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Memorable Tourism Experiences: Scale Development

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a research intended to develop a reliable and valid measurement instrument for memorable tourism experiences from the perspectives of more regular and typical leisure-oriented travellers. The exploratory stage involved data analysis of 100 travel blog narratives and 35 in-depth interviews and the subsequent quantitative stage gathered data through a survey of 700 respondents who had visited some of the major tourist sites in Australia. The study confirmed a reliable and valid MTE instrument having 34 items across the ten experiential dimensions: authentic local experiences; novel experiences; self-beneficial experiences; significant travel experiences; serendipitous and surprising experiences; local hospitality; social interactions; impressive local guides and tour operators; fulfilment of personal travel interests and affective emotions. However, the relative importance of these dimensions can differ according to the destinations and travellers' demographic characteristics. The results provide important managerial implications for destination marketing efforts.

Keywords: Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs), Tourist Experience, Instrument Development

INTRODUCTION

Modern tourism offers a wide variety of experiences for travellers who crave diverse scenery, cultures, and local life styles at different tourism destinations (Ritchie, Tung, & Ritchie, 2011). With the recognition of tourism destinations as amalgams of tourism products offering an integrated experience to consumers

(Buhalis, 2000), the emphasis is now on delivering unique, extraordinary and memorable tourism experiences to potential visitors in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). This has resulted in increasing recognition of the significance of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) among both tourist experience researchers and tourism professionals (Kim, 2009; Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012; Pizam, 2010; Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). Nevertheless, knowledge of MTEs is limited to just a few studies. Many of the studies used only student subjects to examined MTEs; such samples can hardly be considered typical tourists. Tourism institutions and suppliers are likely to prefer to rely on studies that examine MTEs based on more typical tourists with more financial freedom in their choice of travel destinations than students are likely to exhibit. This study, therefore, conceptualises MTEs from the perspectives of more regular and typical tourists; to fill a significant gap in the knowledge base concerning MTEs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Travellers now expect unique, gratifying and diverse experiences on their trips (Azevedo, 2010; Lagiewski & Zekan, 2006). However, conventional destination marketing is still driven mostly by the delivery of quality services that are focused on the amenities and facilities at the destination, ignoring the increasing demand for unique and memorable experiences (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012; King, 2002; Lagiewski & Zekan, 2006; Williams, 2006). According to Kim et al. (2012, p. 13), 'satisfaction and quality alone are no longer adequate descriptions of the experience that today's tourists seek'. Thus these two basic marketing attributes alone can no longer stimulate future behavioural intention of visitors. These new developments in tourist behaviour have led destination marketing organisations (DMOs) to find new ways of marketing their destinations; this has generated a paradigm shift from 'a features and benefits based approach' towards an experienced-based approach (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Williams, 2006). As a result, there is a growing interest among tourism scholars to examine the psychology behind tourist experiences and, more importantly, to understand how tourist experiences can be converted into more memorable experiences.

Several scholars have tried to conceptualise the meaning of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) from both tourists' and institutional perspectives. Many experiential dimensions have been proposed by these studies as integral components of MTEs, for example, intellectual development (Kim, et al., 2012; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a), social interactions and relationship development

(Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b), novelty/adventure (Gunter, 1987; Kim, et al., 2012; Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Xu, 2009), affect/hedonism (Anderson & Shimizu, 2007; Gunter, 1987; Kim, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a), extreme/extraordinary experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004), identity formation (Gunter, 1987; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b) and moments of amazements (Morgan, 2006; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a).

