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The Integration of Creativity into Paragliding Tourism: The Case of Babadağ, Fethiye

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Abstract

Creativity has been frequently explored in artists' work. However, this concept has also been studied in the economic context of business and management. The concept of creativity has also recently become a subject of tourism research, as tourism is considered an important industry. Tourism classifications that include experiences are becoming more widespread. Alternative and special-interest tourism encompasses a range of tourism types presenting unique experiences. Within the classifications of sport, adventure, and experiential tourism, commercial tandem paragliding can be examined through a creative tourism lens in terms of perceived learning, interaction, and unique involvement. Hence, this research was conducted in Babadağ, Fethiye, a renowned paragliding destination. A total of 360 visitors were included as the participants. PLS-SEM was used to estimate a structural equation model. The results clearly demonstrate the centrality of the creative tourist experience. Firstly, the direct effect of the creative tourist experience on behavioral intentions was found to be quite strong and significant. The results show that the creative tourist experience is strongly and positively associated with behavioral intentions (revisit, recommendation, and positive word of mouth). The effect of the creative tourist experience on memories indicates that creative experiences leave a strong impression on visitors' memories. Similarly, the creative tourist experience had a significant and positive effect on satisfaction. Considering these three results together, it can be said that creative experiences strengthen cognitive/affective memories, increase overall evaluative satisfaction, and directly affect behavioral intentions. This finding is consistent with the experiential and creative tourism literature on the determinative role of experience quality in memory value and satisfaction. These findings reveal that creative tourist experiences strengthen both memories and satisfaction; that memories are positively related to satisfaction and behavioral intentions; and that satisfaction is positively related to behavioral intentions, thereby extending fundamental assumptions in the experience economy and creative tourism literature to the specific context of commercial tandem paragliding as a guided air-based adventure activity. The study's unique contribution to the literature is that it not only examines creative tourism through cultural/workshop-based experiences, but also conceptualizes creative tourism through adventure activities involving high involvement and high arousal, and empirically demonstrates the importance of creative-experience quality in explaining behavioral intentions through "memorability" and "satisfaction".

Keywords: adventure tourism; paragliding; creativity

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1. Introduction

The development of alternative distribution channels and shifts in demand have led to the differentiation of tourism products from conventional mass tourism offerings. A trio of eco, nature, and adventure tours, along with a myriad of niche products, are on the rise [1]. The expansion of international tourism has also facilitated the growth of adventure tourism, which is characterized by inherent risks and unpredictable environments [2]. Statistics on adventure tourism vary due to the wide range of activities included; however, the sector has experienced substantial and sustained growth [3]. Adventure tourism is regarded as an extension of outdoor and adventure recreation. Adventure tourism is at the center of adventure recreation [4]. Adventure tourism is a vital sector in the tourism industry, especially concerning its responses to crises like climate change and COVID-19 [5].

Adventure tourism includes a wide range of activities. However, while an activity may be considered adventurous depending on the context and specialists' perspectives, it is difficult to classify it as universally adventurous [6]. While participation in traditional sports is decreasing, adventure tourism activities such as snowboarding, white-water kayaking, rock climbing, and skydiving are increasing [5]. Adventure tourism activities exhibit distinct differences compared to other forms of tourism. Engaging in adventure-based experiences allows individuals to connect with nature through genuine, immersive interactions that stimulate all the senses. This immersion occurs as participants see, hear, smell, feel, and touch during adventure activities [7]. Similarly to other niche activities, adventure tourism is transitioning from being considered extreme to becoming mainstream [8]. Paragliding is among the increasing adventure tourism activities. There is also a tendency to shift from a niche product to a more common, differentiated product.

Changes in terrain, biomes, and landscapes resulting from elevation changes; the presence of diverse flora and fauna; ecosystem protection potential; and the development of resorts offering year-round activities are key features that attract various types of tourists to mountain regions. Mountains encompass a wide range of tourism product components, making them the second most popular type of destination. Mountain destinations account for 15 to 20 percent of international tourism. The European Alps, the Himalayan mountain range in Nepal, the Rocky Mountains in the United States, the Australian Snowy Mountains, Table Mountain in Africa, and Mount Huangshan in China are prominent mountain destinations that have experienced increased visitor numbers [9]. Türkiye is also recognized as a mountainous destination, featuring notable ranges and peaks such as the Taurus Mountains, Erciyes, Palandoken, and Uludag. Although most of these mountain destinations primarily support winter tourism, several mountains are also suitable for paragliding. Babadağ is among these destinations, distinguished by its proximity to the sea, which creates favorable thermal winds for extended paragliding flights offering views of the sea, nature, and the surrounding mountains.

From a supply perspective, new adventure tourism destinations and products have been developed to address the specific and discerning needs and demands of tourists. Adventure tourists can access a range of adventure-based activities in some of the world's most remote locations [3]. Butler's [10] Tourism Area Life Cycle model, which includes the stages of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation, stagnation, rejuvenation, and decline, is applicable to adventure tourism destinations. For example, during the exploration stage, paragliding was considered a niche adventure activity in Babadağ. However, the area now hosts over 300,000 paragliding flights annually.

Engaging in activities such as mountain climbing and river navigation to gain experience and develop strength and abilities is commonly associated with adventure-seeking [4]. The adventure tourism experience is complex; therefore, further studies are needed to identify tourists' personalities, activity types, social context, and environmental settings

within the overall experience [11]. The unpredictability and dynamics of natural settings challenge adventure tourism participants, and these settings may be perceived as supporting self-expression and a sense of personal agency [7]. Adventure recreation stems from conventional outdoor recreation; moreover, both activities require specific skills in outdoor contexts [4]. Adventure-based activities vary in the level of skill required; some demand advanced proficiency, while others necessitate only moderate ability. Both solo and tandem paragliding require moderate to high skill levels on the pilot/operator side to manage the canopy and changing conditions effectively. Among adventure-based activities, paragliding offers distinct sensory experiences that require further investigation. There is a growing trend towards acknowledging favorable outcomes of participation in nature-based activities within adventure tourism research [7].

A 45 min tandem paragliding experience in Babadağ offers breathtaking scenic views, creating an unforgettable adventure. This experience aligns with the concept of dynamic nature. In paragliding, dynamic nature is experienced as a real-time bodily calibration to wind, thermals, and terrain: the participant continuously interprets sensory feedback (balance, speed, sound, altitude cues) and re-frames the landscape as an unfolding scene rather than a static view. This embodied interaction provides a plausible pathway through which perceived involvement and meaning-making can emerge even in guided settings. According to Pomfret, Sand, and May [7], dynamic nature refers to the intersection of the body and nature through active engagement in natural environments, rather than simply passively consuming scenic vistas.

The paragliding industry is experiencing growth, much like the adventure tourism sector as a whole. Recent statistics confirm an increase in participation. As a result, it is essential to understand the factors related to participation in adventure tourism activities [12]. In line with this trend, the current study examines the creative experiences associated with paragliding and adventure tourism.

Research by Deb, Kondasan, and Das [11] shifts the focus from adventure tourism providers to that of adventure tourists. Applying theories from other disciplines provides both revelatory and incremental contributions to adventure tourism [13]. Paragliding is a unique, relatively niche activity that encompasses all components of adventure travel. However, it is important to note that adventure tourists have a diverse nature [14]. Today's high-speed, technical, gendered, and results-oriented culture pressures individuals to pursue freeing experiences that encourage creativity. Adventure tourism research has primarily focused on developed economies; additional research is needed in diverse cultural contexts and various levels of economic development [7].

In the context of adventure tourism, the individual tourist occupies a central position in both the geographical and psychological dimensions. However, variations in perceptions of challenge and risk arise from differences in travel experiences and personality, which remain underexplored in the adventure tourism literature [4]. As both demand and supply for adventure tourism continue to increase, greater attention must be directed toward understanding outdoor adventure tourists [15]. Therefore, following this shift in the adventure tourism industry, this study focuses on the creative experiences associated with paragliding and its environmental context. The development of creative paragliding tourism activities is an innovative way to meet the growing demand for adventure tourism. While adventure tourism is commonly studied using qualitative and autoethnographic methods [14], the current study employs a quantitative method to enhance the generalizability of the results.

1.1. Adventure Tourism

Exploration of unfamiliar, remote sites for wealth, new land, and scientific pursuits is intertwined with adventure. The discovery and uncovering of the unknown are rewards

for adventure-seeking [4]. Nature-based tourism and adventure tourism have distinct differences, as adventure tourism involves more challenging activities compared to nature-based tourism [14]. Adventure tourism is often conceptualized as an extension of outdoor recreation, with particular emphasis on the destination component within the tourism system [4]. Adventure tourism is a distinct form of leisure that involves participants engaging in various types of adventures. Therefore, researchers often specifically focus on particular segments of the adventure tourism sector in their studies [14].

