




MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCES (MTE): INTEGRATING ANTECEDENTS, CONSEQUENCES AND MODERATING FACTOR

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Abstract

Purpose - The concept of tourism as an experience is gaining interest among practitioners and academics alike. This study contributes to the tourism literature by integrating the antecedents and outcomes of memorable tourism experiences (MTE) and consumer-level factors as moderators into a single model.

Design - The study applies primary survey using structured questionnaire. The study hypotheses are empirically tested based on survey data of 700 tourists (both domestic and foreign) in India.

Methodology - The data collected is analyzed using structural equation modeling. The model also includes the moderating role of tourists' openness to experience.

Findings - Findings show a positive impact of destination attributes on MTE. MTE is observed to positively affect its immediate outcomes, perceived value and satisfaction from tourism experiences. Subsequently, satisfaction has a positive effect of loyalty and word of mouth (WOM), but perceived value affects only on word of mouth. Openness to experience moderated the impact of destination attributes on MTE.

Originality - The study makes new theoretical and managerial contributions. The study is one of the first of its kind to integrate the antecedents and outcomes of MTE in a single study. Moreover, the study also considers the moderating influence of tourist personality in the same study.

Keywords memorable tourism experiences, openness to experience, structural equation modeling, India

INTRODUCTION

The changing marketplace from being service dominant to experience based (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Zhang et al. 2018) has drawn the attention of both academicians and practitioners resulting in scholarship on marketing of experiential products and services. Similar to many domains, tourism research has also explored the role of experience in tourism (Ryan 2010; Triantafyllidou and Siomkos 2014; Kim and Chen 2020). The experiences of the tourists reflect the core of the tourism and hospitality industry. Managerial attention has moved from the delivery of "tourism products" to providing "tourism experiences" (Ritchie et al. 2011; Hapsari 2018) to various types of tourists such as leisure seekers, smart tourists and family vacationers. However, travel is fragmented across many experiences such as environment, landscape, climatic

and cultural specificity, adventure, religion and spirituality, destination activities such as shopping and likewise (Kim, Hallab and Kim, 2012; Ritchie et al. 2011) creative tourism (creative tourism New Zealand) (Ali et al. 2015). Thus, destination marketers are carefully creating experiences and communicating the same through destination endorsements such as Historical Egypt, Romance of Paris, Incredible India, Creative Paris, and Dubai Shopping instead of merely selling a destination.

Despite the growing prominence of memorable tourism experiences (MTE) (e.g. Kim and Chen 2020), tourism researchers have investigated the antecedents (Tung and Ritchie 2011; Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012; Kim 2014) and the consequences of MTE separately (e.g. Bolton and Drew 1991; Adhikari and Bhattacharya 2016), while there has been no study that integrates the antecedents and consequences. Researchers also have not integrated consumer level factors that may moderate the relationships between tourism experience facilitators and the actual experience. With growing focus by tourism marketers on building and managing a tourism and service experience that not only creates satisfaction but lead to positive WOM, there is need for a comprehensive study integrating antecedents, consequences and moderators of MTE (Martín-Ruiz et al. 2012; Triantafillidou and Siomkos 2014; Kim and Chen,2020). While there has been some recent interest on the same direction (e.g., Chandralal and Valenzuela 2013; Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018), researchers have either explored the phenomenon in a qualitative manner (e.g., Chandralal and Valenzuela 2013) or have explored the phenomenon partially (e.g., Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018). Thus, an understanding of a research model that has MTE as the focal construct and integrates its antecedents and consequences using a rigorous quantitative approach would not only establish the importance of MTE in tourism research, it would also allow an understanding of the effects of destination attributes such as destination image on MTE and the consequent effect of MTE on consumer level outcomes such as satisfaction and loyalty.

The three major research questions that we try to address in the present study are:1) what is the effect of destination attributes on MTE; 2) what is the effect of MTE on immediate outcomes such as perceived value and satisfaction and subsequent outcomes such as loyalty and word of mouth; 3) what is the moderating effect (if any) of consumer openness to experience on relation between destination attributes and MTE. To summarize, the present study empirically validates a model that has MTE as a mediator between destination attributes and attitudinal effects on the consumer (in form of perceived value and satisfaction) and subsequent effects on tourist loyalty and word of mouth including the moderating effect of the consumer's openness to experience on the relation between the antecedents to MTE.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Memorable Tourist Experience

The central interest of research in tourist experience is based on investigating the psychology underlying tourist experience and to comprehend how the same experiences may be transformed into memorable experiences (Chandralal et al. 2015; Kim and Chen 2020). Experience has an important influence on memory generation which is the primary objective of the tourism industry (Gohary et al 2020). Infact, the yearning for authentic experiences has become imperative in tourism and reflects the current experience economy (Cornelisse 2018). The experience of a tourist is the personal state of the mind that is felt during a tourism service encounter (Ryan 2010). Tourism experience comprises of multiple aspects, encompassing behavior, perception, cognition and emotions: that may be explicitly expressed or implied (Kim and Chen 2020) and internal connections are important for extraordinary experience (Iványi and Bíró-Szigeti 2020). Multiple conceptualizations of tourism experience have been constructed including travel experience (Ryan 2010); transformative tourism experience (Kirillova, et al. 2017); and memorable tourism experience (Kim 2014; Kim and Chen 2019; Kim and Chen 2020), of which the last one received significant importance among researchers.

A memorable tourism experience could be defined as a significant event that is accumulated in the memory of the tourist and can be evoked later (Kim and Chen 2020). Such memorable experiences may lead to psychological outcomes in the consumer such as a sense of happiness and enjoyment that embeds in long term memory and is cherished (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Sthapit and Björk 2019). Researchers have reflected that travelers are information creators, processors and distributors who co-create their own experiences and are in no way passive information consumers (Suhartanto et al. 2020).

