



Gender differences in motivations to consume in restaurants with environmentally sustainable practices

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ABSTRACT

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Modern tourism increasingly emphasizes sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, with green restaurants playing an important role by implementing environmental protection measures, energy-efficient operations, and the use of fresh local products. This study examines tourists' motivations for dining in environmentally sustainable restaurants and explores gender differences in these motivations. The research was conducted in the Republic of Serbia, with Vrnjačka Banja, the country's leading spa destination, serving as the study area. Data were collected between August and October 2025 through a structured questionnaire using a seven-point Likert scale. Descriptive statistics were applied to assess respondents' motivations, while gender differences were analyzed using the Mann–Whitney U test. The findings indicate a generally high level of motivation to visit green restaurants, particularly for experiencing local culture and exploring new food tastes. Statistically significant gender differences were identified, with female respondents demonstrating stronger preferences for environmentally sustainable restaurant choices. The results suggest that tourists increasingly recognize the importance of sustainability and circular tourism principles, highlighting the need for further development of green gastronomic offerings in Serbia. By providing evidence from an underexplored context, this study contributes to the sustainable hospitality literature by identifying gender-based motivational patterns and offering practical implications for market segmentation, green restaurant management, and sustainable tourism development.

Contribution/Originality: This study provides original evidence from Serbia, an underexplored context, by examining gender differences in tourists' motivations to visit environmentally sustainable restaurants. It extends sustainable hospitality research by linking green restaurant choice with gastronomic and circular tourism, offering practical insights for market segmentation and sustainable restaurant management.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing interest of consumers in sustainable and ecologically responsible tourist and hospitality offers has caused a series of transformations in this industry, which are reflected in the adaptation of business models to the principles of environmental protection and social responsibility. In this context, it becomes particularly interesting to examine the influence of gender on the motivation of consumers to choose and use green practices in restaurants, because understanding the differences in the behavior of male and female consumers can contribute to a more precise definition of marketing strategies and the development of offers in accordance with the values of modern tourists.

Previous research indicates that women make more socially and environmentally responsible consumer decisions, which can be linked to their greater empathy and concern for others and the community (Hawkins, 2012). Numerous empirical studies confirm that women, on average, show stronger pro-environmental attitudes and a greater degree of concern for the environment compared to men (Ramstetter & Habersack, 2020). Thanks to a more developed environmental awareness, women are more willing to participate in circular and sustainable practices (Lorincová & Osvaldová, 2025) as well as to pay a higher price for products and services that have a positive impact on the environment (Lee, 2011). Also, women are more likely to consume organic products and prefer food of local origin (Olivas & Cañete, 2012) compared to men.

In accordance with the growing importance of sustainability in hospitality and tourism, this paper aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the differences between male and female consumers regarding the motives for visiting restaurants with environmentally sustainable practices. The research is focused on the analysis of how gender affects the perception, evaluation and behavior of consumers in the context of environmentally responsible restaurants.

The objectives of this research are threefold: (a) to examine the importance of gastronomic experiences during travel among male and female tourists; (b) to compare gender differences in motivations for choosing environmentally sustainable restaurants; and (c) to analyze the extent to which these motivations influence respondents' intentions to choose destinations that offer environmentally sustainable restaurant options in the future.

The research results are expected to provide significant insight to restaurant owners and managers in understanding which aspects of "green business" affect male and female consumers differently. Based on this knowledge, restaurateurs can tailor their marketing and business strategies in different market segments. In this way, the development of sustainable, competitive and socially responsible gastronomic tourism is encouraged.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Tourism and the Concept of Green Travel*

Environmental pressures have become increasingly pressing in contemporary society, requiring urgent responses aimed at promoting sustainable development, protecting biodiversity, and advancing the processes of green transition and decarbonization (Torun & Aslan, 2023). As one of the most rapidly expanding global industries, tourism has been identified as a potentially significant source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions (Filimonau, Dickinson, Robbins, & Reddy, 2013; Lenzen et al., 2018; Obersteiner, Gollnow, & Eriksson, 2021), with the hospitality sector playing a particularly important role in this environmental impact (Filimonau et al., 2021; Singh, Cranage, & Nath, 2014).

In addition, tourism is among the largest global consumers of water resources. Empirical studies conducted in hotel settings across different regions indicate that average tourist water consumption reaches approximately 350 liters per day, frequently exceeding 300 liters per guest (Garcia et al., 2023). These environmental pressures have contributed to the growing relevance of green tourism, which is increasingly recognized by multiple stakeholders as a mechanism for reducing the ecological footprint of tourism activities. Within the academic literature, green tourism strategies are primarily focused on influencing visitor behavior (Hou & Wu, 2021; Nelson, Partelow, Stäbler, Graci, & Fujitani, 2021) as well as on optimizing the composition of tourism demand in a more sustainable direction (Sun, Lin, & Higham, 2020).

In this context, the concept of green tourism acquires special importance because it seeks to mitigate these negative consequences. Through the analysis of the literature, it is possible to see that the concept of green tourism can be viewed from two perspectives. The first perspective defines green tourism as activities that take place in natural environments, where the main focus is on the preservation of natural resources (Andari & Setiyorini, 2016). Another perspective sees green tourism as a form of tourism that is environmentally responsible by nature. In line with this, Furqan, Som, and Hussin (2010) also highlight two purposes of using the term "green tourism". The first refers to

the presentation of the destination as an attractive and untouched location for vacation, while the second emphasizes that tourist activities in that area do not harm the environment.

The literature points out that the concept of green travel is based on the idea of green transport, which involves encouraging the population to choose forms of transport that consume less energy, reduce the emission of harmful gases and contribute to the preservation of health. Such forms include using public transport, carpooling, walking and cycling (Jia, Appolloni, & Wang, 2017).

