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# The Effect of Heritagescapes on Immersion and Hedonia: The Moderating Role of Visitor Type

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationships between the heritagescapes (namely, variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination), immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions, and the moderating effects of visitor type (domestic versus international) on heritagescapes, immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions. A total of 512 responses were collected from domestic and international visitors visiting Göreme Open Air Museum, an archaeological heritage site in Cappadocia. Findings show heritagescapes improve immersion and hedonia and reveal the positive relationship between visitors' hedonia and behavioral intentions. We find that mystery and variety are positively associated with hedonic and immersion, respectively, for international visitors. Our study provides valuable insights for archaeological site managers and heritage experience providers by identifying key heritagescapes and their impact on visitor experiences. By understanding and enhancing the link between heritagescapes, immersion, and hedonia, managers can create more immersive and hedonic experiences, adding significant value for visitors.

## 1 | Introduction

Heritage experiences include highly subjective elements and include past and present lived or imagined experiences (Chen et al. 2020; Mossberg 2008; Timoney 2020). Through tangible and intangible elements in cultural and historical heritage sites, visitors actively interpret the experience and attribute meanings to it (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2010; Ramkissoon, Nekmamud, and Uysal, Ramkissoon et al. 2025). Consequently, tourists partially construct the meanings of the physical context throughout the experience. Unlike other tourist settings, archaeological heritage sites, especially open-air museums, offer a unique and irreplaceable context that shapes the visitor's experience in profound ways. The concept of heritagescapes integrates both tangible and intangible elements, capturing the multifaceted nature of heritage sites. Heritagescapes are environments co-created by stakeholders and visitors, where personal experiences emerge through the interplay of tangible and mental contexts, embodying the values and physical setting of a heritage site. This uniqueness is what makes the study of heritagescapes crucial, as understanding how visitors interact with and derive meaning from these sites can provide valuable insights into creating more impactful and memorable experiences.

In this context, open-air museums, such as archaeological sites, provide distinctive environments that differ significantly from controlled and purposefully designed spaces like hotels, restaurants, and theme parks. These settings often feature damaged, disorganized, or dilapidated ruins, presenting unique challenges for visitor experience. For instance, visitors may struggle to fully immerse themselves in and comprehend the significance of these sites. These distinctive conditions necessitate a deeper

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understanding of the heritagescape (with dimensions of variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination) that contribute to positive and meaningful visitor experiences. This approach bridges the perspectives of archaeologists and experience providers. Archaeologists focus on the historical authenticity and preservation of sites, while experience providers aim to create engaging and memorable visitor experiences. The modern, sophisticated consumer, while in search of historical authenticity, also is in pursuit of hedonic experiences (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2018). Heritagescape dimensions serve as a common framework bringing people back in history and providing memorable experiences. For instance, mystery and uniqueness enhance the interpretive depth of a site, aligning with archaeologists' priorities, while also fostering immersive and hedonic experiences valued by visitors. Furthermore, the open-air museum context necessitates the adaptation of museological practices, such as storytelling and narrative curation, to the dynamic and unstructured conditions of archaeological heritage sites. These practices can cater to diverse visitor typologies, from cultural tourists seeking authenticity to leisure tourists prioritizing hedonic and immersive experiences. By addressing these challenges, this study offers a nuanced understanding of how heritagescape dimensions contribute to meaningful visitor experience.

Although experiencescapes have been investigated in a variety of contexts, from a broad perspective such as destination experiencescapes (Lin et al. 2022) to a narrower scale such as hotels (Mody et al. 2017), restaurants (Radic et al. 2021), festivals (Chen et al. 2020), theme parks, and nature-based activities (Vespestad and Hansen 2020), the unique and complex nature of heritagescapes, especially archaeological sites, has not been sufficiently explored (Chen et al. 2020). Unlike environments such as museums, restaurants, and hotels that are designed and managed to optimize visitor experiences, open-air museums as archaeological heritage sites present unique challenges due to their unstructured and often fragile nature, necessitating a deeper understanding of how heritagescapes shape visitor experience.

Previous research has provided only a limited contribution to identifying the components of experiencescapes by considering Pine and Gilmore's four experience dimensions and mostly a subset of experience variables such as physical setting, social factors, and quality value (Lin et al. 2022). Nevertheless, these approaches are inadequate for comprehensively understanding and elucidating the complex nature of experiencescapes. A comprehensive understanding of experiencescapes requires more than a solely marketing-focused approach and requires examining this complex structure from perspectives across disciplines (Pizam and Tasci 2019). Moreover, there is also a lack of a robust theoretical framework to explain heritagescapes, especially archaeological heritagescapes. Therefore, a multifaceted and in-depth examination of heritagescapes is essential both to expand theoretical understanding and to establish a solid foundation for practical implications.

Experiencescapes, usually designed around a theme and limited in time and space, are pointed out as one of the main elements that facilitate immersive and memorable experiences (Blumenthal and Jensen 2019). Yet, empirical research on relationships between experiencescapes and immersion is limited and unclear. Associations between immersive experiences and eudaimonia (Seeler et al. 2021; Løvoll 2019) and visitor satisfaction (Lunardo and Ponsignon 2020) have been examined; empirical evidence on the relationships between immersion and hedonia, however, remains scarce (Bec et al. 2021; Lee et al. 2020). Nevertheless, managers of heritage sites face the dilemma of how to design and control memorable visitor experiences; they need practical guidelines on how to encourage visitors' immersive experiences, hedonia, and behavioral intentions. In light of the aforementioned gaps in the extant literature, a more nuanced comprehension of the concepts of experience extensions and immersion in the context of heritage sites is of pivotal importance for enhancing the quality of visitor experiences and furnishing guidance to managers.

To address the research gaps mentioned above, this study first employs a theory-driven approach to understand the complex structure of the experiencescape, moving beyond a solely marketing-focused approach. Central to this approach is the application of the preference matrix model (PMM) (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989), which originates from environmental psychology and is based on information processing theory (IPT). PMM was specifically chosen for this research due to its focus on the role of environmental information in shaping experiences, making it, particularly, suitable for understanding the challenges posed by unstructured and fragile open-air museums. Archaeological heritage sites often lack cohesive narratives and visual clarity, complicating visitor engagement and experience. PMM addresses these challenges by emphasizing the importance of the information richness of the environment in enabling visitors to derive meaning and engage effectively with the site.