MTEs are carefully created from the complete tourist experience and can be easily reminisced even when the trip is over (Sthapit and Björk 2019; Kim and Chen 2020). Consumers first recollect previous travel experiences before they seek information regarding a destination and decide to travel. Thus, MTEs are relevant for the destination marketers as they also affect future decision making of the consumer (Kim et al. 2010). MTE is based on two aspects, (a) tourism experience in a provided time and space and (b) procedure of creating memories concerning experience or consumption (Coelho et al. 2018). Tourism researchers emphasize on the role of memorable experiences in influencing revisit decisions and WOM communication (Marschall 2012; Hapsari 2018; Suhartanto et al. 2020). Thus, one could argue that MTE would act as a mediator between destination attributes and consumer attitudes and behavior post the experience.

1.2. Facets of MTE

Research in MTE is relatively less compared to customer experience literature in mainstream marketing (Kim and Ritchie 2014). Tung and Ritchie (2011) discussed 4 dimensions of MTE (viz. affect, consequentiality, expectations and recollection). Subsequently, Kim, Ritchie and McCormick (2012b) constructed a seven-dimensional MTE scale, where the dimensions were: refreshment, hedonism, local culture, knowledge, meaningfulness, involvement, and novelty. Hedonism refers to the emotions and feelings that are positively connected with tourist experiences, e.g., happiness and excitement (Tung and Ritchie 2011). Refreshment is the feeling of being relaxed or rejuvenated that has a positive impact on people's travel memories (Kim 2010). Local culture is concerned with close interactions of the tourists with the local people that result in making the travel experience a memorable one (Morgan and Xu 2009). Meaningfulness is important for the well-being of a person and has a sense of achieving something worthy (Baumeister and Vohs 2002). Knowledge relates to the information, facts or experiences that a tourist gains in tourism (Blackshaw 2003). Involvement indicates the immersion that the tourist finds him/herself in an activity that results in a memorable experience (Pine and Gilmore 1999). Novelty is the act of experiencing new things (such as, culture, food, and accommodation) as a part of the tour as a component of MTEs (Chandralal and Valenzuela 2013). Subsequently, Chandralal et al. (2015) discussed seven experiential themes of tourism experience: "*local people's life and culture, personally significant experiences, shared experiences, perceived novelty, perceived serendipity, professional guides and tour operator services, and affective emotions*". Recent research on MTE focuses on the network of MTE and other constructs such as destination image, attachment, satisfaction, memory and belief, subjective well-being, and loyalty (Tsai 2016; Kim 2018; Zhang et al. 2018; Kim and Chen 2020).

1.3. Destination Attributes as Antecedents of MTE

Tourists are significantly affected by the various attributes that characterize a destination. Destination attributes encourage marketers to "*facilitate the development of destination that enhances the likelihood that tourists can create their own Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE)*" (Tung and Ritchie 2011, 3). A combination of attributes, such as country image, landscape, local shopping experiences, cultural exchange, destination infrastructure and entertainment results in the construction of favorable image of the destination and affect individuals' choice of the same (e.g., Kim, Hallab and Kim, 2012). In addition, the performance of the destination attributes leads to creation of MTE and tourists' future behavior (Triantafillidou and Siomkos 2014). Tourists who are enticed by the destination's attributes engross themselves in activities offered at the destination that may affect the memorable experiences (Kim 2014).

Thus, destination attributes would affect MTE. Researchers have tried understanding the factors that lead to favorable MTE, without unanimity in the outcomes (Kim 2010; Kim, Hallab and Kim, 2012). However, researchers have not yet explored the effect of the major destination attributes (that lead to the creation of experiences) on

the multidimensional MTE construct (Assaf and Josiassen 2012). This exploration becomes important as various factors of a destination, such as, the perception about the infrastructure, accessibility and management of the destination are expected to influence the tourism experience and the traveler's memory (e.g., Kim 2014; Kim and Chen 2020). Thereby, we postulate our first hypothesis as:

H1: Favorable destination attributes have a positive and significant effect on MTE.

1.4. Consequences of MTE

Experience as defined Carlson (1997) is “a perpetual flow of views and feelings that transpire during the moments of consciousness”. The experiences that the consumers' store in their memory are important sources of internal information for subsequent decision making as suggested by Hoch and Deighton (1989). Experiences are vital for tourists as they result in attitudinal (e.g., perceived value and satisfaction) and behavioral (e.g., loyalty and WOM) outcomes (Suhartanto et al. 2020). However, not all outcomes may be direct as Tsai (2016) and Sharma and Nayak (2019) reflects that MTEs may have both direct and indirect effect on intentions and behavior. We argue that MTEs may influence attitudinal outcomes directly and behavioral outcomes indirectly. The immediate outcomes could be explained using the expectation confirmation theory (ECT) of Oliver (1980). The ECT has applied to explain tourist experience by Ryan (2010) and used in empirical research by Kim (2018). According to the ECT, post consumption evaluation (i.e., the outcome of MTE) is a function of the confirmation/disconfirmation of the beliefs held by the consumer for the product/service consumed. Thus, there should be some immediate outcomes based on the attitudinal confirmation/disconfirmation of the beliefs related to the tourism destination that were built through various media and communication (even past experience).

One of the immediate outcomes of MTE is perceived value. Perceived value as defined by Zeithaml (1988) is the “*consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given*” (p. 14). Strong value perceptions are generated by services that offer memorable experiences in the context of services (Edvardsson et al. 2005). The same has been observed across tourism industry (Chen and Tsai 2007). It is also observed that destinations providing good quality, satisfying experiences are perceived by the tourists to be of high value (Lee et al. 2007).