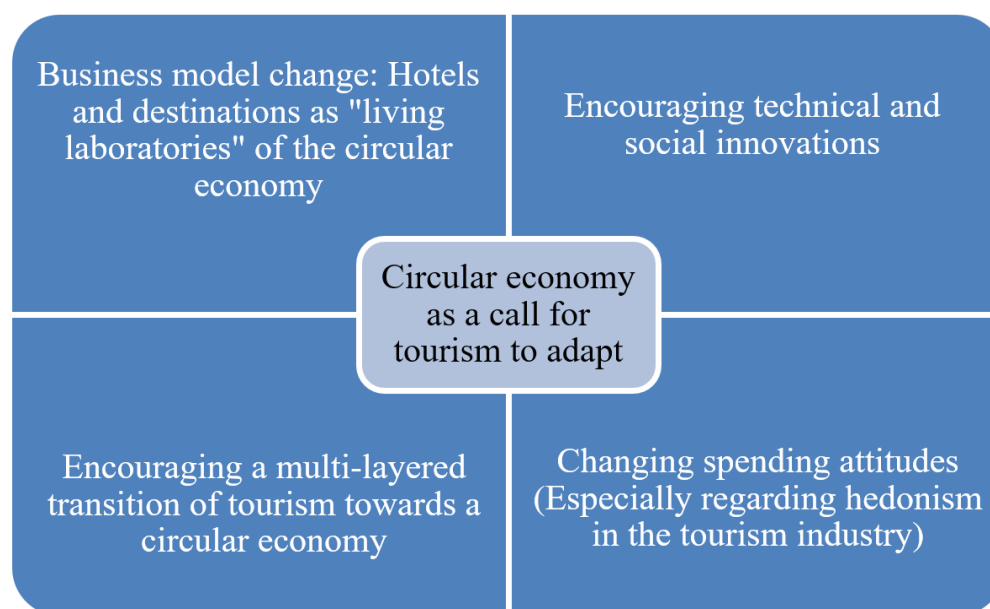


Figure 1. Changing the domain of tourism in the context of the circular practice.

Source: Gabor, Panait, Bacoş, Naghi, and Oltean (2023).

Figure 1 illustrates the key transformations required for tourism to adapt to the principles of the circular economy. The figure highlights four interrelated dimensions: business model changes in hotels and destinations, the promotion of technical and social innovations, the transition of tourism toward circular economy principles, and changing tourist spending attitudes, particularly regarding hedonistic consumption. Together, these dimensions demonstrate how circular practices can support more sustainable tourism development.

In today's context of climate change and increasingly pronounced environmental pollution, the concept of green travel and tourism stands out as one of the possible ways to mitigate negative environmental consequences. However, the adoption of this concept among tourists is slow, which can be partly explained by insufficient understanding of its deeper dimension and significance (Kasim, 2016). Although previous studies have demonstrated that women generally exhibit stronger pro-environmental attitudes and are more willing to support sustainable products and services, limited research has examined whether these differences are also reflected in motivations for choosing environmentally sustainable restaurants. Furthermore, evidence from emerging tourism destinations remains scarce. In the Serbian context, research on environmentally sustainable restaurants is still limited, while gender-based differences in motivational factors influencing restaurant choice have not been sufficiently explored. Addressing this gap can contribute to a better understanding of sustainable consumer behavior and support the development of more effective market segmentation and sustainability strategies in the hospitality sector.

2.2. Environmentally Sustainable Restaurants as a Lens for Interpreting Consumer Trends

In addition to other elements, tourism, as one of its main components also includes public catering or more commonly called restaurants. Today, restaurants are not only places where the physical needs of consumers are met, but places where the social and cultural values of a society are reflected, i.e., in modern consumption, they include its

tangible and intangible dimensions (Suhartanto, Arsawan, Leo, & Dean, 2025). Therefore, it is stated today that restaurants that respect ecological values (such as awareness of food waste, reduced waste and a focus on energy saving) have a greater impact on consumers (Kim & Hall, 2020). When such concepts of ecological value are respected, we arrive at restaurants that include environmental sustainability aspects in their business. The growing awareness of sustainable principles in public catering is considered an important factor in the practice of the green hospitality industry.

The literature indicates that green practices, similar to the hotel industry, are gaining importance in the restaurant sector. Due to the high consumption of resources, especially water, energy and disposable products, there is a need to improve environmental performance (Perramon, Alonso-Almeida, Llach, & Bagur-Femenías, 2014; Shin & Cho, 2023). Research emphasizes that implementing sustainable practices strengthens a restaurant's image and brand, which positively impacts financial results and the sustainable development of the local community.