According to PMM, the crucial element for individuals motivated to understand and explore an environment is the amount of information it provides. Visitors who gather sufficient and varied information from the environment can create emotions and integrate mental representations that support efficient performance (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). This theoretical framework uniquely contributes to the understanding of how visitors interact with and derive meaning from heritage sites by focusing on their cognitive and affective responses. Building on this theory, this study posits that the variety, uniqueness, mystery, and imaginative aspects of tangible and intangible information resources—such as ruins, stories, and cultural narratives—play a critical role in enabling visitors to make sense of and experience these environments. By applying PMM in this context, this research offers a novel approach to overcoming the barriers faced by heritage managers in creating immersive and meaningful visitor experiences.

Second, we examine the consequences of heritagescapes in the context of immersion, hedonia, and behavioral effects. Theoretical relationships investigated in the current research are based on Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R) theory that consists of stimuli, which include heritagescapes; processes, which include immersive (cognitive) and hedonia (affective); and outputs, which include behavioral intentions. Finally, we demonstrate the moderating effect of visitor type (domestic vs. international) on the proposed relationships. Specifically, we aim to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the dimensions of heritagescapes?



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2. What is the relationship between heritagescapes and visitors' immersive and hedonic experiences at archaeological sites?
3. How does immersion in the heritage experience affect visitors' hedonic experiences?
4. What impact do visitors' hedonic experiences have on their behavioral intentions?

How does visitor type (domestic vs. international) moderate the relationships between heritagescapes and the outcomes of immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions?

This study makes the following contributions. First, this study contributes to a better understanding of the nature of heritagescapes by integrating Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) PMM from environmental psychology into heritage experiences. Second, the study advances our comprehension of the psychological and behavioral consequences of heritagescapes by examining the relationships between heritagescapes, immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions, which are limited in the existing literature. Finally, examining the moderating effect of visitor type on the investigated relationships helps to understand how different visitor segments perceive and evaluate heritage experiences. Thus, reflecting the differences between the experiences of domestic and international tourists in a relatively neglected context offers important implications for heritage site managers who aim to provide memorable experiences to visitors.

## 2 | Theoretical Foundation

O'Dell (2005, 16) defines experiencescapes as "not only organized by producers [ranging] (from place marketers and city planners to local private enterprises) but…also actively sought out by consumers. They are spaces of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, as well as the meeting grounds in which diverse groups (with potentially competing as well as overlapping interests and ideologies) move about and come in contact with one another." Experiencescapes refer to particular environments where personal experiences are created and occur in relation to those settings. They involve both tangible and mental contexts that establish specific conditions for individuals to gain experiences and contribute to the representation of a place's values (Cederholm 2012, 96). For this reason, a psychological and individual-oriented perspective on the experiencescapes is offered (Ujang and Zakariya 2015), as well as a perspective on the tangible environment (Pizam and Tasci 2019; Cederholm 2012).

While experiences are inherently individual, in tourism they are closely tied to and significantly influenced by the surrounding environment. Since tourism experiences are staged and consumed in specific locations, examining the physical aspects and spaces where they occur helps enhance our understanding of the processes that shape these experiences (Kandampully et al. 2023; Lin et al. 2022; O'Dell 2005). Place and space cannot be separated from individual's emotions (Kastenholz et al. 2020) and the meaning they give them (Ramkissoon 2024); they are also phenomena that can be interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, and imagined (Appadurai 1996; Soja 1996). People assign meanings to their consumption environment (Richards 2020) and require further information on these settings. This aligns with IPT, which proposes that our evolutionary pressures within natural environments favored the development of a cognitive ability to quickly detect conditions for survival by acquiring knowledge of the environment (Van der Berg and Staats 2018). Building upon IPT, Kaplan and Kaplan's PMM suggests that people's environmental preferences arise from two basic human responses to the environment, namely understanding and exploration, and that these two responses largely depend on individuals' ability to obtain and receive information from the environment (Hung and Chang 2024; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). The "understanding" aspect in PMM pertains to comprehending and perceiving events occurring in the surrounding environment (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). On the other hand, "involvement or exploration" relates to the variety and richness of an environment, as well as the amount of information acquired while interacting with it. The "exploration" aspect describes how tourists are stimulated at a destination and whether they can discover new experiences there. "Involvement" encompasses diverse landscape elements and relates to attracting and keeping tourists interested in the destination (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Based on this model, we propose that for an archeological site to be effectively understood and explored by individuals, it needs to incorporate elements of variety, mystery, and uniqueness. Our present study examines Kaplan and Kaplan's model further by extending the concept of heritagescapes into a multidimensional framework and proposing four key dimensions: variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination.

Variety refers to the complexity and richness of different visual elements and activities in the destination environment (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989; Shayestefar et al. 2022). The variety of elements in the immediate environment provides sufficient information to maintain an individual's interest and engagement, thereby encouraging their curiosity to explore. Greater variety leads tourists to explore and engage with the different appealing and meaningful tourism resources available at a destination (Liu et al. 2017). The visitor is surrounded by both tangible and intangible elements such as the ruins, culture, stories, guides, and other tourists. As these elements surrounding the visitors increase, visitors will be able to gain more knowledge and thus explore the environment and make sense of their archaeological heritage experiences (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2018).

Mystery is the potential of the environment to provide new information, the degree to which it arouses curiosity and offers more information (Kaplan 1989, 58). The quality of this information is not directly tied to the visual characteristics of an environment; instead, it involves a process of cognitive inference or prediction for it to be interpreted (Van der Jagt et al. 2014). Therefore, elements such as ruins at an archaeological heritage site, information signs, narratives by guides, and mystical stories told by locals or other tourists require a process of inference in the visitor's mind. By interpreting these mysterious elements, visitors actively participate in the co-production process, explore the tangible and intangible environmental context and hence create their own experiences (Bideci and Bideci 2021; Minkiewicz et al. 2014).

Uniqueness refers to the distinctive feature of the environment surrounding a visitor experience (Kirillova et al. 2014).



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A tourism setting offers visitors cultural and social uniqueness in terms of their heritage, communities, and traditions, as well as the physical environment (Karagöz and Uysal 2022; Liu et al. 2021; Pechlaner et al. 2011). The uniqueness of the tourism setting also enables tourists to experience something new and special that cannot be experienced in everyday life (Liu et al. 2021, 2017).

At the heart of the consumption activity is the creative experience created by the consumer, as opposed to the use of the product, and imagination is the trigger for engaging in these experiences (Campbell 1987). In particular, imagination is apparent in the consumption experiences of utopian marketplaces and themed retail environments (Bender et al. 2022; Kozinets et al. 2004). Being on a heritage site can stimulate the imagination, as it evokes multisensory images, fantasies, and emotional responses related to the site's past (Wu et al. 2023; Bender et al. 2022). Chronis et al. (2012) showed that the setting, the physicality of a historic site and the narratives of the guides dominate the visitors' imaginations of the past in the present. In a heritage visit, visitors do not remain as outside observers in the process of telling a story; they become a part of the story through the process of imagination and their actions on the site, immersing themselves in their narrative imagination (Chronis et al. 2012).