Kim (2009) made the first attempt to develop a measurement instrument for MTEs by using a sample of college students as subjects and publishing the results in a series of papers (Kim, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Kim, et al., 2010). Kim developed a 24-item MTEs scale consisting of seven dimensions: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty (Kim, et al., 2012). 'Hedonism' refers to experiences associated with emotions such as pleasure, excitement and enjoyment. 'Refreshment' is associated with feelings of freedom, liberation and revitalisation reported by travellers on a memorable trip. The third dimension, 'local culture', represents travellers' experiences of friendly local people; 'meaningfulness', indicates travellers' engagement in personally significant activities. 'Knowledge' is the exploration of new cultures and the acquisition of new knowledge on a trip; the sixth dimension, 'involvement' represents travellers' active participation in memorable tourism experiences. The final dimension, 'novelty' denotes unique experiences encountered by travellers during MTEs.

While acknowledging the contributions made by Kim and his colleagues, several future research avenues can be identified for further enrichment of their contributions. Firstly, it important to assess the validity of the seven MTEs dimensions and the measurement instrument offered by Kim (2009) through further research based on more representative samples of tourists. Scholars can either test the instrument developed by Kim (2009) on different samples of respondents or develop an entirely new instrument based on a sample of more genuine travel populations. The latter may be more beneficial since the limitations of the scale based on Kim's (2009) student sample can be overcome by developing a new instrument. For example, it is rational to argue that either more or different experiential dimensions may arise if a new scale is developed using more typical tourists instead of student respondents. The underlying argument is that student samples are not robust enough to represent more regular tourists who are employed and have the disposable income to have more travel options. Secondly, further verification of the initial insights provided by Kim (2013) with reference to cultural impact on MTEs can be valuable for DMOs to improve visitor experiences. Kim (2013) found that evaluation of some of the MTEs dimensions varied between students in the United States and Taiwan. Hence,

extending the scope of the study into other cultural contexts and investigating the claim from more typical tourists' perspectives will enhance the accuracy of such findings and will help DMOs and other tourism marketers to develop sound marketing strategies, such as segmentations and choosing the right target markets.

The MTE literature suggests that the topic is still being insufficiently studied, with few scholarly examinations. There is no consensus among scholars over the components of MTEs with 'fuzzy' and fragmentary explanations in the literature. In addition, many of the studies only used student subjects to examine MTEs (e.g. Kim, 2009; Kim, et al., 2012; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a); students are hardly representative of all tourists. Student samples are not particularly robust when studying the tourist experience because students do not have the same financial resources as people with full-time salaries and other income. They also do not represent more experienced and frequent travellers who are ideal respondents to question about MTEs.

In light of these gaps in the literature, the goal of the present study was to develop and validate a more reliable measurement instrument for MTEs from a more representative sample of tourists.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The study followed the best practices suggested by the experts in the field of instrument development and validation in order to develop a more reliable and valid instrument for MTEs (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2003; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

Item Generation

Specification of the domain of constructs is the first step in developing an instrument that will secure content validity. In the present study, further exploration of the *domain of MTEs* was deemed important for two reasons. Firstly, the literature on the topic offers highly fragmented and inconsistent conceptualisations of the construct. Secondly, many of the conceptualisations have been based on student samples which may not provide an accurate picture of MTEs. In order to obtain more reliable findings, the study employed two data sources: travel blog narratives, as a secondary and researcher-unsolicited data source; and in-depth interviews as a primary data source. A content analysis was performed on 100 travel blog narratives published on two reputable travel websites: Travelblog.org and TravelPod.com. The blog narratives were purposively chosen for the analysis based on two criteria. The first criterion was relevancy: the blog entry should consist of information about a

memorable tourism experience. The second criterion was richness: the entry should offer a sufficient description of the experience. The analysis of travels blog narratives was followed by conducting in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of 35 frequent leisure travellers from Australia. Priority was given to respondents who were academics and other professionals such as accountants, solicitors and schoolteachers because they are more likely to be affluent and more likely to travel.

Using two data sources enabled triangulation of the results as a means of ensuring their trustworthiness (Denscombe, 2010, p.346). In addition, 'member checking' was used to validate the themes and categories that emerged from the in-depth interviews (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). MAXQDA10 software was used to facilitate the data analysis; results revealed that travellers are much more likely to describe their MTEs as positive tourism experiences. Hence, the instrument was focused on positive MTEs. In relation to the MTE dimensions, a total of 90 items were generated across ten experiential dimensions based on the qualitative results for further purification of the instrument.