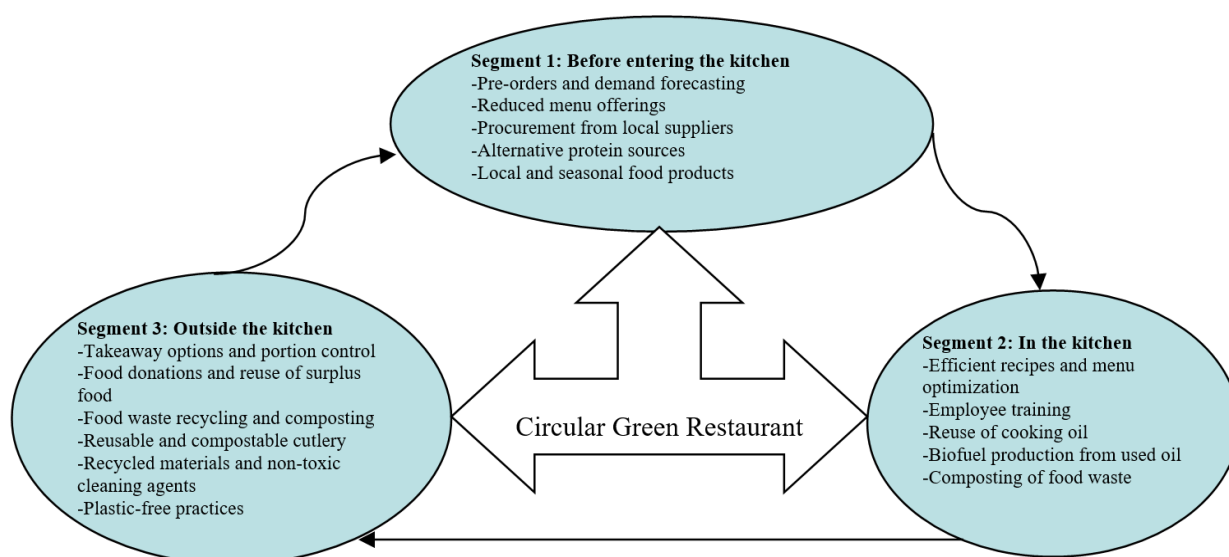


Figure 2. Key measures in circular green restaurant activities across the food value chain.

Source: Biloslavo and Janković (2025).

Figure 2 illustrates the key circular practices implemented across the food value chain in green restaurants. The figure organizes these practices into three stages: before entering the kitchen, in the kitchen, and outside the kitchen. It highlights measures such as procurement from local suppliers, the use of seasonal products, menu optimization, food waste reduction, recycling, composting, and the adoption of environmentally friendly cleaning products. Together, these measures demonstrate how circular principles can be integrated throughout restaurant operations to improve resource efficiency and environmental sustainability.

In line with these trends, the concept of a green restaurant is also developing in the literature, which involves the implementation of various environmentally responsible measures. Such restaurants encourage recycling and composting, rational use of water and energy, as well as efficient waste management. In addition, environmentally sustainable restaurants are increasingly including locally produced or organic food in their offerings (Julião, Gaspar, Tjahjono, & Rocha, 2018). Special emphasis is placed on the principles of the three "Rs" (reduce, reuse and recycle), as well as the two "Es", which relate to energy and efficiency, thus strengthening a comprehensive approach to sustainable business.

Within the circular economy model, a green restaurant is positioned as a response to the demands of environmentally conscious consumers who, through their choices, seek to encourage social change, expecting transparency regarding the quality and origin of food, the application of sustainable production processes and respect for the principles of fair consumption and consumer rights, while being ready to support, even financially, catering

establishments that contribute to environmental protection and the local community (Biloslavo & Janković, 2025; Madanaguli, Dhir, Kaur, Srivastava, & Singh, 2022).

Sustainable restaurants are often defined and interpreted in literature as “eco-friendly” or “green” restaurants that operate in an environmentally friendly manner (Green Restaurant Association, 2025). Associations and networks that promote the concept of sustainable restaurants typically implement a wide range of responsible practices that contribute to environmental protection, economic development, and social sustainability (Della Corte, Amin, Sepe, Luongo, & Cobanoglu, 2025; Maynard et al., 2020). These practices include rational waste management, reduced water and energy consumption, the use of local, seasonal, and organic ingredients, and the introduction of Fair Trade products when possible. In addition, sustainable restaurants strive to use environmentally friendly materials and equipment, provide fair working conditions and adequate wages for employees, and actively connect with the local community through various forms of cooperation and socially beneficial initiatives (The Sustainable Restaurant Association, 2025).

The Green Restaurant Association (GRA) is an international non-profit organization founded in the United States of America in 1990, with the aim of becoming a leader in the development and promotion of environmentally responsible catering practices. With the establishment of this organization, a systematic approach to the certification of restaurants according to scientifically based sustainability criteria was started, which laid the foundation for the development of the concept of green hospitality. According to the guidelines of Green Restaurant Association (2025) restaurants striving for "green" certification must meet a number of key conditions, among which are rational use of water, efficient waste management, use of sustainable furniture and building materials, preparation of food from sustainable sources, application of renewable energy sources, use of recyclable materials, as well as limiting the use of chemicals and reducing environmental pollution. In this way, GRA represents a model of institutional approach to sustainable development in catering, which connects ecological, economic and social aspects of restaurant business (Lorenzini, 1994).

Maynard, Zandonadi, Nakano, Raposo, and Botelho (2021) pointed out that in order for a certain restaurant to be classified as a green restaurant, it is necessary to determine whether its activities are aligned with the dimensions of sustainability. For this reason, the application of sustainability assessment tools has a key role in identifying the types of practices that restaurants implement, as well as in understanding the activities that need to be implemented in order to reach the criteria of a "green" business.

Modern consumers show a higher level of environmental awareness than before (Kwok, Huang, & Hu, 2016), but still consumer knowledge about environmentally sustainable restaurants needs to be improved (Schubert, Kandampully, Solnet, & Kralj, 2010). In this sense, it is necessary to first study their motivation for use and proceed further according to sustainable principles. Also, the Republic of Serbia, which is stalling and has yet to advance in green agendas, does not have a sufficiently researched concept of environmentally sustainable restaurants. In this regard, this paper will fill the gap in the literature on environmentally sustainable restaurants and consumer (in our case tourist) motivation and provide useful findings for small open economies, such as the Republic of Serbia.