Nature, active, and adventure tourism encompass activities that integrate environmental, sporting, and touristic elements. From a sports perspective, terms such as adventure sports, outdoor physical activities, and nature sports are also used [2]. According to the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) [16], adventure travel experiences are characterized by a blend of natural, cultural, and activity-based elements. This combination provides a comprehensive travel experience. Customized experiences are designed to meet the needs of travelers, aiming for transformation, challenge, and uniqueness. While destinations offer the backdrop of nature and culture, it is tour operators and other stakeholders in the tourism industry who provide substantive content through engaging activities. Figure 1 illustrates the key components of adventure travel. Engaging in adventure tourism activities fosters a sense of community by connecting individuals and establishing shared values and beliefs [7]. Although the Adventure Travel Trade Association's (ATTA) definitions of adventure tourism are widely accepted, the cultural dimension of these definitions has not been examined in depth within the academic adventure tourism literature [6]. Engaging in adventure-based activities can significantly enhance subjective well-being. However, social interactions with friends and participation in other hobbies—such as learning a language, reading, or playing a sport—also contribute to overall well-being, alongside adventure tourism [7]. Thus, paragliding tourism, framed within the context of creative tourism, can further enrich the subjective well-being associated with adventure tourism through its various dimensions.

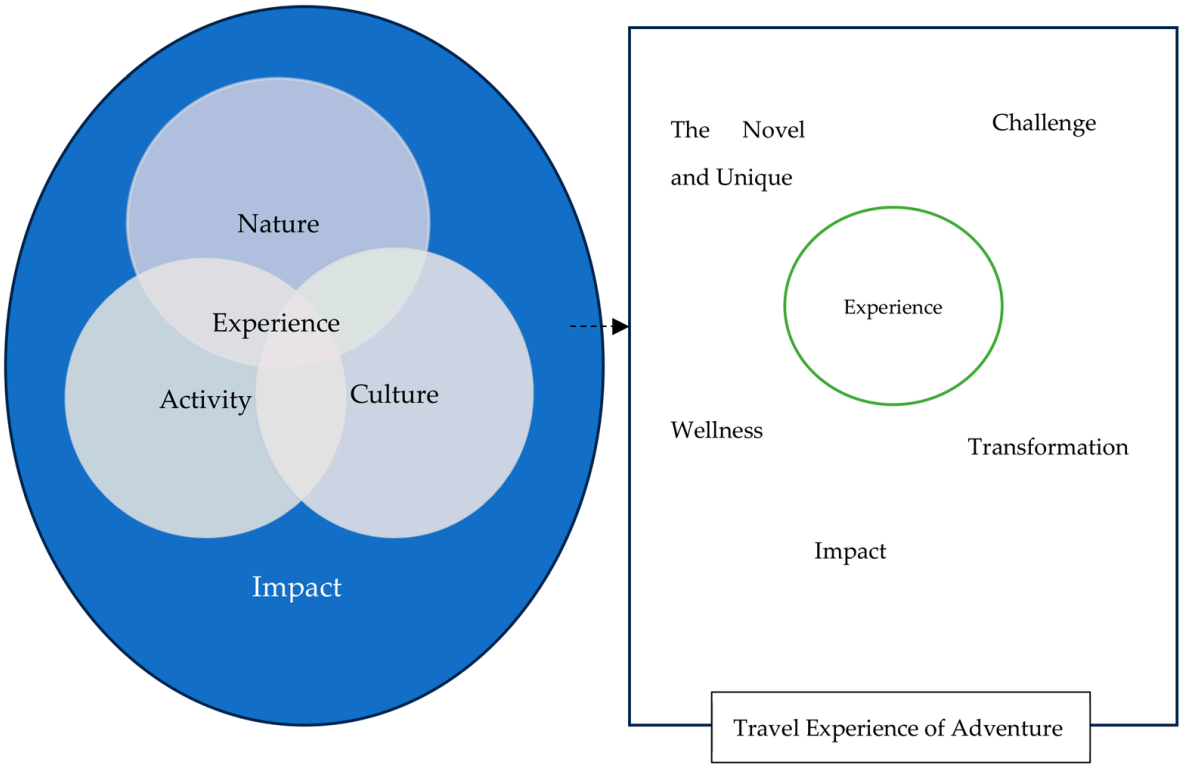


Figure 1. Components of adventure travel. Source: Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA) [16] (p. 5).

Within the tourism system, the psychological movement of adventure tourists from their origin, through transit routes, to the destination constitutes a significant process from the perspective of individual adventure. In the absence of social organizational influence (structural), individuals undergo a three-stage ritual process—spatial and social separation, liminality, and reintegration—characterized as antistructural and free from social restrictions. This process is applicable to adventure tourism. By traveling from origin to destination, individuals remove themselves both physically and symbolically from their structured environment and social group. Subsequently, the separation stage leads to entry into an antistructure state. In this state, individuals may experience "communitas" [4]. For Bodreau et al. [12], adventure can be defined as "self-initiated, nature-based physical activities that create heightened bodily sensations and necessitate skill development to manage unique perceived and objective risks". Pomfret, Sand, and May [7] define participation in outdoor adventure activities as "participating in nature-based outdoor adventure tourism or recreation activities which may be challenging and may include perceived or real risk". The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) [17] (p. 50) defines adventure tourism as "a type of tourism activity which takes place in a defined and limited geographical space such as hills or mountains with distinctive characteristics and attributes that are inherent to a specific landscape, topography, climate, biodiversity (flora and fauna), and local community. It encompasses a broad range of outdoor leisure and sports activities". The definition of adventure tourism encompasses product- and people-oriented concepts [11]. Adventure tourism, by definition, includes voluntary activities that feature uncertainty, as well as physical and mental challenges, in an outdoor context, often accompanied by kinaesthetic pleasure [5]. Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14] argue that adventure tourism is a category rather than a concept. Moreover, as an umbrella term, it encompasses all kinds of adventure-based activities. Like other forms of adventure tourism, paragliding tourism can be classified as mountain tourism, as paragliding activities require elevated mountain runways. Mountain tourism falls within the broader concept of nature tourism, as most outdoor activities occur in natural environments [9]. Paragliding tourism is also classified as a form of nature tourism.

Research on adventure tourism is complex because it includes a wide range of activities, typically involving water-, land-, and air-based pursuits. This diversity often leads to overlap with other forms of tourism [15]. Paragliding, for example, lies at the intersection of adventure and mountain tourism. Mountain tourism encompasses a wide variety of leisure and outdoor activities and can be regarded as a sector of adventure tourism [9]. Paragliding tourism is included among these leisure and outdoor activities. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization [17], mountain tourism is defined as "tourism activity which takes place in a defined and limited geographical space such as hills or mountains with distinctive characteristics and attributes that are inherent to a specific landscape, topography, climate, biodiversity (flora and fauna) and local community. It encompasses a broad range of outdoor leisure and sports activities". Mountain tourism research encompasses three primary topics: sustainable development, tourism development, and mountain destinations [9]. The present study focuses on the Babadağ mountain destination, which is recognized as a renowned site for activity-based paragliding tourism.

As the adventure tourism industry has grown significantly, it has attracted attention from academia [3,11,18]. Doran, Pomfret, and Adu-Ampong's [13] investigation of the adventure tourism literature identifies five types of contributions: replicatory, consolidatory, revelatory, differentiated context, and incremental. The tourism literature highlights the need for conceptual work. Adventure tourism research includes both "product-oriented" and "people-oriented" approaches, drawing from marketing, psychology, geography,

sociology, and anthropology as key disciplines [14]. The current state of knowledge creation is lacking in conceptual contributions [13].

According to Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14], the distinction between adventurous activities and tourism is often blurred, leading to various categorizations within the literature. These include individual versus mass adventures; soft versus hard adventures; authentic, self-led adventures versus expert-led adventures; philosophical versus product-oriented approaches; and adventure education versus adventure tourism approaches. Product development in the adventure tourism industry could focus on risk-free experiences that appear risky [11]. Weber [4] identifies activities such as skydiving, rock climbing, hiking, trekking, rappelling, ballooning, spelunking, rafting, snowshoeing, hang gliding, mountaineering, diving, sailing, orienteering, bicycling, rogaining, kayaking, and backpacking as examples of adventure pursuits. Paragliding, due to its inherent risks and uncertainties, may also be considered in this category.

Leisure, adventure education, and recreation are among the primary topics addressed in adventure tourism research [3]. According to Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14], sustainability, gender, safety, events, guiding, value creation, motivation, and destination development are the most popular topics in adventure tourism research. Additionally, marketing, psychology, geography, sociology, and anthropology are the most frequently used disciplines. Individuals and organizations may find it challenging, if not impossible, to consider the numerous impacts of their adventures across various geographical and temporal scales, particularly regarding the environmental and social dimensions [5].

According to Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14], adventure tourism is often considered a context for exploring various topics, including environmental sustainability. The literature indicates that sustainability cannot be achieved through isolated, small efforts. Instead, adventure operators need to think and act both critically and holistically regarding how we travel and conduct business [5]. Participating collectively or individually in adventure-based activities fosters strong connections with nature, encourages environmentally friendly behaviors and attitudes, and contributes to subjective well-being [7]. This study investigates paragliding tourism explicitly as a form of adventure tourism, emphasizing the concept of creative tourism. While research on creative tourism typically focuses on cultural contexts, the intersection of adventure tourism—encompassing its cultural, natural, and activity-oriented components—remains a relatively underexplored field within the broader creative tourism framework. As a developing sub-industry of tourism, adventure tourism possesses many attributes that relate to sustainability. The intersection of creative tourism and adventure tourism can therefore contribute to sustainability, especially within environmental and social spheres.

