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**Meal Experience in Fine-Dining: Exploring
the role of memory, happiness and
mindfulness as mediators.**

Manuel João Rio Braz Patrício Alves

Thesis Proposal report presented as partial requirement
for obtaining the Master Degree Program in Data-Driven
Marketing, specialization in Marketing Research and
CRM

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by

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November, 2022

DEDICATION (OPTIONAL)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS (OPTIONAL)

ABSTRACT

The fine-dining market has been receiving increasing attention from academics due to its ability to charge premium prices, the growing number of locations, added-value business and how they are in the top of mind. On the consumer side, there is a greater demand for different and remarkable experiences, a unique novelty seeking in the fine-dining business. Whether due to the restaurant atmosphere and decoration, the attention to the customers, product selection and presentation, or even the storytelling experience. Thus, it is crucial for the fine dining industry to understand the underlying motivations, perceptions, attitudes and behavioral intentions of customers as a consequence of the meal experience and how it could affect a mindful individual. Through a partial least squares structural equation modeling, which allows the estimation of cause-effect relationships in path models, this research investigated the relationship between the meal experience with happiness, memory creation, intention to revisit and mindfulness, with significant effects unveiled, as well as the preponderant mediating role of memory and happiness in the relationship between meal experience and revisit intention.

KEYWORDS

KEYWORDS: MEAL EXPERIENCE, HAPPINESS, MEMORY CREATION, REVISIT INTENTION, MINDFULNESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Fine dining restaurants are an industry of progressive expansion. The number of locations, profitability, and the ability to charge premium prices is a factor that has aroused the interest of multiple researchers (Hwang & Hyun, 2012).

In the highly competitive market of the hospitality industry, especially where fine dining restaurants are inserted, the consumer experience is characterized and leveraged as a memorable experience that will be used to make future behavioural decisions (Miao et al., 2014).

Although there are several studies focusing on the quality of service in the restaurant industry, just a few have addressed drivers of creating memorable dining experiences. For instance, Holbrook & Hirschman (1982) and Walls et al. (2011) identified that customer experiences related to a product or service are complex and may depend on multiple factors such as: cognitive, emotional, and sensorial experience.

To succeed in this highly competitive industry, it is essential to present customers with products of extraordinary quality, combined with a service experience that can be absorbed by the five senses (Cao et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2011). In parallel, in the hotel industry, several studies suggest that memorable experiences in a hotel depend on aspects such as the size and comfort of the room, the attentive staff or having a varied choice of food products for breakfast (Sthapit, 2018). Similarly, fine-dining restaurants are considered the top of the market due to multiple factors: the price, the quality of their core products, the restaurant's decor and atmosphere, the helpful and attentive staff, the influence, and social status that confer on those who visit them and, most likely, due to the combination of all these factors (Hwang & Hyun, 2012).

Previous research has distinguished luxury products from normal ones when workmanship and quality are at the highest level (Lee et al., 2019). In fact, luxury has been defined as

“anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary” from a philosophical-sociological perspective (Gutsatz & Heine, 2018). However, very little is known about the influence of this type of experience (fine dining) on happiness and the creation of positive memories in the consumer that potentially leads to a consequent revisit intention. Most studies on this topic only addressed the prestige/social influence on the choice of luxury consumption and the consequence of these experiences on a valuable loyal behaviour (Kim et al. 2019).

The vital role of emotion in the relationship between a brand and the consumer has long been known to convert customer emotion into loyalty (Chase & Dasu, 2001). This type of emotions, related to novelty and sensory experiences, trigger a potent affective sense in memory, and these memory elements are more easily retrieved when making cognitive judgments about the brand (Cohen & Areni, 1991). Emotional outputs can be a consequence of exposure to surprise or unexpected elements, created by the restaurant staff or triggered by an innovative food product, creating an impact on customers both through the restaurant's inherent attributes and through the positive emotional experiences of excitement and pleasure it causes (Arora, 2012; Goolaup et al., 2018).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

2.1. Meal Experience

The hospitality industry is a highly competitive one. Therefore, providing customers with the finest, most extraordinary, and memorable experiences has become the main goal of this industry (Cao et al., 2019; Kim et al., 2012; Ritchie et al., 2011; cited by Tsaur & Lo, 2020). According to Holbrook and Hirschman (1982, cited by Tsaur & Lo, 2020), consumer experiences related to a product or service are complex and involve multiple sensory, cognitive, and emotional aspects. For example, in the restaurant industry, the restaurant attributes such as the quality of the food, the service, the relationship between price and value, and the atmosphere are very important dining experience factors in consumer restaurant decision-making processes (Karamustafa & Ulker, 2020).

Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggest that companies treat service as a theatrical stage using merchandise as a prop to attract individual customers using techniques that create memorable events. When it comes to food, high quality one leads to a predisposition for it to constitute a great, emotional, and memorable experience, which causes the creation of a new customer and the retention of old ones (Harrington et al., 2012, cited by Tsaur & Lo, 2020). Therefore, it is possible to assume that customers in fast food restaurants are more likely to have minimal emotional investment, and those who visit fine dining restaurants tend to have maximal emotional investment (Line et al., 2012, cited by Tsaur & Lo, 2020).

According to Basil and Z. Basil (2009), the term “luxury” has been defined in various ways. As they argue in their investigation, it can be described as a prestige-seeking behaviour, which usually stems from social or self-expression motives that include a desire for conspicuousness, uniqueness, social interaction, emotions, and quality. It also can be frame emphasising on aesthetic values related to uniqueness, quality, hedonics, and the extended self.

The luxurious or fine-dining experience is a user-centred one, where these exciting and fashionable places provide a multidimensional event. Person-specific variables; such as preferences, expectations, personality traits and habits; characteristics of the foods; and the atmosphere surrounding the experience are the core of how customers appraise and remember these experiences. Such experiences are constituted by, not only, sensory characteristics, that come from the customer's interaction with the food, but also, by idiosyncratic features like preferences and personality traits (Muñoz, Hildebrandt, Schacht, Sturmer, Brocker, Martín-Loeches & Sommer, 2022) Therefore, "the outcome of fine-dining is a subjective state that is associated with reward that may be implicitly evaluated as pleasant" (Rolls, 2014, cited by Muñoz et al., 2022). In addition, the sensory properties, reward value and emotional valence of the fine dining experience are stored in the long-term memory which leads to further mental or physical actions, such as the decision-making process in visiting these places (Muñoz et al., 2022).

In the last decades various studies (Thomas & Mills, 2006; Jeong & Jang, 2011; Nemeschansky et al., 2015), concerning the meal experience, concluded that these experiences included customer observation of restaurant attributes, such as the quality of the food, services, atmosphere, diet, people, and price fairness. Nonetheless there is still lack of research concerning source factors and measurable items involved in creating memorable dining experiences in customers at fine dining restaurants, which is very important because it would influence future dining decisions and word-of-mouth communication (Cao et al., 2019).

2.2. Positive Emotions and Happiness

What is an emotion? There have been many working definitions of emotions across different researchers. Nonetheless, a consensus is emerging that emotions can be conceptualized as multicomponent response tendencies that, not only, involve subjective feelings, but also

attention and cognition, facial expressions, cardiovascular and hormonal changes (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009).