Data Collection and Purification Measures

The refining process commenced with judging of the items. Seven academics with expertise in tourist behaviour research were chosen to determine which items should be retained for the remaining instrument purification steps. This procedure is frequently used by scholars and is widely recommended as an important step for securing face validity of the instrument (Hardesty & Bearden, 2004; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The experts were asked to evaluate the degree to which each item represents each of the dimensions along a three-point scale consisting of (1) not representative (2) somewhat representative and (3) clearly representative according to the operational definitions of each dimension. For an item to be retained, all seven judges had to have rated the item 'at least somewhat representative'. This expert judging reduced the total number of items from 90 to 62.

A field survey was then carried out to collect the data for further purification of the instrument. The survey was carried out using a self-administered questionnaire at 4 key tourism spots in Sydney, Australia in November and December of 2012. Seven hundred (700) questionnaires were administered during the survey and 688 were retained for the data analysis after discarding 12 because of missing data. Item analysis, exploratory factor (EFA) analysis and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were performed for refining and validating the instrument. The total sample (N=688) was split into two random sub-samples to perform exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as recommended by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010, p.122).

In relation to the sample profile of the survey respondents, there were approximately the same percentages of male (51.5%) and female (48.5%) respondents. With regard to nationality, Australians and New Zealanders comprised 48% of the sample, 45% were Europeans, 6% were Americans. Of the total sample, 59% of the respondents usually undertake domestic leisure travels more than once every year, and another 26% undertake such tours once every year. With reference to overseas leisure travels, around 21% of respondents normally visit overseas destinations more than once every year and around 28% do so once a year. Approximately half of the total respondents had visited more than 10 destinations (countries) on leisure trips, 24% more than 6-10 destinations and another 21% had visited 2-5 destinations.

Before assessing reliability and validity of the MTE, scale data screening was carried out to check the appropriateness of the data for the subsequent data analysis. First, missing data analysis was performed, followed by the analysis of univariate and multivariate normality of the data. The results of the missing value analysis of the 688 usable questionnaires showed that all the variables had less than 5% missing values except for the personal income variable (D5), which had 5.1% missing data. Further analysis showed that the missing values of variable D5 did not have a significant impact on other variables. These results indicated no serious issues for the remaining data analysing options in terms of missing values. In terms of univariate and multivariate normality checking, an inspection of histograms and boxplots showed no problematic outliers in the data set. The multivariate normality, using AMOS package, and inspecting 'the squared Mahalanobis distance' (D^2) (Byrne, 2009, p.106) revealed no significant problematic multivariate outliers in the data set.

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then carried out with the items to identify the dimensionality of the proposed MTE scale. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used as the extraction method with Promax rotation, and eigen values greater than 1 were used to determine the number of factors to be retained (Kaiser, 1958). Table 1 shows the steps followed and items removed at each of EFA during the purification process using the general practices recommended by the experts in the field (Churchill, 1979; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair, et al., 2010; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

Table 1 The Steps Followed and The Items Removed during EFA

Step	Items deleted at each EFA	Reason for deletion	Remaining number of items	Remaining number of factors
1	ME1, ME2, ME3, SI5, TI3, TI4, IN1, IN2, IN3, IN4	Poor item-total correlation (< .3) and low Cronbach's alpha (< .7)	52 (62-10)	13 (the initial solution)
2	NE10, SI1, NE6	poor loadings (< .4)	49	12
3	SI6	poor loadings (< .4)	48	12
4	SE4 AE5	poor loadings (< .4), one item factor	46	12
5	NE7 NE8	one item factor, high cross loadings (>.4)	44	11
6	SB5, SB6	poor Cronbach's alpha (< .7)	42	10
7	SB1, SB2 NE9	poor loadings (< .4), high cross loadings (> .4)	39	10
8	AL6, NE5, AE1 ME4, SI3	poor loadings (< .4), high cross loadings (> .4)	34	10