Janowski, Gardiner, and Kwek [6] proposed a three-pillar framework for adventure tourism. The first pillar is the consumer-based dimension, which consists of the psychological and intangible feelings stimulated by adventure tourism. The second pillar is the product-based dimension, encompassing both tangible and intangible adventure tourism experiences that exist independently of the tourist's mindset. The third pillar is the hybrid dimension, which is influenced by consumer and product perceptions, skill levels, and behaviors. The three pillars of adventure tourism are presented in Figure 2. According to Deb, Roa, & Das [11], the concepts of risk in adventure tourism, motivation for adventure tourism, the adventure tourism experience, and the development of adventure tourism products are key topics within the scope of the adventure tourism literature. The discussion surrounding adventure tourism primarily focuses on value creation, destination development, safety, identity formation, and the production and consumption of places [14].

Fredman and Margaryan's [19] literature review on nature-based tourism identifies a growing emphasis on supply-side research. Wildlife tourism, mountain tourism, adventure

tourism, and ecotourism are key subsectors within the broader category of nature-based tourism. They further observe that most research questions are practically oriented, indicating a need for additional studies that utilize theoretical frameworks. Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14] argue that adventure tourism should be conceptualized in the literature rather than simply treated as a category. They believe that adventure tourism is an empirical area of study, and that the practice of adventure tourism should be examined in reality. Starting from this perspective, the current study focuses on paragliding as a tourist activity and aims to illuminate its creative aspects.

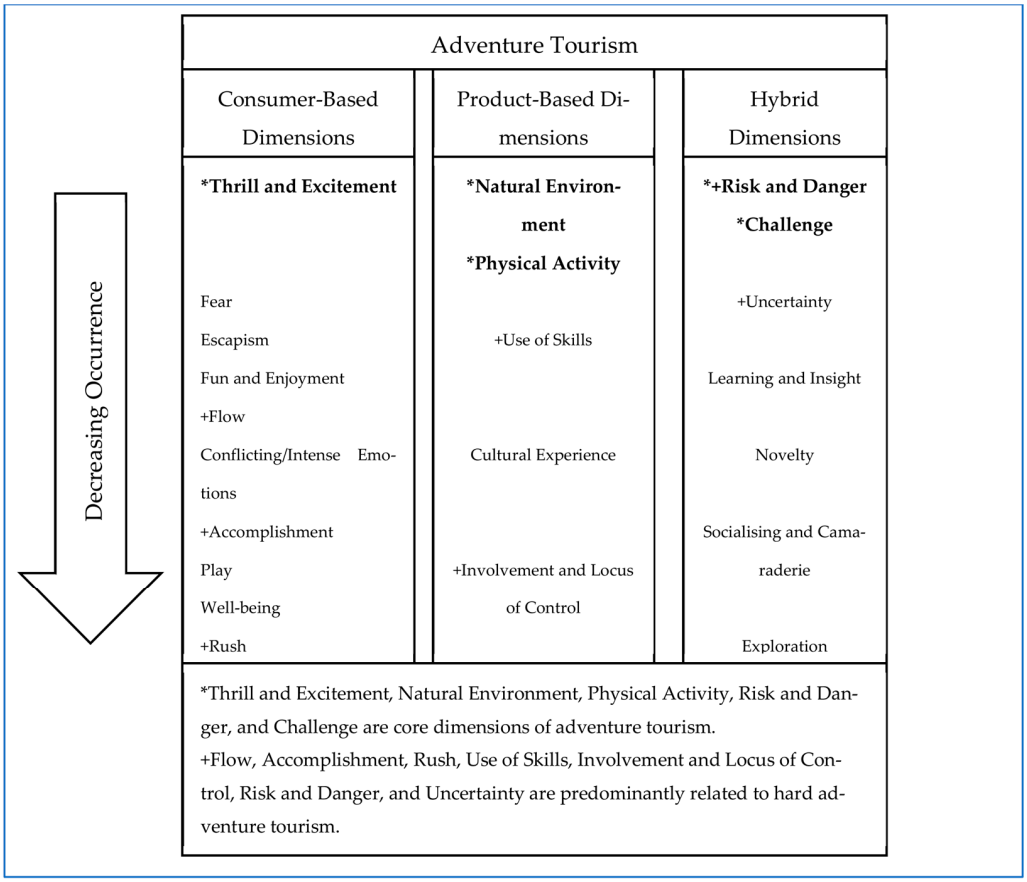


Figure 2. Three pillars of adventure tourism. Source: Ref. [6] (p. 6).

Adventure tourism is commonly divided into soft and hard categories. Soft adventure tourism generally does not require prior experience or significant commitment, and such activities are frequently guided. In contrast, hard adventure tourism requires professional skills and a higher degree of commitment, and involves considerable risk [8]. The distinction between soft and hard adventure is determined by situational factors, including climate, marine conditions, equipment, environment, guidance, facilities, individual experience, skill, and psychological state. Unexpected changes in these factors can shift an activity from soft adventure to hard adventure. This classification also applies to paragliding tourism: tandem paragliding is considered a soft adventure activity, while solo paragliding is classified as a hard adventure. Consequently, paragliding encompasses both soft and hard adventure tourism. The commonly referenced categorizations of soft and hard adventure tourism exhibit certain limitations [6]. Earlier studies on adventure tourism primarily examined hard activities. More recent research has broadened the scope to include soft adventures, with family, micro-adventure, and health and well-being emerging as prominent topics [8].

Challenge and risk are central concepts within the adventure tourism literature [4]. Common concepts in the most cited articles of the adventure tourism literature, regardless of discipline, include novelty, emotions, and thrill [14]. In their literature review on adventure tourism and subjective well-being, Pomfret, Sand, and May [7] identified five metathemes: Extraordinary Experiences, Physical and Mental Balance, Personal Development, Immersion and Transformation, and Community. Janowski, Gardiner, and Kwek's [6] text-mining analysis of the adventure tourism literature identifies injury, physical activity, emotions, well-being, novelty, the natural environment, learning, and culture as key dimensions of adventure tourism. Rantala, Rokenes, and Valkonen [14] propose that, because of the understanding of adventure tourism as both a journey and a category, employing autoethnographic methods can provide insights into the localized understanding of adventure tourism cultures and activities. This approach allows us to utilize the concept of adventure tourism as an analytical tool.

The commercial and non-commercial contexts of adventure-based activities clarify the development of skills for environmental management and risk control [4]. Paragliding activities can be divided into two main categories. The first category, single paragliding, involves individual flights that require personal skill and risk management. The second category, tandem paragliding, is typically a commercial activity in which a licensed pilot is responsible for the execution of skills and risk management. Paragliding is therefore a distinctive adventure-based activity due to its unique operational settings. In particular, tandem paragliding requires group coordination and collaboration, which introduces creative elements to the activity.

Humans possess a strong interest in adventure and discovery. Initially, exploration is undertaken by adventurers and pioneers, and subsequently, a broader community follows. As motivations for visiting evolve and the number of tourists increases, the associated impacts also intensify [20]. It is essential for adventure tourism providers to understand the motivations of adventure tourists. Identifying the reasons for participation in these activities is crucial, and research serves as a valuable tool in this context [15]. Significant differences exist between the motivations of adventure tourists. For example, individuals who aim to explore their own strengths and capabilities are motivated differently from those who seek to gain knowledge about the external environment. Within the understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, adventure tourists willingly accept a certain level of risk and danger in their pursuit of adventure. Alternatively, some scholars argue that adventure tourists seek to test their skills and abilities in situations involving circumstantial risk [4].

Adventure activities offer extraordinary experiences and induce flow states, which can lessen worry and enhance subjective well-being (SWB). The natural highs from engaging in adventures, along with the excitement of taking risks and overcoming challenges, amplify these effects [7]. When considered within the framework of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, participation in activity-based adventure tourism for peak experiences can be interpreted as an effort to satisfy the need for self-actualization [4]. Buckley [21] identified three categories of motivation in his analysis of adventure tourist motivations, based on a review of 50 studies. The first category, "performance of activity" (thrill, fear, control, skills, achievement, fitness, risk), is considered an internal category. The second, "place in nature" (nature, art, spirit), is classified as both internal and external. The third, "social position" (friends, image, escape, competition), is regarded as external.

Pomfret and Bramwell [15] identify Csikszentmihalyi's [22] "Flow", Apter's [23] "Reversal Theory", and Lyng and Snow's [24] "Edgework" as the three primary motivation-based theoretical concepts in the adventure tourism literature. Csikszentmihalyi [25] (p. 4) defines "Flow" as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it at

great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it". Reversal Theory is a psychological framework concerning motivation, emotions, and personality, and is applicable to a broad range of daily activities [26]. Lyng [27] defines "edgework" as the act of maintaining control in situations that approach complete chaos, which most individuals would regard as entirely uncontrollable. Additionally, Lyng's personal experiences and observations as a skydiver significantly influenced his conceptualization of the theory.