The next immediate outcome of MTE that we discuss is tourist satisfaction. Past studies have established that satisfaction is the outcome of consumer's appraisal of the value of experience over the experience process (Suhartanto, et al. 2020). Scholars have studied the impact of experience on consumer satisfaction (e.g., Bolton and Drew 1991) and have opined that experience may have a long-lasting impact on consumer satisfaction. While satisfaction is an important component of any experience (including MTE) (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982), the extent of satisfaction may be decided by the tourist responses to the service-quality at a subjective/affective level (Suhartanto, et al. 2020). Thereby, a memorable tourism experience would generate satisfaction among the tourists (Tung

and Ritchie 2011; Sharma and Nayak 2019). Summarizing the discussion, we postulate the next two hypotheses:

H2a: MTE will have a positive and significant effect on perceived value of tourism.

H2b: MTE will have a positive and significant effect on tourist satisfaction.

1.5. Subsequent Consequences of MTE

One of the purposes of tourist destinations is to generate value for the tourists immersed in a memorable experience and thereby, make them revisit (Triantafyllidou and Siomkos 2014). Researchers note that organizations that are seeking novel ways to create an experience (that would also aid in positioning), will be successful in customer retention (Bendapudi and Leone 2003). We draw explanations behind such inference based on the liminality theory (Gennep 1960; Turner 1974). According to the liminality theory, an individual may pass through a liminal phase (may be because of a new environment or experience) that allows him/her to move from ordinary to extraordinary and may have a complete change of perspectives where they create new perspectives dissolving the previously held ones. If we juxtapose this rationale in the case of MTE, one could argue that MTE allows tourists to pass through a liminal phase where he/she may experience transformation that, if positive, leads to the consequential outcomes such as tourist loyalty and WOM.

Research has supported the association between the customers' perceived value and its relational outcomes, namely, loyalty (e.g., Harris and Goode 2004), and positive word of mouth (e.g., Dubrovski 2001). The extent of loyalty towards the destination is reflected in tourists' revisit intentions and their willingness to advocate the tourist destination among their peers (Chen and Tsai 2007) and their previous brand experience (Hussein 2018). We already posited that the customers who encounter memorable service experience would have a positive perceived value. This perceived value would create effective informal communication or word of mouth (WOM) regarding the service. Mainstream marketing researchers have established perceived value as the major influencer of consumer satisfaction and behavioural intentions (e.g. Cronin et al. 2000; Coelho et al. 2018). Behavioral intentions are significant indicators for firms to comprehend whether customers will stay with, or leave the firm. Based on the arguments discussed, we postulate the next hypotheses:

H3a: Perceived value (derived from MTE) has a positive and significant effect on loyalty

H3b: Perceived value (derived from MTE) has a positive and significant effect on WOM

Tourist satisfaction refers to the function of expectations before traveling and post-travel experiences. Literature postulates that highly satisfied customers are the most valuable customers who spread positive WOM and reflect strong loyalty (Lee et al. 2011; Suhartanto et al. 2020). A satisfied tourist tends to communicate his/her positive experience through WOM and elicits repeat visit (loyalty) (Bigné et al. 2005).

In addition, Ou and Verhoef (2017) note that emotional experiences relying on relational exchange between the tourists and service providers result in future loyalty. Customers who are loyal will reflect behaviours such as repeat purchase (visit) and promote the brand via positive WOM in future (Triantafyllidou and Siomkos 2014). Therefore, satisfaction can be studied as the primary phase of developing emotions that results in strong loyalty for the service provider. A satisfied tourist may have destination revisit intentions, recommend it, or spread favorable comments about it (Ryan 2010; Lee et al. 2011). Thereby, we propose the next hypotheses as:

H4a: Satisfaction (resulting from MTE) has a positive and significant effect on loyalty

H4b: Satisfaction (resulting from MTE) has a positive and significant effect on WOM

1.6. Openness to Experience

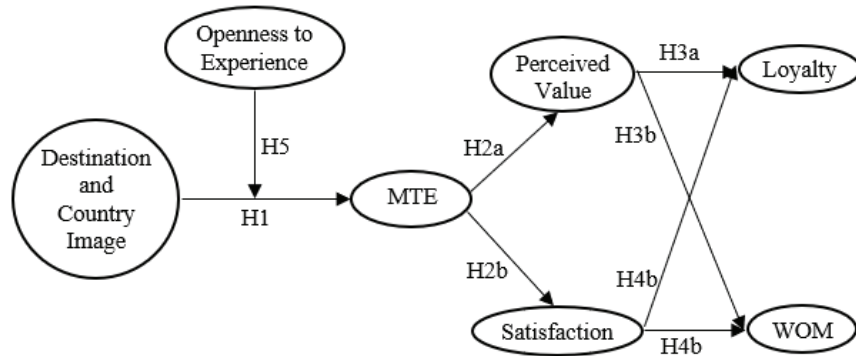
Experience is described as a collection of sensory memorabilia (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Kim and Chen 2020). When buyers purchase an experience, they connect themselves to the memorable events provided by an experience provider. However, it is important for customers to be open (receptive) towards various experiences to make them memorable. Personality traits of the consumer might play a deciding role in predicting and elucidating consumer behavior (Kim and Jang 2016) that is integral for experiences. Risks related to an unexplored destination are influenced by individual personality (Gross and Sand 2020) thereby making openness to experience an essential aspect of tourism.

Openness to experience concerns the extent of an individual's originality, having broad interest, intellectual inquisitiveness and has inclination for variety (Kim and Jang 2016). People with this personality trait are imaginative and sensitive to art and beauty, are intellectually curious, flexible and nondogmatic in their behavior. Individuals more open to experience are likely to be higher in inquisitiveness, imagination power and adaptability to novel circumstances and experiences (Madjar 2008) and foster a wider set of passions and interests (Butt and Phillips 2008). Schneider and Vogt (2012) found tourist personality to influence choice of adventure tourism as the personality traits such as liveliness, competitiveness and cultural experiences are associated with adventure travel. This implies that tourists high on openness to experience would be more affected by destination attributes and form more memorable and strong tourism experiences compared to those who are less open to experiences. Thereby, we argue that openness to experience as a personality trait would moderate the "flow" effect of destination attributes on MTE. However, this aspect of tourist personality traits affecting tourism experience has not been discussed in tourism research as per the authors' knowledge. Hence, we postulate the final hypothesis as:

H5: Openness to experience will moderate the effect of the destination attributes on MTE.

