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Experience, service quality, and behavioral intentions in adventure tourism

Macera turizminde deneyim, hizmet kalitesi ve davranışsal niyetler

Necibe Şen[1*]

[1]*Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Vocational School of Tourism and Hotel Management, necibe_emin@hotmail.com, 0000-0002-4230-3961*

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ABSTRACT

The 2025 World Downhill Skateboarding Championship was held at Ergan Mountain Ski Center (Erzincan, Türkiye) and is considered one of the most challenging courses in this field. Hosting an international event in a niche area such as downhill skateboarding creates an important arena for experience. While efforts to improve the tourist infrastructure at the Ergan Mountain Ski Resort continue, visitor experiences are also a matter of interest. This study aims to determine the service quality perceptions of visitors attending the championship, examine the effects of these perceptions on customer satisfaction and intention to recommend, and assess the impact of a memorable tourism experience on customer satisfaction and intention to recommend. Quantitative research methods were employed in the research. Within the scope of the research, data were obtained from a sample of 234 people using a questionnaire administered in face-to-face interviews with visitors attending the championship. The results indicate that visitors' perceptions of service quality at international adventure events positively affect both customer satisfaction and intention to recommend. Additionally, a memorable tourism experience has a positive impact on customer satisfaction and intention to recommend. Furthermore, it has been concluded that satisfaction is a crucial mediating variable in the transformation of a memorable tourism experience into an intention to recommend. These results present the relationships between factors that will be focused on in the international adventure tourism literature, local governance and event management practice.

ÖZET

2025 World Downhill Skateboarding Şampiyonası Ergan Dağı Kayak Merkezi'nde (Türkiye, Erzincan) gerçekleştirilmiştir ve bu alandaki en zorlu parkurlardan biri olarak yer alıyor. Yokuş aşağı kaykay gibi niş bir alanda uluslararası bir etkinliğin gerçekleştirilmesi önemli bir deneyim alanı oluşturmaktadır. Bir yandan Ergan Dağı Kayak Merkezi'nde turistik altyapı imkânlarını geliştirmeye yönelik çalışmalar sürerken, bir yandan da ziyaretçi deneyimleri merak konusu oluşturmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, şampiyonaya/etkinliğe katılan ziyaretçilerin hizmet kalitesi algılarını belirlemek, belirlenen algıların müşteri memnuniyeti ve tavsiye etme niyeti üzerindeki etkilerini incelemek ve unutulmaz turizm deneyiminin müşteri memnuniyeti ile tavsiye etme niyeti üzerindeki etkisini tespit etmektir. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemi kullanılmıştır. Araştırma kapsamında, şampiyonaya katılan ziyaretçilere yüz yüze yapılan görüşmelerde uygulanan soru formu kullanılarak 234 kişilik örneklemden veri elde edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak, uluslararası macera etkinliklerine katılan ziyaretçilerin hizmet kalitesi algılarının müşteri memnuniyeti ve tavsiye etme niyeti üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahip olduğu ve unutulmaz turizm deneyiminin müşteri memnuniyeti ile tavsiye etme niyeti üzerinde olumlu etkisi tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, unutulmaz turizm deneyiminin tavsiye etme niyetine dönüşmesinde memnuniyetin önemli bir aracı değişken olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır. Bu sonuçlar, uluslararası macera turizmi literatürü, yerel yönetim ve etkinlik yönetimi konusunda uygulamada odaklanılacak faktörler arasındaki ilişkileri sunmaktadır.

1. Introduction

Despite global challenges, tourism worldwide is projected to increase by 5% in the first half of 2025 compared to 2024 (UNTourism, 2025). While this is the global situation, according to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism (2025), Türkiye, with 62.27 million visitors in 2024, became the 4th most visited country in the world. WTTC (2025) states that in 2024, Türkiye's tourism and travel sector contributed 5 trillion to GDP, representing approximately 12%. This also indicates that it provided employment for 1 in 10 people in the country. According to TURKSTAT (2025), 52.5% of visitors came for "sightseeing, entertainment, sports and cultural activities". Participants in adventure activities are included in

* Corresponding author / Sorumlu yazar
Asst. Prof. Dr., Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University, Vocational School of Tourism and Hotel Management, necibe_emin@hotmail.com, 0000-0002-4230-3961

this category. In adventure tourism, destination image and preference are important determinants of consumer perceptions and of creating satisfaction and loyalty (Senachai et al., 2025). The 5% increase in global tourism travel statistics in the first six months of 2025 is evidence of tourism growth. Adventure tourism also reflects this development. According to the Adventure Tourism Development Index (ATDI) (2024), the top ten developed countries in adventure tourism are Germany, France, Switzerland, Norway, Austria, Spain, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan. Developing countries include Costa Rica, Chile, Thailand, Brazil, China, Peru, Türkiye, Montenegro, the United Arab Emirates, and Romania. Türkiye ranked 23rd out of 163 developing countries in 2020, rising to 7th out of 147 in 2024. In terms of infrastructure, Türkiye was among the top three developing countries in 2020 but dropped to tenth in 2024. Furthermore, in the regional classification (Eastern Europe/Central Asia), Türkiye ranked fourth in 2020 behind Croatia, Georgia, and Montenegro, but surpassed them to reach second place in 2024. In 2024, it ranked second in the cultural resources category among developing countries, after China, and first in the image category. These international rankings demonstrate Türkiye's upward trend. However, it is believed that a country with such rich potential for adventure tourism as Türkiye could further improve its position in mountaineering, skiing, and other adventure sports.