The perception of a holiday as an adventure is influenced by prior travel experiences [4]. Moreover, the perception of adventure is inherently subjective, and the degree to which individuals understand adventure varies considerably [15]. The consumption of tourism experiences comprises functional, objective, and tangible components, such as traveling, dining, drinking, and recreation. Additionally, it encompasses subjective, hedonic, emotional, and symbolic elements, including enjoyment, laughter, and socialization [3]. Recent shifts in consumer preferences highlight an increased demand for adventure tourism. This growing interest contributes to the economic, cultural, and ecological benefits of destinations [6].

Pomfret and Bramwell [15] distinguish between outdoor adventure tourists and outdoor recreational adventurers. The latter engage in adventure activities within their home environment, whereas adventure tourists participate in such activities away from home and typically stay overnight. A similar distinction can be observed among paragliders at Babadağ Mountain. Participation in adventure tourism requires a range of skills, from novice to expert levels. Novices often engage in comfortable, pre-arranged activities, while experts demonstrate personal control and responsibility [21]. For instance, tandem paragliding is typically associated with novice participants, whereas solo paragliding is regarded as an expert activity. Tandem paragliding may offer structured opportunities for perceived involvement through briefing, safety learning, and guided interaction; however, the degree of participant agency remains bounded by the pilot-led nature of the activity.

The adventure tourism literature distinguishes between two types of adventure tourists, each characterized by distinct motivations and behaviors. These are the "package adventure tourist" and the "independent adventure tourist" [15]. To examine the creative experiences of paragliding participants, the "package adventure tourist" classification is adopted. Paragliding activities are generally divided into two main types. The first is "tandem paragliding", in which participants fly with a licensed pilot and rely on their expertise. Tandem paragliding aligns closely with the "package adventure tourist" category. The second type is "solo paragliding", where a licensed individual manages and experiences the flight independently, resembling the "independent adventure tourist". This research focuses exclusively on tandem paragliding activities to capture creative experiences within this context. Research on adventure tourists typically employs customer segmentation to enable adventure tourism stakeholders to better understand this market. Segmentation efforts include soft and hard adventure; cultural learning and exchange; interaction with nature and physical activity; and travel attributes and behavior [15]. Examining paragliding within the framework of creative tourism may further contribute to understanding adventure tourists.

A comprehensive understanding of socio-psychological dimensions is essential for effectively analyzing demand [3]. Socializing and camaraderie represent hybrid dimensions within adventure tourism. However, this dimension has not yet received significant academic attention [6]. The current study examines paragliding tourism as a tourist activity; however, further research is required on its service and business aspects.

1.2. Creativity and Creative Tourism

Creativity is defined as the process of generating new and useful ideas using existing knowledge. It allows individuals to reveal both their strengths and weaknesses, think

from an adventurous perspective, and develop to the ability to solve problems. Therefore, creativity has an impact on many social, artistic, industrial, and scientific fields, including fashion, art, science, advertising, sports, and decoration [28].

Creativity is not actually a new field of study. The concept of creativity is predominantly discussed in the context of the work of artists. However, this concept is no longer of interest to such a small minority, and is also being studied within the economic context. The concept of creativity has recently become a subject of tourism research, as tourism is considered an important industry. Tourism is rapidly evolving beyond its traditional purpose of rest, pleasure, and vacation. Types of tourism that include experiences are becoming more widespread. Alternative and special-interest tourism encompass a range of tourism types. These types mostly encompass unique experiences. The production–consumption patterns and promotional styles in such operations differ significantly from those of conventional tourism.

Tourism, initially referred to as a sector and later also used to indicate the economic volume it generates, is a dynamic structure that constantly changes and renews itself in both supply and demand. In particular, the dizzying pace of globalization and of information and communication technologies has accelerated changes in demand, creating the need for supply to adapt rapidly.

Consumer expectations and feedback have led to, and continue to lead to, new types of tourism and its diversification. Tailor-made or individualized products/packages, sustainability and environmental responsibilities, and local cultural values have stood out. These are identified as the main inputs shaping visitors' preferences [29]. In this manner, creativity has become more prominent in tourists' expectations of experiences [30].

Seeking creativity in active tourism activities aligns with seeking authenticity. In this context, creative tourism enhances personal development and unique experiences [31]. Creativity provides both tourism suppliers and destinations with the opportunity to rapidly innovate and improve their products. This concept makes significant contributions to the value-creation process [32,33].

This type of tourism aims to provide authentic and creative experiences by encouraging tourists' active participation in activities focused on destination-specific cultural, sporting, and artistic values. Moreover, tourists would like to participate in creative activities and learn actively. Tourists can connect with locals by participating in creative activities such as arts, crafts, cultural events, sports, and gastronomy. This approach allows tourists to develop their creative potential. Additionally, it allows them to experience living culture through direct interaction with local communities. With its experience- and interaction-based structure, creative tourism stands out as an innovative model that aligns with the fundamental principles of sustainable tourism [34–36].

Creative tourism provides the opportunity to learn about a destination's unique characteristics, as well as its historical and cultural heritage, by experiencing them and establishing relationships with local people. Creative tourism is generally viewed as a synergistic way to exchange ideas and enhance skills. Nonetheless, it can be perceived differently by tourists, tourism professionals, and residents. Accordingly, a synopsis of creative tourism is given below [37]:

- A tool that offers new and creative destinations for tourists;
- A creative method that enables the evaluation of existing resources;
- Discovery and expression by visitors themselves;
- A resource for creating unique and creative environments at destinations;
- A strategic method to be used for the redesign and revitalization of the region.

Creative tourism, in other words, encompasses tourism activities whereby tourists aim to gain experience and learn by participating in the region's cultural activities, feeling

like a local citizen, and enjoying witnessing the locals' way of life [38]. This type of tourism offers tourists the opportunity to become part of a region, its history, its artworks, or an event, beyond a guided tour. Creative tourists are not solely content with simply seeing the historical and cultural heritage. Furthermore, they also request to participate in local cultural activities. Based on this understanding, local carpet weaving courses, the making of clay pots, and volunteer archeological trips are examples of creative tourism activities.

According to Richards and Raymond [39] (p. 18), creative tourism is characterized by participation, creativity, interaction, and a quest for authenticity in destination-specific courses and learning experiences. UNESCO states that creative tourism involves participatory learning through the art, heritage, or special character of the destination. Fundamentals of this concept include experiencing the host's culture, creativity, learning, and experiencing the local heritage. Creative tourism encourages co-creation between visitors and hosts. From this angle, it serves as a facilitator of understanding diversity. It differs from mass tourism, which has a positive impact on tourists' satisfaction with their destinations, as co-creation is a key component of the creative tourism experience [35]. This new form of tourism transforms existing tourism activities and poses unprecedented challenges to the economics and management of creativity within the experience economy.

To set an example, Giuliani [40] introduced the concept of knitting treks. This means combining hiking through Iceland's beautiful natural landscapes with knitting. The artisans and weavers encountered during the trek are invited to share their skills and traditions related to the knitting experience (transhumance, sheep sorting, wool selection, Icelandic knitting techniques, etc.). This dual activity is thus firmly rooted in the responsible tourism movement and its social dimension. It focuses particularly on creating connections between visitors and local communities. By actively participating in one's own experience, this activity also aptly symbolizes the quest for authenticity that visitors are increasingly drawn to. In addition, it creates a tangible souvenir and fosters beneficial human connections.

Creative tourism is not a new concept, but it has gradually improved due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This period of pause encouraged a return to manual activities and do-it-yourself. Some examples include baking one's own bread, sewing, and cultivating a small garden. This desire to learn new creative practices has translated into travel patterns. Vacations also offer a respite during which visitors once again have time to do things for themselves and to express and develop their creative potential.

Numerous opportunities arise from creative tourism. First, it encourages a circular economy that cannot be outsourced by leveraging local expertise. It promotes extending the tourism season, as these products can be offered year-round. Creative tourism also allows for customer diversification. Because those who are keen on this type of tourism naturally gravitate toward less-frequented, more intimate locations. It also offers an alternative for business clients during seminars and team-building events. Finally, creative tourism presents an opportunity to diversify offerings for destinations heavily reliant on a single activity or resource, such as winter sports resorts.

Certainly, the tangible object created during this unique creative activity will remain, but that is not all. The emotional memory associated with this experience within the local area, as well as the acquisition of a new skill through hands-on creation, will also last for a lifetime. Naturally, many regions can leverage their strengths to implement creative tourism initiatives. Participating in a writing workshop is a clear example; in contrast, activities such as paragliding can only be discussed within a creative tourism lens when the experience is intentionally designed around learning, interaction, and individualized meaning-making rather than mere consumption. As adventure and sports activities are rarely studied in creative tourism, the aim of this research is to investigate an adventure tourism activity in terms of creative tourism scope.