Integrating all the hypotheses, we create the conceptual model in Figure 1 where we place MTE as the focal mediator between destination attributes and consumer outcomes.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Model



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Focal Country

We selected India as the focal country for the research. Most developing countries such as India, Brazil and China have reflected proof of economic growth and latent demand for the tourism industry, both inbound and outbound (Richards 2018). The reason for choosing India as research focal sample country is that because India is expected to set up itself as the fourth largest Travel and Tourism economy by 2027 (Swanston 2019). Both at global and national level, India is revered as an attractive destination offering a diversity of beautiful landscapes and culture but still under researched (Sanjeev and Birdie 2019). The rise of India tourism sector contributed to inbound growth in many destinations (Richards 2018). Thus, India is one of the countries where such a study is applicable and would generate relevant implications.

2.2. Questionnaire Design

The present study has seven major constructs (refer to figure 1) that are: destination attributes, MTE, perceived value, satisfaction, loyalty, WOM and openness to experience. Measures for all constructs were adopted from existing literature except destination attributes; MTE (Kim et al. 2012) (24 items, 7 sub-dimensions); perceived value (Zeithaml 1988) (3 items, 1 dimension); satisfaction (Lee et al. 2011) (3 items, 1 dimension); loyalty (2 items, 1 dimension); word of mouth (2 items, 1 dimension) both from (Murphy et al. 2000); and openness to experience (Moghavvemi et al. 2017) (10 items, 1 dimension). The destination attributes scale (Kim 2014) (33 items, 10 sub-dimensions) was subject to one round of review to suit it better to the Indian context and also with respect to similarity between other constructs in the model. The review was performed by a panel of experts comprising of two marketing scholars specializing in

tourism marketing, two tourism industry experts and a high-level government official in charge or a state tourism board. Based on their suggestions, two dimensions were removed that were local culture and superstructure. Thus, the resultant scale had 8 dimensions with 27 items. The items related to the MTE scale were measured on a five-point Likert type scale with endpoints (1 never experienced– 5 strongly experienced). All other items were measured on five-point Likert scales (1 Strongly Disagree – 5 Strongly Agree). The last part of the study questionnaire included respondent demographics.

2.3. Data Collection

The survey data was collected from tourists using systematic random sampling. Three tourism destinations were first chosen in India by the researchers, each of which offered very different tourist experience. The reason behind selecting three different destinations was to avoid bias that may be due to the destination type (such as a beach) and to increase generalizability. The first one was heritage destination, the second one was a skiing destination and third was a beach destination. Next, for each destination, tourists were approached to participate in a survey. This part was governed by systematic sampling. First, one busy location such as the beach, a heritage monument and the mall were selected in each location respectively. Trained associates were given the job to intercept every fifth tourist arriving at the selected place for a full week. Each tourist who was approached was briefed that the feedback given by them would help in the development of tourism and help future tourists. In the case of tourists who came with families, only one person was asked to participate in the survey. Based on consent, the survey was conducted. The data collection associates were asked to maintain 1:1 ratio of domestic: international tourists in each destination. A total of 700 completely filled responses (approximately 231 per destination) were obtained using this procedure (refer to Table 1 for sample demographics).

2.4. Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the data was subjected to exploratory factor analysis to identify the dimensionality and factor structure. This was performed using SPSS software. In the second phase, the data was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to validate the factor structure for convergent and discriminant validity. In the third phase, the data was subjected to path analysis to check for the hypothesized relationships. Both phase two and three were performed using SPSS AMOS. The major part of the analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling (phase 2 and 3) because SEM permits the exploration of real-life phenomenon and “provides a useful forum for sense-making and in so doing link philosophy of science to theoretical and empirical research” (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). SEM is an appropriate statistical technique that allows testing of measurement models and also predictive hypotheses that approximates realities of the world (Bagozzi and Yi 2012). SEM has the ability to assess of latent constructs at the level of observation (i.e., a measurement model) and the testing of hypothesized association between latent constructs at the theoretical

level (structural model) (Hair et al. 2012). SEM is a very popular methodology in social and behavioral sciences and is deemed to be a widely employed statistical technique for estimating complex models that comprise several dependent and independent variables (Heene et al. 2011; MacCallum and Austin 2000). In addition, most empirical studies exploring MTE have used similar procedures like the present study such as Kim et al. (2012); Kim and Ritchie (2014); Kim (2018). Thus the use of SEM is justified.

Table 1: **Sample Demographics**

Characteristics		Frequency	Percentage (N= 700)
Nationality	Indian	356	50.86
	Foreign	344	49.14
Gender	Male	382	54.57
	Female	318	45.43
Age (in years)	20-29	156	22.29
	30-39	242	34.57
	40-49	168	24.00
	50 and above	134	19.14
Education	10+2 (High School)	90	12.86
	College (Graduate)	234	33.43
	Higher (Masters and beyond)	376	53.71
Marital Status	Single	292	41.71
	Married	408	58.29
Annual Income (in USD)	Below 15000	110	15.71
	15000 -25000	172	24.57
	25000 - 50000	186	26.57
	50000 - 100000	144	20.57
	Above 100000	88	12.57
Occupation	Private Service	160	22.86
	Public/Govt. Service	88	12.57
	Business	184	26.29
	Professional (ex. artist)	60	8.57
	Student	164	23.43
	Others	44	6.29

3. FINDINGS

3.1. Exploratory analysis

We first conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of all items used in the study to assess the dimensionality of the factor structure. Results of the EFA indicated a 20-factor solution (Table 2) with the number of factors in each study construct mapping to the scale structures used. Three items from openness to experience were removed because of poor loading. The results indicated a KMO value to be 0.80 and statistically significant Bartlett's Test ($p < 0.01$). A decent portion of the total variance (75%) was explained by the factor solution and each item had communality value above 0.6. The internal consistency reliability measures for each factor was acceptable (measured by Cronbach's Alpha).