It is expected that qualitative and quantitative improvements made to adventure sports tourism and ski resorts in Türkiye will be reflected in visitor numbers. This study examines participants in adventure sports and tourism activities at Ergan Mountain Ski Resort, which has attracted increasing interest among ski resorts in Türkiye in recent years. The ski resort has hosted many national and international tournaments. Most recently, it hosted the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship on June 20-22, 2025. This event, which brought together adventure enthusiasts with both international and local participants, was seen as an important demonstration of the diverse potential of Ergan Mountain Ski Center and Erzincan's adventure tourism. The annual successive studies conducted in this region (Güneş, 2019; Şen et al., 2024) provide insights into this emerging destination. While in 2019 the region needed infrastructure development, by 2025 it has become a destination where infrastructure problems are rapidly being solved and accommodation services are diversified. A study was conducted to determine the service quality opportunities in Ergan (Güneş, 2019). The destination also considered service quality, customer satisfaction, and recommendation intention from a winter tourism perspective (Şen et al., 2024). However, research on adventure tourism is absent from this destination, and the effect of a memorable vacation experience on service quality (SQ), customer satisfaction (CS), and intention to recommend (IR) has not yet been studied. Revealing the relationship between adventure tourism and the memorable tourism experience (MTE) variable and other variables would fill an important gap in this regard. Furthermore, skateboarding has previously been studied as a sport within the scope of the Olympics (Diewald et al., 2026; Fouillot et al., 2025). However, these studies have mostly focused on athlete characteristics. Regarding downhill skateboarding, only one study (Aixa-Requena, Camerino & Iglesias, 2025) is available in the literature. Aixa-Requena et al. (2025) observationally examined downhill skateboarding and defined its characteristics. Therefore, a downhill skateboarding championship will offer an innovative and different perspective in this sport, which is a niche area within the context of adventure tourism and event management. Given this information, we should consider adventure events and tourism together. The people participating in these events are not only athletes but also those who actively engage in this adventure sport or those who passively attend as spectators. The different motivations and differing opinions of these participants offer clues about the dynamics of these events (Kerr & Houge Mackenzie, 2012). The perspectives of participants with adventurous spirits contribute to the literature on adventure tourism and to the observation of participant profiles.

Service has long been at the heart of tourism. Just as destination attractions motivate consumers to travel from their current location to another destination, the quality of services offered within a destination remains critical for maintaining demand (Bui & Robinson, 2024; Khan et al., 2025; Kiskenda & Wiranatha, 2025). Service quality (SQ) is considered important in all types of tourism, and it is particularly significant in adventure tourism. Active participants in adventure tourism experience intense interaction with nature and the environment. However, adventure sports viewing activities and participant experience constitute an important area of research. It is known that the quality of activities enhances the destination experience, leading to satisfaction (CS) and changes in intentions to revisit and recommend (IR) (Senachai et al., 2025).

Firstly, identifying the perceptions of visitors to the ski resort in Erzincan regarding MTE and SQ at the resort, to benefit branding, will offer ideas addressing this gap. The scarcity of research measuring the relationships between MTE and SQ, CS and IR among participants in adventure activities at ski resorts is one of the reasons for this study. Another important reason is that no previous studies have been conducted in this context with participants in downhill skateboarding championships, demonstrating the novel contribution of this study. Adventure sports and tourism are generally conducted independently with a small number of participants. Therefore, reaching all participants is difficult. However, this study is valuable because it is one of the few activities where adventure activity participants are together as a group, and it includes their opinions. In conclusion, the main objective of this research is to determine the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship visitor perceptions of MTE and SQ among participants in adventure sports and tourism activities at the ski resort, to examine the effects of these perceptions on CS and IR, to determine the effect of CS on IR, and to determine the mediating effect of CS between MTE and IR.

2. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism (UNTourism, 2025) is defined as “a type of tourism that typically takes place in destinations with specific geographical features and landscapes and tends to be

associated with physical activity, cultural exchange, interaction, and engagement with nature." Often considered in conjunction with sports, adventure tourism can involve active participation or simply sightseeing. Adventure tourism is developing worldwide (Dumitras et al., 2021). The ATDI (2024) report on adventure tourism development tracks this change annually. Furthermore, scholars have long considered adventure and tourism as a field of study. While primary studies have focused on accidents in adventure tourism (Bentley & Page, 2001; Page et al., 2005), guiding and experience in mountaineering (Beedie, 2003), the interaction between nature and the environment (Buckley, 2000), and the connection between clothing, equipment, and the leisure industry (Buckley, 2003), studies have also addressed the concept from a broader management and marketing perspective (Buckley, 2006; Buckley, 2011; Giddy, 2018; Swarbrooke et al., 2003). The relevant literature reveals a deep connection between adventure tourism and issues like sustainable tourism, risk, and ecotourism. In addition, studies on tourism development, experience, and satisfaction are quite common (Alwi et al., 2025). Recent studies offer in-depth solutions to similar issues (Nurjanah et al., 2025; Khanom & Shah, 2025). Nurjanah et al. (2025) emphasised the importance of effective communication during disasters in volcanic lava jeep tours. She stated that the approach would enhance the experience, quality of life, and quality of the environment. Moreover, for many years, the connection between cultural and adventure tourism has gone unnoticed. Social and environmental impacts affect adventure tourism (Khanom & Shah, 2025).

Erzincan is a destination with strong potential for adventure tourism. It offers opportunities for more than forty adventure sports. These include rafting, mountain climbing, cycling, paragliding, skiing, nature walks, camping, horseback riding, trail walking, mountain hiking, backpacking, motorcycling, mountain biking, ATV and jeep driving, fishing, and adventure races, among many others (Çelik Yetim & Şen, 2016). In the Kemaliye district, activities such as canyoning, trekking, hiking, base jumping, rope jumping, paragliding, and wingsuit are very common. Ergan Mountain Ski Center has recently become a major tourist attraction. It offers 12 km of uninterrupted slopes for skiing. Activities such as snow rafting, ski paragliding, snowboarding, and downhill skateboarding are some of the prominent sports. The research area of this study is the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship event held at Ergan Mountain Ski Center. Held at the ski resort, this international championship showcased how service quality, customer satisfaction, recommendation intention, and memorable tourism experiences influence each other and contribute to the field of adventure tourism.