3. METHODOLOGY

Selection of study area: The research was conducted in the Republic of Serbia, with data collected in Vrnjačka Banja, the country's largest spa tourism center. Data collection took place between August and October 2025, during a period of intensified tourist activity and the presence of visitors with diverse socio-demographic and travel characteristics, which enabled the inclusion of a wide range of tourist profiles. Although the empirical findings are derived from a single destination, they are not limited exclusively to its specific context. Given that the study focuses on the green restaurant concept and consumer perceptions of sustainable practices, the results can be applied to other tourist destinations that currently implement or plan to implement green restaurant practices, regardless of their tourism type or geographical location. Consequently, the findings offer broader implications for sustainable

hospitality management and destination development, particularly in contexts aiming to integrate circular economy principles into restaurant operations.

Sample and data collection: The research was conducted on a sample of tourists who were staying in Vrnjačka Banja at the time of data collection. An intentional (targeted) sample was used, which includes respondents of different genders, ages, and educational levels, in order to ensure diversity of views on the topic of research. The questionnaire was available in printed form at some of the locations: restaurants, hotels, cafes and tourist information centers. A total of 102 valid completed questionnaires were collected, which were taken into further analysis. The study employed a purposive sampling approach to obtain responses from tourists with diverse socio-demographic characteristics and travel experiences. Given the exploratory nature of the research, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as the sample is not statistically representative of the broader tourist population. In addition, participation was limited to tourists who had visited or were familiar with restaurants applying environmentally sustainable (green) practices, which further defined and narrowed the sampling frame.

Research instrument: For the purposes of the research, a standardized questionnaire was used, which was constructed on the basis of relevant literature in the field of sustainable and gastronomic tourism (Elsehly & Elsayed, 2024; Gheorghe, Tanase, & Nicodim, 2021; Hernández-Rojas, Huete-Alcocer, & Hidalgo-Fernández, 2022). The questionnaire was designed to examine the motivational factors that influence tourists' decisions to visit restaurants with environmentally sustainable practices. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: (1) a sociodemographic part, which includes questions about gender, age, level of education and frequency of travel and (2) a part with statements about motivations, which examines respondents' motivations for visiting environmentally sustainable restaurants and their intentions regarding future consumption choices. A seven-point Likert scale (1-7) was used to measure attitudes, where 1 means complete disagreement with the statement, 7 means complete agreement.

Table 1. Motivational Statements Used in the Questionnaire.

Code	Statement
MT1	Environmentally sustainable restaurants help me better understand the local culture.
MT2	Environmentally sustainable restaurants introduce me to new tastes of local food.
MT3	In environmentally sustainable restaurants, I try something different from what I usually eat at home.
MT4	After visiting a green restaurant, I recommend the experience to others.
MT5	Visiting destinations with environmentally sustainable restaurants represents an authentic experience for me.
MT6	In environmentally sustainable restaurants, I enjoy pleasant moments with family and friends.
MT7	Food served in environmentally sustainable restaurants contains fresh, locally sourced ingredients.
MT8	The taste of dishes in environmentally sustainable restaurants differs from the food typical of my home region.
MT9	Environmentally sustainable restaurants should offer diverse menu options.

Source: Gheorghe et al. (2021); Hernández-Rojas et al. (2022) and Elsehly and Elsayed (2024).

Table 1 presents the motivational statements included in the questionnaire and used to assess tourists' motivations for visiting environmentally sustainable restaurants. The nine statements capture key dimensions of the dining experience, including local culture, gastronomic exploration, authenticity, social interaction, the use of fresh locally sourced ingredients, and preferences for menu diversity. These items served as the basis for measuring respondents' attitudes toward green restaurants. **Data processing methods:** The collected data were analyzed using the methods of descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the basic characteristics of the sample and the answers obtained. Arithmetic means, standard deviations, minimum and maximum values were calculated, which made it possible to see the general level of agreement of respondents with statements about motivations for visiting restaurants with environmentally sustainable practices. In addition, the non-parametric Mann–Whitney test was used to examine differences between groups of subjects according to gender. Also, an additional illustration of the results through box-plot diagrams was made. Statistical data processing was carried out using the IBM SPSS Statistics software package (v.17 and v.23).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When we look at the demographic structure of the respondents (Table 2), the gender structure of the respondents is significant for the research, which shows that in the sample $N = 102$, 37.25% of the respondents are male, while 62.75% of the respondents are female. This kind of difference occurred in other studies that show that during field research, women are more willing to give answers to the questions (Ćurčić, Zakić, & Galantić, 2009). Most respondents are aged 18–25 years (51.9%) and hold a university degree (51.9%), followed by those with a master's degree (21.2%), secondary/high school education (17.3%), and a PhD (9.6%). This demographic profile provides the background for interpreting respondents' motivations toward environmentally sustainable restaurants.

Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents.

Characteristic	Frequency (%)
Gender	
Male	37.25
Female	62.75
Age (Years)	
18–25	51.9
26–35	19.2
36–45	13.5
46–55	11.5
>55	3.8
Education	
Secondary/high school	17.3
University degree	51.9
Master's degree	21.2
PhD	9.6

Based on the descriptive statistics, it can be concluded that all statements about motivations for visiting environmentally sustainable restaurants are rated above the mean value ($\text{Mean} > 4.00$), which indicates a high level of agreement of the respondents with the statements offered. Figure 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics for the nine motivational statements included in the questionnaire. The figure shows the mean values and standard deviations for each item, indicating generally high levels of agreement among respondents and relatively consistent responses across the sample.