Table 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis

Items	Constructs																			
	ASI	HOS	INF	MGT	ACC	SQL	PGY	HED	NOV	LCL	RFR	MNG	INV	KNW	PV	SAT	LOY	WOM	OPN	
ASI1	.711																			
ASI2	.771																			
ASI3	.836																			
ASI4	.699																			
HOS1		.725																		
HOS2		.554																		
HOS3		.821																		
INF1			.746																	
INF2			.824																	
INF3			.861																	
INF4			.825																	
MGT1				.852																
MGT2				.853																
MGT3				.714																
MGT4				.681																

3.2. Confirmatory factor analysis

Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted on the refined items (68) obtained from the test sample on the validation sample. This part of the validation stage aimed to test for convergent and discriminant validity of the factor structure. To this end, we ran a combined measurement model where all the 20 factors were allowed to be correlated among each other. We could not run independent measurement models since many factors had three items (some even had two) which would have led to 'just identified' models (Hair et al. 2008). Results indicated high standardized factor loadings (λ coefficients) (Table 2) and acceptable fit measures (Chi sq/df = 3.79, GFI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, NFI = 0.94, RMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.08) as per standard criteria (Hair et al. 2008). The internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha) values for the factors were above 0.70, ensuring high reliability (Table 3).

Table 3: Item loadings and scale validity (first order constructs)

Dimension	Construct/Item	Standardized loadings
Destination and Country Image (DCI)	Activities and Special Events (ASI) (AVE= 0.57, CR= 0.84, α = 0.77)	
	Different kinds of sports/games/recreational activities in the destination	0.81
	Activities that I cannot usually participate in mundane lives	0.71
	Interesting special events in the destination	0.77
	Festivals and events that I have been interested in	0.73
	Hospitality (HOS) (AVE= 0.64, CR= 0.82, α = 0.73)	
	Local people in the destination were friendly	0.85
	Local people were willing to help me/us	0.80
	Local people were willing to share information about the destination	0.75
	Infrastructure (INF) (AVE= 0.58, CR= 0.85, α = 0.84)	
	Uniquely designed infrastructure	0.66
	High quality of infrastructure	0.71
	Good signage/directions	0.90
	Good availability of tourism information	0.76
	Destination Management (MGT) (AVE= 0.65, CR= 0.88, α = 0.87)	
	The destination has a chaotic traffic system	0.84
	The destination was unclean	0.89
	The destination had a bad odor	0.76
	The destination was unsafe	0.73
	Accessibility (ACC) (AVE= 0.74, CR= 0.90, α = 0.90)	
	Inconvenient to get to destinations	0.82
	Took me(us) long hours to get to destination	0.88
Difficult traveling around destinations	0.88	
Service Quality (SQL)	Service Quality (SQL) (AVE= 0.63, CR= 0.84, α = 0.83)	
	Service staff were courteous and friendly	0.81
	Offered highly customized service	0.86
	Service staff provide impressive service	0.71
	Physiography (PGY) (AVE= 0.65, CR= 0.85, α = 0.84)	
	Different ecology zones	0.76
	Well preserved areas	0.88
	Awe-inspiring landscapes	0.77

Dimension	Construct/Item	Standardized loadings
MTE	Hedonism (HED) (AVE= 0.57, CR= 0.84, α = 0.78)	
	Thrilled about having a new experience	0.76
	Indulged in the activities	0.73
	Really enjoyed this tourism experience	0.78
	Exciting	0.76
	Novelty (NOV) (AVE= 0.63, CR= 0.87, α = 0.85)	
	Once-in-a-lifetime experience	0.85
	Unique	0.73
	Different from previous experiences	0.71
	Experienced something new	0.88
	Local Culture (LCL) (AVE= 0.59, CR= 0.81, α = 0.72)	
	Good impressions about the local people	0.77
	Closely experienced the local culture	0.75
	Local people in a destination were friendly	0.78
	Refreshment (RFR) (AVE= 0.62, CR= 0.87, α = 0.76)	
	Liberating	0.79
	Enjoyed sense of freedom	0.78
	Refreshing	0.79
	Revitalized	0.79
	Meaningfulness (MNG) (AVE= 0.59, CR= 0.81, α = 0.74)	
	I did something meaningful	0.79
	I did something important	0.82
	Learned about myself	0.69
	Involvement (INV) (AVE= 0.60, CR= 0.82, α = 0.85)	
I visited a place where I really wanted to go	0.76	
I enjoyed activities which I really wanted to do	0.77	
I was interested in the main activities of this tourism experience	0.79	
Knowledge (KNW) (AVE= 0.55, CR= 0.78, α = 0.83)		
Exploratory	0.76	
Knowledge	0.76	
New culture	0.70	
Value	Perceived Value (PV) (AVE= 0.55, CR= 0.78, α = 0.78)	
	Overall, the value of this experience is	0.62
	Comparing what I gave up and what I received	0.87
	The experience has satisfied my needs and wants	0.71
Satisfaction	Satisfaction (SAT) (AVE= 0.70, CR= 0.87, α = 0.87)	
	I am satisfied with the tour	0.82
	I have enjoyed myself from the tour	0.79
	I am positive in participating in the tour in the future	0.89