2.2. The Impact of Service Quality on Customer Satisfaction

The relationship between service quality and tourist satisfaction is well established. Customer-perceived service quality is a subject that business and organizational managers have studied for many years (Parasuraman et al., 1988). It is known that service quality influences people's behavioral intentions (Zeithaml et al., 1996). This topic, frequently studied in business and marketing, is particularly important for adventure tourism, especially when developing tourist centres. In their pioneering study conducted at Ergan Mountain Ski Center, Şen et al. (2024) found that service quality affects "tourism information services" (TIS), equipment rental shops (ERS) and ski-run services (SRI); these dimensions have been shown to have a positive impact on customer satisfaction. However, it was found that the dimension of the "restaurant and cafe" (RC) did not have a significant effect. At the time this study was conducted, the fact that there was only one restaurant and cafe in the region negatively affected the quality of service.

Silik and Ünlüönen (2018), in a similar study they conducted in ski resorts (Palandöken, Uludağ, Kartalkaya, Ilgaz, Erciyes, Davraz, Sarıkamış, and Zigana), found that tourism information services (TIS), accommodation (AC), equipment and rental shops (ERS), and ski-run service quality (SRI) positively impacted customer satisfaction (CS). Based on

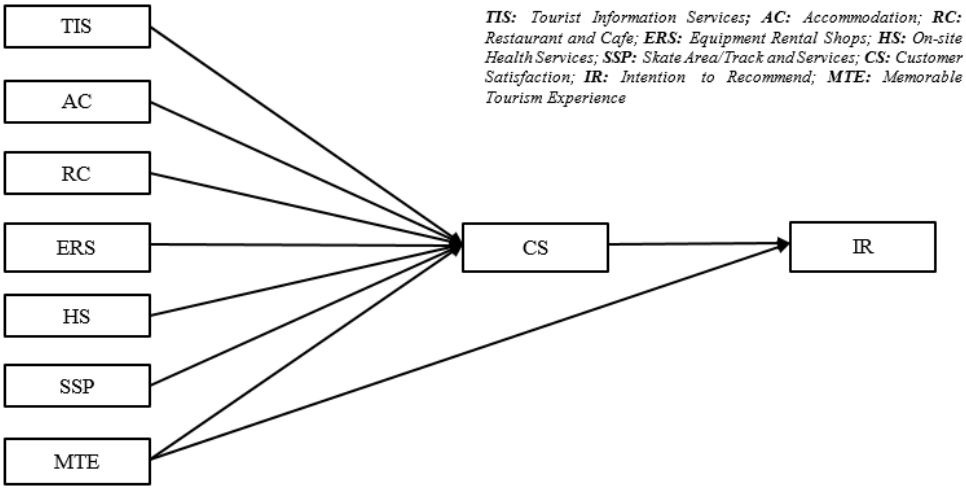


Figure 1. Proposed research model
Source: *Created by the author.*

these results, other service quality dimensions (accommodation and healthcare services) were added to previous studies (Şen et al., 2024), and the following hypotheses were presented.

H_1: Tourist information services (TIS) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

H_2: Accommodation services (AC) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

H_3: Restaurant and cafe services (RC) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

H_4: Equipment rental shops (ERS) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

H_5: On- site health services (HS) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

H_6: The skate area/track and services (SSP) have a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

2.3. The Impact of Memorable Tourism Experiences on Customer Satisfaction

Adventure tourism influences customer preferences in many different ways (Ali et al., 2025). Experience represents a broad area of research (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). Studies have shown that satisfaction and quality are not sufficient for today's tourists to express their experience (Kim et al., 2012). At this point, the concepts of memorable experience (Churchill, 1979) and memorable tourism experiences (Kim et al., 2012) have been introduced. 'Memorable experience' refers to the experiences that individuals gain from the activities they participate in and that remain in their minds (Kim, 2018). According to Otto and Ritchie (1996), tourist experience does not necessarily transform into an MTE. Among the dimensions of experience, memory-orientated analyses have shown that the aesthetic dimension affects memory (Oh et al., 2007). In this context, the components that make the experience memorable are important. Destination attributes shape the MTE. In addition, MTE provides a competitive advantage and increases revenue. However, one of the most important outcomes of the experience is satisfaction, which influences repeat visits and recommendations (Kim et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2024). Tourist satisfaction, as the most likely mediating concept, aligns visitors' expectations with their experiences (Moon et al., 2023). In other words, MTE influences future behavioral intentions through satisfaction (Kim, 2018). Accordingly, the following hypothesis has been proposed.

H_7: Memorable tourism experience (MTE) has a positive and significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS).

2.4. The Impact of Customer Satisfaction on Intention to Recommend

Şen et al. (2024) reiterated the effect of customer satisfaction on recommendation based on data obtained from visitors who came for winter tourism at Ergan Mountain Ski Center. Therefore, it is known that as satisfaction increases, the intention to recommend also increases. Similarly, Lee et al. (2014) showed that satisfied tourists recommend the destination to other tourists, and Yoon and Uysal (2005) demonstrated its effect on both recommendation and revisiting. Moon et al. (2023) corroborated these findings by asserting that the alignment of visitor expectations with the experience impacts satisfaction and directly affects the intention to revisit or recommend a destination. As Martínez et al. (2022) stated, positive experiences in well-organised, small-scale sporting events that meet tourists' expectations increase satisfaction and fuel the tendency for participants to revisit them. In this context, we propose the following hypothesis.