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reported a large chi-square value, which is highly significant $\chi 2$ (DF=1326, n=344) = 6765.092, p< .05, and the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) was 0.9 (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). A value of 0.60 or above is required for KMO to be considered a good factor and any KMO value between .8 and .9 can be considered as meritorious (Kaiser & Rice, 1974). Thus both Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and KMO figures signalled the appropriateness of applying Principle Components Analysis (PCA) to the data set.

The final solution, shown in Tables 2 and 3, consists of 34 scale items across 10 factors, which collectively explained 73.38% of the total variance; well above the minimum threshold of 60% in the social sciences (Hair, et al., 2010, p.109). Internal consistency reliability was very high, ranging from 0.717 to 0.907. The 10 MTE dimensions were labelled: authentic local experiences, self-beneficial experiences, professional local guides and tour operators, local hospitality, affective emotions, perceived significance, social interactions with people, serendipitous and surprising experiences and fulfilment of personal travel interest.

Assessment of the Latent Structure

To verify the latent structure identified from the EFA analysis, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was then performed using the second split-half of the total sample (N=388). The model fit indices showed that the model is well-fitted to the data (CMIN/DF = 1.572 < 3, CFI = .968 > .95, IFI = .969 > .95, TLI = .963 > .95, RMSEA

= .041 < .08) (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998; Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). HOETLER figures at both 0.05 and 0.01 levels indicated a good sample adequacy for the model, since these figures were greater than 200 (242 and 253 respectively) (Hoelter, 1983). Checking for the feasibility of the parameter estimates indicated that all the estimates were statistically significant with critical values greater than ± 1.96 ($p<.05$).

Subsequently, we assessed the reliability and validity of the identified scale. The MTEs instrument was further checked for the psychometric properties using the thresholds suggested by Gaskin (2012b) and Hair, et al. (2010); convergent validity (CR[1]>.07), discriminant validity (CR>AVE[2]; AVE>.05) and composite reliability (MSV[3]<AVE; ASV[4]<AVE). The 'Stats Tools Package' developed by Gaskin (2012a) was used to calculate the measures and Table 4- illustrates the results. Since these figures met all the criteria it was concluded that the instrument illustrates adequate psychometric properties in terms of convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite reliability.

Comparison with Other Scales Used to Measure MTEs

As mentioned earlier, Kim (2009) developed the first scale to measure MTEs. The result of this investigation validated the following MTE dimensions: hedonism or emotions associated with traveling; getting to know a different culture; and searching for meaningful experiences. In addition this study found two new MTE dimensions, which were the role of local tour guides and engagement in surprising and unexpected experiences.

Furthermore, the scale developed in this investigation is expected to be more reliable and more accurate in its application to a wider travel population than Kim's (2009) because it was purified and validated using a relatively large sample of authentic leisure travellers (N=688). In other words, these were travellers who were actually on leisure trips during the survey, unlike the scale developed by Kim (2009) which used non-representative student samples.

[1] Composite Reliability
[2] Average Variance Extracted
[3] Maximum Shared Squared Variance
[4] Average Shared Squared Variance