Dimension	Construct/Item	Standardized loadings
Loyalty	Loyalty (LOY) (AVE= 0.68, CR= 0.81, α = 0.59*)	
	I would return to same destination in next 5 years	0.86
	I would return to same tourist spots in next 5 years	0.79
WOM	Word of Mouth (WOM) (AVE= 0.79, CR= 0.88, α = 0.89*)	
	I would recommend the destination to friends and relatives	0.90
	I would recommend the destination on social media	0.88
Personality	Openness to Experience (OPN) (AVE= 0.60, CR= 0.913, α = 0.85)	
	Is original, comes up with new ideas	0.73
	Is curious about many different things	0.76
	Is ingenious, a deep thinker	0.88
	Is inventive	0.80
	Values artistic, aesthetic experiences	0.75
	Likes to reflect, play with ideas	0.79
	Has few artistic interests	0.70

Note: Sources of Scales: Destination attributes scale (Kim 2014); MTE (Kim et al. 2012); perceived value (Zeithaml 1988); satisfaction (Lee et al. 2011); loyalty and word of mouth (Murphy et al. 2000); openness to experience (Moghavvemi et al. 2017).

Convergent validity was ensured through: Standardized factor loading (above 0.5), Average Variance Extracted or AVE (above 0.5), and Composite reliability (above 0.7) as per the suggestions of Hair et al. (2008) (Table 3). The comparative approach suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) was applied to assess discriminant validity of the constructs. The AVE values of each construct were compared to the inter-factor correlations. We observed that the AVE's (diagonal values) were larger than the squared inter-construct correlations (the off-diagonal values) thus discriminant validity was evident (as per Fornell and Larcker 1981) (Table 4).

Since our model had two second-order constructs, destination attributes (DCI) and MTE, we next proceeded to model them as second-order construct and run individual measurement models for the same. The results indicated standardized loadings above 0.7 and high reliability values (Table 5). The composite reliability (CR) and AVE values were checked for both DCI and MTE and these were found to be within the acceptable ranges (Hair et al. 2008) and the dimensions displayed acceptable discriminant validity (Table 6).

3.3. Conceptual model without moderators

The next step was to analyze the hypothesized model without the moderator (Figure 1 without H5). The findings suggested a significant and positive impact of destination attributes on MTE (H1); MTE on perceived value (H2a) and satisfaction (H2b); perceived value on word of mouth (H3b); and satisfaction on both loyalty (H4a) and word of mouth (H4b) (Table 7). The effect of perceived value on loyalty (H3a) was not found significant. The model fit statistics (CMIN/df = 3.04; GFI = 0.93; NFI = 0.91; CFI = 0.94; RMR = 0.05; RMSEA = 0.07) were acceptable. Thus, Hypotheses 1, 2 and 4 were fully supported while H3 was partially supported at this stage.

3.4. Conceptual model with moderator

Finally, we tested the moderating effect of openness to experience on the linkage between destination attributes and MTE (H5). Here, we applied an adapted version of the moderation method suggested by Hayes and Montoya (2017) for SEM. We computed standardized scores for destination attributes (DCI), MTE, perceived value (PV), satisfaction (SAT), loyalty (LOY), word of mouth (WOM) and openness to experience (OPN). Next, the interaction term was constructed by multiplying the scores of DCI to OPN. The model thus created included the study constructs and one interaction term (DCI X OPN). The direct effects supported the findings from the model without moderators (even here H3a was non-significant). Findings also indicated a positive and significant moderating effect of openness to experience (Table 7). Thus, H5 was supported. However, we also found a significant direct effect of openness to experience on MTE (Table 7 and Figure 2).

Table 4: Discriminant Validity (first order constructs)

	ASI	HOS	INF	MGT	ACC	SQL	PGY	HED	NOV	LCL	RFR	MNG	INV	KNW	PVL	SAT	LOY	WOM	OPN
ASI	0.57																		
HOS	0.12	0.64																	
INF	0.14	0.11	0.58																
MGT	0.13	0.21	0.20	0.65															
ACC	0.10	0.20	0.21	0.52	0.74														
SQL	0.11	0.19	0.25	0.46	0.92	0.63													
PGY	0.12	0.21	0.16	0.23	0.38	0.30	0.65												
HED	0.18	0.24	0.22	0.23	0.22	0.15	0.24	0.57											
NOV	0.23	0.22	0.11	0.12	0.17	0.17	0.20	0.19	0.63										
LCL	0.12	0.18	0.25	0.17	0.14	0.24	0.10	0.31	0.17	0.59									
RFR	0.12	0.24	0.14	0.10	0.20	0.22	0.13	0.01	0.13	0.12	0.62								
MNG	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.21	0.25	0.22	0.10	0.15	0.20	0.17	0.11	0.59							
INV	0.17	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.20	0.17	0.25	0.18	0.37	0.10	0.14	0.13	0.60						
KNW	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.20	0.11	0.17	0.11	0.24	0.33	0.27	0.23	0.20	0.33	0.55					
PVL	0.18	0.14	0.23	0.25	0.17	0.24	0.20	0.13	0.17	0.10	0.25	0.25	0.13	0.13	0.55				
SAT	0.12	0.22	0.20	0.13	0.25	0.22	0.25	0.21	0.23	0.11	0.19	0.12	0.21	0.22	0.32	0.70			
LOY	0.10	0.15	0.14	0.24	0.23	0.13	0.13	0.21	0.20	0.13	0.19	0.25	0.21	0.12	0.12	0.23	0.68		
WOM	0.16	0.16	0.12	0.11	0.21	0.10	0.20	0.24	0.21	0.16	0.11	0.18	0.24	0.24	0.10	0.14	0.15	0.79	
OPN	0.19	0.20	0.19	0.14	0.23	0.19	0.22	0.10	0.16	0.16	0.19	0.14	0.10	0.16	0.11	0.14	0.24	0.17	0.60

Note: Diagonal values in bold represent Average Variance Extracted; off diagonal values represent squared inter-factor correlations.