## 3 | Hypothesis Development

### 3.1 | Heritagescapes, Immersion, and Hedonia

Hansen and Mossberg (2013) define consumer immersion as "a form of spatio-temporal belonging in the world that is characterized by deep involvement in the present moment" (p. 212). Immersion is a state in which consumers actively participate in the consumption environment, time and self-awareness are blurred (Lindberg and Østergaard 2015) and is characterized by intense emotional engagement (Blumenthal 2020; Hansen 2014). Immersion is the key to memorable travel experiences, as this intense emotional engagement is more likely to be remembered after the travel experience (Kandampully et al. 2023; Kim 2014; Lunardo and Ponsignon 2020). Experiencescapes, which are usually designed around a theme and limited in time and space (Blumenthal and Jensen 2019), are one of the key elements that facilitate immersive experiences. Immersive and extraordinary experiences can occur especially when the experience takes place in the context of hedonistic consumption and in a service environment that allows the consumer to move away from everyday reality (Mossberg 2008). Therefore, themed experiencescapes built on a story can increase the intensity of the experience by reducing the intervening elements (Firat and Dholakia 1998; Saragih 2023), and increase visitors' attention and involvement in the present moment (Kandampully et al. 2023). It can facilitate intensification by encouraging to increase the level of their desires and add meaning to the experience (Blumenthal and Jensen 2019; Caru' and Cova 2006).

People seek to participate in extraordinary experiences because they offer magic and mystery that seem to be excluded in ordinary life (Goolaup and Mossberg 2017). Essentially, mystery is the promise that more can be seen in an environment (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989) and includes a sense of new things to discover (Van Rompay and Jol 2016). Information about archaeological ruins on site adds a "mystical" element to the overall tourism experience the area offers, complementing the available products and resources; a heritage hidden from view creates a certain attraction (Ross and Saxena 2019). Therefore, the high perception of mystery around the setting prompts visitors to go a little further to discover what is in the environment, to be immersed in the experience (Van der Jagt et al. 2014). Also, in the context of experiential consumption, the surrounding imaginative elements (e.g., ruins, narratives, stories, legends) are crucial for visitors to create meaning from their experiences (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982; Jiang and Yu 2020). Imagination allows tourists to be immersed in the experience (Blumenthal and Jensen 2019) by separating and isolating tourists from everyday life and reality (Kao et al. 2008).

Based on the above, we assume that as the variety, uniqueness, mystery, and imaginative aspects of the elements surrounding the heritage experience increase, visitors will increase their knowledge of such extraordinary places and the context of experience, directing their attention to the present moment and allowing them to be fully immersed in the experience:

**H1.** *Mystery positively affects tourist's immersion in the heritage experience.*

**H2.** *Variety positively affects tourist's immersion in the heritage experience.*

**H3.** *Uniqueness positively affects tourist's immersion in the heritage experience.*

**H4.** *Imagination positively affects tourist's immersion in the heritage experience.*

According to the S-O-R paradigm, environmental stimuli (S) surrounding the experience environment can trigger visitors' pleasure, enjoyment and happiness experiences (organism-O). In turn, hedonic value perceptions (O) cause behavioral intentions (response-R) (Baber and Baber 2023; Dedeoglu et al. 2018; Mehrabian and Russell 1974). Previous research has demonstrated the impacts of experiencescapes on the hedonic experiences (Lee 2024; Su et al. 2020; Løvoll 2019). For example, Lee (2024) discovered that captivating heritage environments have a stronger influence on hedonic experiences compared to eudaimonic experiences, and that tourists' positive emotions are enhanced when they perceive heritage sites as attractive and mysterious. Su et al. (2020) suggested that being in a comfortable setting or enjoying captivating scenery can enhance visitors' hedonic well-being, which manifests as feelings of relaxation, pleasure, and positive emotions. On the other hand, the perceived uniqueness of an environment enables individuals to mentally experience a sense of escape, diverting their attention from everyday responsibilities and routines (Lehto 2013). Also, consumers' imagination shapes consumption experience (Heath and Nixon 2021). MacInnis and Price (1990) argued that consumers who engaged in higher levels of elaborated imagery were more satisfied with their vacation outcomes, whether or not the event unfolded as imagined. Bender et al. (2022) demonstrate that imagination, supported by the physical environment of the



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heritage site and the visitor's internal references, is the stimulus for hedonic experiences. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H5.** *Mystery positively affects visitor' hedonia in the heritage experience.*

**H6.** *Variety positively affects visitor' hedonia in the heritage experience.*

**H7.** *Uniqueness positively affects visitor' hedonia in the heritage experience.*

**H8.** *Imagination positively affects visitor' hedonia in the heritage experience.*

### 3.2 | Hedonia, Immersion, and Behavioral Intentions

Hedonia is defined as a state of joy, enjoyment, or pleasure that occurs in response to a stimulus and is experienced to a greater extent with increasing pleasure (Argyle and Martin 2013; Chen and Zeng 2023). Previous research shows that tourism experiences trigger the hedonic experience through sensory pleasure behaviors (Demeter et al. 2022; Karagöz and Kama 2024; Peng et al. 2023).

Immersion plays a significant role in influencing the emotional and cognitive aspects of tourism experiences (Makransky and Petersen 2021), and immersive experiences are characterized by greater emotional intensity (Løvoll 2019). Although the relationship between immersion and hedonia is rarely examined, there is still some evidence in the literature. Mathwick et al. (2001) showed that one of the outcomes of engaging in immersive activities for consumers is pleasure. Løvoll (2019) found that concentration in immersive experiences was associated with hedonic feelings. Li et al. (2023) found that immersion influences tourist happiness as a positive emotion, which subsequently results in tourist satisfaction and influences their behavioral intentions. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H9.** *Immersion positively affects visitors' hedonia in the heritage experience.*

Expectation theory suggests that individuals are driven to adopt actions or behaviors that help them reach their goals. When people wish to maintain their happiness, they often persist in activities that bring them joy (Peng et al. 2023; Ramkissoon 2022). Studies have shown a positive relationship between hedonic experience and behavioral intentions in tourism consumption (Karagöz et al. 2024; Karagöz and Kama 2021). Peng et al. (2023) revealed that tourists' happiness positively affects their memorable tourism experiences and revisit intentions. Lee (2024) found that hedonic experiences influence tourists' behavioral intentions more than eudaimonic experiences. Vada et al. (2019) found that there was no significant relationship between eudaimonia and tourists' behavioral intentions; tourists who felt hedonic well-being were more likely to revisit a destination. Tsai (2021) demonstrated that hedonia and eudaimonia are two components of happiness that lead to loyalty behavior in visitors. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