1.3. Paragliding

Paragliding is an adventure tourism activity that can range from soft to hard, depending on the level of guidance and locus of control; this study focuses on commercial tandem paragliding as a guided (soft-adventure) form [21,29,41,42]. According to adventure tourism studies, participants perceive risk as an element that enhances the activity's value by providing an adrenaline rush. Therefore, professional safety management is crucial to ensuring a safe and exciting experience [4,21,42]. Flow theory explains the quality of experience through intense concentration, time distortion, and enjoyment in a high-skill–high-challenge balance. Accordingly, this framework is widely used to model the tourist experience in high-involvement activities such as paragliding [43].

A significant portion of the empirical studies conducted in Türkiye focusing on tourism in the context of paragliding are based on the example of Babadağ, Fethiye. In a recent study, structural equation modeling (SEM) among commercial tandem flight participants showed that perceived risk does not necessarily reduce satisfaction. Rather, trust and satisfaction, based on perceived benefit and experiential value, ultimately strengthen future intention [44]. It has been found that the flow experienced in paragliding supports leads to feelings of satisfaction and life satisfaction. Furthermore, it has been reported that satisfaction mediates the relationship between flow and storytelling intention [45,46]. At the destination attribute level, elements such as beach/sea and safety/security stand out as thrill factors, indicating that experience design should be considered alongside both flight services and the destination ecosystem [47].

Creative tourism is linked to systematically strengthening the meaningfulness and skill/learning dimensions, and the experience's interaction with the local context. This conception transforms the tourist from a passive spectator to a more meaningful active participant [35,39,48]. Creative tourism is based on a framework that offers visitors the opportunity to develop their creative potential. It emphasizes active participation, courses/learning experiences, and the compatibility of the experience with the destination's characteristics [39]. The approach of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) [48] also considers creative tourism as an practice involving tourist engagement. It underlines participatory learning and authentic connections grounded in place specificity. In this context, creative tourism differs not only in terms of the consumption of cultural content but also in terms of contact/encounters with local daily life, skill acquisition, and the co-creation of the tourist experience [35]. More recent syntheses reveal that recurring themes in the theoretical framework cluster around the axes of co-creation of experience, interaction, place-specificity, and learning [49,50].

When evaluated within the framework of these criteria, three structural features stand out that make it possible to consider the paragliding activity not merely as a thrill/risk-based adventure tourism product, but also as an activity that can be investigated within the context of creative tourism: Firstly, the experience inherently produces a high level of embodied-cognitive participation [21,51]. Secondly, it is tightly embedded in the destination's place-specific environmental conditions [52,53]. Thirdly, it involves a service encounter that fosters learning and co-creation through design [54,55]. In this context, the active participation dimension of paragliding is not limited solely to sensory intensity during flight; micro-actions such as briefing, interaction with equipment, takeoff run/body position, and continuous communication with the pilot during the flight bring the experience closer to participatory practice. In terms of place-specificity, the dependence of flight on topography and micro-meteorological conditions gives the experience a character that cannot be reproduced to the same extent everywhere. This is consistent with the emphasis of creative tourism in experience production based on the specific character of the destination [35,39,48].

The learning and co-creation threshold is particularly evident in commercial tandem flights. When the tourist's experience is completely passive, the criteria for creative tourism may weaken. However, the development of creative potential and co-creation is strengthened when planned learning components, such as reading the local wind regime, justifying safety decisions, and explaining equipment logic, are added, along with areas of personalization/participation. Therefore, rather than classifying tandem paragliding as type of creative tourism per se, this study examines whether a creative tourism lens (participatory learning, interaction with local knowledge, personalization, and narrative meaning-making in experience design) is applicable to a guided air-based adventure setting, without denying the adventure tourism nature of the activity [35,50]. This theoretical foundation directly enables the formulation of hypotheses to explain outcomes such as behavioral intentions, satisfaction, and memories in the subsequent stage.

The creative tourism approach envisions transforming the tourist from a passive consumer into an active participant who creates, and who learns from and interacts with the host [54,56]. This transformation enhances the perceived value and personal meaning of the experience, thereby strengthening tourists' behaviors (revisit intention, recommendation intention, positive word-of-mouth, WOM) [57,58]. Richards and Raymond [39]'s definition of creative tourism, along the axes of participation, creativity, interaction, authenticity, and learning, suggest that creative experiences are based not only on seeing but also on doing/learning, and on co-creation. Thus, creative tourism practices potentially generate stronger loyalty outcomes. Accordingly, hypothesis H1 is suggested.

H1. *Creative tourist experiences positively influence the behavioral intentions of tourists (revisit intention and recommendation intention).*

The memorability of a tourism experience is closely related to qualities such as emotional intensity, novelty, participation, and interaction [59,60]. Memories are considered one of the key sources of information that influence future destination choices and behavioral tendencies. Previous visits/experiences can increase the likelihood of returning to a destination and recommending it to others [61,62]. Creative tourist experiences, on the other hand, include elements such as learning, social interaction, and unique participation, resulting in stronger encoding and more vivid recall of the experience [35,41]. In this context, hypothesis H2 is suggested.

H2. *Creative tourist experiences positively influence tourists' memories of the experience.*

Satisfaction is an outcome variable reflecting the tourist's overall post-experience evaluation (cognitive and affective) and is explained by experience/experience quality in most models [63,64]. Since creative tourist experience offers a richer value proposition through dimensions such as escape, peace of mind, uniqueness, interaction, and learning, overall satisfaction is expected to increase. Therefore, hypothesis H3 is suggested.

H3. *Creative tourist experiences positively influence tourists' satisfaction.*

The relationship between behavioral intentions and satisfaction is among the most established in the tourism and service marketing literature [65,66]. Within this framework, Hypothesis H4 is suggested.

H4. *Tourist satisfaction positively influences the behavioral intentions of tourists.*

Memories are mental representations of a tourist's past experiences and provide a fundamental frame of reference that shapes future preferences [61,67]. Therefore, hypothesis H5 is suggested.

H5. *Tourists' memories positively influence tourists' behavioral intentions.*

The assessment of satisfaction is shaped not only by the tourist's momentary emotional state but also by how the experience is recalled and re-interpreted [62,68]. Within this framework, hypothesis H6 is suggested.

H6. *Tourists' memories positively influence tourists' satisfaction.*

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Scale Adaptation and Measurement Instrument

Ali et al. [69] developed the creative-experience scale based on the following creative tourism literature: Richards and Raymond [39]; Richards and Wilson [33]; and Tan, Kung, and Luh [70]. The measurement instrument used in the study consisted of the creative-experience scale developed by Ali et al. [69]. This scale is adapted to the context of paragliding experience in Babadağ, Fethiye. In the original scale development study, the item pool was generated and an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on 75 creative tourists, resulting in a five-dimensional structure. In the present study, we focus on cross-context adaptation and measurement assessment within the paragliding setting.

The scale resulted in a five-dimensional structure. Escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning are the dimensions. Outer loadings were deemed acceptable, and reliability values for all dimensions and the total scale exceeded 0.80 [69,71]. Furthermore, a KMO value of 0.902 and the significance of the Bartlett test of sphericity demonstrate the suitability of the scale for factor analysis [69]. Regarding memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, Ali et al. [69] drew on the studies by Hosany and Witham [72] and Oh et al. [73], while Ali et al. [69] measured the satisfaction variable with a 5-point semantic differential scale in their study. In this study, to ensure consistency across scales, all constructs, including memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions, were assessed with a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 5 = "strongly agree"). All items were reworded to align with the paragliding experience context. In this tandem setting, 'learning' refers to situational learning (e.g., safety procedures, equipment awareness, and place-specific wind/terrain knowledge) rather than acquiring piloting skills; similarly, 'interactivity' primarily captures guided interaction, communication, and perceived co-created meaning within the service encounter. The 29-item scale in this study was adapted to capture the paragliding experience in Babadağ while preserving its content. The translation–back-translation technique was used in the adaptation process. The scale was first translated from English to Turkish and then back to English by an independent translator, who compared the translation with the original. The resulting Turkish form was presented to expert academicians working in the field of tourism and recreation. Moreover, linguistic and semantic corrections were made to increase content validity and cultural adaptability. The research was conducted with the university's ethics committee's approval.

2.2. Sampling Procedure and Data Collection

The empirical context for this research is Babadağ, Fethiye. This location is one of Türkiye's leading paragliding destinations. Data were collected between June and October 2025 through face-to-face surveys administered at the landing area and the relevant service

points from tourists who had just completed a tandem flight. On-site surveys are widely used in tourism research because they allow evaluations to be collected immediately after the experience and to include only visitors who actually participated in the activity [74].

Due to the lack of a comprehensive list of paragliding participants and the dynamic nature of the destination, a non-probability convenience sampling method was chosen for the study. Convenience sampling is frequently used in tourism and recreation research when the population cannot be precisely defined, and the aim is to collect sufficient data from actual visitors in the field [75].

A total of 360 visitors were included as the participants. After eliminating incomplete or lacking responses, 325 questionnaires were found to be usable for analysis. Demographic information and descriptive statistics of the obtained data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics 27. Additionally, PLS-SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 to test the research model.