Positive emotions have long been studied as markers of people's overall well-being and happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2004; Kahneman, Kreuger & Schkade, 2004, cited by Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009). These are emotions that subjectively resemble positive sensations, undifferentiated positive moods, and an appraisal of the situation (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2009).

Happiness, as well as sadness, anger, fear, and disgust, is one of the five primary categories of the emotional prototype (Russel, 1991). Veenhoven (2013) defines happiness, in the broadest sense, as the quality of life as a whole. According to the author, in order to properly define the concept, it is necessary to make a distinction between life chances and life outcomes, and external qualities and internal qualities, since the quality of one's life is dependent on them. "Chances" refers to the preconditions that act upon an individual's life and "outcomes" is about life results. A second distinction is made between "external" and "internal" qualities of life. In the first case the quality of life is influenced by the environment and external conditions, in the latter it is influenced by the individual and his subjective mental perception.

Other authors, such as Miao, Koo and Oishi (2013) conceptualize happiness as subjective well-being (SWB) – the sum of affective and cognitive components. The balance of positive and negative emotions constitutes affective well-being and an individual's evaluation of their life represents cognitive well-being. Thereby, subjective well-being is associated with pleasurable experiences and the achievement of a subjective sense of contentment.

In consensus with the previous authors, Christopher and Hickinbottom (2008) distinguish two different definitions of happiness – emotional satisfaction and authentic happiness. They associate emotional happiness with pleasurable experiences which converge in a sense of contentment, and authentic happiness with positive emotions resultant from a sense of purpose in life and a sense of positive connection to daily life.

Nowadays, a dining experience has become a resource that provides a multisensorial experience where smelling and tasting are perceived as an experiential practice rather than just functional to a nourishing need (Ellis et al., 2018; Hall et al., 2003, cited by Di-Clemente, Hernández-Mogollón & Campón-Cerro, 2019). Assuming that we are discussing a fine-dining meal experience, special flavours and dishes can induce positive feelings in their respective customers, which will converge in a pleasurable experience, and the reminiscence of its memory can drive future intention to reuse (Di-Clemente, Hernández-Mogollón & Campón-Cerro, 2019). Therefore, it is possible to assume that a fine-dining meal experience can positively influence customers happiness.

Therefore, by being exposed to unexpected attributes of a product or a situation, customers experience emotional outcomes which may lead them to patronize a particular restaurant for its attributes and also the positive emotional experiences of happiness, enthusiasm, and enjoyment it elicits (Arora, 2012; Goolaup et al., 2018).

H1: The Meal Experience positively influences customers' Happiness

2.3. Memory Creation

Emotional memories are the center of our personal history (LaBar & Cabeza, 2006). In fact, emotional and sensorial experiences are believed to enhance memories more strongly than nonemotional events (Dolcos & Cabeza, 2002). Studies that concern declarative emotional memory, the explicit form of memory that consists of facts and events that can be consciously recalled, have shown how frontotemporal brain regions act together to instigate the retention of emotionally arousing events, such as a fine dining experience, and regain them from long term stores (LaBar & Cabeza, 2006).

Pine and Gilmore (1998, cited by Elvekrok & Gulbrandsøy, 2021) propose that “the more senses an experience engages, the more effective and memorable it can be”. According to the authors, the primary goal of an experience provider, such as a restaurant owner, should be to stage memorability. Thus, when trying to develop a meaningful and happy experience, one

should take positive memory into account. If a collective emotional and sensorial memory is positive, it is more accessible in long term memory because of the existence of more contextual details that help the memory (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2012).

Thereby, a dining experience in a luxury restaurant, which comprises varied sensorial experiences, not only of taste, but also of smell and sight, among many others, should be meaningful and contribute to customers' happiness. The happiness provided in that same experience should increase positive memories and so it could act as a mediator between the fine dining experience and memory creation.

H2: Happiness influences Memory Creation positively

H3: Happiness mediates the relationship between the Meal Experience and Memory Creation.

2.4. Revisit Intention

Intention can be translated as a person's willingness to engage cognitively with a behaviour or to perform a certain action (Aziz et al., 2012).

The intention to revisit is the consequence of the value perceived by customers who obtain satisfaction when purchasing a certain good or service and reproduces itself as the desire to visit again (Kusumawati et al., 2020). This satisfaction depends on the circumstances and conditions of the good and/or service they bought, which will influence them to make a decision, also affected by the promotion efforts and consequent word-of-mouth in the dissemination of good information about a certain good or service that they have acquired. (Aziz et al., 2012).

Several studies show the intention to revisit associated with commitment or loyalty. Regarding the added value of quality products, satisfaction and behavioural intentions (Getty & Thompson, 1995) points out that the intentions to revisit and repurchase are consequences of the perception of satisfaction and service quality. Consumer satisfaction with the brand that provides the foodservice is significantly associated with two constructs of specific intention:

intentions as part of desires and intentions as part of expectations (Soderlund, & Ohman, 2003). Several studies provide evidence of a significant relationship between customer satisfaction and perceived service quality and the intention to revisit a foodservice.

Therefore, satisfied customers are more likely to decline new offers and repurchase the product or service from the current provider (Mittal & Kamakura, 2001).

As stated by Flavian et al. (2011, cited by Di-Clemente et al., 2019), loyalty is regarded as the measure of the success of marketing strategies. Previous investigations have demonstrated the relationship between a person's familiarity with a facility due to prior visits, destination loyalty and their probability to return to the destination (Kozak & Beaman, 2006). Emotions have also been suggested as crucial in determining consumer's future behaviour (Bigne et al., 2008). For example, the emotional feeling of happiness connected to an experience, such as a fine-dining one, will be an incentive to revisit later.

According to various authors, such as Kesinger & Corkin, 2003, the memory of an emotional experience, whether it is a negative or positive one, tends to be more vivid and realistic than a memory of a neutral event. All of these leads us to believe that an emotional happy fine-dining experience will develop vivid memories of it. Thus, providing a memorable experience possibly has a significant impact on outcome variables such as satisfaction and loyalty (Ali et al., 2014, 2016; Hoch & Deighton, 1989; Kim, 2014, 2018; Kim & Ritchie, 2014; Kim et al., 2012, cited by Di-Clemente et al., 2019). We can possibly assume, according with a marketing perspective, that experiences are valuable, as long as they are stored in an individuals' memory system (Kim, 2010, cited by Di-Clemente et al., 2019).

As a result, a great meal filled with special flavours and dishes, provided by a fine-dining restaurant, can induce positive feelings in customers, and the reminiscence of its memory can drive future loyal behaviours and, thereby, revisit intentions.

H4: Happiness influences Revisit Intention positively.

H5: Memories influence Revisit Intention positively.

H6: Happiness mediates the relationship between Meal Experience and Revisit Intention

H7: Memory mediates the relationship between Happiness and Revisit Intention

2.5. Mindfulness

The construct of mindfulness has been in constant revision and definition over the past few decades. Nowadays it is best defined as an inherent quality of human consciousness, a capacity of attention and awareness oriented to the present moment that varies in degree within and between individuals (Black, 2011). It can be difficult to fully understand this concept, in fact, to truly understand mindfulness, it's necessary to experience it directly because it points to something intuitive and preconceptual (Siegel, Germer & Olendzki, 2009).