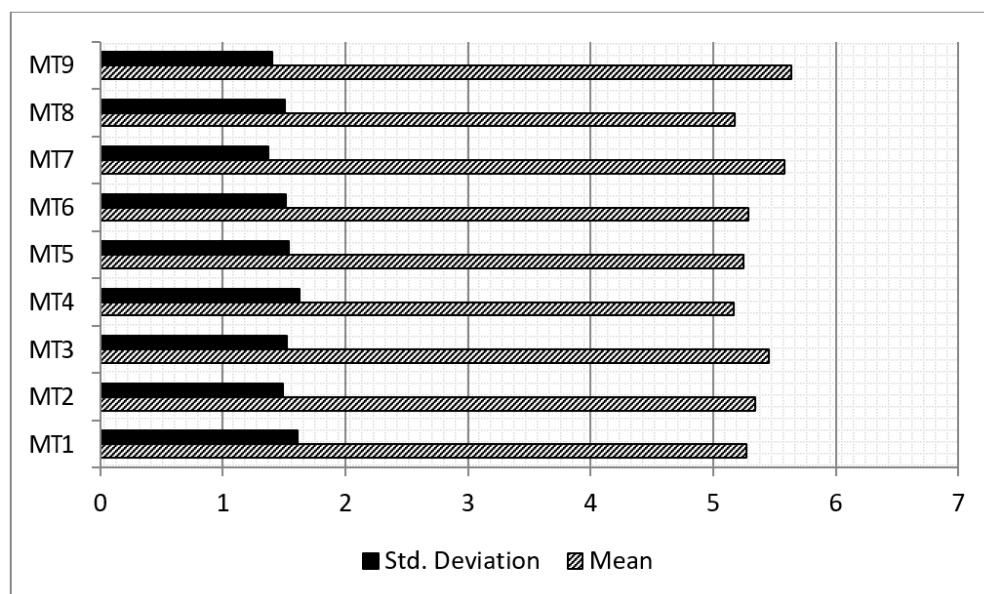


Figure 3. Descriptive Statistics.

The highest average values were obtained for statements MT9 (Average = 5.64) - "Environmentally sustainable restaurants should have varied menus" and MT7 (Average = 5.58) - "Food in environmentally sustainable restaurants contains fresh, locally produced ingredients", which suggests that the respondents particularly appreciate the quality and variety of food offered in environmentally sustainable restaurants. Somewhat lower average values, although still positive, were obtained for statements MT4 (Average = 5.17) and MT8 (Average = 5.18), which may mean that respondents associate environmentally sustainable restaurants to a lesser extent with recommendation to others or with marked differences in the taste of food compared to local cuisine. Standard deviations range from 1.36 to 1.62, which indicates a moderate variability of responses.

Furthermore, the aim of the paper is to determine in which positions deviations are possible and whether they will be statistically significant. First of all, the goal was to determine how much the respondents, depending on their gender, valued the gastronomic experience on the trip. The results are shown in Figure 4.

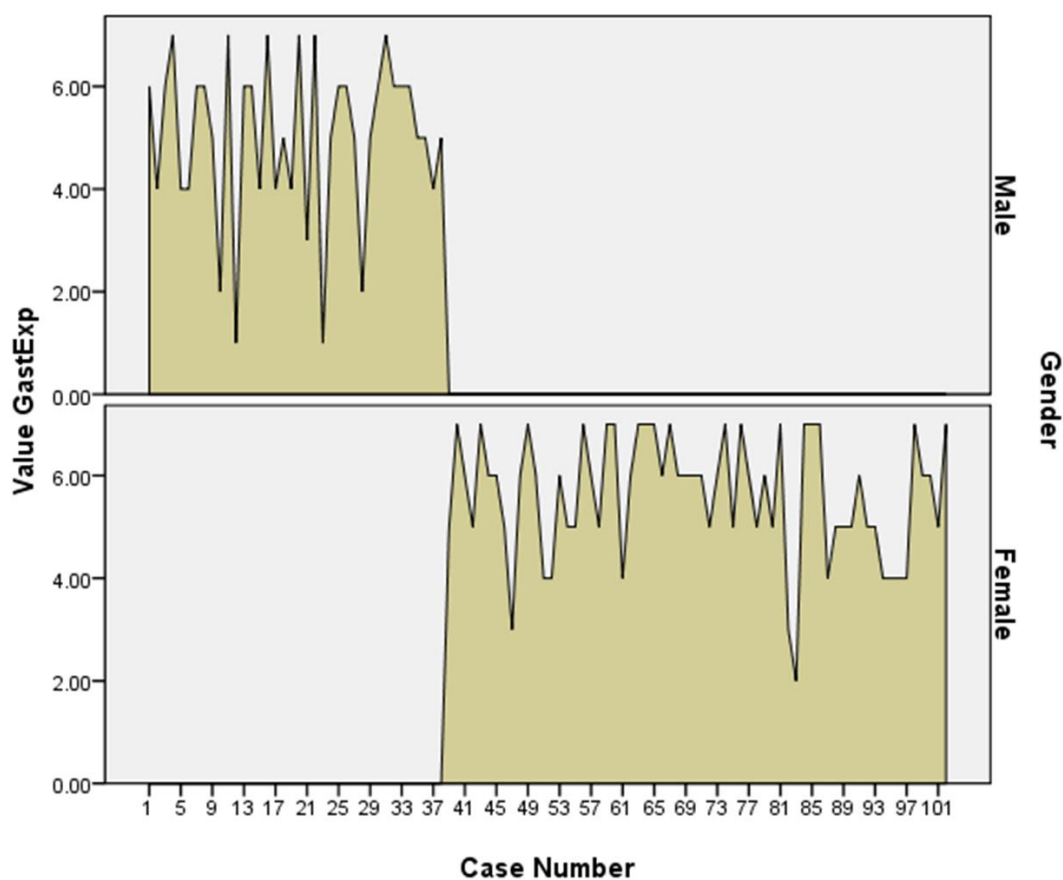


Figure 4. The importance of a gastronomic experience on a trip.