**H10.** *Visitors' hedonia positively affects behavioral intentions.*

### 3.3 | Visitor Type as a Moderator

Tourists at a given destination are diverse, with varying motivations, perceptions, and experiences (Nekmahmud et al. 2022; Ponsignon et al. 2021). Different types of visitors from different cultures and nationalities experience an environment differently (Karagöz and Uysal 2022; Ponsignon et al. 2021). The literature provides increasing evidence that visitor experiences and their outcomes can vary significantly according to the type of visitor, particularly, in the context of heritage tourism (Gannon et al. 2022; Kaur and Kaur 2020; Yang et al. 2010). This difference also stems from the different cultural, social, and psychological frameworks that visitors have. The theoretical explanation proposed by researchers for the observed differences in the experiences of domestic and international tourists is based on cultural and social distance. It is argued that as the social, cultural, and/or psychological distance between a visitor and a destination increases, the visitor's experiences and perceptions of that environment become increasingly unique (Crotts and McKercher 2006; Iordanova and Stylidis 2019; McKercher and Chow 2001). This differentiation is due to factors such as cultural unfamiliarity, which increases the sense of novelty and discovery for international visitors (Bideci and Albayrak 2018; Ponsignon et al. 2021), while domestic visitors may find the environment more familiar and predictable (Ng et al. 2007). These differences in visitors' perceptions and experiences are further influenced by visitors' cognitive schemas, which are shaped by their previous experiences and the level of knowledge they have about the environment (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2011; Ramkissoon 2020). The PMM theory posits that the degree of information and familiarity visitors possess with an environment can result in varying interpretations and experiences of the same environment (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Consequently, a comprehensive understanding of these theoretical frameworks is imperative for elucidating why visitor type can serve as a pivotal moderating variable in shaping perceptions of heritagescapes and their outcomes. Visitor type is hence proposed as a critical moderating variable that can either amplify or diminish the impact of heritagescape dimensions on visitor outcomes such as immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions.

Researchers have noted that these differences may be based on differences in tourist mindset and desire for escape (Bideci and Albayrak 2018; Ponsignon et al. 2021). These distinct visitor mindsets can lead to varying levels of psychological engagement, with international visitors often experiencing higher levels of novelty and relaxation due to the foreign environment. Since domestic visitors travel to relatively familiar destinations with similar language, attitudes, and norms (Li and Wu 2019), these similarities shape the travel behavior of domestic visitors according to the residual mindset they adopt in their place of origin (Ryan 1994). In contrast, international visitors are more likely to adopt the tourist mentality, as they are less familiar with an unusual and foreign destination environment that involves constant change and movement than their domestic



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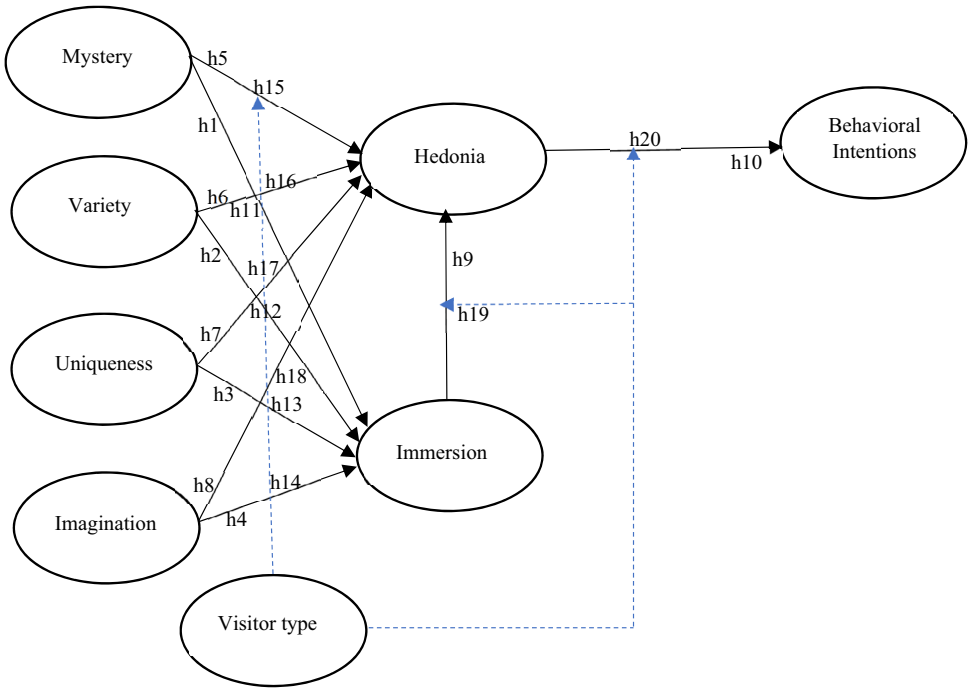



**FIGURE 1** | The hypothesized framework of the study.

counterparts (Ponsignon et al. 2021). With this change in environment and mindset, the psychological tension of foreign tourists is reduced, and thus they can feel great relaxation and happiness (Dogan 2004; Ponsignon et al. 2021; Yüksel 2004).

Tourism researchers also considered the desire to escape to explain the differences among tourists (Bideci and Albayrak 2018; Ponsignon et al. 2021). The escape experience plays a vital role for historical sites and museums, enabling visitors to break away from their daily routines (Lee and Smith 2015; Komarac and Došen 2022) and offering deeper immersion compared to merely absorbing the experience (Pine and Gilmore 2011). Researchers have revealed that international visitors can feel higher hedonia and satisfaction than domestic tourists, as they can escape from their usual daily lives and enter a new environment more than domestic visitors (Bideci and Albayrak 2018; Ponsignon et al. 2021). Carr (2002) found that the behavior of young British tourists differed according to whether they holidayed nationally or internationally; international tourists were more hedonistic than domestic tourists. Šagovnović and Kovačić (2021) showed that international tourists have higher levels of positive emotional experiences than domestic tourists. Ponsignon et al. (2021) reported that international tourists perceive hedonic aspects of an experience more than domestic tourists. Therefore, international tourists are likely to experience a higher level of psychological arousal due to the unfamiliarity of the environment. However, this unfamiliarity can also lead to greater relaxation, relief, and satisfaction once they immerse themselves in the experience. This contrasts with domestic tourists, whose familiarity with the environment may result in a less intense emotional response. In summary, the type of visitor (domestic or international) significantly moderates the relationships between the dimensions of the heritagescape and visitor outcomes, influencing how visitors perceive and interact with heritagescapes, and thereby plays a critical role in shaping their hedonia experiences and behavioral intentions. Based on the above arguments, we hypothesize that the type of visitor (domestic and international) will strengthen or weaken immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions based on the heritagescapes assessed in this study.