According to Langer and Moldoveanu (2000), mindful people are more sensitive to the environment and more open to new information and, therefore, to the creation of new categories in memory for structuring perception of multiple perspectives in a way that enhances their problem-solving skills. In fact, Langer (1989) theorises that the construct of mindfulness can be distinguished in two different concepts: the first one descends from cultural, contemplative and philosophical traditions, which involve the development of a moment-to-moment, non-judgmental awareness of one's present experience; and the second one is inspired in the Western scientific literature, and it can be described as a mindset of openness to novelty in which the individual actively constructs novel categories and distinctions. Therefore, according to western literature, mindfulness can be defined as "an active mindset characterized by novel distinction – drawing that results in being 1) situated in the present, 2) sensitive to context and perspective, and 3) guided (but not governed) by rules and routines", (E. Langer & Moldoveanu, 2000, cited by Pirson & Langer, 2015. p. 4) and it consists of four subfactors: novelty seeking, novelty producing, flexibility and engagement (Bodner, 2000; Bodner & Langer,

2001, cited by Pirson & Langer, 2015). In this investigation we gave more importance to the concepts of Novelty Seeking and Novelty Producing to define the construct of Mindfulness.

2.5.1 Mindfulness Mindset – Novelty Seeking

Novelty Seeking refers to the tendency to have an open and curious orientation to one's environment, which contributes to an individual's propensity to interact and actively attend to changes in the environment.

2.5.2 Mindfulness Mindset – Novelty Producing

Novelty Producing refers to how one operates in one's environment. This type of individuals actively creates new categories rather than relying on previously constructed categories and distinctions. (Bodner & Langer, 2001; Langer, 1989, cited by Haigh, Moore, Kashdan & Fresco, 2011).

Therefore, mindfulness is popularly viewed by researchers as a cognitive process and it also can be defined as a present cognitive state of active awareness (Langer, 1989). At the same time, the concept of mindfulness was perceived as the conscious distinction that allows the individual to be open to novelty and influenced by the context that surrounds him (Langer, 1992). Likewise, the concept can be defined as being aware, conscious, and active processing of what is happening in the present (Brown, Ryan & Creswell, 2007). In the context of consumption, full consciousness acts at the level of the products offered. The quality of the product and service, the level of involvement with a particular brand that determines the degree of effort a marketing team will have to make for its customers, as well as the careful interpretation of its value propositions. The mindful consumer also processes the environment and atmosphere that surrounds him in a more detailed way (Akdeniz, Calantone & Voorhees, 2013).

Attention and awareness are intrinsic characteristics of the human being, however, mindfulness unlocks greater attention to the experience of the moment and the context of the reality that is lived (Deikman, 1982; Martin, 1997), which can result in a deeper understanding

of events and experiences. Mindfulness also relates to aspects of the Openness to Experience personality dimension (Costa & McCrae, 1992), which translates into a greater receptivity to experience and a greater interest in the seek for new experiences.

Several studies point to mindfulness training associated with positive psychological and physical results (Kabat-Zinn, 1990; Shapiro, Schwartz & Bonner, 1998). However, much remains to be done to demonstrate the role of mindfulness in happiness and well-being. Despite this, there is a direct link between mindfulness in the sense of improving well-being and happiness with the association with more fruitful and better-quality experiences or optimal moment-to-moment experiences. Research indicates that intrinsically motivated activities and flow activities, with which the mindful subject has a high level of attention and engagement with what is happening at the moment, provide a greater degree of satisfaction and a greater sense of vitality (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985).

If we consider a mindful individual at one pole and a mindless individual at the opposite pole, we can see that there is an individual predisposition to be mindful that is driven by the active processing of external stimuli. For example, a more stimulating physical environment (such as fine dining restaurants), methodical and attentive management control of the staff (organizational culture), can act as triggers for more active processing, contributing to greater mindful activity. When customers are faced with stimulating environments, both of service and physical space, they engage in a deeper cognitive way and consequently, this can reveal unique and atypical subliminal actions that can be of added value to the hospitality industry. (Goswami et al., 2009; Langer, 1989, 2014; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Ngo et al., 2016)

In the existing literature on mindful customers in the hospitality context, it was found that highly mindful customers have a greater compassion and concern for issues that affect society as a whole, as well as an incessant search for surprise and novelty (e.g., information about news and events, or different ways of exploring a particular hotel, restaurant, bar, etc) and detailed information about sustainable products (e.g., origin of products, use of recyclable materials,

etc.) (Barber & Deale, 2014). It was also shown that highly mindful customers have a greater sense of self-awareness, which consequently translates into greater affective satisfaction, prioritizing, for example, green restaurants. (Hwang & Lee, 2019). Despite these discoveries, there is still much to be discovered about mindful customers. For example, it is necessary to understand if different dimensions of the meal experience will affect the way customers absorb it or if its positive influence will be decisive in other variables.

H8: Meal experience significantly influences Novelty Seeking

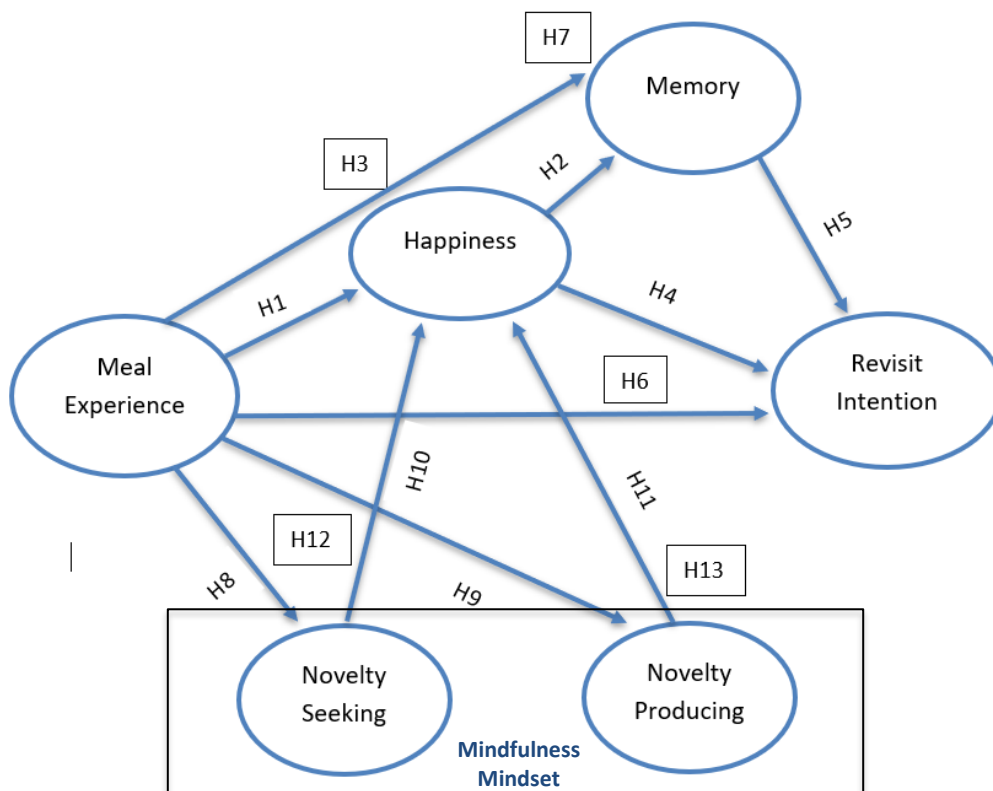
H9: Meal experience significantly influences Novelty Producing

H10: Novelty Seeking significantly influences customers Happiness

H11: Novelty Producing significantly influences customers Happiness

H12: Novelty Seeking mediates the relationship between Meal Experience and Happiness.