The resulting sample of 325 participants meets the minimum sample size recommended for PLS-SEM analysis. This sample size clearly exceeds the classical 10-times rule [76], which recommends 10 times the maximum number of paths leading to each latent variable. Moreover, given contemporary approaches that recommend determining the minimum sample size based on the number of paths, model complexity, and expected effect sizes [77,78], the current sample is sufficient in terms of statistical power.

Accordingly, a PLS-SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4, given its suitability for predictive modeling and support for multiple latent-variable structures. This analysis also avoids the assumption of normality in the data and works effectively with medium-sized samples commonly encountered in tourism research [79,80].

3. Results

3.1. Demographics

The demographic information gathered from the participants is listed in Table 1. The sample encompasses 325 participants, of which 55.1% were female (n = 179) and 44.9% were male (n = 146). Regarding marital status, 56.9% (n = 185) of participants were single, and 43.1% (n = 140) were married. Those aged 26–32 (33.5%, n = 109) and aged 19–25 (32.0%, n = 104) accounted for the majority of participants, followed by those aged 33–39 (18.5%, n = 60) and those aged 40 and over (14.8%, n = 48). Only 1.2% (n = 4) of the participants were 18 years old or younger. Regarding education level, the majority of participants had a bachelor's or master's degree (60.6%, n = 197), while 18.2% of participants (n = 59) had an associate's degree, 17.5% percent (n = 57) had a high school diploma, and 3.7% (n = 12) had graduated from primary school.

Those with a monthly income between USD 1501 and USD 2250 constituted the largest group, accounting for 27.7% (n = 90) of the participants. The next largest groups were those earning between USD 751 and USD 1500 (22.5%; n = 73) and between USD 2251 and USD 3000 (18.2%; n = 59). Smaller proportions of the participant population were attributed to groups with incomes between USD 0 and USD 750 (11.1% (n = 36), USD 3001 and USD 3750 8.7% (n = 28), USD 3751 and USD 4500 6.8% (n = 22), and USD 4501 and above 5.2% (n = 17).

The sample consisted primarily of citizens from China (39.4%, n = 128) and Russia (23.4%, n = 76), followed by participants from United Kingdom (13.8%, n = 45), Germany (7.1%, n = 23), and other countries (16.3%, n = 53). The vast majority (90.5%; n = 294) reported never having paraglided, while 9.5% of participants had prior experience (n = 31). The decision to participate in paragliding was largely made individually (44.0%; n = 143) or influenced by friends (39.1%; n = 127). Smaller portions of the participant population were referred by family members (9.8%; n = 32) or travel agencies (7.1%; n = 23).

Table 1. Demographic profile of the research participants.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	179	55.1
	Male	146	44.9
Marital Status	Married	140	43.1
	Single	185	56.9
Age	18 and Under	4	1.2
	19–25	104	32.0
	26–32	109	33.5
	33–39	60	18.5
	40 and Above	48	14.8
Education	Primary School	12	3.7
	High School	57	17.5
	Associate Degree	59	18.2
	Bachelor/Master's	197	60.6
Monthly Income (USD)	0–750	36	11.1
	751–1500	73	22.5
	1501–2250	90	27.7
	2251–3000	59	18.2
	3001–3750	28	8.6
	3751–4500	22	6.8
	4501 and Above	17	5.2
Nationality	Chinese	128	39.4
	Russian	76	23.4
	British	45	13.8
	German	23	7.1
	Other	53	16.3
Q1: Have you ever done paragliding before?	Yes	31	9.5
	No	294	90.5
Q2: Who influenced you to participate in paragliding?	Yourself	143	44.0
	Friends	127	39.1
	Family Members	32	9.8
	Travel Agency	23	7.1

3.2. Measurement Model

All constructs used in the study were considered within the reflective measurement model. Indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity were analyzed in PLS-SEM, in line with common recommendations for evaluating measurement models [80–82].

The creative tourist experience construct was modeled as a higher-order reflective construct consisting of five dimensions: escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning [76,83,84]. In estimating the second-order construct, the repeated indicators approach, widely recommended in partial least squares structural

equation modeling (PLS-SEM), was used [83–85]. In this approach, all items measuring each first-order dimension are simultaneously assigned to both the relevant first-order construct and the second-order construct of the creative tourist experience. Thus, the measurement validity of the sub-dimensions is ensured. Reliable latent variable scores are obtained for the second-level construct [76,84,85]. Table 2 presents the outer loadings, average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each construct. The outer loadings for reflective indicators should be 0.70 or higher [76]. This threshold implies that at least 50% of the true variance of the construct is explained by the indicator.

Table 2. Measurement model results: construct reliability and convergent validity.

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Escape and Recognition (ER)			0.588	0.865	0.859
	ER1	0.805			
	ER2	0.805			
	ER3	0.799			
	ER4	0.727			
	ER5	0.755			
	ER6	0.703			
Peace of Mind (PM)			0.613	0.797	0.790
	PM1	0.797			
	PM2	0.834			
	PM3	0.770			
	PM4	0.728			
Unique Involvement (UI)			0.627	0.852	0.850
	UI1	0.858			
	UI2	0.791			
	UI3	0.803			
	UI4	0.742			
	UI5	0.759			
Interactivity (I)			0.679	0.777	0.763
	I1	0.864			
	I2	0.845			
	I3	0.760			
Learning (L)			0.626	0.812	0.801
	L1	0.829			
	L2	0.827			
	L3	0.770			
	L4	0.733			
Memories (M)			0.672	0.767	0.757
	M1	0.851			
	M2	0.823			
	M3	0.784			

Table 2. *Cont.*

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
Satisfaction (Sat)			0.742	0.753	0.753
	Sat1	0.867			
	Sat2	0.856			
Behavioral Intentions (BI)			0.836	0.911	0.850
	BI1	0.919			
	BI2	0.910			

When the results are examined, it is seen that the outer loadings of all indicators for the constructs escape and recognition (ER), peace of mind (PM), unique involvement (UI), interactivity (I), learning (L), memories (M), satisfaction (Sat), and behavioral intentions (BI) ranged from 0.703 to 0.919. The lowest loading was 0.703 (ER6) and the highest was 0.919 (BI1). All of these values are very close to or above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Therefore, all indicators adequately represent the relevant constructs. This finding demonstrates that indicator reliability was achieved [80].

In the case of convergent validity, AVEs were used. According to Fornell and Larcker [81], an AVE value above 0.50 for each construct indicates that the common variance of the indicators measuring that construct exceeds the error variance. Therefore, this situation demonstrates convergent validity. The AVE values for all constructs ranged from 0.588 (ER) to 0.742 (Sat). The AVE values are over 0.50 for all reflective constructs in the study. Hence, the convergent validity of the construct can be stated to be relevant [80,81].

Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach's alpha. Values of 0.70 or higher are considered acceptable in traditional psychometric approaches [86]. Moreover, values between 0.60 and 0.70 can also be interpreted as acceptable, particularly in exploratory studies. It is emphasized that the CR index is a more appropriate and flexible measure of internal consistency than Cronbach's alpha for PLS-SEM [80].

The CR values for the ER, PM, UI, I, L, M, Sat, and BI constructs ranged from 0.753 to 0.865. Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged from 0.753 to 0.859. These findings indicate that the internal consistency reliability (CR and Cronbach's alpha) for all reflective constructs in the study met the recommended thresholds in the literature [80,86].

Discriminant validity demonstrates that each construct can be conceptually distinguished from other constructs. The heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) has been frequently used in the PLS-SEM literature, along with the Fornell–Larcker criterion and cross-loadings, to assess discriminant validity [80,82]. HTMT is based on the ratio of average heterotrait-to-monotrait correlations between indicators of two constructs, and Henseler et al. [82] recommend that HTMT values should be below 0.85 (stricter criterion) or 0.90 (looser criterion) when discriminant validity is achieved.

Discriminant validity in the study was assessed through HTMT coefficients. The HTMT values reported in Table 3 ranged from 0.278 to 0.677 for all construct pairs. The highest HTMT value was calculated to be 0.677 for the relationship between satisfaction (Sat) and behavioral intentions (BI). All other HTMT values remained below this level. Therefore, the HTMT ratio for the No construct pair exceeded the threshold values of 0.85 or 0.90. These findings indicate that the model's constructs exhibit discriminant validity. The study concluded that the measurement model met the criteria recommended in the PLS-SEM literature. Hence, the measurement model is reliable and valid [80–82].

Table 3. Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios for discriminant validity.

	ER	PM	UI	I	L	M	Sat	BI
ER	-							
PM	0.547	-						
UI	0.503	0.508	-					
I	0.476	0.485	0.597	-				
L	0.411	0.367	0.514	0.577	-			
M	0.408	0.372	0.414	0.513	0.523	-		
Sat	0.278	0.331	0.464	0.467	0.478	0.506	-	
BI	0.433	0.442	0.570	0.617	0.578	0.580	0.677	-

Note. ER = Escape and Recognition; PM = Peace of Mind; UI = Unique Involvement; I = Interactivity; L = Learning; M = Memories; Sat = Satisfaction; BI = Behavioral Intentions.