**H11–20.** *Visitor type (domestic-international) moderates the relationships between heritagescapes (mystery, variety, uniqueness, and imagination), tourists' hedonia, immersion, and behavioral intentions.*

Figure 1 illustrates the study's framework for testing its hypotheses.

## 4 | Method

The present study adopts a quantitative approach. Borrowing reliable measurement scales from well-established studies, a questionnaire was designed in both English and Turkish to gather data from a diverse group of visitors. The survey also collected sociodemographic information, such as gender, age, education, and nationality. To ensure the accuracy of the Turkish translation, we employed the back-translation method.

### 4.1 | Measurement

All constructs have been adapted from previous studies to the context of cultural heritage experience and measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7). Three items were used to measure immersion and behavioral intentions; four items were used for mystery, imagination, and variety constructs; and five items were used for uniqueness and hedonia (see Data S1).



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### 4.2 | Sampling and Data Collection

Data were collected from visitors visiting Göreme Open Air Museum, an archaeological heritage site in Cappadocia, Turkiye between October and November 2021 using convenience sampling. Questionnaires were administered face-to-face by three interviewers and two tourist guides at the end of the visitors' experience. To estimate the sample size, we used G*Power. The a priori G*Power calculation demonstrated a sample size of 172 was required for model testing. Hence, a sample of 512 is acceptable for analyzing the structural model. The results show that 63.3% of respondents were international visitors ($f=254$), and 36.7% were domestic visitors ($f=188$) (50.6% male; 48.8% female).

### 4.3 | Data Analysis

PLS-SEM and multigroup analysis (MGA) were applied to examine the measurement model, structural model, and hypotheses. To examine the moderating effects of tourist type on the structural model, we used PLS-SEM to MICOM test and multigroup analysis (PLS-MGA). Harman's single factor test and variance inflation factor (VIF) were used to check CMV. The total variance extracted by one factor was 41.38%, which was under the recommended threshold of 50%. In addition, outer VIF values for items (from 1.451 to 3.177) were less than a cut-off value of 5.0 (Hair et al. 2019). Pairwise correlations were also used to examine common method bias. All correlations are below 0.9 (see Table 2). These results indicate that the data were not affected by single-source bias.

## 5 | Findings

### 5.1 | Measurement Model

All domestic and international visitors had loading values above 0.70, and only one item of both groups loading values from the hedonia construct was above 0.06; however, it was still acceptable (Hair et al. 2011) (Table 1). AVE values of all latent variables in the measurement model exceeded the cutoff values of 0.50 for both groups. The Cronbach's alpha and CR values for all constructs were higher than threshold value of 0.70 for both groups of visitors. Hence, the measurement model's reliability and convergent validity were established.

As shown in Table 2, based on Fornell–Larcker criteria, the root square value of AVE was higher than correlation values in rows and columns. Moreover, all HTMT values were lower than the threshold value of 0.85 for two groups. These results indicate that each of the two groups' measurement models possesses acceptable discriminant validity.

### 5.2 | Structural Model

The structural model was examined through a bootstrapping technique with 5000 sub-samples without considering the moderating effects of visitor type (Table 3). The SRMR (0.062) value was lower than the threshold of 0.80 (Henseler et al. 2016), confirming that the proposed model had a good model fit. Further, the Stone–Geisser (Q2) was assessed for predictive relevance of the model through blindfolding procedures. $Q^2$ for immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions was 0.213, 0.315, and 0.320, respectively, indicating acceptable predictive relevance. The $R^2$ value of the endogenous constructs was examined as being indicative of the model's explanatory power. The $R^2$ value of immersion was 0.850, hedonia was 0.628, and behavioral intention was 0.780, which displays hedonia had a moderate level of predictive power, while immersion and behavioral intention had substantial levels of predictive power.

As seen in Table 3, the path coefficients and t-values demonstrate that mystery, imagination, variety, and uniqueness had a significant positive relationship with immersion. Further, mystery, imagination, and variety had a significant positive relationship with hedonia, while uniqueness had no significant association with hedonia. The path result shows that immersion had a significant positive relationship with hedonia. Also, hedonia had a significant positive relationship with behavioral intentions. The effect sizes ($f^2$) showed a combination of small, medium, and large effects, with the largest being for the relationship between hedonia and behavioral intentions (Table 3). In light of these results, H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H8, H9, and H10 were accepted; however, H7 was rejected.

### 5.3 | Measurement Invariance for Composite (MICOM) Procedure, MGA

The moderator effect of visitor type on structural relationships was analyzed in PLS-SEM by following three steps. First, MICOM was used to establish measurement invariance in the structural model between groups, followed by MGA analysis (Sarstedt et al. 2021). MICOM was run through the permutation procedure with 5000 samples, a two-tailed test, and a 0.05 significance level. Since the PLS models, data treatment, and algorithm settings used for the groups were all identical, the configural invariance was established (Step 1). To assess the compositional invariance of the model (Step 2), the permutation procedure was conducted (results for visitor type in Table 4). Third, equality of the composites' mean values and variances across groups was assessed. In Step 3, we found significant differences in the means and variances of composites between domestic and international visitors. Therefore, as Step 3 was not met, partial measurement invariance was accepted, and the PLS-MGA was performed. MGA results indicated that significant differences existed in the path estimates between the structural models for domestic and international visitors (Table 5). For international visitors, mystery has a positive relationship with hedonia ($\beta=0.264$, $p=0.000$). In contrast, this relationship was nonsignificant for domestic visitors ($\beta=0.057$, $p=0.450$). Also, for international visitors, variety has a positive relationship with immersion ($\beta=0.351$, $p=0.000$). However, no significant effect of variety on immersion was found for domestic visitors ($\beta=0.030$, $p=0.822$).