H13: Novelty Producing mediates the relationship between Meal Experience and Happiness.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sampling

A survey was carried out through qualtrics and sent to residents of Lisbon (capital of Portugal and the city with the largest number of fine-dining and Michellin-starred restaurants). Portuguese cuisine is rich, complex and made up of global flavours from centuries of trade that took place mainly in the city of Lisbon and destined for the rest of Europe and Asia. Lisbon's restaurateurs have access to top-quality fish and seafood, top wines and sustainably raised organic vegetables from farms outside the city.

From charming neighbourhoods like Chiado to more traditional areas like Alfama, the dining in town is now full of fine-dining restaurants. Before the pandemic, the city of Lisbon recorded the fastest-evolving food scene of any European Capital. The growing number of immigrants and tourists arrived to taste the luxury Portuguese cuisine and kept the demand higher than the supply. The city recorded fine-dining restaurant openings at a high rate. The impact of COVID-19 was felt and moderated this rapid growth. Although some fine-dining restaurants have closed, many more have adapted and survived, redefining the luxury gastronomy landscape in the capital.

The questionnaire has a filter question "Have you had a meal in a luxury (Fine-Dining) restaurant in the last 6 months?", which was placed on the questionnaire in order to ensure that the participants had actually enjoyed a meal experience in a context of Fine-Dining, thus being able to exclude all those who never enjoyed this experience. The six-month cut-off date was used to ensure that people can accurately and clearly recall their experience in this meal context (Keaveney, 1995).

The questionnaire was subjected to a pre-test with the support of graduate students in hospitality and tourism management, carried out on a small and representative sample, so that it could be conducted in circumstances ideally similar to the original sample.

The survey questionnaire was developed in English. Data collection was done in qualtrics. In order to obtain more accurate answers. A brief context was provided about the meal experience, happiness and memory creation associated with the meal experience, as well as the degree of mindfulness while having a meal between the participants involved in the study. The data collection lasted approximately one month. A total of 387 responses were collected, however, due to the filter question "Have you had a meal in a luxury (Fine-Dining) restaurant in the last 6 months?" only 311 valid and fully completed responses remained.

3.2. Measures

The meal experience scale was developed and proposed by Hansen (2012). It is measured using a total of 28 items in six factors. The first construct to define the meal experience is the core product, which concerns taste sensations, the formulation of the menu, and the staff's ability to correctly elucidate it and consists of five items. The second construct is the interior of the restaurant, which concerns comfort, cleanliness, and the pleasant visual elements of the restaurant and is composed of four items. The third construct is the restaurant social meeting, which refers to the relationship between employees and customers and is measured through eight items. The fourth construct is the Company which refers to the harmony generated by the staff in terms of accompanying customers throughout the experience and is composed of three items. The fifth construct is the restaurant atmosphere, which measures the restaurant's ability to stimulate the consumer's senses and whether it has the ability to make the consumer to feel special and unique. This construct is measured in two items. Finally, the last construct is the management control system, it measures the degree of efficiency and professionalism and is composed of six items.

Currently, there is a panoply of scientific scales that can measure different types and different levels of happiness, such as the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, 1985), a scale designed to measure global cognitive judgments of one's life satisfaction or The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999), that measures the global subjective happiness. In this case scenario, it is pertinent to use a scale that contemplates the emotional component and that includes the lived experience as a driver of this happiness, as well as measuring personal fulfilment, which corresponds to the noblest degree of happiness. For this study, I chose to use a scale that measures emotional happiness with three items by Van Boven & Gilovich (2003) and Bhattacharjee & Mogilner (2014).

In the scientific field, individual mindfulness can be assessed using several scales, such as The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale–State (Brown & Ryan, 2003), a scale designed to measure individual receptivity as a state of mind. The Mindful Attention Awareness Scale–Trait (Brown & Ryan, 2003), scale designed to assess current moment attention, the Five Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire (Baer, Smith, Hopkins et al., 2006): which is a more comprehensive scale and developed from 5 analytical factors that individually develop the concept of mindfulness, or the Langer Mindfulness Scale (LMS) (Langer, 2004). The scale developed by Langer is the one that seems most relevant to be used in this study. First, in this study, I am interested in measuring the cognizable state of a particular consumer, rather than analyzing the collective as a whole. Secondly, this scale does not presuppose adaptation conditions to a specific environment, and can be used in multiple contexts, as is the case of a meal experience. In order to be more objective and to facilitate the participants' response process, I chose to use a shorter version of the original Langer scale. The 14-item LMS (Pirson, 2015; Langer, 2004) which revealed a good test, reliability, factor validity, and construct validity.

The LMS scale is composed of three dimensions: novelty-seeking, novelty producing, and engagement. Novelty seeking characterizes the degree to which an individual is open to/curious about the environment and the ability of the individual (in this case, a consumer) to

identify the opportunity to retain something new from an experience or event. In the novelty producing domain, it measures the ability of the consumer, who is subject to a certain experience, to be able to produce new information through the way that an individual interacts with his/her environment. Due to statistical incongruity resulting from the answers to the questionnaire, I eliminated the dimension: engagement from the analysis. A complete list of all measurement items can be found in Appendix A.

4. RESULTS

The PLS approach (SmartPLS 3.0) was used to test the model. The construct of Meal Experience, in agreement with Hansen (2012), was represented as a six-dimensional second-order construct consisting of Core Product, Restaurant Interior, Restaurant Social Meeting, Company, Restaurant Atmosphere and Management Control System. Therefore, we use a reflexive-formative hierarchical component model and the repeated indicator approach to measure Meal Experience and its six lower-order components. However, the dimension: Core product was removed from the analysis due to having unsatisfactory Cronbach's alpha values. Mindfulness was represented here through two individual dimensions: Novelty seeking and Novelty production, since the loading values of the dimension: Engagement, proved to be unsatisfactory.

Table 1 – Respondents’ demographics

Gender	Age	Nacionality	Education	FineDiningExperience
Male: 68,5%	18-20: 46,2%	Portuguese : 91.6%	High School or below: 27,7%	Yes: 100%
Female: 31%	≥26: 10,8%	Other: 8,4%	Bachelor degree: 56%	No: 0%
			Master degree: 13,6%	
			Doctoral degree: 1,1%	

Other:	None: 0,5%
0,5%	Others: 1,1%

Table 2 – Fine-dining usage

UsageFrequency
1 time or less a year: 25%
1-2 times a year: 22,3%
3-5 times a year: 25,5%
6-10 times a year: 16,3%
More than 10 times a year: 10,9%

Sample profile Participants were split differently between male (68,5% of the sample) and female (31% of the sample), with most (46.2%) between 18 years and 20 years, followed by the ages between 21-25 (43%). The questionnaire was filled out by 387 respondents, however, for research purposes, I was only interested in those who managed to recall or had visited a fine dining restaurant recently (last six months), eliminating about 76 responses who had never enjoyed this type of experience. The percentage of people who answered "Yes" was 100% of all those who had previous experience (see Table 1 for specific details). Table 2 concerns the frequency of use in Fine Dining meals, with the majority (25.5%) stating they visit this type of restaurant 3-5 times a year. Closely followed by those who visit it 1 time or less a year (25%). Those who visit it more than 10 times a year were (10,9%) of the sample (check Table 2 for specific details).