Table 2 Loading Values of the Final Exploratory Factor Analysis Solution

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
AL3 (.832)*	.930									
AL2 (.741)*	.866									
AL4 (.690)*	.811									
AL5 (.581)*	.739									
AL1: (.683)*	.716									
SB4 (.758)*		.880								
SB8 (.740)*		.868								
SB7 (.718)*		.809								
SB3 (.672)*		.806								
LG1 (.792)*			.887							
LG2 (.803)*			.858							
LG3 (.798)*			.842							
LG4 (.534)*			.729							
NE1 (.617)*				.828						
NE4 (.716)*				.766						
NE2 (.675)*				.703						
NE3 (.655)*				.686						
LH2 (.866)*					.917					
LH1 (.829)*					.876					
LH3 (.770)*					.854					
AE4 (.595)*						.797				
AE3 (.635)*						.796				
AE2 (.600)*						.787				
ME5 (.608)*							.833			
ME6 (.585)*							.788			
ME7 (.604)*							.645			
SI2 (.604)*								.845		
SI4 (.518)*								.796		
SI7 (.508)*								.704		
SE1 (.634)*									.865	
SE2 (.668)*									.827	
SE3 (575)*									.653	
PTI2 (.712)*										.933
PTI1 (.712)*										.920
Variance explained (%)	29.02	9.83	6.77	5.16	4.62	4.39	3.89	3.54	3.21	2.97
Total variance explained	29.02	38.85	45.62	50.78	55.34	59.78	63.66	67.21	70.41	73.38
Cronbach's alpha (α)	.875	.869	.869	.834	.907	.770	.765	.717	.785	.830

Table 3 Final Exploratory Factor Analysis Solution: Factor Labels and Reliability

Factor	Item No.	Item Code	Factor Label and the Items	α
F1: Authentic Local Experiences				
F1	1	AL3	I closely experienced the actual local cultures	.875
	2	AL2	I was exposed to authentic local villages and markets	
	3	AL4	I could immerse myself in local festivals and other cultural ceremonies	
	4	AL5	I visited authentic local restaurants/ food outlets	
	5	AL1	It gave me an opportunity to experience the real day-to-day life of locals	
F2: Self-beneficial Experiences				
F2	6	SB4	It helped me to improve my self-confidence	.869
	7	SB8	It helped me to develop my personal identity	
	8	SB7	It helped me to learn more about myself	
	9	SB3	It helped me to acquire new skills	
F3: Professional Local Guides and Tour Operators				
F3	10	LG1	Local guides were very informative and knowledgeable	.869
	11	LG2	Social skills of local guides were very impressive	
	12	LG3	Local guides were always very supportive	
	13	LG4	Local tour operator services were outstanding	
F4: Novel Experiences				
F4	14	NE1	Many aspects of the trip were novel to me	.834
	15	NE4	The trip provided a unique experience for me	
	16	NE2	It was an adventurous experience	
	17	NE3	I felt I was in a different world during the trip	
F5: Local Hospitality				
F5	18	LH2	Local people I encountered were genuinely helpful	.907
	19	LH1	Local people I encountered were genuinely friendly	
	20	LH3	Local people I encountered were genuinely generous	
F6: Affective Emotions				
F6	21	AE4	I felt very stimulated during the trip	.770
	22	AE3	I felt very excited during the trip	
	23	AE2	I was very pleased during the trip	
F7: Perceived Significance				
F7	24	ME5	It was a special experience for me personally	.765
	25	ME6	It was a once in a life time experience for me	
	26	ME7	It was an extraordinary experience for me	

Table 3 Final Exploratory Factor Analysis Solution: Factor Labels and Reliability (Continued)

F8: Social Interactions with People				
F8	27	SI2	I highly enjoyed the comradeship among my travel companions of the trip	.717
	28	SI4	I enjoyed the trip very much because I was with a wonderful group of travellers	
	29	SI7	It enhanced the existing bonds with my friends and travel companions	
F9: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences				
F9	30	SE1	I faced unplanned and unexpected good incidents/experiences during the trip	.785
	31	SE2	I experienced certain random things that really surprised me during the trip	
	32	SE3	I received unexpected benefits/advantages during the trip	
F10: Fulfilment of Personal Travel interests				
F10	33	PTI2	I engage in activities which I really wanted to do	.830
	34	PTI1	I visited the places where I really wanted to go	

