiences.

3. Research methodology

This study aims to identify and explore the dimensions of food experience in sharing-economy services. Therefore, it adopted a qualitative case study approach for the research design and used UGC based on tourists' reviews on two popular sharing-economy platforms, namely, Eatwith and Withlocals. The qualitative case study approach is the most effective technique for understanding and exploring individual descriptions (Creswell, 2009). With the development of the Internet and increase in tourist-experience sharing online, UGC has become a crucial source for service providers and tourism scholars aiming to explore and understand tourist experiences and behaviors (Thanh & Kirova, 2018). In addition, numerous tourists use such platforms owing to their dependability and credibility (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014).

3.1. Research setting

This research examined the posted reviews of international tourists on their food experiences in Istanbul. Situated in an influential developing country with cultural and historical attractions, Istanbul offers a wide range of national and international foods (Karayilan & Cetin, 2016). Istanbul, which has hosted numerous civilizations for centuries, is the most crowded city in Turkey, with a local population of over 15 million, and the most preferred city in the country for immigrants (Alvarez & Yarcin, 2010; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2020). Furthermore, with its 8,000-year-old history, Istanbul was the capital of various empires, including the East Roman, Latin, and Ottoman empires (Olcay, 2020). The city's cultures and historical background have led to unique ethnic gastronomic elements (Okumus & Cetin, 2018). Given its population, which consists of migrants from other Turkish cities, Istanbul partially reflects the Turkish nomadic culture (Gezici & Kerimoglu, 2010). In addition to interactions with other cultures (e.g. Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Arabs) owing to their history, Turkish people have a natural ability to use ingredients available in their region, which enriches the country's culinary culture (Karaosmanoğlu, 2007). These aspects have enriched Turkish cooking and indirectly led to the well-known reputation of Istanbul in terms of culinary richness (e.g. kebabs, baklava, Turkish coffee, and raki) (Onçel, 2015)

3.2. Data collection

The main objective of this study is to explore the dimensions of the food experience of international tourists visiting Istanbul. To achieve this goal, international tourists'

reviews of food experiences in Istanbul posted on sharing-economy platforms were selected as the research sample. These data ($n = 459$) were collected from March 20–25, 2020 from reviews of food experiences posted on two crucial sharing-economy platforms related to food-sharing websites, namely, Eatwith and Withlocals, from 2015 to 2020. Every review for Istanbul was included; a total of 46 service providers (36 were obtained from Eatwith, and 10 were collected from Withlocals) are included in data collection.

The two platforms were chosen owing to their extensive coverage of a diverse pool of reviews in Istanbul. In these websites, tourists or guests have access to information related to service providers and users' feelings and opinions about food experiences. Eatwith is 'the world's largest community for authentic culinary experiences with locals, available in over 130 countries and connects people who are seeking unique and immersive experiences with our hand-selected local hosts, in private homes and exclusive venues with home-cooks and food lovers, MasterChefs and Michelin-starred chefs,' with 25,000 registered hosts and 265,000 registered guests (Eatwith, 2020). Meanwhile, Withlocals enables people to connect with locals, and its website expresses that, 'We're on a mission to break down the barriers between travelers and locals worldwide and want to create real connections between people and cultures such as food, culture, history, bike and so on' (Withlocals, 2020). These platforms bring people together for a fee, and locals serve as service providers. Before a tourist can participate in a food experience, they must first pay for the service online. Next, locals prepare their food or accompany them to dine at a local restaurant. After a food experience, Eatwith and Withlocals allow tourists to review the local host who provided the service and post the review as a food experience.

In the data collection process, all reviews posted by food tourists were collected by the authors. The majority of the reviews were written in English, with the exception of five reviews, which were written in other languages (four in French and one in Portuguese). The five reviews were analyzed using web-based dictionaries and online translation services, as suggested by Dinçer and Alrawadieh (2017). During the translation process, no ambiguity or disagreement was encountered in the translations. Thus the five reviews were included in the analysis. The reviews collected from the websites were entered into Microsoft Word for the data analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

Conventional content analysis, which is defined as 'an observational research method that is used to systematically evaluate the symbolic content of all forms of recorded communications,' was used to examine the data (459 reviews) (Kolbe & Burnett, 1991, p. 243). Content analysis is commonly applied to a large number of studies in the social sciences and requires a systematic and objective investigation of texts, images, symbols, roles, and other media (Krippendorff, 2004). Moreover, content analysis is used widely in hospitality and tourism research (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Dinçer & Alrawadieh, 2017). In hospitality and tourism research, content analysis allows researchers to extract and investigate words and expressions from online reviews posted by tourists (Barreda & Bilgihan, 2013; Taecharungroj & Mathayomchan, 2019). It also provides researchers opportunities to organize numerous texts and clarify data with major themes (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017).