4.1. MEASUREMENT MODEL

The analysis method using the PLS consists of two phases: (i) analysis of the adequacy of the measurements (item reliability, construct reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity), as well as the parameter estimates of indicator weights, the significance of each weight, multicollinearity, and (ii) appraisal of the structural results (Hulland, 1999).

The item reliability is estimated through item loadings of the scales measuring reflective constructs at the first-order construct level. In my data, the item loading of each item is equal or higher than 0.677 (see Appendix A), exceeding the recommended critical value of 0.6 for established items (Awang, 2014). In construct's reliability, measured through composite reliability, all the constructs are reliable, with all composite reliability equal to or greater than 0.815 (see Appendix A), largely exceeding the cut-off value for composite reliability value in the PLS-SEM analysis of 0.7 (Hair et al, 2014). Cronbach α values is seen as a less accurate measure than composite reliability, however, cronbach α values are greater than 0.6, which also indicates good reliability. Convergent validity is proved through values of average variance extracted (AVE) higher than 0.5 (see Appendix A), showing that the variables associated with a given construct are related to each other.

Another three measures should be analysed: 1- parameter estimates of weights, 2- significance indicator level of each weight (t-value), and 3- multicollinearity of indicators, at the second-order construct. The indicator weights explain the contribution of each formative indicator to the variance of the latent variable (Roberts & Thatcher, 2009) and it should be above 0.2 (Chin, 1998). All the five indicators shows that this criterion is fulfilled. To demonstrate that each indicator (Restaurant Interior, Company, Atmosphere, Control System and Restaurant

Social) is relevant in constructing the formative index (Meal Experience), the significance level of 0.001 is achieved, demonstrating a good level of validity. The variance inflation factor (VIF) explains the degree of multicollinearity among the formative indicators, as this value should be below 3.33 (Diamantopoulos and Siguaw, 2006), and the results presented in Table 3 confirm that there is no multicollinearity problem.

The discriminant validity values can be interpreted through the square root of the AVE, which must be greater than the correlation between two constructs in the model, as shown in table 4. The correlation between the Meal Experience and each first-order construct (Restaurant Interior, Company, Atmosphere, Control System, Restaurant Social) are above 0.664, which reveals that the first-order constructs have more than half of their variance in common (MacKenzie et al, 2011) (see table 4).

Table 3 – Weight, t-value and VIF between first and second-order constructs

Second-order formative constructs	First-order constructs/ dimensions	Weight	t-Value	VIF
Meal Experience	Restaurant Interior	0.198***	10.566	1.413
	Restaurant Social Meeting	0.320***	16.907	1.996
	Company	0.262***	13.368	1.742
	Restaurant Atmosphere	0.216***	13.565	1.763
	Management Control System	0.315***	12.292	1.472

(*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.)

To assess the discriminant validity, it is crucial to analyse three criteria: Fornell-Larcker, cross-loading and the Hetrotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT). The Fornell-Larcker refers to the square root of the AVE (diagonal values in bold in Table 4) being higher than the correlation between the other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), the results show that this criterion is met.

Moreover, the cross-loadings shouldn't be higher than the loading of each indicator in the respective constructs (see Table 4) and the HTMT should be lower than 0.9 in all the first

order constructs, excluding the 2nd-order construct: Meal Experience (see Table 5). The present results show that all criteria were met, presented discriminant validity, proving that each construct is able to proceed with testing the structural model.

According to the results achieved, these last two criteria are also met, and therefore discriminant validity is accomplished, and every construct must be suitable to proceed with testing the structural model.

Table 4 – Discriminant Validity

	Atmosphere	Company	Control System	Happiness	Meal Experience	Memory Creation	Novelty Producing	Novelty Seeking	Restaurant Interior	Restaurant Social	Revisit Intention
Atmosphere	0.870										
Company	0.554	0.798									
Control System	0.377	0.387	0.754								
Happiness	0.291	0.162	0.187	0.871							
Meal Experience				0.290	0.602						
Memory Creation	0.291	0.258	0.345	0.659	0.382	0.863					
NoveltyProducing	0.183	0.162	0.066	0.135	0.158	0.125	0.845				
Novelty Seeking	0.208	0.269	0.243	-0.015	0.325	0.091	0.257	0.782			
RestaurantInterior	0.456	0.406	0.408	0.215		0.223	0.102	0.235	0.894		
Restaurant Social	0.568	0.583	0.522	0.254		0.299	0.103	0.267	0.415	0.724	
Revisit Intention	0.245	0.233	0.290	0.466	0.335	0.539	0.148	0.043	0.233	0.253	0.857

Table 5- Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	Atmosphere	Company	Control System	Happiness	Meal Experience	Memory Creation	Novelty Producing	Novelty Seeking	Restaurant Interior	Restaurant Social	Revisit Intention
Atmosphere											
Company	0.797										
Control System	0.520	0.516									
Happiness	0.386	0.205	0.229								
Meal Experience	0.957	0.967	0.934	0.332							
Memory Creation	0.387	0.333	0.433	0.782	0.445						
NoveltyProducing	0.281	0.255	0.116	0.193	0.217	0.184					
Novelty Seeking	0.303	0.380	0.338	0.061	0.418	0.114	0.430				
RestaurantInterior	0.638	0.551	0.530	0.274	0.816	0.284	0.149	0.331			
Restaurant Social	0.815	0.806	0.723	0.330	1.075	0.391	0.153	0.376	0.569		
Revisit Intention	0.329	0.307	0.368	0.554	0.395	0.641	0.212	0.084	0.298	0.334	

4.2 STRUCTURAL MODEL

The structural model was measured by observing the significance of path coefficients and the explained variance of the dependent constructs.

The values of the structural results of the main effects are presented in Table 6. The non-parametric bootstrapping procedure with 1500 resamples was used to calculate the values of the path coefficients and standard errors, respectively, as well as the t-value for each path coefficient.