Table 5: Item loadings and scale validity (second order constructs)

Construct/Item	Standardized loadings
Destination and Country Image (DCI) (AVE= 0.64, CR= 0.95, α = 0.85)	
Activities and Special Events (ASI)	0.76
Hospitality (HOS)	0.78
Infrastructure (INF)	0.86
Destination Management (MGT)	0.94
Accessibility (ACC)	0.74
Service Quality (SQL)	0.73
Physiography (PGY)	0.79
MTE (AVE= 0.66, CR= 0.93, α = 0.88)	
Hedonism (HED)	0.74
Novelty (NOV)	0.84
Local Culture (LCL)	0.75
Refreshment (RFR)	0.83
Meaningfulness (MNG)	0.89
Involvement (INV)	0.81
Knowledge (KNW)	0.82

Table 6: Discriminant Validity (constructs in the nomological model)

Construct	Destination and Country Image (DCI)	Memorable Tourism experience (MTE)	Perceived Value (PV)	Satisfaction (SAT)	Loyalty (LOY)	Word of Mouth (WOM)	Openness to Experience (OPN)
DCI	0.64						
MTE	0.64	0.66					
PV	0.03	0.04	0.55				
SAT	0.21	0.21	0.32	0.70			
LOY	0.04	0.04	0.02	0.03	0.68		
WOM	0.12	0.13	0.00	0.13	0.06	0.79	
OPN	0.19	0.23	0.11	0.14	0.24	0.17	0.60

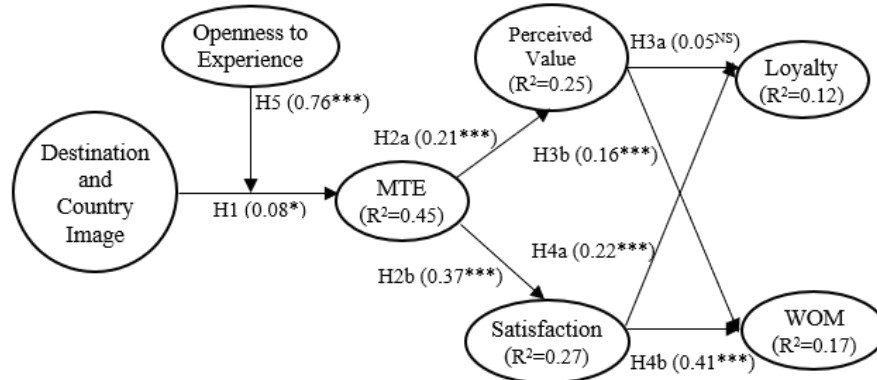
Note: Diagonal values in bold represent Average Variance Extracted; off diagonal values represent squared inter-factor correlations

Table 7: Results of the path analysis

Hypothesis	Path		without moderator		with moderator		Inference	
	Std. β	p value	Std. β	p value				
H1	Destination and Country Image	→	Memorable Tourism experience	0.96	< 0.001	0.08	.045	Supported
H2a	Memorable Tourism experience	→	Perceived Value	0.17	0.011	0.21	< 0.001	Supported
H2b	Memorable Tourism experience	→	Satisfaction	0.53	< 0.001	0.37	< 0.001	Supported
H3a	Perceived Value	→	Loyalty	0.02	0.688	0.05	.393	Not Supported
H3b	Perceived Value	→	Word of Mouth	0.34	< 0.001	0.16	.001	Supported
H4a	Satisfaction	→	Loyalty	0.12	0.014	0.22	< 0.001	Supported
H4b	Satisfaction	→	Word of Mouth	0.57	< 0.001	0.41	< 0.001	Supported
	Openness to Experience	→	Memorable Tourism experience	Not Applicable		0.08	.029	Not Applicable
H5	Destination and Country Image X Openness to Experience	→	Memorable Tourism experience	Not Applicable		0.76	< 0.001	Supported

Note: Highlighted paths are non-significant

Figure 2: The Empirical Model Results



Note: *=significant at 5%; ***=significant at 0.1%, NS=non-significant

4. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The current study contributes to the theory of tourism experiences with multiple implications for tourism research. It follows on the suggestions of Ryan (2010) on the exploration of tourism experience in a network of interrelated variables using novel theoretical frameworks. Thus, our study brings together the antecedents, consequences and moderators of MTE for the first time. Even though the antecedents and consequences have been studied separately (antecedents: e.g., Kim 2010; Tung and Richie 2011; Kirillova et al. 2017; and consequences: e.g., Suhartanto et al. 2020), having MTE as the focal construct between its nomological correlates was something that was achieved in this study. In course of that, we found destination attributes to influence MTE while MTE was found to influence several tourist outcomes.

Second, the support for Hypothesis 1 justifies the importance of destination attributes as the starting point of an MTE (Kim 2010; Kim, Hallab and Kim, 2012). Tourism researchers have already noted the role of physical and non-physical elements of a tourist destination in the creation of MTE (Kim, Ritchie and McCormick, 2012). We support those findings empirically in the context of tourism. Our study also hints at the notion that destination attributes may subsequently impact tourist attitudes and behavior through MTE as hinted upon by researchers (Kim 2014).

Third, our study explores the role of MTE as a mediator of destination attributes and consumer level outcomes. Even though the literature on experience has discussed perceived value as an outcome of experience (Edvardsson et al. 2005), it has been rarely discussed in tourism literature. We drew our inferences from the same literature and found support for the notion that a memorable tourism experience would generate positive value perceptions among the tourists. Along with perceived value, we found backing for the effect of MTE on tourist satisfaction. The same effect has been discussed in tourism literature conceptually (Van Doorn and Verhoef 2008; Triantafyllidou and Siomkos 2014) and our study supports the same.