H_8: Customer satisfaction (CS) has a positive and significant effect on intention to recommend (IR)

2.5. The Impact of Memorable Tourism Experience on Intention to Recommend

The more vivid and impactful tourists' memories of their experiences are, the more likely they are to recommend the destination to others (Riptiono et al., 2023). Memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) significantly influence overall tourist satisfaction and future behavioral intentions (Kim et al., 2012). Considering historical and cultural local food experiences, MTEs have an impact on revisiting and recommending them (Hidayat et al., 2024). Nonetheless, the influence of MTEs in adventure tourism remains inadequately examined. Adventure can be defined as consumers seeking excitement through challenges and experiences (Mulcahy & Riedel, 2021). Adventure tourism constitutes a significant attraction for destinations to draw more tourists (Ali et al., 2025). Williams and Soutar (2009) examined the satisfaction of adventure participants and how it affects future tourism service. They emphasized the importance of satisfying and happy experiences. According to Pop et al. (2023), experience, especially the pursuit of new experiences, constitutes one of the four key factors in adventure tourism. The others are stress reduction, self-awareness, and social interaction. Citizens of different countries may have different values and experiences in adventure tourism tours (Williams et al., 2017). Therefore, it is necessary to research the experiences and intentions of tourists in different destinations. Downhill Skateboarding has not received sufficient attention in the adventure tourism literature. Therefore, this research addresses the views of Downhill Skateboarding participants and fills an important gap in terms of its connection to memorable tourism experiences. Furthermore, the attitudes of participants who had memorable experiences toward recommending it are of interest. Based on this information, we present the research hypothesis as follows.

H_9: A memorable tourism experience (MTE) has a positive and significant effect on the intention to recommend (IR).

2.6. The Role of Customer Satisfaction as a Mediator in the Impact of a Memorable Tourism Experience on the Intention to Recommend

As previously mentioned, the relationship between memorable tourism experience (MTE) and intention to recommend (IR) has been thoroughly examined in the literature (Hidayat et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2012; Riptiono et al., 2023). The most important indicator and outcome of a

Table 1. Demographic information

How many times have you visited Ergan Ski Resort before?	**n**	**%**
This is my first time here.	52	22.2
Second	24	10.3
Third and further	158	67.5
Which city do you live in?	**n**	**%**
Erzincan	162	69.2
Other	72	30.8
How many times a year do you travel for adventure sports?	**n**	**%**
I go every year.	97	41.5
I go at least once a year.	59	25.2
I go at least 3 or more times a year.	78	33.3
Who did you travel with on this trip?	**n**	**%**
Alone	30	12.8
With my wife	39	16.7
With family/relatives	59	25.2
With my colleagues	28	12.0
With friends	66	28.2
Other	12	5.1
How did you make your travel plans?	**n**	**%**
Individual	213	91.0
Travel Agency / Tour Operator	21	9.0
Gender	**n**	**%**
Male	153	65.4
Female	81	34.6
Age	**n**	**%**
18-24	53	22.6
25-34	92	39.3
35-44	66	28.2
45-54	14	6.0
55 +	9	3.8
Monthly Income	**n**	**%**
I have no income.	45	19.2
22205-40000	38	16.2
40001-60000	78	33.3
60001-80000	38	16.2
80001+	35	15.0
Total	**234**	**100.0**

How did you participate in the event?	**n**	**%**
I am an athlete.	36	15.4
I am a foreign tourist.	14	6.0
I am a day visitor.	150	64.1
Other	33	14.1
What was the most important factor influencing your decision to choose this facility?	**n**	**%**
My previous trips	77	32.9
Radio/TV and Movies	9	3.8
Travel/Tour Operator	11	4.7
Recommendation from friends, family, and colleagues.	61	26.1
Internet, Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	50	21.4
Other	25	10.7
Which adventure sports and tourism activity did you participate in?	**n**	**%**
Skateboarding downhill	55	23.5
Mountain skiing	28	12.0
Ski	109	46.6
Other	42	17.9
Education Level	**n**	**%**
Primary education	3	1.3
High school	49	20.9
Associate's degree	49	20.9
Bachelor's degree	107	45.7
Postgraduate	26	11.1
Occupation	**n**	**%**
Civil servant	72	30.8
Housewife	10	4.3
Freelancer	27	11.5
Retired	7	3.0
Student	34	14.5
Worker	40	17.1
Unemployed	8	3.4
Other	36	15.4
Marital status	**n**	**%**
Married – with children	84	35.9
Married – no children	27	11.5
Single	117	50.0
Other	6	2.6
Total	**234**	**100.0**

Source*: Created by the author.*

positive experience is customer satisfaction (Kim et al., 2012; Moon et al., 2023; Rahmawati et al., 2024). In addition to this information, satisfaction is a common mediator between expectations and experiences (Moon et al., 2023). Kim (2018) stated that memorable tourism experiences affect behavioral intentions through satisfaction. Therefore, the following hypothesis explains the situation regarding the intention to recommend.

H_{10}: A memorable tourism experiences (MTE) have a significant indirect effect on the intention to recommend (IR) through customer satisfaction (CS).

3. Methods

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of adventure sports and tourism participants' perceptions of service quality and memorable tourism experiences on customer satisfaction and recommendation intentions at the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship event held at the Erzincan Ergan Mountain Ski Center. A quantitative research method was used. The study population consisted of service recipients who participated in adventure sports and tourism activities during the championship (June 20-22, 2025). In the study, the convenience sampling method was chosen from among non-random sampling methods. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool. The questionnaire was administered face-to-face between June 20 and 22, 2025. A total of 234 questionnaires were deemed valid, while 8 questionnaires were considered invalid due to incomplete or incorrect coding.