Note: The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

The vertical axis shows the values of the variable Value GastExp (importance of gastronomic experience), while the horizontal axis shows individual cases (respondents). The results show that both male and female respondents consider gastronomic experience to be an important contributor to overall travel satisfaction. However, female respondents showed a higher level of agreement and slightly higher average scores on the GastExp variable, suggesting that women tend to perceive culinary experiences as a more integral part of their travel enjoyment. Male respondents showed greater variability in their responses, indicating more diverse attitudes towards the role of gastronomy in travel satisfaction. These findings are consistent with previous research that has highlighted gender-based differences in travel motivations and experiential preferences (Björk & Kauppinen-Räsänen, 2016; Kim & Eves, 2012).

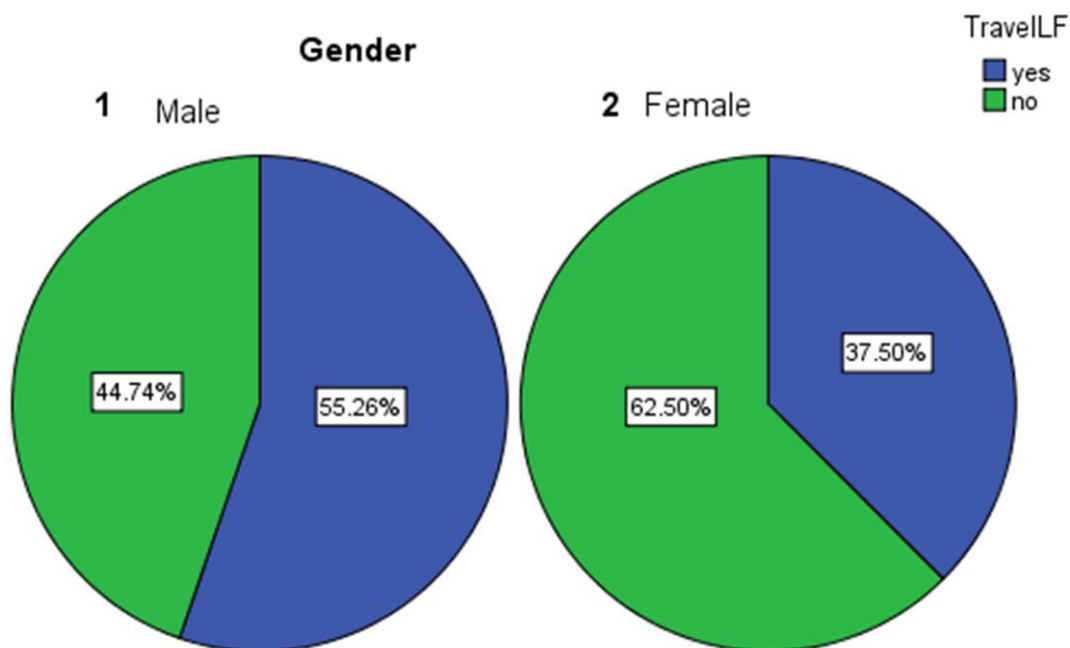


Figure 5. Travel for traditional local food.

Note: The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 5 shows the respondents' answers to the question: "Have you ever traveled solely with the aim of experiencing the local cuisine of the destination?", analyzed according to the gender of the respondents. The results show that a higher percentage of men (55.26%) are interested in traveling for the sake of experiencing local cuisine, while among female respondents, a higher percentage of women are not highly interested (62.50%) in making this a motive for travel.

Table 3. Tourist results for every criterion in research.

Criteria	Testing group	No.	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Mann-Whitney U Test	
					Z	P (2-tailed)
In environmentally sustainable restaurants, I get to know the local culture better.	Male	38	45.53	1730.00	-1.610	0.003
	Female	64	55.05	3523.00		
Environmentally sustainable restaurants reveal to me new tastes of local food.	Male	38	44.66	1697.00	-1.852	0.004
	Female	64	55.56	3556.00		
After visiting the green restaurant, I recommend the experience to others.	Male	38	47.95	1822.00	-0.956	0.339
	Female	64	53.61	3431.00		
Visiting destinations with environmentally sustainable restaurants is an authentic experience for me.	Male	38	46.87	1781.00	-1.249	0.212
	Female	64	54.25	3472.00		
Environmentally sustainable restaurants should have varied menus.	Male	38	49.00	1862.00	-0.682	0.495
	Female	64	52.98	3391.00		

Note: The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3 presents the results of the Mann-Whitney U test comparing male and female respondents across the examined motivational criteria. The findings indicate that female respondents generally achieved higher mean ranks than male respondents, suggesting stronger environmental and cultural awareness. Statistically significant gender differences were identified for motivations related to learning about the local culture and discovering new tastes of local food. In contrast, no statistically significant differences were observed for recommending the restaurant

experience to others, perceiving environmentally sustainable restaurants as an authentic experience, or preferring diverse menu options. However, the claims that are statistically significant are significant for this research. In this case, it is MT1 ($Z = -1.610$; $p = 0.003$) and MT2 ($Z = -1.852$; $p = 0.004$), so these claims will be analyzed in more detail. In both cases, p -values are less than 0.05, which indicates a statistically significant difference between male and female respondents. For other statements, the differences were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), which means that gender does not significantly affect the perception of other dimensions of motivation. In addition to statistical significance, effect sizes were calculated to assess the magnitude of differences between male and female respondents. For MT1, the effect size was small ($r = 0.16$), while for MT2 a small effect size was also observed ($r = 0.18$), according to Cohen's criteria (Cohen, 1988). These results indicate that although statistically significant differences exist, the magnitude of gender differences is relatively modest.

In order to additionally show the differences in motivations between the sexes, box-plot diagrams were created for the claims where statistically significant differences were recorded (MT1 and MT2).