Path	Coefficient β (t-value)	SE	Test Result
Structural Results: Main effect model			
ME \rightarrow Happiness	0.273*** (4.67)	0.059	H1:supported
Happiness \rightarrow Memory	0.596*** (14.57)	0.041	H2:supported
Happiness \rightarrow Revisit intention	0.189** (3.07)	0.062	H4:supported
Memory \rightarrow Revisit intention	0.367*** (5.68)	0.065	H5:supported
ME \rightarrow Novelty Seeking	0.325*** (5.82)	0.056	H8:supported
ME \rightarrow Novelty Producing	0.158*** (2.65)	0.059	H9:supported
Novelty Seeking \rightarrow Happiness	-0.151* (2.35)	0.063	H10: not supported
Novelty Producing \rightarrow Happiness	0.123* (1.97)	0.064	H11:supported
R ² Happiness	0.103		
R ² Memory	0.477		
R ² Revisit intention	0.326		
R ² Novelty Seeking	0.103		
Q ² Happiness	0.078		
Q ² Memory	0.347		
Q ² Revisit intention	0.224		
Q ² Novelty Seeking	0.058		

(SE: standard error. * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$)

Table 6 - Structural results: Main and interaction effects

Confidence levels of 0.001, 0.01 and 0.05 were used to test the hypotheses and all of them proved to be significant for these p-values (H1, H2, H4, H5, H8, H9, H10, H11). The hypotheses H1 ($\beta = 0.273$; $p < 0.001$), H2 ($\beta = 0.596$; $p < 0.001$), H5 ($\beta = 0.367$; $p < 0.001$) and H8 ($\beta = 0.325$; $p < 0.001$) and H9 ($\beta = 0.158$; $p < 0.05$) proved to be significant at the 0.001 level, the path coefficient of H4 ($\beta = 0.189$; $p < 0.01$) proved to be significant at the 0.01 level and the hypotheses H10 ($\beta = -0.151$; $p < 0.05$) and H11 ($\beta = 0.121$; $p < 0.05$) at the 0.05 level. The predictive power values of the model can be assessed through (R^2). The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the structural model predictive accuracy and

according to Hair et al. (2017), it determines the "amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by all of the exogenous constructs linked to it" (Hair et al., 2017), indicating that the constructs explain 48% of the variance in memory creation, 33% of the variance in revisit intention, 10% of the variance in happiness and 10% of the variance in novelty seeking.

Although the predictive power of the model for the variable Happiness and Novelty Seeking is considered weak (<0.25), proposed by Hair et al. (2011), it is important to bear in mind that in social or behavioural sciences, we don't expect models to include all the relevant predictors to explain an outcome variable, especially in associations that are neither obvious nor direct and that, on the contrary, are intangible and vulnerable (Lei & Wasserman, 2014), as is the example of the state of fulfilling happiness/the contribution of the meal experience into absolute happiness in life (instead of momentary happiness), or the contribution of the meal experience into the explanation of an abstract mental state of individual mindful, as This is the case with Novelty Seeking. Nonetheless, both R^2 values are above the critical limit of 10% (Falk & Miller, 1992). In order to evaluate the structural model and the cross-validated redundancy, the Q^2 (χ^2 of the Stone-Geisser criterion) was used. As we can see in table 6, all Q^2 values are positive, since both endogenous constructs Q^2 values are above the minimum value of 0 (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2019; Sarstedt et al., 2017), it is possible to confirm the predictive relevance of this model.

4.3 – MEDIATION ANALYSIS

In order to investigate the proposed mediation hypotheses H3, H6, H7, H12 and H13, it was followed the suggestion made by Preacher & Hayes (2008), as well as the specific PLS-SEM recommendations suggested by Hair et al. (2013), in order to conduct a step-by-step analysis of the structural model.

This analysis was performed using a bootstrapping procedure with 1500 subsamples (Hair et al., 2017; Michna, 2018; Sarstedt et al., 2017) to test the relevance of the indirect effects between the

model constructs. According to Table 7, the first model (A) demonstrates the relationship between meal experience and revisit intention, showing that the direct effect is significant ($\beta = 0.334$; $p < 0.001$). However, when separately introducing each mediator, the direct effect of meal experience on revisit intention decreases in model B due to the presence of the mediator variable (happiness), despite this and regarding the indirect effects of meal experience on revisit intention via happiness show that this relationship is significant since its path coefficient is of ($\beta = 0.065$; $p < 0.001$) and its p value < 0.01 , H6 supported.

Similarly, Table 7 proves that the indirect effects of meal experience on memory via happiness show that this relationship presents a path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.192$; $p < 0.001$). Therefore, H3 is also supported. It is also possible to conclude that the memory construct serves the partial mediator of the relationship between happiness and revisit intention with a significant path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.218$; $p < 0.001$), being possible to assess that the memory creation serves as a complementary mediator given that both direct and indirect effects between the constructs involved in these relationships are significant (Hair et al., 2017), therefore H7 is supported.

Regarding model (E) and (F), the mediator: Novelty Seeking, is negatively associated with Happiness, proving that the meal experience has a negative impact on happiness mediated via its positive effect on Novelty Seeking. If the meal experience was manipulated experimentally, for instance, we could maybe prove that meal experience reduced happiness indirectly as it increased the Novelty Seeking. Within the statistical literature this represents inconsistent mediation or statistical suppression (MacKinnon et al., 2000).

Table 7 – Separate analysis of mediating effect

Model	Total effect coefficient (t-value)	Direct effect coefficient (t-value)	Indirect effect point estimate (t-value)	Percentile bootstrap 95% confidence interval		Test Result
				Lower	Upper	
Model A: ME → RI (without mediator)	0.334***(5.99)	0.334***(5.99)				
Model B: ME → RI Mediator: Happiness	0.335***(5.98)	0.143*(2.57)	0.065**(2.65)	0.023	0.109	H6: Supported for complementary partial mediation
Model C ME → Memory Mediator: Happiness	0.388***(7.55)	0.215***(4.93)	0.192***(5.17)	0.121	0.268	H3: Supported for complementary partial mediation
Model D: Happiness → RI Mediator: Memory	0.405***(7.96)	0.187**(2.97)	0.218***(5.07)	0.134	0.304	H7: Supported for complementary partial mediation
Model E: ME → Happiness (without mediator)	0.291***(5.54)	0.291***(5.54)				
Model F: ME → Happiness Mediator: Novelty Seeking	0.290***(5.10)	0.332***(5.93)	-0.051(2.16)*	-0.102	-0.008	H12: Supported for inconsistent mediation
Model G: ME → Happiness Mediator: Novelty Producing	0.290***(5.06)	0.276***(4.60)	Not supported			H13: Not supported

(ME: Meal Experience; RI: Revisit Intention; * p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001)

5. DISCUSSION

The dimensions that form the second-order construct: Meal Experience, proposed for enhancing restaurant business performance and service quality (Hansen, 2014), have been widely applied in several fields of tourism and hospitality. All five dimensions of the second order construct: Meal Experience, strongly converged, proving that the focus on the most functional dimension can coexist with sensory dimensions. Nevertheless, other restaurant-specific service elements could be a useful scale to measure a fine-dining restaurant performance. The finding is also consistent with previous literature on experiential marketing, revealing that customers do not necessarily pursue only functional value but also fantasies, feelings and fun (Forlani & Pencarelli, 2019).

The effects resulting from a meal experience, particularly in the context of fine-dining, on a luxury segment, as well as its interrelationships with other factors, such as Happiness, Memory Creation and Mindfulness, have attracted less research attention. In line with prior research, some studies have presented happiness in life, which is the most organic type of happiness, as an important consequence of an extraordinary or singular experience (Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014). Nonetheless, in this study, it was tested happiness and memory as mediators between the meal experience and revisit intention, and additionally, two mindfulness constructs: novelty seeking and novelty producing, as mediators between the meal experience and happiness.

Mindfulness is an interesting concept which has recently attracted the academic researcher's attention. It was studied in several contexts, although few times applied to hospitality and tourism research. It was examined, for example, the role of mindfulness trait in restaurant service performance (Babalola et al., 2019) and how mindfulness could be used as a preponderant tool to decide and manage visitors to tourism destinations (Frauman & Norman, 2004). These studies allowed us to understand that different degrees of mindfulness (or mindlessness) could vary, for example, with the information presented in menu, and how it could impact the current experience and the consequent

subjective well-being. In this study, it was analyzed the effect that meal experience exercises on Novelty seeking and Novelty producing, as well as the effect of these concepts of mindfulness on happiness. The mediation effect of novelty seeking in the relationship between meal experience and happiness was also investigated.