All measurement items were adapted from scales previously validated in the tourism literature. They were translated and reviewed according to established adaptation procedures and evaluated for content appropriateness within the context of this study. The survey form consists of 6 sections. The first section of the survey includes a total of 15 questions aimed at determining participants' travel information, demographic characteristics, and personal information. In the second section, the scale by Scorgie (2008) was used to determine their perceptions of service quality. The study included only the dimensions of service quality available at Ergan Mountain, not all dimensions. These consisted of 6 dimensions and 40 statements: Tourist Information Services (TIS),

Table 2. Measurement model results and confirmatory factor analysis

Dimension	Expressions	SFL	CA	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR (H)
TIS	TIS1	0.828	0.870	0.878	0.595	0.578	0.898
	TIS2	0.875					
	TIS3	0.756					
	TIS4	0.774					
	TIS5	0.593					
AC	AC1	0.811	0.906	0.901	0.570	0.533	0.915
	AC2	0.825					
	AC3	0.819					
	AC4	0.845					
	AC5	0.620					
	AC6	0.623					
	AC7	0.701					
RC	RC1	0.700	0.937	0.935	0.617	0.572	0.941
	RC2	0.813					
	RC3	0.848					
	RC4	0.852					
	RC5	0.820					
	RC6	0.760					
	RC7	0.804					
	RC8	0.805					
	RC9	0.645					
ERS	ERS1	0.736	0.925	0.929	0.687	0.560	0.944
	ERS2	0.914					
	ERS3	0.909					
	ERS4	0.869					
	ERS5	0.775					
	ERS6	0.751					
HS	HS1	0.824	0.871	0.875	0.701	0.499	0.890
	HS2	0.904					
	HS3	0.780					
SSP	SSP1	0.724	0.951	0.948	0.645	0.578	0.951
	SSP2	0.802					
	SSP3	0.744					
	SSP4	0.780					
	SSP5	0.779					
	SSP6	0.829					
	SSP7	0.820					
	SSP8	0.856					
	SSP9	0.851					
	SSP10	0.838					
CS	CS1	0.919	0.936	0.944	0.848	0.799	0.946
	CS2	0.942					
	CS3	0.901					
IR	IR1	0.925	0.948	0.948	0.858	0.799	0.949
	IR2	0.943					
	IR3	0.911					
MTE	MTE1	0.935	0.952	0.952	0.869	0.671	0.953
	MTE2	0.941					
	MTE3	0.921					

TIS: Tourist Information Services; AC: Accommodation; RC: Restaurants and Cafes; ERS: Equipment Rental Shops; HS: On-site Health Services; SSP: Skate Area/Track and Services; CS: Customer Satisfaction; IR: Intention to Recommend; MTE: Memorable Tourism Experience; SFL: Standardized Factor Loading

Source*:* *Created by the author.*

Accommodation (AC), Restaurant and Cafe (RC), Equipment Rental Shops (ERS), On-site Health Services (HS), and Skate Area/Track and Services (SSP). The third section of the survey included 3 statements regarding satisfaction level (Oliver, 1980), and the fourth section included 3 statements regarding intention to recommend (Zeithaml et al., 1996). The section on memorable tourism experiences (Hidayat et al., 2023; Kim, 2018) includes three statements adapted to this study. The statements were adapted taking into account experiences related to adventure tourism and the characteristics of the Ergan Mountain Ski Center where the activity was carried out. Different and longer scales exist in the literature for measuring MTE (Kim et al., 2012). However, to reduce participant fatigue and survey length when combining the service quality and other scales listed above, a scale that can be measured with a small number of statements was preferred. The reliability and validity analyses confirmed that the selected items adequately represented the construct. These statements are presented in five-point scales: 1=Strongly disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neither agree nor disagree, 4=Agree, and 5=Strongly agree. It is rated using a Likert scale. The data collected within the scope of the research were analyzed using the SPSS and AMOS statistical packages. Based on SPSS results, the data were normally distributed with kurtosis and skewness coefficients between -2 and +2 (Kline, 2015). Frequency analysis and Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis were performed to evaluate the internal consistency of the scales. With AMOS, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA),

convergent and discriminant validity, goodness-of-fit values, and path analyses were applied to test the construct validity of the scales and their compatibility with the proposed theoretical model. In this context, exploratory factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis, and structural equation modelling analyses were used according to the distribution of the data. First, the two-stage structural equation modelling application proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) was adopted.

For this purpose, the measurement model was tested first, and then the structural model. The aim in testing the measurement model was to perform confirmatory factor analysis on all variables included in the structural model. In the testing phase of the measurement model, reliability and validity analyses were examined. After testing the measurement model, the second stage of the approach proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), namely testing the structural model (path analysis), was carried out. The structural model differs from the measurement model because it defines the pattern and direction of relationships between theoretical constructs (Sümer, 2000). In the structural model, the relationship between the variables in question, the cause-and-effect relationship, was tested. Permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the Erzincan Binali Yıldırım University Ethics Committee (Decision No. 05/37, dated May 28, 2025).

3.1. Common Method Bias Assessment

Harman's single-factor test was conducted to assess common method bias. The unrotated principal component analysis revealed that the first factor accounted for 49.27% of the total variance, which is below the commonly accepted threshold of 50%. Therefore, common method bias does not appear to pose a serious threat to the validity of the findings.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic Data

When the demographic and travel characteristics of the 234 participants in the study were examined (Table 1), it was determined that the majority (67.5%) had visited Ergan Ski Center for the third time or more, and a large proportion of the participants (69.2%) resided in Erzincan. Nearly half of the participants (41.5%) stated that they traveled for adventure sports at least once a year. It was noted that the majority of trips were undertaken with friends (28.2%) or family members (25.2%). While most participants planned their trips individually (91%), only 9% used travel agencies or tour operators. When examined in terms of the type of participation in the activity, it was determined that a large proportion were day visitors (64.1%), 15.8% of the participants participated as athletes, and 18.8% as tourists staying overnight. The most influential factor in the participants' choice of the facility was their previous travel experiences (32.9%), followed by recommendations from friends, family, and colleagues (26.1%).