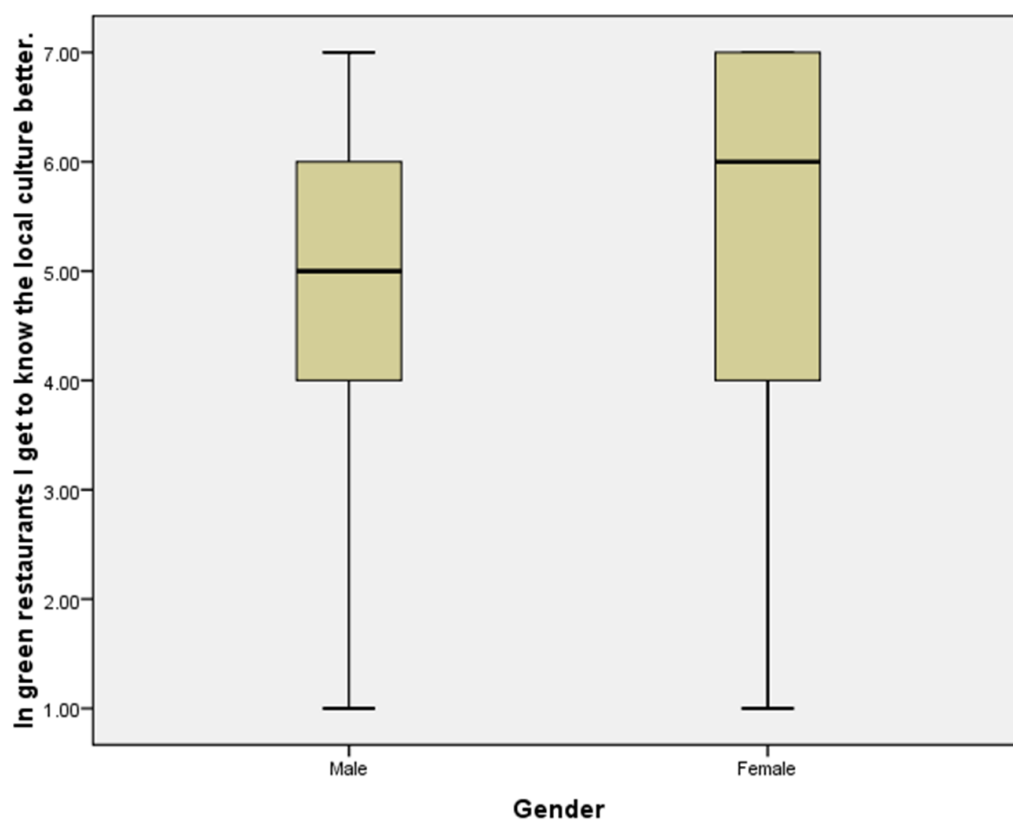


Figure 6. Boxplot of respondents' evaluations of the statement "Environmentally sustainable restaurants help me better understand the local culture" by gender.

Note: The difference was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Figure 6 shows that women have a higher median than men, which indicates that women, to a greater extent, believe that environmentally sustainable restaurants allow them to get to know the local culture better. The range of women's answers is somewhat wider, while men's answers are more concentrated around the mean values. The results of the Mann–Whitney U test ($U = 989$; $p = 0.003$) confirm that the difference between the sexes is statistically significant, with women showing greater agreement with this statement.

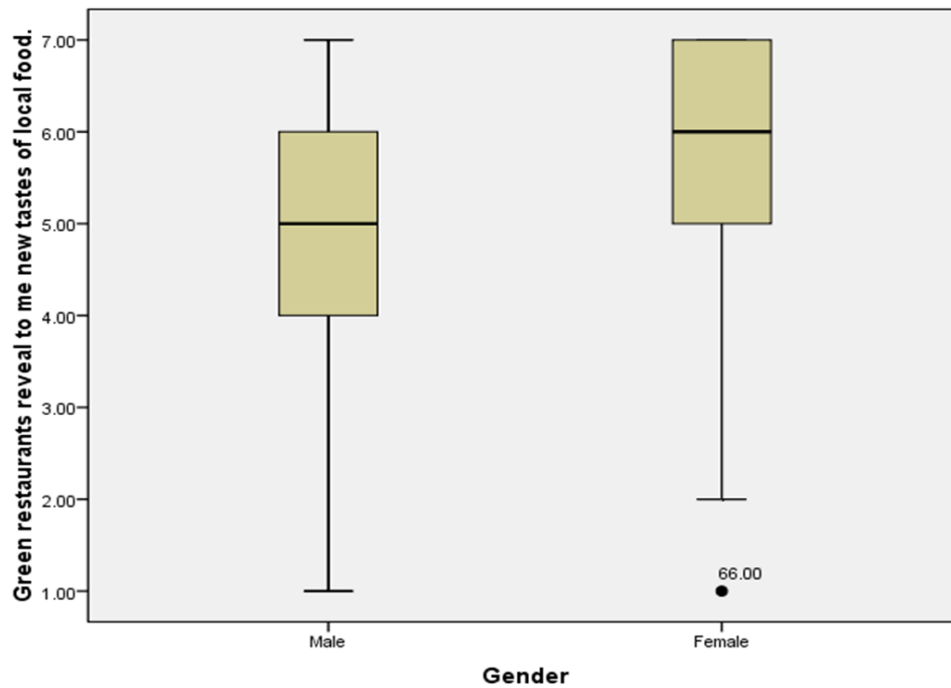


Figure 7. Boxplot of respondents' evaluations of the statement "Environmentally sustainable restaurants introduce me to new tastes of local food" by gender.

Note: The value "66.00" represents the identification number of the respondent automatically assigned by SPSS to an outlier. It does not represent a measurement or statistical value but merely identifies the observation associated with the outlier.