Following the content analysis method of Miles and Huberman (1994), the authors read and examined the obtained data independently. However, the dimensions of food tourism experience were obtained from previous studies. Next, the authors performed a coding procedure as a data reduction strategy to clarify the data and organize them into meaningful classifications (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This procedure was conducted by the authors independently, and manual coding, rather than coding with a software program, was preferred. Several studies emphasize that manual coding is more efficient than coding with software programs (Krippendorf, 2004), which allows researchers to be creative in their qualitative analysis (Welch & Patton, 2002). After the individual coding, the authors discussed the codes and compared the categories they determined previously.

All disagreements were discussed until a consensus was reached. This procedure provided validity and reliability in the data analysis. The coding and agreement procedures enabled the data to clarify the categories into extensive and inclusive classifications (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992). After various iterations, the authors were able to reach a consensus regarding the categories. After food experience constructs were determined, the authors conferred with several researchers with comprehensive knowledge on tourist behaviors and cultural and food tourism experiences. A total of 26 categories (codes) emerged after this process, and the main themes were discussed by the authors. Subsequently, four themes were identified, namely, knowledge, authenticity, local hospitality, and social interaction. These dimensions were presented using original quotes from reviewers (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and discussed to reinforce the findings of previous studies (Gummesson, 2000).

4. Findings

This study aims to explore the dimensions of food experience in the sharing economy through the Eatwith and Withlocals peer-to-peer platforms. The findings were centered around four interrelated key constructs obtained from the qualitative data of this study, namely, knowledge, authenticity, local hospitality, and social interaction. In the analysis process, the number of codes for each related theme and the number of reviews on related themes are presented in Table 1.

Notably, negative statements in comments were absent in the data, except for one, and more than two thirds of the reviewers (i.e. 77.53%) clearly mentioned their delight with their Eatwith and/or Withlocals experience and generally stated their revisit intention, with recommendations to friends and family members. For example, R153 commented the following regarding a Withlocals service provider: '... thank you very much for your time, service, and tips, and we look forward to seeing you again in the near future. Super highly recommended!'

Table 1. Text breakdown.

Constructs	# of codes for each related theme	# of reviews on related themes
<i>Knowledge</i>	450	431
<i>Authenticity</i>	183	163
<i>Local hospitality</i>	121	90
<i>Social interaction</i>	63	61

Moreover, except for one reviewer, the reviewers (i.e. 3.08%) mentioned the services as worth the price (e.g. 'well worth it,' 'great value for money,' 'worth every dollar'). The only negative comment in terms of satisfaction and price was by R258, who expressed the following: 'It was a bad experience. You can travel around in Istanbul yourself and hire a local guide in much fewer rates than getting ripped off on this platform.' More than one third of the reviewers (i.e. 44.27%) also praised the characteristics of the sharing-economy platform service as 'a lovely experience away from tourist crowds,' 'an amazing way to start our stay in Istanbul,' 'a brief cultural exploration through food, mainly to experience the way locals live and eat,' and 'more experiences outside typical tourist sites.'

The food experience dimensions in the sharing-economy platforms suggested in this study are summarized in Figure 1. As previously mentioned, the dimensions are discussed in light of the existing literature, and original quotations from the reviewers are presented in the succeeding sections.