When evaluated in terms of adventure tourism activities, it was determined that 23.5% of the participants took part in downhill skateboarding, 12.0% in mountain skiing, and 46.6% in skiing. The fact that downhill skateboarding, a high-risk sport, is only attempted by a small number of participants and that they participate in other activities available at the event area demonstrates the diversity of participant motivations and preferences (Kerr & Houge Mackenzie, 2012). It also shows that participants engage in both active and passive (spectator) activities. A total of 65.4% of the participants were male, and 34.6% were female, and when the age distribution is examined, the densest group is in the 25-34 age range (39.3%). In terms of education level, the vast majority of participants have a bachelor's degree (45.7%). When the occupation distribution is examined, civil servants (30.8%) and workers (17.1%) are prominent, and it was determined that 33.3% of the participants have a monthly income between 40,001 and 60,000 TL. In terms of marital status, more than half of the participants (35.9%) are married and have children. These findings indicate that the visitors of Ergan Ski Center are largely local, highly educated individuals belonging to the upper-middle income group and regularly participating in adventure tourism activities.

4.2. Measurement Model

When Tables 2 and 3 are considered together, it is seen that the convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model is generally achieved. According to the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results in Table 2, all factor loadings are significant and above 0.70. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values being above 0.50 indicate that each construct can be adequately explained by its own indicators. In addition, the fact that the composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha (CA) values are above 0.70 confirms that the internal consistency of the scale is high (Byrne, 2016; Kılıç, 2016). According to Table 2, CR > 0.70, AVE > 0.50, and CR > AVE indicate that convergent validity is achieved. According to the Fornell-Larcker criterion in Table 3, the square root of the AVE (the values on the diagonal) of each construct is greater

Table 3. Construct validity and reliability

Fornell-Larcker	TIS	AC	RC	ERS	HS	SSP	CS	IR	MTE
TIS	**0.771**								
AC	0.667*	**0.755**							
RC	0.638*	0.730*	**0.786**						
ERS	0.610*	0.670*	0.643*	**0.829**					
HS	0.576*	0.705*	0.561*	0.659*	**0.837**				
SSP	0.760*	0.706*	0.756*	0.749*	0.706*	**0.803**			
CS	0.674*	0.536*	0.679*	0.543*	0.495*	0.722*	**0.921**		
IR	0.622*	0.548*	0.663*	0.519*	0.446*	0.705*	0.894*	**0.926**	
MTE	0.635*	0.514*	0.653*	0.570*	0.520*	0.720*	0.806*	0.819*	**0.932**

Goodness-of-Fit Values: CMIN/ df: 2.504; RMSEA: 0.080; CFI: 0.866; IFI: 0.868; SRMR: 0.056

** p < 0.001. There are no validity concerns here.*

Source: *Created by the author.*

than the correlation coefficients of that construct with other constructs. This result indicates discriminant validity. It is stated that the validity of the model has been ensured (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The model fit results show that χ^2/df (2.504) is in the right range. The RMSEA (0.080) shows that the model fits well, and the SRMR (0.056) shows that it fits very well. Although CFI (0.866) and IFI (0.868) are slightly below the commonly recommended threshold of 0.90, it has been argued that strict cut-off values should not be applied rigidly. As noted by Marsh et al. (2004), fixed thresholds may be overly restrictive, particularly for complex models. Similarly, Hu and Bentler (1999) recommend evaluating multiple fit indices simultaneously. Therefore, considering all indices together, the model demonstrates an acceptable level of fit.

The analysis results in Tables 2 and 3 show that the scales are adequate in terms of validity and reliability in the measurement model, that convergent and discriminant validity are ensured, and that the confirmatory factor analysis shows an acceptable level of fit.

positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.213; p = 0.024). This result reveals that the recreational facilities offered at the ski resort enrich tourists' experiences and increase their satisfaction levels. Additionally, hypotheses (H1, H3, and H6) are supported.

Table 4 shows that the effects of Accommodation (AC) (β = -0.019; p = 0.809), Equipment Rental Shops (ERS) (β = -0.073; p = 0.285), and On-Site Health Services (HS) (β = -0.051; p = 0.495) variables on customer satisfaction were not found to be statistically significant. This result indicates that these service elements do not significantly contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction perception. Furthermore, the Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE) variable was found to have a strong and significant effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.498; p = 0.001). This finding reveals that memorable experiences play a critical role in increasing tourists' satisfaction levels. In conclusion, while hypotheses H2, H4, and H5 are not supported, hypothesis H7 is supported.

Table 4. Results of the structural model

No	Hypotheses					Estimate	SE	CR	P	Conclusion
H1	TIS	→	CS			0.177	0.063	2.306	0.021*	Supported
H2	AC	→	CS			-0.019	0.080	-0.242	0.809	Not supported
H3	RC	→	CS			0.174	0.073	2.312	0.021*	Supported
H4	ERS	→	CS			-0.073	0.061	-1.068	0.285	Not supported
H5	HS	→	CS			-0.051	0.073	-0.683	0.495	Not supported
H6	SSP	→	CS			0.213	0.094	2.256	0.024*	Supported
H7	MTE	→	CS			0.498	0.056	7.543	0.001*	Supported
H8	CS	→	IR			0.673	0.070	10.219	0.001*	Supported
H9	MTE	→	IR			0.280	0.055	4.537	0.001*	Supported
	Hypotheses					Estimate	Lower Bounds (PC)	Bounds (PC)	Two-Tailed Significance (PC)	
H10	MTE	→	CS	→	IR	0.335	0.189	0.541	0.000	Supported

** p < 0.001,* **Source:** *Created by the author.*

4.3. Structural Model

When the structural model results presented in Table 4 and the model relationships in Figure 2 are examined, it is determined that the effects of various service components constituting the tourist experience on customer satisfaction (CS) and intention to recommend (IR) show varying levels of significance. In Table 4, the structural model was tested by examining the estimated coefficient (Estimate), standard error (SE), critical ratio t-value (CR), and significance level (p) values for each hypothesis. Relationships found to be significant at the p < 0.05 level were accepted as supported hypotheses in the model.