3.3. Structural Model

The structural model was evaluated according to the steps outlined by the PLS-SEM approach. In this context, first, the explained variance level (R^2) of the endogenous latent variables, and their predictive validity (Q^2) were examined. Afterwards, the magnitude and significance of the path coefficients were tested. It is known that structural model evaluation in PLS-SEM relies on the combined interpretation of standardized path coefficients. This interpretation particularly focuses on R^2 and Q^2 [76,80].

The R^2 values obtained for the endogenous variables are presented in Table 4. For the behavioral intentions variable, the R^2 value was 0.450. This score indicates that creative tourist experience, memories, and satisfaction together explain approximately 45% of the variance in behavioral intentions.

In the PLS-SEM literature, it is stated that R^2 values at levels of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 in the context of social sciences can be interpreted as substantial, moderate, and weak, respectively [78,82,87]. In this context, the R^2 value of 0.450 indicates a satisfactory level of explanatory power, close to a moderate level, for behavioral intentions. The R^2 value of 0.245 for memories is very close to the 0.25 threshold in the literature, indicating weak-to-moderate explanatory power. The R^2 value of 0.209 for satisfaction indicates that satisfaction is largely explained by creative tourist experiences and memories, but the explained variance is relatively limited compared to that for the behavioral intentions variable.

Table 4. R^2 and Q^2 values for endogenous constructs.

Construct	R^2	Q^2
Memories	0.245	0.227
Satisfaction	0.209	0.163
Behavioral Intentions	0.450	0.346

Note. R^2 = explained variance; Q^2 = predictive relevance.

The predictive relevance of the model was evaluated using Q^2 coefficients. Q^2 values are calculated on the cross-validated residuals obtained by the blindfolding procedure and are a measure showing the reduction in the prediction error; a value greater than zero means that the relevant endogenous construct is significantly predicted by the model [76,88,89].

According to Table 4, the Q^2 scores were Q^2 = 0.227 for memories, Q^2 = 0.163 for satisfaction, and Q^2 = 0.346 for behavioral intentions. The fact that all Q^2 values are greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive relevance for these three endogenous variables. In particular, the value of Q^2 = 0.346 for behavioral intentions indicates that, beyond explaining this variable, the model's predictive power is also highly significant. This finding is consistent with recent discussions of PLS-SEM's potential to support both explanatory and predictive studies [80].

The hypotheses in the structural model were tested using t-statistics obtained from a bootstrapping procedure based on 5000 resamplings, two-tailed tests, and a 5% significance level, using standardized path coefficients (standardized betas). In the PLS-SEM literature, it is accepted that a t-value ≥ 1.96 is used as the critical threshold for a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$) and a t-value ≥ 2.58 is used as the critical threshold for a 1% significance level ($p < 0.01$) in two-tailed tests [76,80]. All path coefficients tested in the model exceed these thresholds, indicating that the relevant relationships are statistically significant. The hypothesis test results are presented in Table 5, and the structural model, which visually displays the standardized path coefficients and t-values, is presented in Figure 3.

Table 5. Structural model results: hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path	Standard Beta	Standard Deviation	t-Statistics	Decision
H1	Creative Tourist Experience → Behavioral Intentions	0.418	0.049	8.512 **	Supported
H2	Creative Tourist Experience → Memories	0.495	0.040	12.285 **	Supported
H3	Creative Tourist Experience → Satisfaction	0.322	0.056	5.713 **	Supported
H4	Satisfaction → Behavioral Intentions	0.257	0.047	5.415 **	Supported
H5	Memories → Behavioral Intentions	0.158	0.049	3.215 *	Supported
H6	Memories → Satisfaction	0.201	0.059	3.440 *	Supported

Note. $p < 0.05$ is indicated by *, $p < 0.01$ is indicated by **. t-statistics greater than 1.96 correspond to significance at the 0.05 level, and values greater than 2.58 indicate significance at the 0.01 level.

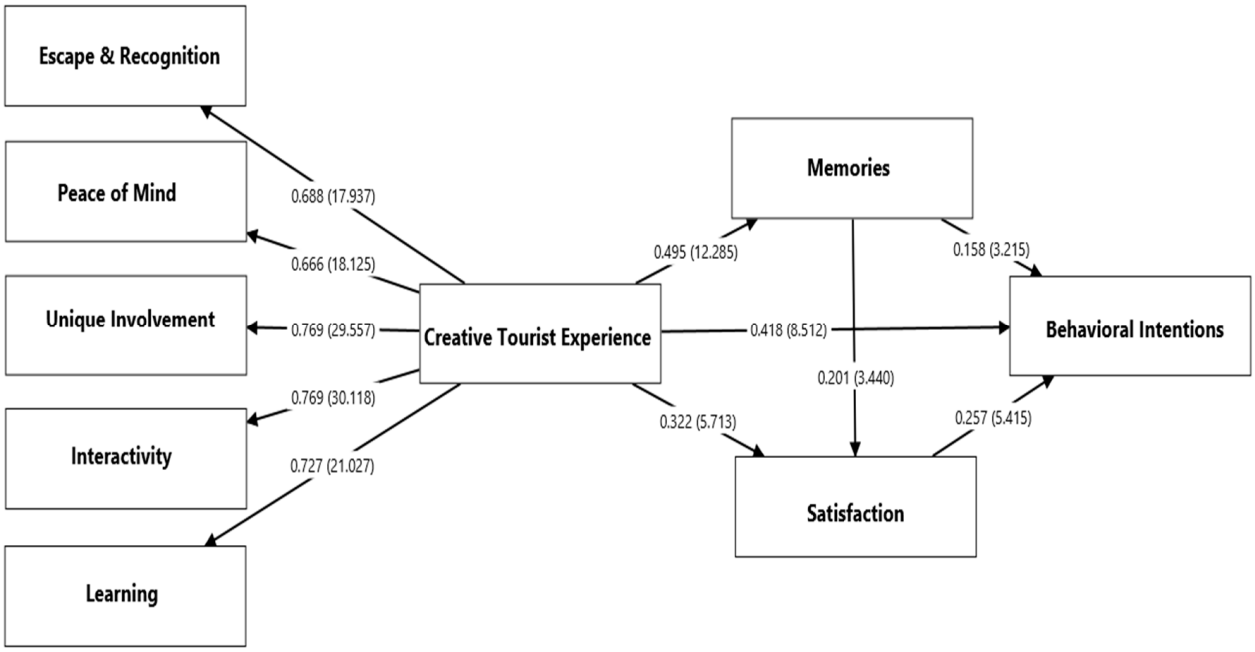


Figure 3. Structural model with standardized path coefficients and t-values.

The results clearly demonstrate the centrality of the creative tourist experience. Firstly, the direct effect of the creative tourist experience on behavioral intentions was found to be quite strong and significant under H1, with $\beta = 0.418$ and $t = 8.512$ ($p < 0.01$). This result indicates that the creative tourist experience is strongly and positively associated with behavioral outcomes such as repeat visits, recommendations, and positive word of mouth. The effect of the creative tourist experience on memories was found to be $\beta = 0.495$, with $t = 12.285$ ($p < 0.01$), under H2, indicating that creative experiences leave a strong impression on visitors' memories. Similarly, the creative tourist experience had a significant and positive effect on satisfaction under H3, with $\beta = 0.322$ and $t = 5.713$ ($p < 0.01$). Considering these three results together, it can be said that creative experiences strengthen cognitive/affective memories, increase overall evaluative satisfaction, and directly affect

behavioral intentions. This finding is consistent with the experiential and creative tourism literature on the determinative role of experience quality in memory value and satisfaction.

From the perspective of behavioral intentions, the creative tourist experience has a direct effect, but other variables in the model also make significant contributions. The effect of satisfaction on behavioral intentions was found to be $\beta = 0.257$, with $t = 5.415$ ($p < 0.01$), under H4, and the effect of memories on behavioral intentions was found to be $\beta = 0.158$, with $t = 3.215$ ($p < 0.05$), under H5. These two findings imply that creative tourist experiences strengthen behavioral intentions not only directly but also indirectly through satisfaction and memories. In other words, the fact that creative experiences create memorable memories and increase overall satisfaction suggests potential mediation in strengthening tourists' positive behavioral tendencies toward the destination or event.

The extent to which satisfaction is explained by memories is also noteworthy. The significance of the memories → satisfaction relationship tested under H6, with $\beta = 0.201$ and $t = 3.440$ ($p < 0.05$), indicates that positive-experience fragments that remain etched in visitors' memories significantly increase their overall satisfaction evaluations. This result aligns with studies in the tourism literature that emphasize the role of memories in the satisfaction-and-loyalty cycle; it also provides an example consistent with methodological discussions of the advantages of PLS-SEM for hierarchical and mediation models [82].

Overall, the combined evaluation of R^2 and Q^2 indicates that the model's power and predictive validity are satisfactory and consistent with the recommended thresholds [76,80]. The strong, consistently significant direct effects of the creative tourist experience on memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions support the model's theoretical relationships, while the effects of memories and satisfaction on behavioral intentions reinforce this theoretical framework. Thus, empirical evidence demonstrates that experience quality in the context of creative tourism has a strong, multidimensional impact on both cognitive/affective outcomes (memories, satisfaction) and behavioral outcomes (behavioral intentions).