## 6 | Theoretical Contributions

The present study enriches our knowledge of heritagescapes and enables us to develop a deeper understanding of the heritagescapes of visitors as cocreators. This study makes a unique



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**TABLE 1** | Measurement model.

| | Loadings | | Cronbach's alpha | | CR | | AVE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Construct/items** | **Domestic** | **International** | **Domestic** | **International** | **Domestic** | **International** | **Domestic** | **International** |
| Mystery (MY) | | | 0.870 | 0.861 | 0.911 | 0.906 | 0.718 | 0.706 |
| MY1 | 0.845 | 0.817 | | | | | | |
| MY2 | 0.864 | 0.861 | | | | | | |
| MY3 | 0.866 | 0.867 | | | | | | |
| MY4 | 0.813 | 0.814 | | | | | | |
| Imagination (IMG) | | | 0.938 | 0.885 | 0.956 | 0.920 | 0.844 | 0.743 |
| IMG1 | 0.906 | 0.810 | | | | | | |
| IMG2 | 0.921 | 0.874 | | | | | | |
| IMG3 | 0.931 | 0.877 | | | | | | |
| IMG4 | 0.917 | 0.885 | | | | | | |
| Variety (VRY) | | | 0.900 | 0.832 | 0.930 | 0.888 | 0.768 | 0.665 |
| VRY1 | 0.890 | 0.845 | | | | | | |
| VRY2 | 0.890 | 0.804 | | | | | | |
| VRY3 | 0.888 | 0.827 | | | | | | |
| VRY4 | 0.836 | 0.785 | | | | | | |
| Uniqueness (UQ) | | | 0.877 | 0.802 | 0.910 | 0.862 | 0.670 | 0.556 |
| UQ1 | 0.755 | 0.773 | | | | | | |
| UQ2 | 0.839 | 0.801 | | | | | | |
| UQ3 | 0.878 | 0.735 | | | | | | |
| UQ4 | 0.811 | 0.695 | | | | | | |
| UQ5 | 0.805 | 0.721 | | | | | | |
| Immersion (IMM) | | | 0.938 | 0.890 | 0.960 | 0.932 | 0.890 | 0.820 |
| IMM1 | 0.942 | 0.867 | | | | | | |
| IMM2 | 0.944 | 0.931 | | | | | | |
| IMM3 | 0.944 | 0.918 | | | | | | |

(Continues)



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**TABLE 1** | (Continued)

| Construct/items | Loadings | | Cronbach's alpha | | CR | | AVE | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Domestic | International | Domestic | International | Domestic | International | Domestic | International |
| Hedonia (HED) | | | 0.825 | 0.850 | 0.878 | 0.894 | 0.592 | 0.628 |
| HED1 | 0.703 | 0.789 | | | | | | |
| HED2 | 0.830 | 0.850 | | | | | | |
| HED3 | 0.853 | 0.845 | | | | | | |
| HED4 | 0.783 | 0.775 | | | | | | |
| HED5 | 0.659 | 0.696 | | | | | | |
| Behavioral intentions (BI) | | | 0.883 | 0.830 | 0.927 | 0.899 | 0.810 | 0.748 |
| BI1 | 0.903 | 0.779 | | | | | | |
| BI2 | 0.919 | 0.915 | | | | | | |
| BI3 | 0.877 | 0.894 | | | | | | |

contribution to the heritage tourism literature by developing and empirically validating a comprehensive model of 'heritagescapes' that integrates both tangible environmental components (variety, mystery, uniqueness) and the crucial psychological dimension of imagination, demonstrating their impact on visitor immersion, hedonia, and behavioral intentions. Moreover, the current study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of visitor segmentation by demonstrating that the impact of specific heritagescape dimensions on immersion and hedonia varies significantly between domestic and international visitors.

Unlike studies that treat heritage experiences as a homogenous construct, our research delineates the distinct roles of variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination in shaping visitor engagement, thus extending the concept of experiencescape into the realm of archaeological heritage. By incorporating "imagination" as a key dimension, our model moves beyond a purely descriptive approach, acknowledging the active role of visitors in cocreating meaning and deriving pleasure from their engagement with the past. This dual approach highlights how visitors interact with their environment to make sense of and create their experiences (Saha 2022). Researchers argue that individuals can make sense of the environment, involved in and explore the environment according to the amount of information provided by the environment (Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Especially the amount of information in the environment is crucial for visitors to make sense of and produce their experiences, especially in new and extraordinary archaeological heritage sites far from modern life and images, at a temporal and spatial level. Variety, as the richness of physical, visual, and sensory elements in the environment where experiences are produced enables visitors to discover and make sense of the experience (Ramkissoon et al. 2025). Curiosity and novelty, which are among the essential motives that push visitors to tourism experiences, are counterparts in the physical environment with the element of mystery and uniqueness, which enable the individual to access more information as they progress in an environment. Through these elements in the archaeological heritage site surrounding the visitor's experience, visitors might gain information about the experience environment, past lives, and culture as they progress through the cultural heritage sites. Thus, visitors can connect with the physical context and past civilizations and produce their own meanings.

Visitors are co-creators of the environment and experiences by attributing and imagining meanings (Ramkissoon and Uysal 2018). Therefore, imagination plays a vital role in driving tourism experiences. Individual experiences in the context of cultural heritage reflect a complex situation in which well-known narratives can be repeated and reimagined, and reconstructed on a personal level (Timoney 2020). Imagination, stimulated by the images surrounding the heritage site and the narrations of guides, can be both the source of the escape desired by visitors (Goulding 2000) and establish a connection between the tourism landscapes and past experiences, civilizations, and cultures. Consequently, visitors produce their experiences both by perceiving the physical environment that includes physical, sensory, and visual elements and by including their own meaning and imagination. This reaffirms the interaction between tangible and intangible components in constructing heritagescapes.



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**TABLE 2** | Discriminant validity.

| | BI | HED | IMG | IMM | MY | UQ | VRY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Domestic visitors | | | | | | | |
| BI | 0.900 | | | | | | |
| HED | 0.658 (0.754) | 0.769 | | | | | |
| IMG | 0.468 (0.515) | 0.620 (0.707) | 0.918 | | | | |
| IMM | 0.548 (0.595) | 0.641 (0.173) | 0.486 (0.516) | 0.943 | | | |
| MY | 0.523 (0.595) | 0.507 (0.581) | 0.606 (0.672) | 0.402 (0.439) | 0.847 | | |
| UQ | 0.450 (0.516) | 0.400 (0.449) | 0.423 (0.460) | 0.247 (0.266) | 0.639 (0.724) | 0.818 | |
| VRY | 0.463 (0.514) | 0.526 (0.585) | 0.722 (0.783) | 0.385 (0.413) | 0.606 (0.679) | 0.559 (0.634) | 0.876 |
| International visitors | | | | | | | |
| BI | 0.864 | | | | | | |
| HED | 0.622 (0.731) | 0.792 | | | | | |
| IMG | 0.411 (0.481) | 0.561 (0.647) | 0.862 | | | | |
| IMM | 0.234 (0.275) | 0.555 (0.635) | 0.411 (0.460) | 0.905 | | | |
| MY | 0.440 (0.511) | 0.525 (0.612) | 0.527 (0.607) | 0.316 (0.361) | 0.840 | | |
| UQ | 0.359 (0.437) | 0.376 (0.445) | 0.498 (0.606) | 0.185 (0.210) | 0.680 (0.811) | 0.745 | |
| VRY | 0.324 (0.386) | 0.536 (0.635) | 0.565 (0.656) | 0.465 (0.539) | 0.471 (0.556) | 0.459 (0.562) | 0.815 |