According to Table 4, Tourist Information Services (TIS) have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction (β = 0.177; p = 0.021). This finding indicates that the information and guidance services offered at the facility strengthen tourists' overall perception of satisfaction. Similarly, Restaurant and Cafe (RC) services were also found to significantly increase customer satisfaction (β = 0.174; p = 0.021). This indicates that the service quality of food and beverage establishments has a direct impact on tourists' experience and satisfaction levels. Furthermore, the Skate Area/Track and Services (SSP) variable was found to have a

According to the results in Table 4, customer satisfaction (β = 0.673; p = 0.001) and memorable tourism experiences (β = 0.280; p = 0.001) have positive and significant effects on the intention to recommend. Therefore, tourists who have high satisfaction levels and memorable experiences are more likely to recommend the ski resort to others. As a result, we also support hypotheses H8 and H9.

When Table 4 and Figure 2 are examined together for a general assessment, it is seen that customer satisfaction and intention to recommend are significantly influenced by tourist information services, restaurant and cafe services, recreational activities (skate areas/slopes and services), and memorable experiences. In contrast, the fact that accommodation (AC), equipment rental (ERS), and health services (HS) did not have a significant impact on customer satisfaction (CS) indicates that these services contribute only limitedly to tourist satisfaction at the Ergan Mountain ski resort, suggesting the need for improvement in these areas.

To examine the mediating role of customer satisfaction, bootstrapping analysis was conducted using 5,000 resamples with a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval. The results indicated that the indirect effect of a memorable tourism experience on recommendation intention through customer

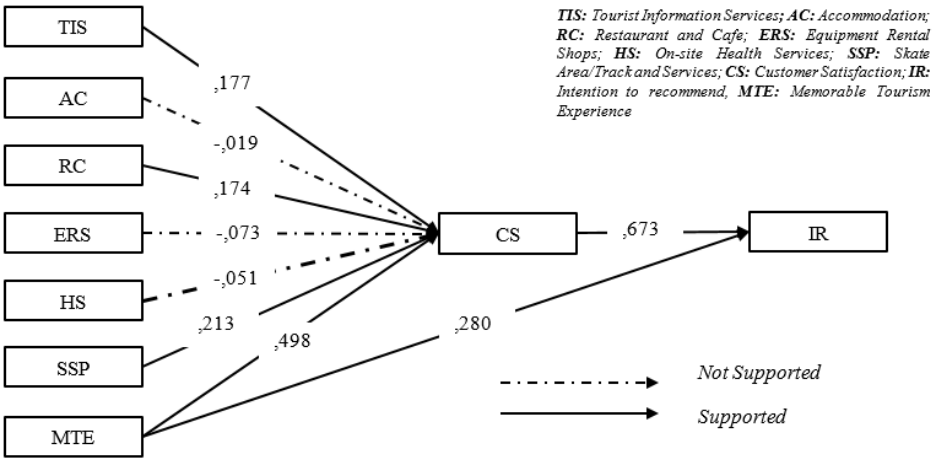


Figure 2. Structural model resulting from hypothesis testing
Source*: Created by the author.*

satisfaction was statistically significant, confirming the presence of a partial mediation effect. The structural model demonstrated substantial explanatory power. The squared multiple correlations (R^2) indicated that 72% of the variance in customer satisfaction (CS) and 83.3% of the variance in recommendation intention (RI) were explained by the proposed model. Effect size (f^2) values indicated that the impact of a memorable tourism experience on customer satisfaction and the impact of customer satisfaction on recommendation intention were large, suggesting strong substantive effects.

The mediation analysis for hypothesis h10 indicates that customer satisfaction (CS) significantly mediates the effect of memorable tourism experiences (MTE) on the intention to recommend (IR) (indirect effect = 0.335, 95% CI = 0.189–0.541, $p < 0.001$). This finding shows that, in addition to the direct effect of MTE, it also increases IR through satisfaction. In other words, tourists who have memorable experiences are more likely to develop higher satisfaction levels, which in turn strengthens their intention to recommend; this highlights the importance for tourism businesses not only to provide experiences but also to design them in a way that fosters satisfaction.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The Downhill Championship visitors' perceptions of service quality and memorable holiday experiences at Ergan Mountain Ski Resort, within the scope of adventure tourism, affect customer satisfaction and recommendation intention. According to the results obtained from the research, the sub-dimensions of service quality, namely equipment rental shops (ERS), accommodation (AC), and on-site health services (HS), do not have a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction (CS). In a study conducted by Şen et al. (2024) at the same center, the positive effect of equipment rental services was mentioned. This service, which was seen to turn negative within a year, is thought to be due to the lack and inadequacy of services in the ski room area. However, since this is a predicted outcome as of 2025, the ski room building has been renovated and its capacity increased by local authorities. We expect the improvement of physical facilities to positively impact service quality. Conversely, the study by Silik and Ünlüönen (2018) found that while ERS and AC had a positive effect on satisfaction, HS did not positively affect customer satisfaction. These results indicate that the findings of studies conducted in the same destination each year may differ, and studies conducted in different destinations (Silik & Ünlüönen, 2018; Şen et al., 2024) reveal these differences and provide an opportunity to compare the results. International literature (Shang et al., 2022) also supports these differences, demonstrating that skiers' experiences at ski resorts can vary depending on the season. Furthermore, experienced skiers' first choice is a multi-pass ski pass, and they have high expectations from rental services (Bausch et al., 2024). Higher-paying customers expect a better skiing experience (Bausch et al., 2019). Therefore, the expectations of the target audience may change in some groups. The data shows that more than half of the participants were day visitors, indicating that they did not prioritise accommodation (AC) services. Additionally, the fact that participants were activity-orientated showed that they did not prioritise health services (HS) or equipment rental shops (ERS). Similarly, Haverila and Haverila (2018) stated that visitors' priorities may change depending on whether they have a daily, weekly, holiday, or seasonal pass. The differences observed reflect the preferences and importance levels of the participants.