4. Discussion

With the strengthening of the "product" nature of experiences, approaches that view the visitor not only as a consumer but also as a potential co-creator of the experience have become more prominent in the tourism literature [41,54,55]. Creative tourism, as an important manifestation of this transformation, emphasizes activating the creative potential of the tourist through destination-specific learning, interaction, and active participation [35,39]. While a significant portion of creative tourism studies focuses on arts- and culture-based events, workshops, and urban creative industries, the quality of the creative experience in adventure experiences with high involvement and high arousal has been empirically explored to a more limited extent. This study directly addresses this gap by examining through a creative tourism lens, without assuming that the activity fully satisfies all core conditions of creative tourism in the strict sense. The findings show that a creative tourist experience produces significant, positive effects on memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions; furthermore, memories are positively correlated with satisfaction and behavioral intentions, and satisfaction is positively correlated with behavioral intentions. This pattern is consistent with the fundamental assumption of the experience economy approach that "designed, intense, and personally meaningful" experiences foster loyalty-like outcomes through value creation [41,73]. At the same time, it expands upon the finding that creative tourism strengthens the visitor's encoding of their experience as "unique" through its participation/learning/interaction dimensions, transferring this to a different class of activity [33,35,39].

When the creative tourism experience is considered a structure enriched by learning and interaction, in which the individual feels "involved" in the process, and

experience-specific meaning is produced, it is expected to leave stronger traces in episodic memory [59,61]. In this context, the fact that creative experience produces one of the strongest relationships with memories suggests that the experience is not merely about momentary pleasure; it reveals that recalled experiences are structured around narratives, visuals, and a sense of "personal achievement". Findings suggesting that recalled experiences are critical in guiding future choices are also consistent with the psychology literature. Individuals often base their future choices more on recalled experiences than on "online" affect [62]. Furthermore, given the role of cognitive shortcuts, such as the "peak-end" effect, in experience evaluation [68], and the selective/reconstructive nature of memory [67], it is theoretically consistent that strong memories fuel satisfaction and intentions in highly arousing activities such as paragliding.

The results along the memories–satisfaction–behavioral intentions (MSB) pathway align with the "experience → memories/satisfaction → intention" pattern frequently reported in creative tourism studies. It has previously been shown that experiences in the context of creative tourism reinforce memories, increase satisfaction, and are reflected in behavioral intentions such as revisiting/recommending [69,70]. The unique contribution of this study is that it demonstrates that this pattern is not limited to "low-risk" forms of creative tourism, such as workshops/creative activities; it also shows that the quality of creative experiences has the potential to produce the same outcomes in adventure activities framed by elements such as safety, perceived control, and professional guiding. This result supports the "high involvement–intense experience–strong memory" relationship in the adventure tourism literature [21,51].

The context (Babadağ, Fethiye) and the characteristics of the sample make the interpretation of the findings of this study even more meaningful. Babadağ is a destination element with high international visibility and hosts a large number of first-time visitors. The fact that a very large proportion of the participants in the sample had never paraglided before enhances the effect of "novelty" and "extraordinariness", facilitating memory formation, because first experiences are more prone to being encoded with higher cognitive attention and emotional intensity [59,60]. Furthermore, the fact that a significant portion of the participants were Chinese and Russian citizens suggests that cultural frameworks may influence how they perceive the experience. Therefore, the components of a creative tourist experience (e.g., interaction, learning, peace of mind) may become even more critical in the multilingual/multicultural service ecosystem of Babadağ.

Finally, the findings of this study are consistent with those in the paragliding literature. For example, flow/intensity experiences in paragliding have been shown to be associated with outcomes such as satisfaction and storytelling [45,46]. Similarly, studies examining the relationship between experiential evolution and behavioral intentions in the context of Babadağ support this link [44]. The difference in this study is that it repositions paragliding through the lens of creative tourism, linking experiential evolution to its theoretical backbone (learning, interaction, unique involvement, recognition, escape, peace of mind).

Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature in three ways. Firstly, it expands the scope of creative tourism, which is mostly limited to culture-based experiences, showing that adventure activities can also be explained by the principles of creative tourism (active participation, learning, interaction, and destination specificity) [35,39]. Secondly, it strengthens the memory-centered evaluation approach in the tourism experience literature by reading value creation not only through the lens of "satisfaction" but also through the lens of "memorability" [60–62]. Thirdly, in line with the perspectives of value co-creation and service-dominant logic, it empirically supports the idea that experience is a process designed together with the visitor; it demonstrates the explanatory power of considering the outputs of this process (memory, satisfaction, intention) together [54–56].

In terms of practice, the findings of this study point to the importance for businesses and destination managers operating in Babadağ, Fethiye, of not limiting experience design to the moment of flight. Firstly, given the powerful role of creative tourist experiences in shaping memories, the experience needs to be designed "end-to-end"—including pre-flight information/learning (e.g., clear explanation of equipment, safety procedures, weather conditions), in-flight interaction (pilot's communication style, micro-applications that support the visitor's sense of control/participation), and post-flight memory creation (designing photo/video delivery to facilitate narrative). This will enhance both the memorability and satisfaction of the experience, laying the groundwork for behavioral intentions [59,73]. Secondly, the positive impact of satisfaction on intentions increases the strategic importance of the "peace of mind" dimension in the context of adventure: operational safety, transparent risk communication, and standardization of professional guidance should be considered not only in terms of risk management but also in terms of experience quality management [21,47]. Thirdly, considering the multinational structure evident in the sample (especially China and Russia), developing customer relationship practices that properly manage multilingual communication, culturally sensitive service scenarios, and "recognition/prestige" expectations can accelerate the conversion of positive memories into word-of-mouth and revisit intention [58,64].

Although sustainability was not operationalized as an empirical construct in this study, the findings are relevant to sustainability-oriented destination management in three ways: (i) experience design that strengthens perceived learning and place-based meaning can support longer-term destination value without relying solely on volume growth; (ii) standardized safety communication and multilingual information can reduce perceived risk and improve responsible service delivery; and (iii) destination-level coordination (traffic, waste, crowd management at take-off/landing points) is critical for minimizing localized environmental and social pressures in high-demand seasons. Future studies should explicitly integrate environmental and community-level indicators to test whether 'creative' experience design translates into measurable sustainability outcomes.

Some limitations should be considered when evaluating these results. Because the survey was administered immediately after landing, responses may reflect peak affect (relief/excitement) and a positivity bias. Tourists who were disappointed, overly frightened, or dissatisfied may have been less likely to remain at the landing area and participate, which can inflate satisfaction and intention measures. First, the study was conducted within the context of a single destination (Babadağ, Fethiye) and a single activity (commercial tandem paragliding); therefore, it is unclear whether the findings would be replicated with equal strength in different air-based activities or at different destinations. Second, the cross-sectional design and self-report measures may increase the risk of common-method bias and evaluation bias in constructs such as memory and satisfaction; evaluations made immediately after the experience, especially during high-arousal activities, may amplify the "peak" effect [67,68]. Third, the very high proportion of first-time participants in the sample may limit the generalization of the findings to experienced participants. Future studies are expected to mitigate these limitations through longitudinal designs (e.g., remeasuring memories and intentions after a specified period following the experience) and through comparisons across different nationality groups/segments given that perceptions of risk, adventure, and 'creative' involvement may vary across cultural backgrounds and may shape how the same tandem experience is evaluated.

5. Conclusions

This study demonstrates that creative tourist experiences in the context of commercial tandem paragliding in Babadağ, Fethiye, are systematically and positively related to

memories, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions. The findings reveal that creative tourist experiences strengthen both memories and satisfaction; that memories are positively related to satisfaction and behavioral intentions; and that satisfaction is positively related to behavioral intentions, thereby extending fundamental assumptions in the experience economy and creative tourism literature to the specific context of commercial tandem paragliding as a guided air-based adventure activity. The study's unique contribution to the literature is that it not only examines creative tourism through cultural/workshop-based experiences, but is also conceptualized through adventure activities involving high involvement and high arousal, and empirically demonstrates the importance of creative-experience quality in explaining behavioral intentions through "memorability" and "satisfaction" [35,39,69].

From an application perspective, three concrete conclusions stand out: (i) businesses should design an integrated experience architecture that does not confine the experience to the moment of flight, incorporating pre-flight learning and trust communication with post-flight memory/narrative production; (ii) transparent safety standards, multilingual information, and consistent service scenarios that strengthen the perception of "peace of mind" can strengthen behavioral intentions through satisfaction; (iii) destination management should consider the multinational demand structure and implement culturally sensitive service design and memory-oriented promotion. Promotion (e.g., official digital channels that facilitate the sharing of experience stories) can increase positive word of mouth (WOM) and the likelihood of repeat visits. Future research that examines these same relationships across different destinations and air-based adventure activities, and that longitudinally tracks how the dynamics of "remembered experience" transform into behavioral intentions over time, will provide a stronger theoretical foundation at the intersection of the creative tourism and adventure tourism literature.

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Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ATTA	Adventure Travel Trade Association
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

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