4.1. Knowledge

Knowledge is attributed mainly as a cognitive aspect of the tourism experience that is attached to learning and education, which influences people's decision to visit or revisit a destination (Morgan & Xu, 2009; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Poria, Butler, & Airey, 2004). In gastronomic tourism, local cuisine experiences influence intellectual development and provide travelers comprehensive knowledge to understand the actual culture of a destination from a culinary perspective (Quan & Wang, 2004; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). The findings implied that the majority of the reviewers (i.e. 94.93%) discussed numerous items related to their knowledge experience perception, which significantly symbolized the Eatwith and Withlocals peer-to-peer services. For example, most of the reviewers generally described their knowledge experience as a tourism destination experience that they would have never been able to find on their own. R157 described her/his knowledge experience as follows:

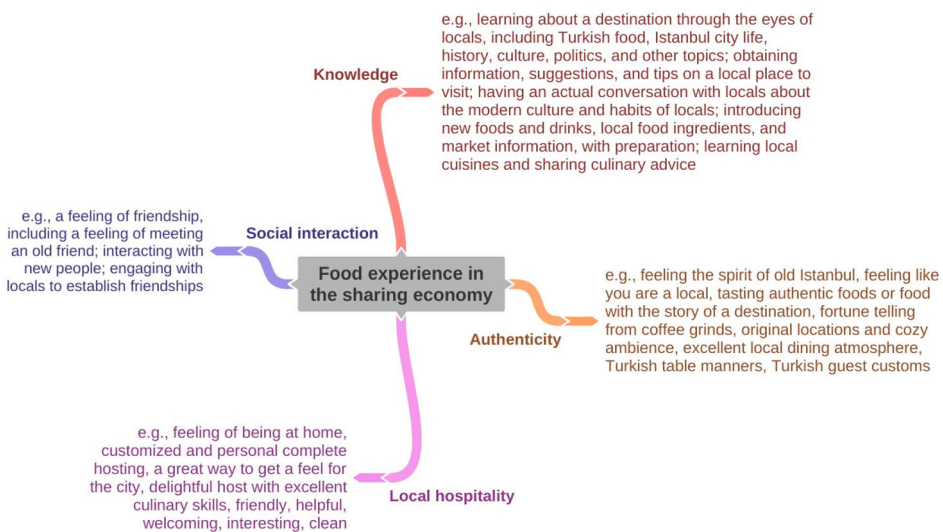


Figure 1. Dimensions of food experience in the sharing economy.

The places she took us too we would never have found on our own, and we both came away more knowledgeable about Turkish food and culture. (R157). Confirming this statement, R150 said that, 'We got to experience all the quintessential Turkish food, located in hidden gems we would have never found on our own!'

The qualitative findings also implied that the knowledge dimension was associated mostly with learning about a destination through the eyes of locals, accompanied by informative conversations with hosts. Numerous research (e.g. Choe & Kim, 2018; Poria et al., 2004; Williams, Yuan, & Williams, 2019) stated that tourists seek culinary knowledge through tourism to improve their expertise on food. The qualitative data of this current study contribute this notion to be better explained in tourism and hospitality, because it reveals that tourists participating in meal-sharing platforms obtain everything unique that is an essential part of the local cuisine. For example, in using the Eatwith service, R20 expressed that, 'We also enjoyed our over dinner and after dinner conversation, which gave us a local's perspective of Turkey, Istanbul, and different aspects of culture, politics, and all sort of topics.' Confirming this information, R361 said, 'Besides the food, as a local, he is familiar with history and tradition, we had some good talks, and he showed us cultural relics of this area, which gave us a better understanding of the city and people here.' In using the Withlocals service, reviewer R393 elaborated on this issue as follows:

As she walked me through the city's most colorful and noisiest neighborhoods, sampling its food and drink in the open air, I was inspired by the pride she shows in Istanbul's nightlife culture, which ultimately reflects a pride in her generation of young Turks, a generation that completely shatters the misconception that the city was ever a place of religious and social conservatism. Istanbul may no longer be the center of civilization, but its nightlife would easily rival the best in the world. And by the end of the night, I really felt like I understood why she loves her city so much thereby infecting me with the same affection for this place (which may explain why I drank so much raki when I don't even like the taste of anise!). (R393)