In line with Goolaup et al. (2018), who studied the influence of a meal experience in fine-dining context on positive emotions, the current study shows that a favourable meal experience does indeed generate happiness in visitors ($\beta = 0.273$; $p < 0.001$). All external conditions experienced in a fine dining context concerning the dining experience (restaurant attributes, such as the quality of the food, staff service quality, atmosphere and people) are supported by previous studies (Thomas & Mills, 2006; Jeong & Jang, 2011; Nemeschansky et al., 2015).

Regarding restaurant social meeting, management control system and company, modelled as second-order constructs, resulted the most relevant dimensions in the overall meal experience. Restaurant social meeting (refers to the relationship between employees and customers as well as the empathy/helpfulness of the staff in meeting the clients' requirements), management control system (the degree of efficiency and competence of the staff, considering the customer's best interest) and company (the harmony generated by the staff in terms of accompanying customers throughout the experience, informing pertinently about the offered products). Both restaurant social meeting and company dimensions can be understood as the perception that the consumer has about the present moment, exponentiating the impact on a consumer by activating their full attention to the experience, as demonstrated in previous studies developed in the context of mindfulness in hospitality. These studies revealed that customer mindfulness can generate favorable customer response through, for example, stimulating information about the products offered (e.g., emotional satisfaction and preferences for sustainable products) (Barber & Deale, 2014; Hwang & Lee, 2019).

The other two dimensions are Restaurant interior (which concerns comfort, cleanliness, and the pleasant visual elements of the restaurant) and Atmosphere (which measures the restaurant's ability

to stimulate the consumer's senses and whether it has the ability to make the consumer to feel special and unique). This experience scale proposed by Hansen (2012) to measure meal experience, showed reliability and validity. These five dimensions of the meal experience are conceptually different and accurately represent what could be a meal experience in fine-dining context, justifying the construction of a reflective-formative second-order construct.

Furthermore, the level of happiness that a consumer gets from the meal experience is significant ($\beta = 0.273$; $p < 0.001$), in line with previous literature that provides consistent evidence that purchasing positive experiences brings greater and deeper type of happiness rather than positive material purchases (Howell & Hill, 2009; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman 2009; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). According to Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 2000, a complex sensory experience in which individuals have a sense of control, provides greater enjoyment and happiness. It also may enhance memories ($\beta = 0.596$; $p < 0.001$), corroborating studies by (Anderson & Shimizu, 2007; Ballantyne et al., 2011; Dolcos & Cabeza, 2002; Marschall, 2012) explaining that in sensory or emotional experiences, the consumer will develop and create memories in a more accurately and cognitively way than in non-sensory experiences. The creation of memories in a fine-dining context significantly affects the intention to revisit the place ($\beta = 0.367$; $p < 0.001$), reinforcing a previous study from (Cao et al., 2019), which explains that a memorable dining experience has significant influences on customers' decision-making processes and behavior intentions.

In the mindfulness domain, in particular, the novelty seeking and novelty producing constructs, it was shown that the meal experience indeed has a positive and significant effect on novelty seeking ($\beta = 0.325$; $p < 0.001$) and of a smaller magnitude, although equally positive, on the novelty producing ($\beta = 0.158$; $p < 0.001$), giving additional support to previous studies demonstrating that customers when faced with stimulating environments, both of service and physical space, they engage in a deeper cognitive way, i.e. they become more mindful (Goswami et al., 2009; Langer, 1989, 2014; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Ngo et al., 2016).

Additionally, findings support the partial mediating role of happiness in the relationship between meal experience and revisit intention but also in the relationship between meal experience and memory creation. In addition to this finding, it was proved that the relationship between happiness and revisit intention is partially mediated by memory. Moreover, it was assessed that the mediator: Novelty Seeking, is negatively associated with Happiness, suggesting that the meal experience has a negative impact on happiness mediated via its positive effect on Novelty Seeking. This negative effect is explained by the significant despite negative effect novelty seeking has on happiness ($\beta = -0.158$; $p < 0.05$).

In this context, novelty seeking works as a suppressor, showing that more mindful customers (seeking novelty in a deeper and in a more cognitive way) seem to experience less happiness from the experience. The multisensory experience that takes place inside a fine-dining restaurant apparently does not strengthen the feeling of happiness and immersion in the experience of the most mindful customers. The offer of personalized services, differentiated products of high quality care in the attendance, need to be redefined for this target that seeks a more meaningful experience than the current one. In other words, the effect of mindfulness on happiness is not capable of fulfilling the individual who seeks novelty experiences and connects in a deeper way with the experience.

Based on mediating results, happiness seems to exercise a stronger mediating effect on the relationship between meal experience and memory ($\beta = 0.192$; $p < 0.001$) than between meal experience and revisit intention ($\beta = 0.065$; $p < 0.01$). The memory construct serves as partial mediator of the relationship between happiness and revisit intention with a significant indirect path coefficient of ($\beta = 0.218$; $p < 0.001$). This mediation effects evidence the preponderant role of happiness and memory as partial mediators. These mediation analysis have never been tested in previous studies.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1. Theoretical Contributions

The results have several theoretical implications. First, one of the important contributions of this study is to extend the literature on hospitality marketing by applying the concept of mindfulness in the context of hospitality service, especially in the context of a fine-dining restaurant. Although the concept of mindfulness has already been widely studied in fields of psychology and neurosciences, there is a small number of studies on mindfulness regarding the hospitality context, with the few exceptions being mostly directed to hotel services or tourism destinations.

Second, in this study, it was found that the multisensory experience that is intrinsically associated with a meal experience (atmosphere, personalized service, communicative staging, decoration, staff empathy and efficiency and social meeting) indeed increases customer mindfulness, both in terms of novelty seekers as in the novelty producers; This unique dimension of fine-dining restaurants is typically very different from a common environment that we are used to visit, including our homes, our workplaces and even the vast majority of restaurants. This unique, complex, and thoroughly crafted environment can easily connect with customers in a deeper cognitive way, attracting their full attention, which in turn influences their emotional states and consequent responses. This finding extends the service marketing and hospitality literatures. In addition, interactions between clients and staff influence cognitive and affective responses, making it possible for customers to experience new sensations in that environment (Dedeoglu et al., 2018; Raajpoot et al., 2008). Furthermore, and consistent with the existing literature, it has been shown that in experiences with which a mindful consumer cannot be deeply involved in or fully absorb the current experience, under these circumstances, his or her high state of mindfulness will negatively affect happiness from the consumer experience.

A third association was discovered, although reasonably expected, is nonetheless significant, which corresponds to the effect of the meal experience on a feeling of emotional happiness in life,

which contemplates personal fulfilment, corresponding to the most genuine and intense state of happiness (Boven & Gilovich, 2003; Bhattacharjee & Mogilner, 2014), as well as the resulting association with the creation of memories and the intention to revisit the place, having analysed the partial effect of mediation of happiness and memory creation in the relationship between the meal experience and the intention to revisit, which proved to be in agreement and reinforced previous studies, now in the context of fine-dining (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013); (Bloemer & De Ruyter, 1999); (Liu & Jang, 2009; Tsaur et al., 2015).