In Figure 7, a similar pattern is observed: Women have a higher median (≈ 6) compared to men (≈ 5), which indicates that women perceive environmentally sustainable restaurants to a greater extent as an opportunity to discover new tastes of local food. In women, the majority of answers are grouped in higher values (5–7), while in men a greater range and a more even distribution of answers is observed. One extreme response was recorded in women, which does not significantly affect the central tendency.

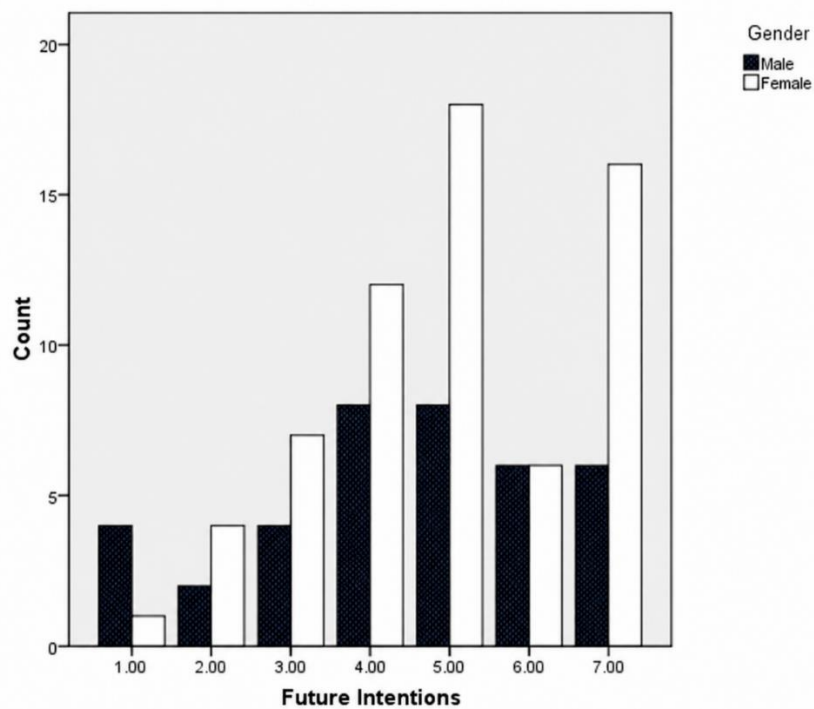


Figure 8. Future intentions.

Based on the histogram shown in Figure 8, it can be seen that both genders generally express a high level of agreement with the statement about planning future choices of destinations with environmentally sustainable restaurants, but female respondents are more strongly oriented towards this goal. The largest number of female respondents rated the statement with values 5, 6 and 7 on the Likert scale, which indicates a strong intention to choose destinations that support environmental protection in the future. Male respondents also showed positive attitudes, but their distribution is more even, with a higher proportion of lower values (especially between 1 and 4), which indicates a slightly lower degree of future intention compared to women.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed respondents' motivations for consuming in environmentally sustainable restaurants within a spa tourism context in Serbia. The findings can be interpreted within the broader framework of environmentally sustainable restaurants as hospitality facilities that integrate energy efficiency, waste reduction, the use of locally and seasonally produced food, as well as recycling and responsible resource management. In this regard, environmentally sustainable restaurants represent an important component of circular tourism, contributing to more sustainable patterns of resource use and supporting local economic development.

The results suggest that tourists increasingly recognize the importance of sustainable practices in hospitality and express willingness to support restaurants operating according to circular economy principles (Gössling & Hall, 2019). This indicates a gradual shift in consumer orientations from predominantly hedonistic motives toward more responsible, environmentally conscious, and socially oriented decision-making (Hwang & Lee, 2019). Accordingly, visiting a green restaurant may be interpreted not only as a gastronomic experience but also as an expression of environmental awareness and individual responsibility toward the community and destination sustainability (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019; Kirchherr, Reike, & Hekkert, 2017; Kwok et al., 2016).

The findings further suggest that female respondents demonstrate more consistent responses regarding sensory, cultural, and social dimensions of food experiences. This is in line with previous research indicating that women often perceive gastronomic activities as opportunities for learning, enjoyment, and cultural connection (Fields, 2003; Kim & Eves, 2012). In contrast, male respondents show greater variability in their responses, which may indicate more diverse or context-dependent approaches to gastronomic experiences.

From a managerial and policy perspective, the results highlight the importance of designing green gastronomic offerings that integrate both sustainability attributes and experiential value. Destination managers should consider combining environmental responsibility with cultural and sensory engagement to appeal to different market segments. Marketing strategies may emphasize local sourcing, environmental protection, and circular practices, while policy-makers can support the development of environmentally sustainable restaurants through incentives promoting waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable procurement. Moreover, strengthening transparency in sourcing, fairness in pricing, and ethical labor practices further reinforces the social legitimacy of environmentally sustainable restaurants and their contribution to sustainable tourism development.

Future research should extend these findings to other destinations and hospitality contexts where green restaurant practices are implemented or planned. Comparative studies across different tourism regions could provide deeper insights into how demographic and cultural factors shape sustainable consumption behavior. In addition, future research may explore how consumer awareness and education regarding sustainability influence decision-making processes, as well as how circular economy practices interact with perceptions of fairness, transparency, and consumer rights in the hospitality sector.

This study has several limitations. The relatively small sample size and purposive sampling approach limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the higher representation of female respondents may have influenced the observed gender-related differences. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicative rather than conclusive

at the population level. Future studies should employ larger and more representative samples and consider additional methodological approaches to further validate and extend these results.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, University of Kragujevac, Serbia, approved this study on [19 February 2026] [Ref. No. 102].

Informed Consent Statement: Informed verbal consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study. All data were anonymized to ensure participant confidentiality.

Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

Competing Interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions: All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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