Moreover, the reviewers highlighted the importance of the information, suggestions, and tips provided by the service providers on visiting several authentic local places outside typical tourist sites in various destinations. For example, according to R81, 'The conversation was very rich, pleasant, and respectful. They also gave us valuable tips for our visit.' Supporting this statement, R95 expressed that '... an enormous array of truly delicious food and really interesting conversation. She also gave me loads of tips for places to visit and restaurants to try.' The findings also notably revealed that the reviewers mentioned certain items under knowledge experience related to local cooking, such as 'local food ingredients and market information with preparation,' and 'learning local cuisines and sharing culinary advice.' Visiting a local market to buy ingredients and cooking with locals, thereby obtaining numerous culinary advice, are regarded as a treat in high demand by food lovers. Two examples of reviews confirm this finding, as follows:

Our market trip was so much fun, and we tried a variety of food at the market before we went to her apartment for the food preparation. Dishes we made at her apt were all very tasty and easy, and I will definitely make it at home. She gave us plenty of advice which was great. (R45)

She showed us through the local markets, had us sample delicious foods we hadn't tried before, and then brought us back and taught us how to cook traditional Turkish food. This

was even better than showing up for a meal she just cooked for us—being involved in the meal preparation added a lot to the experience. (R50)

4.2. Authenticity

The findings revealed that more than a third of the reviewers discussed several conspicuous authentic items in their sharing-economy food experiences. For example, the reviewers particularly emphasized the native atmosphere they perceived during their experiences. Authenticity has become a popular phenomenon among modern tourists in regard to visiting such specific destinations to escape from daily mundanity (Ellis et al., 2018; Paulauskaite et al., 2017; Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011) which also has close link with the memorable tourism experience (Seyfi, Hall, & Rasoolimanesh, 2020). Therefore, the authentic dining atmosphere is considered as a significant part of the tourism experience (Beer, 2008; Jang, Liu, & Namkung, 2011; Liu & Jang, 2009) and is addressed as an important part of tourist motivation in tourists' behavioral intention (Antón, Camarero, Laguna, & Buhalis, 2019; Autio, Collins, Wahlen, & Anttila, 2013). The expression of majority of the reviewers support these notions since meal-sharing economy offers a great way to experience something beyond of mundanity of daily life (Paulauskaite et al., 2017; Privitera & Abushena, 2019). This finding also supports the study of Gul (2018), which demonstrates four fundamental motives in participating the meal-sharing economy platforms: trying actual/quality foods, meeting people, feeling sincerity, and attaining cultural experiences. According to R246, 'It was an authentic local experience, as we were surrounded by local people, everyone was speaking Turkish, and the menu was in Turkish too ...' R400 said '... truly gave us a great sense of the food and atmosphere of Istanbul.' Supporting the previous notions, reviewer R401 expressed that, 'The tour was a lovely mixture of food, drinks, and the amazing atmosphere of the city night-life.' Moreover, the authenticity of perceiving the actual atmosphere of locals was highly emphasized by the reviewers. R398 shared that, 'I immersed myself in the local mindset, neighborhoods, and lifestyle.' In identifying with this notion profoundly, R429 commented the following:

Maybe you want to focus on one location for a long night of food and drinks. Or maybe like me, you'd just rather go to whatever bar or lounge the locals like hanging out in and doing exactly as they do. (R429)

However, a few of the reviewers emphasized that they perceived themselves as a local. For example, R401 described his/her deep feelings as, 'I was shown all the major hotspots and honestly felt like I was a local, which was so refreshing compared to other tours.' Confirming this idea, R396 said, 'It really felt like we were locals for the day!' This finding lends support to the study of Privitera and Abushena (2019), which stated that meal-sharing platforms allow hosts to set a comfortable environment for tourists for interaction by sharing culinary experiences, feelings and thoughts.

Moreover, under the authenticity dimension, the reviewers defined the features of food using analogies, such as 'top-notch food,' 'a food with a story behind it,' 'real Turkish cuisine,' 'a variety of traditional foods,' 'authentic foods,' 'mom's recipes,' 'home-made,' 'so many fantastic flavors,' and 'original.' For example, R304 mentioned that, 'He took us to so many local, authentic, and delicious places and gave us a true Turkish

culinary experience.' Confirming this statement, **R361** stated that, 'We experienced traditional food, dessert, and Turkish coffee hidden in the neighborhood.' Other critical findings on local foods consistently mentioned by the reviewers were every dish had its own story behind it, and all of the dishes covered a different part of Turkey. Each anecdote was explained to the travelers by the service provider. This notion supports the statement of both Zurek (2016) and Mhlanga (2020) about the role of meal-sharing economy offering deep authentic experience with the story of local foods. Examples of reviews on this issue are as follows:

Each course was accompanied by an anecdote that explained the origin or idea behind the food. (**R6**)

The food was great, and each dish has its own little story. (**R8**)

She went to great lengths to explain the history of each dish which she prepared. (**R85**)

The reviewers mentioned other authentic clues as well, such as 'fortune telling from coffee grinds,' and 'having unlimited tea service after Turkish breakfast, which is one of the Turkish table manners.' Meal-sharing economy platforms offer authenticity experience in their nature by allowing tourists to more interact with locals through local cuisine (Mhlanga, 2020). Numerous studies (e.g. Kim, 2014; Okumus & Cetin, 2018; Tsai & Wang, 2017) emphasize that tasting local foods in a specific destination generates such unique and majestic experience to tourists which outcomes positive tourist behavior. This study finding supports this notion and also highlights the importance of local table manners in boosting authentic clues. The following are examples of reviews related to authentic clues:

She showed us how to read our future in the coffee grounds after having an authentic Turkish coffee! (**R212**)

We had different pieces of bread; cheese dishes; sausages; eggs; tomato dishes; sweet dishes, some hot, some cold; fresh fruit juices; and endless Turkish tea. (**R246**)

4.3. Local hospitality

Hospitality is associated mainly with host and guest interactions that depend on the positive attitudes and behaviors of both. Numerous studies (e.g. Heuman, 2005; Lashley, 2008) also emphasize that the characteristics of hosts affect tourists' perceptions of local hospitality. The findings revealed that the reviewers perceived characteristics of the locals, such as 'hospitable,' 'insightful,' 'patient,' 'friendly,' 'language skilled,' 'knowledgeable,' 'food passionate,' 'helpful,' 'intelligent,' 'a conversationalist,' and 'easygoing.' For example, **R102** mentioned that, 'She was a great host, very friendly and knowledgeable, mixing delicious home-cooked Turkish food with conversations ranging from literature to technology and travel stories.'

However, nearly one fourth of the reviewers specifically mentioned that their service provider offered customized attention and personal care and thus they perceived a feeling of complete hospitality, which gave them a feeling of being at home. The hospitality of locals toward tourists are of considerable emphasis in terms of forming positive culinary experience (Seyitoğlu, 2020a, 2020b). Lashley (2008) noted that local hospitality

should be involved with welcoming, generosity, and respect for tourists in order to be resulting in revisit intention. Likewise, Okumus and Cetin (2018) implied that local hospitality for culinary tourists should be perceived such attributes as social, caring, helpful, and generous. With regards to meal-sharing economy platforms, they enable tourist to encounter and interact with local culture in a broad sense by being accommodated at locals' home or town. It is important to find supports from previous researches (e.g. Maitland, 2010; Privitera & Abushena, 2019; Zurek, 2016) which mentioned that meal-sharing economy experience is more relevant to hospitality attitudes of locals. The following are examples of reviews related to hospitality experiences:

She made us feel right at home with her family stories, recipes, and her warmth. (R25)

Istanbul was a bit challenging for me due to both cultural and physical reasons, but she made me feel welcomed and well cared for her in-home. (R86)

She was the complete host that took time and effort to ensure we got the most out of the tour. (R152)

She was very friendly and informative and readily adapted the tour to meet the needs of a lady who is pregnant and has some allergies. (R172)

4.4. Social interaction

Interacting with locals and the host culture in a destination is considered as an essential part of the travel experience, and mentioned by numerous studies (e.g. Gul, 2018; Murphy, 2001; Su & Wall, 2010) as necessary in the tourism experience. A growing number of prior studies (e.g. Veen & Dagevos, 2019; Zurek, 2016) also support that meal-sharing experience enables travelers to be involved in a novel, engaging, and sensual food experience. Moreover, meal-sharing experience is happening together with locals, hence generating more social interaction and offering glimpse into the daily lives of locals (Maitland, 2010; Privitera & Abushena, 2019; Zurek, 2016). This study supports this notion. For instance, a few of the reviewers expressed frequently that social interaction was an essential part of their sharing-economy experience. The reviewers also stated that engaging with locals when enjoying local cuisines was desirable to make friends. According to R3, 'It is always good to connect with the locals when travelling, and this is a great way to do it.' Confirming this idea, R139 said that, 'It is great to make friends in a new city.' In explaining how a new friendship was formed, R94 mentioned that, 'I really enjoyed talking with her and hearing about her life and the neighborhood she lives in.'