Table 4 CR, AVE, MSV and ASV Figures for The 10 factors

Factor	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
F1	0.876	0.589	0.268	0.121
F2	0.961	0.861	0.254	0.110
F3	0.901	0.704	0.220	0.095
F4	0.931	0.772	0.318	0.154
F5	0.913	0.778	0.220	0.123
F6	0.898	0.747	0.196	0.114
F7	0.892	0.734	0.270	0.122
F8	0.845	0.660	0.154	0.083
F9	0.788	0.554	0.318	0.203
F10	0.818	0.691	0.196	0.111

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study confirmed a reliable MTE scale that consists of 34 items across the 10 experiential dimensions: authentic local experiences; self-beneficial experiences; novel experiences; significant travel experiences; serendipitous and surprising experiences; local hospitality; social interactions with people; professional local guides and tour operators; fulfilment of personal travel interests and affective

emotions associated with experiences. These MTE dimensions cover all the fragmented dimensions offered by previous studies plus new dimensions that they have neglected, such as 'local guides' and 'engaging in surprising activities'. Hence, the results suggest that MTEs must be conceptualised broadly in order to capture the best operationalisation of the construct.

The MTEs scale proposed by this study is expected to be more reliable and more accurate in its application to a wider travel population because it was purified and validated using a relatively large sample of authentic leisure travellers (N=688) who were actually on leisure trips during the survey. Tourism marketers can obtain valuable visitor feedback by this instrument and thus improve their products over time. The instrument can also be used to assess the strengths and weaknesses of tourism destinations and improve the competitiveness of a particular destination so that destination marketing organizations and governments can increase the number of visitors, and tourism expenditure and enhance the economic development and quality of life for the residents of their countries.

From the perspectives of tourism suppliers, the ten experiential dimensions offer a rich pool of potential experiential arenas for tourism marketers to design MTEs for their visitors and clients. Experienced suppliers such as travel agents and tour operator companies can incorporate these experiential dimensions into their tourism products so that their clients will have more opportunities and avenues to realise MTEs during their tours. For example, introducing travellers to a variety of authentic local experiences in addition to the typical tourist experiences will generate more positive memories of a particular destination or tour. According to Wilson and Harris (2006), research has emphasized the cultural dimension of tourism, highlighting tourism as a cultural process rather than just a product. Present-day visitors now want to meet and socialising with the people of the host destination, and participate in community and cultural activities (The Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004, p. 3).

Provision of novel experiences can also enable travellers to realise MTEs. Novel experiences are perceived as distinctive and unlike those on previous tourism trips. According to Schmidt (1991), an event is distinctive if it has little in common with other events. Similarly, a traveller may perceive that a destination or a travel is distinctive if he or she can enjoy novel and unique experiences, which can, in turn, enhance his or her memories about that destination or trip. That will require two managerial tasks: (a) a continuous commitment to identify potential differentiators that can distinguish their tourism products from competitors' products and from typical 'mainstream tourism products'; and (b) continuous product innovations in order to offer such distinctive and innovative tourist experiences to their clients.

The results also revealed that experiences which travellers perceive as 'self-beneficial' tend to be better retained and recalled than less self-relevant tourist experiences. These findings support the ideas that travellers not only travel for pleasure, but also spend leisure time more meaningfully by seeking physical, emotional and spiritual fulfilment (Williams, 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006). According to Morgan and Pritchard (2000, p. 278), modern tourists want self-discovery, not escape from everyday life. The results are also consistent with previous research related to 'memory', which revealed that self-relevant events, which have personal consequences for people are more memorable than less personally relevant events (Brown & Kulik, 1977; Rathbone, Moulin, & Conway, 2008; Rubin & Kozin, 1984). Experience designers therefore need to identify how and in what ways they can offer more 'self-beneficial' experiences to tourists.