In conclusion, contrary to expectations, this study found that accommodation (AC), equipment rental shops (ERS), and on-site health services (HS) did not have a statistically significant effect on customer satisfaction. This is explained by the expectancy disconfirmation theory (Grimmelikhuijsen & Porumbescu, 2017). Participants with high expectations experience less satisfaction when they encounter services that fall short of their expectations. It can also be explained by the fact that participants view these services as a basic experience element and not as a value-adding feature. Therefore, while AC, ERS, and HS may be important operational components, they do not appear to be leading determinants of customer satisfaction in the context of adventure tourism.

Following the results obtained, it was observed that the variables of restaurant and cafe (RC), tourist information services (TIS), and Skate Area/Track and Services (SSP) significantly and positively affected customer satisfaction. In

this case, thanks to the new brand cafe operating in the region, this contradicts the finding of Şen et al. (2024), who reported that the restaurant and cafe (RC) dimension had no significant effect. The services provided in the newly built cafe and restaurant positively impacted quality. This outcome is a positive development compared to last year. The current study's results, along with those of Şen et al. (2024), clearly show what changes can occur in a destination within a year. In particular, the memorable tourism experience (MTE) variable stands out as a strong predictor of customer satisfaction. In addition, customer satisfaction is seen to have a strong and significant effect on intention to recommend (IR). The result is similar to Moon et al. (2023), Şen et al. (2024), and Lee et al. (2014). Visitor satisfaction shows that visitor expectations and experience are consistent. Furthermore, the direct and positive contribution of the memorable tourism experience to the intention to recommend shows that tourists' positive experiences are reflected not only through satisfaction but also directly in recommendation behavior. Supporting this, Prayag et al. (2016) found that expectation and experience coincided. They stated that it played an important role in shaping his intention to recommend. Another important finding from the study is that tourists who have a memorable experience show increased satisfaction levels, and this, in turn, strengthens their intention to recommend. Thus, in line with Kim (2018) and Moon et al. (2023), satisfaction acts as an important mediating variable between experience and the intention to recommend. Therefore, tourism businesses and local governments should focus on experience and develop these three concepts within a single context.

5.1. Practical Implications

In light of these results, this study offers many practical implications. Destination managers, local administrators, event managers, and adventure tourism stakeholders can create unique, engaging, and unforgettable experience opportunities. This attracts participants and fosters emotional connections that trigger satisfaction. Satisfaction positively influences behaviors such as word-of-mouth marketing and social media recommendations. This will help destination managers reduce costs in building their destination brand. As seen in the destination, the infrastructure investments made by local administrations in Ergan Mountain Ski Center in recent years positively impact the participant experience in event organisation. Making the experience unforgettable allows for attracting attention in the global adventure tourism market and strengthening its position in the market by achieving sustainable results.

5.2. Theoretical Implications

The most significant contribution of this research to the literature is that it reflects the views of participants and visitors in an adventure activity of international importance. Therefore, in an adventure tourism destination, the memorable tourism experiences of visitors participating in adventure activities positively influence customer satisfaction and intention to recommend. Riptiono et al. (2023) and Hidayat et al. (2024) reached similar conclusions in a cultural heritage destination. Pujiastuti et al. (2025) reached similar conclusions during travel and tours. Overall, the model reveals that the quality of the tourism experience, particularly through service variety and experiential elements, strengthens customer satisfaction and recommendation intention in adventure tourism. These positively contribute to promotion and repeat visitor behavior. Furthermore, when service quality performance translates into satisfaction, customer loyalty is a significant determinant for long-term outcomes (Xalxo, 2024). These results will help adventure tourism organizers develop strategies to create an international competitive advantage by improving quality and providing memorable tourist experiences.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The literature review revealed the existence of studies focusing on winter tourism and ski resorts. However, researchers have noted a scarcity of studies on adventure tourism. In particular, no such research has been conducted on the World Downhill Skateboarding Championship. The research only included individuals who participated in this event. Therefore, data were collected from a limited number of people. Another limitation is that surveys could only be collected during the championship. This limitation also indicates that the data collected cover only this period, and data collections carried out at different times may yield different results or have limitations in terms of generalizability. Additionally, although the overall measurement model demonstrated acceptable fit, the CFI and IFI values remained slightly below the commonly suggested threshold of 0.90. Therefore, future studies may improve model fit by employing larger samples, alternative measurement specifications, or additional indicators for the latent constructs.

Adventure tourism and extreme sports participants and event visitors constitute a niche area; therefore, they can be examined with qualitative research to add depth. Future research can combine qualitative and quantitative methods. In-depth studies can be conducted on different types of adventure. This study focused on event participants; other studies could focus on athletes and other groups. The study can be conducted in different destinations and for different types of tourism. This study considered only the services offered at Ergan Mountain Ski Center in terms of the sub dimensions of service quality. A new study can be conducted considering all sub-dimensions when all services are available. A detailed study can be conducted on the concept of a memorable tourism experience, considering its multifaceted nature as described in the literature, while evaluating economic, time, and spatial constraints.

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