Moreover, the reviewers consistently stated that they felt as if they had been friends with their hosts for many years. According to R145, 'Overall, I felt like I was in America with one of my best friends spending a day out eating and hanging out. I forgot at moments I was on tour. She was like a long-time friend I had not seen in months.' Confirming this idea, another reviewer, R147, shared that, 'We felt that we were not on tour, but we were visiting the city with a local friend.' When considering the meal sharing economy platforms, social interaction plays a cornerstone role in attracting tourists to participate in these activities and revisit the destination (Zurek, 2016).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The fundamental aim of this article is to investigate the dimensions of food experience in the sharing economy. To attain this objective, international tourists' reviews and comments posted on Eatwith and Withlocals were analyzed. The findings from the analysis revealed four major dimensions, namely, knowledge, authenticity, local hospitality, and social interaction. Despite the recent upward trend in the sharing economy, studies have yet to explore the representatives of food experience on meal sharing-economy platforms. Thus, the findings of this study in the current literature are original.

According to the tourists participating in the meal-sharing economy, being informed by a local about a destination, such as the food culture, city life, history, culture, politics, and other topics, was important. Acquiring knowledge on new foods and beverages, the process of making local foods, preparations for market shopping, and advice about food was important in the knowledge dimension. Knowledge about a destination and its local food culture was particularly important in the food experience. This method enhances tourists' knowledge and helps them learn about how a destination can affect their satisfaction (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, & Reisinger, 2015). Moreover, being knowledgeable about culinary experiences allows tourists to learn about local foods and processes as well as the culture, history, and traditions of a destination (Seyitoğlu, 2020a). The knowledge dimension was a vital aspect of memorable tourist experiences (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Cultural tourists are motivated by learning about and exploring the history and culture of a destination (Richards, 2002). Similarly, food experiences allow tourists to obtain knowledge about a local food culture as well as a destination (Mak et al., 2012). Moreover, acquiring knowledge about a destination and local foods can be a major motivation for tourists willing to visit the destination (Kim et al., 2009). The knowledge dimension consisted mainly of the findings of previous studies on food and cultural experiences (Demir, 2020; Kim et al., 2009; Richards, 2002; Seyitoğlu, 2020a, 2020b). Furthermore, guests who use meal sharing-economy platforms can learn about local cultures (Zurek, 2016). This finding can be seen as a significant dimension of food experience in meal sharing-economy platforms. Furthermore, whether preparation market shopping and receiving advice are crucial factors in the food experience in the meal-sharing economy have yet to be explored.

As suggested by previous studies, authenticity is an important component in the food tourism experience (Privitera & Abushena, 2019). According to Sims (2009), local foods can be evaluated based on perceptions of authenticity. Moreover, original and unique local clues are part of the cultural experience of a destination (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016). In a broad sense, authenticity includes the traditional culture and origins of the local people and genuinely reflects the true nature of local cultures (MacCannell, 1973). Analysis of the comments indicated that the 'genuineness' of the locals played a crucial role in the authenticity perception process.

Another dimension of the food tourism experience in the meal-sharing platform identified in this study was authenticity, which refers to the feeling of originality or genuineness in the food attractions of a destination. According to the findings of this study, tasting local foods, fortune telling from coffee grinds, presenting foods with a story of a destination, Turkish table manners, and Turkish guest customs were examples of authenticity in food experiences. In addition, the spirit of old Istanbul felt by the tourists can be

considered as another local authentic clue in the food experience. Authenticity in food experiences in the sharing economy is similar to dimensions reported in studies that examine tourist experiences in cultural destinations (Cetin & Bilgihan, 2016; Simeon et al., 2017) as well as food experiences in a culinary destination (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Kim et al., 2009; Özdemir & Seyitoğlu, 2017; Park et al., 2008; Pérez Gálvez, López-Guzmán, Cordova Buiza, & Medina-Viruel, 2017; Seyitoğlu, 2020b, 2020a; Sims, 2009; Sthapit, 2017). Tourists use sharing-economy platforms to feel a sense of authenticity (Mhlanga, 2020) and experience authentic local homes (Privitera & Abushena, 2019).