6.2. Managerial Implications

Considering managerial implications, this study shows that the dimensions of the meal experience can stimulate happiness, memory creation, which in turn affects customers' behaviour and mindfulness. These findings have implications for restaurant practitioners in terms of what they could do to improve their clients' affective and emotional responses. The indirect effect of happiness in revisit intention via memory creation should be emphasized, as positive happiness with the meal experience will positively affect customers' loyalty and intention to revisit the place. One important thing to understand is what could make the experience more meaningful in the field of emotional happiness. Previous studies state that the easiest way in generating these emotional happiness feelings appears to be through unexpected, novelty, extraordinary, or surprisingly enjoyable dining experiences that can delight and exceed expectations (Hanefors & Moss, 2003; Wu & Gao, 2019), for instance, introducing immersive technology to the dining table, with a live view of the kitchen, could be a good starting point.

The effect of memory creation on revisit intention is crucial to be explored. During important occasions, such as customers' birthdays and anniversaries, restaurants could offer special services such as specially designed plates, with personal or physical customer references, a personalized live music show for a particular group of customers (a business group, for example), and other self-related events, with more personal meaning which proved to be more memorable to people than those with less

personal meaning (Chandralal et al., 2015). Another way to effectively facilitate the memory creation in such experiences and provide a deeper understanding of the current experience could be developed through storytelling (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Consequently, in storytelling, it is important to present the experience in an entertaining and unique way but also in a way that customers can learn something from it (which can be highly valued by mindful customers), through, for instance, the chef's story, in audio format, about the cooking process as well as the origin of each ingredient, giving voice, for example, to the farmers who harvested those products (sustainable activation process).

Managers of fine-dining restaurants must consider that less mindful customers, those who do not connect as deeply with the experience, not actively seeking to acquire more information about the products or not pursuing for novelty or personal challenges, seem to be happier in a meal experience, maybe because they have fewer expectations of what could be the personal fulfilment in a meal experience or they are just calmer and can enjoy the experience in a better way. Although, if they want to satisfy more sophisticated and curious customers efficiently and profitably, they must promote more immersive activities that spark their creativity and feed their intellect. Mindful customers enjoy challenges and the constant discovery of aspects in experiences they are experiencing (for instance, through cues in the menu or in the restaurant decoration, in order to learn about the chef's history and the restaurant's origin and purpose).

From a consumer behaviour perspective, the “mindful” individual is also typically one who demands or prefers products, services, practices and tourism destinations that are more environmentally, socially and economically responsible (i.e. sustainable) (Frauman & Norman, 2004). Therefore, it is critical that restaurants provide information related to sustainability and environmentally practices (crafted on the table, for instance). They must strive for the authenticity of information about their practices, from the working conditions of the producers, as well as that of the staff itself. Another useful measure could be to include messages in the menu so that customers can

be more mindful of their food choices, which according to recent research (Olavarria-Key et al., 2021) it would reduce food waste and can be highly appreciated by mindful customers.

7. LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORKS

Although this study contributes with powerful insights that can generate added value for luxury restaurant managers, in a better understanding of the consequent emotional effects of the meal experience on constructs such as happiness, memory creation, the intention to revisit and novelty seeking, as well as an analysis of the mediating role of happiness, memory and novelty seeking, these results must be interpreted attending the limitations of the sample and the used scales. This study used a convenience sample focused on customers of luxury restaurants in the Lisbon region, only on the condition that they had already visited a luxury restaurant in the last 6 months and were able to recall the experience. In the future, this study should be extended to data gathered from different types of experiences and distinctions, for example Michelin-guided and non-Michelin-guided luxury restaurants, with a more limited recall time experience.

This study can only capture a limited number of customer profiles, consequently, it is not possible to generalize or be fully representative. This study is of the opinion that the scale used to represent the second-order construct: meal experience, can be used to measure the experience in a fine-dining restaurant context, however, it should be applied in several contexts to confirm its full validity. Furthermore, this study uses three items to measure happiness based on Bhattacharjee & Mogilner (2014), that could capture a more emotional dimension, meaningfulness, and personal fulfilment. This is an unusual approach, but it seems suitable since a meal experience in a fine-dining restaurant represents a unique experience with profound sensory, emotional, and cognitive repercussions, being also a factor of social dimension, which confers status, reputation, differentiation, and the empowerment of its customers.

Both direct and mediating hypotheses should be analysed in the context of both favorable and unfavourable dining experiences, being interesting to distinguish the sample by the number of times

it has already experienced a fine dining, as multiple visits consequently create different feelings regarding to this type of experience. Future research could test the model by comparing findings when taking into consideration the number of times customers visited this segment of restaurants. Other variables are also interesting to be studied such as willingness to pay more in the future as a consequence of each dimension of the meal experience individually, or the impact of past experiences on word-of-mouth.

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APPENDIX A

Constructs	Measurement items and Loadings	AVE	C.R.	CRONBACH α	References
Restaurant Interior (MERI)	This restaurant's dining area is comfortable and easy to move around in. (removed due to low loading <0.5)	0.800	0.889	0.751	(Hansen, 2012)
	This restaurant's restrooms are thoroughly clean. (0.715)				
	This restaurant uses colors, furnishing, art, and cutlery to give a complete impression. (0.787)				
	This restaurant's physical facilities, such as buildings, signs, décor, lighting, and carpeting, are visually appealing. (0.878)				
Restaurant Social Meeting (MERS)	The staff at this restaurant quickly corrects anything that is wrong.(0.772)	0.525	0.815	0.698	(Hansen, 2012)
	This restaurant has staff who are always willing to help patrons (0.755)				
	This restaurant's employees can answer your questions completely (0.786)				
Company (MEC)	This restaurant's employees make the entire company feel taken care of. (0.831)	0.636	0.840	0.715	(Hansen, 2012)
	This restaurant is aware of the occasion for the meal. (0.791)				
	This restaurant's personal communicate with the entire company. (0.822)				
Restaurant Atmosphere (MERA)	This restaurant has the ability to stimulate all senses.(0.808)	0.756	0.861	0.678	(Hansen, 2012)
	This restaurant atmosphere has the ability to make you feel special. (0.792)				
Management Control System (MECS)	This restaurant's personnel who well-trained, competent, and experienced. (0.788)	0.569	0.841	0.748	(Hansen, 2012)
	This restaurant seems to have the customer's best interest at heart.(0.783)				
Revisit Intention (RI)	This restaurant has an optimal order of serving food for customers. (0.772)	0.735	0.893	0.822	(Casidy and Wymer, 2016)
	I intend to visit this luxury restaurant brand in the near future. (0.852)				
	The next time I need this kind of service, I will visit the same luxury restaurant brand (0.848)				
Novelty Seeking	I will continue to be loyal customer for this restaurant brand (0.879)	0.611	0.824	0.681	(Langer, 2015)
	I like to investigate things (0.700)				
	I am very curious (0.860)				
Novelty Producing	I try to think of new ways of doing things (0.778)	0.715	0.834	0.602	(Langer, 2015)
	I generate few novel ideas (0.826)				
	I make many novel contributions (0.864)				
	I am very creative (removed due to low loading <0.5)				

Appendix A: Measurement results