The fourth major contribution of our study is the separation of the immediate outcomes of MTE from the subsequent outcomes. Researchers have discussed the role of MTE in the generation of future decision-making of the consumer (Kim et al. 2010; Liu et al. 2018), to be more specific, revisit decisions and word-of-mouth communication (Marschall 2012). In our study, this phenomenon is explicated through Hypotheses 3 and 4. However, in our case, H3a, that is the impact of perceived value on loyalty was not found significant. We argue that perceived value in case of an MTE would be more related to the overall experience assessment and even though it is high, it may not generate loyalty behavior or revisit intentions as the assessment is one time. This also supports the flow nature the tourism experience where it may not just lead to the transformation of the tourist in a short period of time. However, perceived value was found to generate positive WOM, which agrees with the existing literature (Chen and Tsai 2007; Suhartanto et al. 2020). The results of H4 (a and b) i.e., a positive and significant impact of satisfaction on loyalty and word of mouth were both in agreement with the literature (Klaus and Maklan 2013). Thereby, satisfaction generated through MTE would create loyal customers who in turn would disseminate positive WOM about the destination.

The fifth and final addition of our study to tourism literature is the inclusion of consumer openness to experience as a moderator. Researchers in MTE have not considered the role of individual characteristics of the tourist in the creation of MTE. Our findings suggest a strong moderating effect of tourist's openness to experience in the relationship between destination attributes and MTE (comparing the standardized beta coefficients of H1 in Table 7). Given the nature of tourism, tourists higher on openness to new experiences would have a higher sensitivity to the destination attributes and would be more adaptable to the same (Madjar 2008). Thereby, the effect of the destination attributes on MTE may not be the same on tourists with different personality types. Interestingly, we also found a significant (though small) direct effect of openness to experience on MTE. This implies that tourists who are more open would have stronger effects on their memory with respect to the tourist experience. This is in agreement with the existing thoughts on the relation between memory and MTE (Kim and Chen 2020).

To summarize, the present study highlights the role of MTE in both short and long term effects on the tourists. It also empathizes on the role of destination characteristics and image on the creation of favorable MTE. The integration of the antecedents and consequences (both immediate and subsequent) of MTE in tourism adds to both theoretical novelty and empirical generalization of earlier thought on the role of MTE, while justifying the mediating role of MTE.

5. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our study has multiple managerial implications for the destination marketer and/or administrator. First, the destination marketer has to start at the destination attribute level to create a memorable experience and to generate tourist loyalty. Though a marketer cannot ensure that MTE would happen, they can always construct the situations and develop an environment where consumers could have an experience. These may be developed through naturally endowed resources, cultural resources, physically created resources or human resources. A properly curated set of attributes would only increase the probability of memorable tourism experience and that should be the objective of the marketer.

The marketer also has to be cautious while the experience is being generated. As discussed by others and also found in our study, MTEs are generated through the interactions of the tourists with the destination, its people, its physical infrastructure and similar touch points that would reduce the perceived risks and enhance the experience. If the marketer establishes monitoring mechanisms at these touch points, he/she would be able to measure the level of MTE and also its impact on the perceived value and satisfaction/dissatisfaction of the tourists. The understanding of the success factors and pain points would enable the marketer to improve the tourism experience so that it becomes more memorable.

The results from the consequences of the MTE note that MTE may have immediate and long-term effects. While the immediate effects are important, it is the long-term effects that would enable the destination to thrive and grow. Thus, the marketer should strive to build loyalty towards the destination that he/she is promoting. A point to note, that in the present era, WOM is instantaneous and may happen in a short time gap after the experience if the tourist is satisfied or dissatisfied. This point underlines the role of careful monitoring and service recovery mechanism to ensure that the desired outcomes of MTE are achieved.

Lastly, our findings emphasize the influence of tourist personality on the creation of MTE. This poses a challenge for the marketer as our findings note certain personality types to augment the effect of destination attributes on MTE. This implication poses a challenge for the marketers as they do not have any direct control over the tourist personality. However, while the marketer may not have any control over the consumer personality, he/she may use effective communication to the target audience so that the audience is aware of what to expect from a destination. Thereby, indirectly the destination marketer would attract the right audience (in this case the experience seekers) and the generation of MTE may not be hampered.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE STUDIES

To conclude, the present study explored the effect of destination attributes (specifically destination image) on MTE and the effect of MTE on immediate outcomes such as

perceived value and satisfaction and subsequent outcomes such as loyalty and word of mouth. In addition, the study also explored the moderating effect of consumer openness to experience on relation between destination attributes and MTE. The findings supported a significant positive effect of destination image on MTE and of MTE on perceived value and satisfaction. Consumer openness to experience was also found to moderate the effect of destination attributes on MTE. Though our study has advanced the literature on tourism experience, it has some limitations that could be explored in future avenues of investigation. First, our study was limited to a single country. Future studies could do a comparative analysis between different countries (e.g., a developing and a developed country) to check for inter-country differences. Second, the concept of experience may depend on culture. Thus, a cross country study may also integrate the role of cultural moderators in the process that we have explored. Third, we conducted a cross-sectional study. Future researchers could explore and expand the study to a longitudinal one where the same tourists are intercepted after a time period to check the actual long-term effects on MTE. Fourth, while we incorporated different destinations to aid generalizability, we did not include tourist idiosyncrasies such as the difference in needs derived from tourism. This could be a potential area of further research. Finally, we did not investigate the market level outcomes of MTE and restricted ourselves to the consumer attitudes and behavior. A worthwhile extension of our study should investigate the impact of MTE generated satisfaction on actual tourist spending that would allow understanding of the financial outcomes of MTE. Nevertheless, the present study has contributed to the literature on tourism experience with a focus on tourism with novel findings and calls for more research and practice in the same.

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