Additionally, this research found that local hospitality was another key dimension of food experiences in the sharing economy. For example, hosts were perceived as hospitable, insightful, patient, friendly, skilled in languages, knowledgeable, passionate about food, helpful, intelligent, chatty, and easygoing by the tourists. These attributes played a major role in creating positive tourism experiences, which could strengthen behaviors such as recommending and/or revisiting a destination (Cetin & Okumus, 2018). In this study, the majority of the reviewers positively evaluated their host and experience. The reviewers indicated that local hospitality was an important dimension in the food experience, which is consistent with the findings of studies that state that the level of local hospitality impacts tourists' overall assessment of their travel experience (Cetin & Okumus, 2018; Mansour & Ariffin, 2017) as well as their evaluation of their food travel experience (Seyitoğlu, 2020a). Local hospitality was important in the tourist experience, but the limited number of studies showed that its importance in food tourism in Istanbul is not well researched. Thus, this dimension was important in the food experience as well as in the meal-sharing economy.

Social interactions in tourism settings occur mostly between tourists or visitors participating in different tourism activities and locals (i.e. the stable population; Murphy, 2001). According to Sharpley (2018), this interaction can affect attitudes, opinions, and ultimately the lifestyles of both sides. If social interaction is well established, then tourists become attached to a destination, and locals' attitudes toward tourism development are positively strengthened (Eusébio, Vieira, & Lima, 2018). Furthermore, tourists can understand local cultures and life and make more friends through social interactions. Social interaction can be a determining factor to travel to the same destination to experience the local culture and see friends once again (Su & Wall, 2010). The users of the meal sharing-economy platforms implied that the feeling of friendship or of meeting an old friend, interacting with new people, and engaging with locals to establish friendships were the best experiences in interacting with locals and other guests. Gul (2018) indicated that one of the main motivations for collaborative gastronomy between guests and hosts is meeting or interacting with different people. As a result, a memorable social interaction is experienced, which remains after a food experience. This finding emphasized that social interactions were major determinants for food experiences in the meal-sharing economy.

Tourist satisfaction is evaluated as the emotional state of visitors after experiencing a destination (Baker & Crompton, 2000). In the tourism literature, tourist satisfaction is based on positive emotions (Asmelash & Kumar, 2019). Studies on tourism and hospitality conclude that tourist experiences impact tourist satisfaction (Mahdzar et al., 2017; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013) and behavioral intentions (e.g. revisit and recommendation; Chen & Tsai, 2007). By contrast, dissatisfied tourists do not

choose the same destination once again and share their negative experiences with others (Soscia, 2007). This study concluded that all the participants had positive experiences. This finding can be seen as a significant food experience in the meal sharing-economy platforms. The result of positive feelings and behaviors to revisit and recommend a service when visiting a destination can help destination planners improve sharing platforms and encourage potential tourists to visit a destination when planning their next vacation.

Despite numerous studies on food experiences in the tourism literature (Hendijani, 2016; Beer, 2008; Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2014, 2016; Kim et al., 2009; Mak et al., 2012; Özdemir & Seyitoğlu, 2017; Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017; Robinson & Getz, 2014; Seyitoğlu, 2020b, 2020a; Sthapit, 2017; Stone, Soulard, Migacz, & Wolf, 2018; Williams et al., 2019), none have explored and identified the dimensions of food experience in the sharing economy. The present study was the first to investigate food tourists' experiences comprehensively and understand the relationship between the various themes that emerged (i.e. knowledge, authenticity, local hospitality, and social interaction). Therefore, this study obtained data that helped fill this research gap.