**TABLE 3** | Structural model.

| | | | | | Confidence interval | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Hypothesis** | **Relationships** | **$\beta$** | ***t* value** | **$f^2$** | **2.5%** | **97.5%** | **Inner VIF** | **Decision** |
| H1 | MY → HED | 0.182 | 3.858 | 0.032 | 0.087 | 0.271 | 2.118 | Supported |
| H2 | MY → IMM | 0.178 | 3.118 | 0.020 | 0.065 | 0.288 | 2.078 | Supported |
| H3 | IMG → HED | 0.248 | 4.903 | 0.064 | 0.151 | 0.340 | 1.796 | Supported |
| H4 | IMG → IMM | 0.268 | 4.82 | 0.051 | 0.166 | 0.388 | 1.727 | Supported |
| H5 | VRY → HED | 0.118 | 2.406 | 0.021 | 0.022 | 0.209 | 1.764 | Supported |
| H6 | VRY → IMM | 0.252 | 4.22 | 0.046 | 0.129 | 0.355 | 1.594 | Supported |
| H7 | UQ → HED | 0.003 | 0.070 | 0.026 | 0.094 | 0.081 | 2.052 | Rejected |
| H8 | UQ → IMM | 0.160 | 2.638 | 0.035 | 0.282 | 0.054 | 1.995 | Supported |
| H9 | IMM → HED | 0.370 | 8.759 | 0.212 | 0.281 | 0.443 | 1.373 | Supported |
| H10 | HED → BI | 0.646 | 15.609 | 0.715 | 0.553 | 0.714 | 1.000 | Supported |

This study uniquely contributes to the literature by demonstrating that the newly defined construct of "heritagescapes," encompassing variety, mystery, uniqueness, and, particularly, imagination, serves as a critical driver of visitor immersion within cultural heritage experiences. Hence, our study expands the theoretical understanding of how heritagescapes affect immersion during the visitors' cultural heritage experience. The findings show that variety, mystery, imagination, and uniqueness are key drivers of visitor immersion in heritage experiences. Our findings empirically demonstrate that variety, mystery, imagination, and uniqueness drive visitors to explore the environment and be more immersed in the experience. Our study hence validates that as the sensory stimuli in heritage sites increase, visitors' knowledge and immersion in the environment are enhanced, contributing to a deeper involvement with the site; our findings lend further support to the literature for more conclusive evidence. Visitors in a special and extraordinary environment must be ready to immerse themselves in the environment and experience they are surrounded by to have the extraordinary experiences they desire. However, visitors often find themselves in an unusual and potentially dangerous environment and it is more difficult to immerse themselves in the experience



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**TABLE 4** | MICOM results.

| Step 2 | Original correlation (*c*) | 95% CI of *cu* |
|---|---|---|
| BI | 0.999 | 0.998 |
| HED | 0.999 | 0.998 |
| IMG | 1.000 | 0.999 |
| IMM | 1.000 | 0.999 |
| MY | 0.999 | 0.997 |
| UQ | 0.997 | 0.982 |
| VRY | 0.999 | 0.998 |
| **Step 3a composite** | **Difference of composite's mean value** | **95% CI of permutation mean value** |
| BI | −0.162 | −0.185–0.165 |
| HED | −0.115 | −0.182–0.165 |
| IMG | −0.160 | −0.19–0.176 |
| IMM | −0.085 | −0.163–0.172 |
| MY | −0.101 | −0.171–0.166 |
| UQ | −0.003 | −0.191–0.173 |
| VRY | −0.159 | −0.173–0.175 |
| **Step 3b composite** | **Difference of composite's variances ratio** | **95% CI of permutation variances ratio** |
| BI | 0.255 | −0.606–0.500 |
| HED | −0.064 | −0.338–0.322 |
| IMG | 0.148 | −0.271–0.272 |
| IMM | 0.204 | −0.237–0.214 |
| MY | 0.082 | −0.402–0.405 |
| UQ | 0.115 | −0.372–0.400 |
| VRY | 0.097 | −0.313–0.282 |

(Caru' and Cova 2006). Experiencescapes facilitate immersion by creating a protective framework around the experience and providing information about the context (Hansen 2014). The immersion process is triggered by the physical environment and is a more flexible and dynamic process associated with ongoing interactions within experiencescapes (Hansen 2014). Similarly, researchers noted that involvement, exploration, and immersion in the experience of the environment were associated with the degree of knowledge gained while navigating an environment (Bitner 1992; Kaplan and Kaplan 1989). Thus, as the variety and mystery of the unique and novel sensory stimuli surrounding the heritage experience increases, visitors' knowledge of the environment and experience may increase enabling them to be more immersed in the experience.

Furthermore, our research findings revealed that mystery had a positive relationship with immersion for international visitors, but the mystery had no significant effect on immersion for domestic visitors. As the intensity of the mystery stimulus increases, especially for international visitors who are more foreign to the experience environment than domestic visitors, visitors may tend to be more involved and immersed in the environment where the experience is lived. Thus, it is possible for visitors to acquire new information and insights into the past and immerse themselves in experiences. On the other hand, Crouch et al. (2005) argue that tourism consumption includes an imaginative process in which tourists develop various perceptions of the world and implement their tourism practices accordingly. Imagination enables the tourist to become active in the heritage site to produce their experiences and shape their representation. It is possible for the tourist, who becomes active with the knowledge and imagination presented about the cultural heritage site, past civilizations, and cultures, to focus and immerse in the heritage experience.

It contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence that heritagescapes, a construct encompassing both tangible and intangible elements, significantly influence visitors' hedonic experiences within archaeological heritage sites. Our findings strengthen the conceptual framework for the consequences of heritagescapes based on the S-O-R model. We demonstrate that the variety, imagination, and mystery of the environment surrounding the heritage experience had a positive effect on visitors' experiences of hedonia. Moreover, our research reveals that variety was positively associated with hedonia for international visitors, whereas for domestic visitors, variety had no significant effect on hedonia. As pleasure and feeling good, hedonia emerges with individuals' physical and mental rearrangement in the cultural heritage site (Ngnoumen and Langer 2016). This situation generally depends on the tourists' perception of the experience environment and the elements in the environment (Rubin et al. 2011). When the visual and sensory elements offered to visitors in heritage sites increase, visitors' knowledge of the experience and environment increases, and they feel safe in this new environment. Thus, visitors might enjoy the experience and feel good about themselves. Lee (2024) found that when tourists perceive the mystery in destinations, their positive feelings about the destination increase. Similarly, in the current study, we found that visitors who perceive the mystery of the physical environment show an increase in their happiness and positive feelings.

Further, our study highlights a positive relationship between imagination and hedonia as heritagescapes. The positive relationship between imagination and hedonia supports our argument that heritagescapes are powerful catalysts for emotional and imaginative engagement. The emotional impact of consumer culture stems from the fact that emotions, though genuine, are experienced in an imagined way, resulting from consumers' interactions with a realm of signs and images. Campbell (1987) states that pleasure does not arise from the satisfaction of needs but from the satisfaction of a desire originating from the individual's imagination. The narratives of guides and imagery surrounding the physical environment in the context of heritagescapes are sources of imagination and, thus, can be a source of pleasure for tourists who relate to the past, make sense of it, and transform it.

While prior studies have primarily examined the relationship between immersion and hedonia in nature-based contexts, our



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**TABLE 5** | MGA results.

| Path | Path coefficient for domestic visitors | Path coefficient for international visitors | Path coefficient difference ($\beta_{\text{Domestic}} - \beta_{\text{International}}$) | *p* difference (domestic vs. international) | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| HED → BI | 0.658 | 0.622 | 0.036 | 0.652 | NS |
| IMG → HED | 0.291 | 0.226 | 0.065 | 0.531 | NS |
| IMG → IMM | 0.369 | 0.225 | 0.143 | 0.305 | NS |
| IMM → HED | 0.428 | 0.313 | 0.115 | 0.170 | NS |
| MY → HED | 0.057 | 0.264 | 0.207 | 0.038 | *** |
| MY → IMM | 0.191 | 0.107 | 0.020 | 0.869 | NS |
| UQ → HED | 0.101 | 0.048 | 0.150 | 0.103 | NS |
| UQ → IMM | 0.048 | 0.203 | 0.155 | 0.218 | NS |
| VRY → HED | 0.059 | 0.159 | 0.100 | 0.299 | NS |
| VRY → IMM | 0.030 | 0.351 | 0.320 | 0.031 | *** |

*Note:* NS, not significant.
***Significant.

research extends this understanding to the under-explored realm of archaeological heritage, demonstrating that immersion indeed strengthens the pleasure and happiness of visitors during their heritage experience. Emotional responses have been previously associated with immersion in the tourism literature. For example, Hansen (2014) found that immersion triggers pleasure. Løvoll (2019) determined that concentration in immersive experiences is associated with hedonistic emotions. However, most studies that question the relationship between immersion and hedonia have been examined with regard to nature-based experiences. The association between immersion and hedonia within the context of heritage experiences proved that immersion strengthens the pleasure and happiness of visitors during their heritage experience.

Finally, building on the S-O-R model, our study provides empirical evidence for the link between the emotional responses elicited by heritagescapes and visitors' behavioral intentions, confirming that positive hedonic experiences foster a desire to revisit and recommend heritage sites. Thus, this study provides a more holistic framework for understanding visitor experiences by recognizing the interplay between the physical environment, visitor's internal cognitive, and emotional processes. According to Tsai. (2021) and Vada et al. (2019), tourists experiencing hedonic well-being are more inclined to return to a destination. Furthermore, Lee (2024) indicated that hedonic experience affects behavioral intention in heritage tourism. Based on S-O-R theory, the current study confirmed the influence of emotional responses resulting from tangible and intangible elements surrounding heritage experiences on individuals' behavioral responses. Our findings reveal that when visitors enjoy their experience and feel good themselves, they are willing to revisit the cultural heritage site and recommend it to others.

## 7 | Practical Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

Because of the individual, subjective nature of heritage experiences resulting from complex psychological processes, it is almost impossible for providers of experience products to produce and control them. Intervening in and controlling heritagescapes can help experience producers facilitate and add value to visitor experiences. Our study offers valuable insights for heritage site managers by identifying the heritagescape dimensions—variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination and revealing their significant impacts on visitors.

Our findings demonstrate a positive relationship between heritagescapes (variety, mystery, uniqueness, and imagination) and visitors' immersion and hedonia. While traditional visitor engagement strategies often rely on uniform experiences, such as straightforward information transfer, our research highlight the need for multisensory and layered approaches. Activities like reenactments, workshops that allow visitors to craft their own stories about the site, and storytelling or legends emphasizing the site's mystery can enrich the variety, mystery, and uniqueness of the experience. These activities not only stimulate visitors' imagination, making their participation more meaningful and memorable, but also require minimal financial investment, making them viable for resource-constrained heritage sites. Moreover, leveraging volunteer programs and collaborating with local communities can help these heritage sites expand their engagement strategies without the need for significant additional funding.

Our findings reveal that variety and mystery have a stronger effect on hedonia for international visitors. Therefore, for international tourists, guided tours in different languages, storytelling and legends, as well as reenactments can be organized in multiple languages. Furthermore, site managers can leverage the "imagination" dimension of heritagescapes to ensure that visitors participate emotionally and cognitively in an active manner. By doing so, they can transform visitors from mere consumers of information into cocreators of the experience.

Ultimately, to create more immersive and pleasurable experiences for visitors, heritage experience providers must deepen



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their understanding of the relationship between heritagescapes, immersion, and hedonia. By strategically designing heritagescapes, providers can leverage the interconnectedness of immersion, hedonia, and memorable experiences to offer visitors more valuable and positive engagements.

This study has several limitations, but they also suggest directions for future research. Our research findings were based on data derived from Göreme Open Air Museum in Turkey, which might not be generalized to other heritage sites. The research model needs to be tested in different cultural heritage sites for conclusive findings. The current study also focused only on the visitor type (domestic and international), but travel motivations and cultural differences were not considered as a moderator variable. Therefore, including these variables in the research model in future studies is recommended; this will contribute further to the knowledge of heritagescapes and their consequences and improve our understanding of visitors' experiences and behavior.

### Ethics Statement

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Anadolu University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee under protocol number 146555.

### Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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