The study's findings have implications for service providers in the meal-sharing economy. This study identified the dimensions of food experience in the meal-sharing economy, which can help service providers develop strategies to ensure that guests are satisfied with their food experiences while participating in various events. Thus, the findings yielded important managerial insights for service providers. Authenticity was an important factor for tourists visiting a destination. In considering the role of local foods in authenticity, service providers should focus mainly on authentic local foods, which should be served to guests. Moreover, this finding proved that tourists gave importance to the feeling of originality or genuineness in food attractions and affected overall tourist satisfaction. Tourists want to obtain knowledge on foods and destinations. Thus, service providers can improve by learning about different Turkish foods and beverages as well as the history and culture of a destination. This knowledge can enhance food experiences and provide opportunities to tourists to gain information about a local culture. In addition, service providers can, and probably should, teach tourists cooking methods and the ingredients of meals, as tourists are interested in learning and obtaining knowledge about local cuisines. These dimensions can promote a destination and local culture. Hosts who are hospitable to guests can create positive memorable food experiences. Therefore, hosts should be hospitable, insightful, patient, friendly, skilled in languages, knowledgeable, passionate about food, helpful, intelligent, chatty, and easy-going, as mentioned by the satisfied tourists. Furthermore, the meal-sharing platforms facilitated social interaction between tourists and hosts. Satisfactory interactions can occur as a result of this encounter. Therefore, service providers should offer comfortable and sincere atmospheres for guests.

5.1. Limitations and future research

The findings of this study provide important implications for future research. First, in this study, reviews posted by Eatwith and Withlocals users were used to analyze food experiences in Istanbul. Future studies can expand the frame of this research to other tourism destinations around Turkey by extending and including general food experiences in the meal-sharing economy. Moreover, reviews on different culinary destinations should be

examined to clarify the dimensions of food experience in meal sharing-economy platforms. Second, this study included only the dimensions of food tourist experience, but the perceptions of hosts were not covered. Thus, determining the motivations and perceptions of hosts toward tourists and the sharing economy is necessary. Third, exploring the growth and success factors and challenges of service providers in the sharing economy play a major role in terms of investigating the role of entrepreneurship (Alrawadieh & Alrawadieh, 2018). Thus, future research may examine the meal-sharing economy entrepreneurship, and this can be a curious topic to ascertain in future research. Fourth, this research adopted a qualitative case study approach for data collection and analysis. Although the data were examined and presented with ingeniousness and particularity, ‘the human factor is the great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis ...’ (Patton, 2014, p. 522). Thus, investigating the dimensions of food experience using quantitative approaches is necessary for validating these findings.

Priporas, Stylos, Rahimi, and Vedanthachari (2017a) emphasized that service quality is an important factor that may enhance the sharing economy participants’ experience and contributes to fulfill customer satisfaction from the service offerings. Moreover, service quality has a determining role in satisfaction and behavioral intentions of customers in the sharing economy (Priporas, Stylos, Vedanthachari, & Santiwatana, 2017b). As such, further research should focus on the role of service quality of foods offered in the meal-sharing economy as well as its impact on customer satisfaction and their behavioral intentions. Furthermore, trust in the sharing economy platforms is a crucial factor that service providers should consider (Altinay & Taheri, 2019). Therefore, it is worth to explore antecedents of trust in the meal-sharing economy platforms for experiencing foods safely. Finally, future research should embark systematic literature review with an emphasis on different aspects of the meal-sharing economy related notions to further assess this emerging phenomenon.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Ozan Atsız holds a PhD degree and Master’s degree in Tourism Management (Turkey). Currently, he is research assistant in the Faculty of Tourism at Yozgat Bozok University. His research interests include destination marketing, heritage experience, food tourism and length of stay of tourists.

Ibrahim Cifci is an assistant professor in the Department of Tourism Management at Istanbul University, Turkey. He obtained his Ph.D. and Master’s degree in Tourism Management (Turkey). He specializes in tourism studies. His research interests include molecular gastronomy, sustainable tourism, and management in tourism.

Rob Law is a Professor at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests are information management, modeling and forecasting, artificial intelligence and technology applications. He has received many research related awards and honors, as well as millions of USD external and internal research grants. Prof. Law serves in different roles for 140+ research journals, and is a chair/committee member of more than 130 international conferences.

ORCID

Ozan Atsiz  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2962-1903>
 Ibrahim Cifci  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7469-1906>
 Rob Law  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-7199-3757>

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