The findings confirmed that highly significant travel experiences, which travellers generally perceive as exclusive, extreme or very special, tend to be the most memorable. Previous memory studies have confirmed that rare and extraordinary events can create vivid and long-lasting memories (Brewer, 1988; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Pillemer, 2001; Talarico & Rubin, 2003). According to the Canadian Tourism Commission (2004, p. 7), travellers now demand exclusive or extraordinary experiences. However, each traveller might have a different perception of what constitutes an extraordinary experience. For example, some travellers may not be comfortable with engaging in risky experiences due to their extreme nature. Therefore, segmentation of the travel market and identifying the right customers is essential for proper marketing of exclusive experiences.

Surprising moments can also facilitate MTEs for leisure travellers. Surprising experiences can be as unplanned discoveries, unexpected benefits or initial disappointments that later lead to more enjoyable and better experiences. These results are consistent with previous memory research that found that surprising and unexpected events can create vivid and long-lasting memories (Brewer, 1994; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Talarico & Rubin, 2003). The challenge facing experience designers is therefore to enhance the probability for travellers to enjoy more unexpected benefits during a tour, which can be planned to some extent (e.g. including experiences/events that travellers might not expect) or organising more flexible tours and providing personal freedom so that tourists can make their own discoveries while on a tour.

The results also revealed that some tourism experiences are more memorable for travellers than others because of the social dynamics among travel companions, other travellers or with locals. A traveller may perceive greater enjoyment and excitement by sharing experiences with his or her close travel companions or with the travelling

party rather than experiencing something alone. Social interactions can also enable travellers to strengthen their social bonds with close travel companions and establish friendships with fellow travellers and local people. All these elements add a new dimension to tourism experiences, which may, in turn, enhance travellers' memory of the experience. Hence, encouraging travellers to socialise and, more importantly, to maintain pleasant interactions with each other on their tours are important elements of memorable travel experiences.

Tourists also tend to feel comfortable, safe and happy when they are welcomed and assisted by locals at hotels, on streets or in shops; hospitality can greatly improve their evaluation and memory of a destination. This conclusion corroborates Dwyer and Kim's (2003) suggestions that tourists sense 'local hospitality' through perceived friendliness of local residents and favourable attitudes of community towards tourists. Local hospitality tends to play an important role in tourist experiences because 'random encounters' with local people are a part of tourist experiences. For example, the Canadian Tourism Commission, (2004, p. 3) found that for travellers now prefer to enter a host community to meet and socialise with local people, and participate in community and cultural activities. This element can be a special additional or augmented component to the typical tourist experience because 'local hospitality' is not something that travellers may expect.

The results suggest that local guides and tour operator services can also play a crucial role in delivering memorable experiences for leisure travellers. This dimension is particularly important for travellers who prefer organised tours in which they are directed by guides and other facilitators. However, independent travellers may also use local tour operator services and local guides as a part of their trip (guided tours) and even experienced travellers sometimes seek the assistance of local pathfinders (Cohen, 1985). Thus a guide can be important for any type of traveller seeking a fruitful travel experience in a foreign destination. Previous studies have also acknowledged the significance of local guides and tour operator services in determining tourist experiences, for example, Geva and Goldman (1991) found that among all the important attributes of a tour, the guide's conduct, expertise and the company's handling of the tour were the most important tour attributes. Hence, having professional and well-trained guides is crucial for delivering memorable travel experiences.

Memorable tourism experiences are related to positive emotions, such as pleasure and excitement, which portray the affective effects of such experiences. It seems that the cognitive dimensions, discussed above, may result in affective feelings in travellers' minds, but this claim is inconclusive. Nevertheless, the findings confirmed

that affective emotions are an integral component of MTEs. The results confirm the findings of previous memory research which showed that events associated with emotions are better remembered than neutral events (Holland & Kensinger, 2010; Schmidt, 1991; Talarico, LaBar, & Rubin, 2004; Wagenaar, 1986). A likely explanation could be that emotionally intense events are more often thought about, talked about, and recalled by travellers than moderately emotional events (Bohanek, Fivush, & Walker, 2005). Hence, it can be concluded that pleasant memorable tourism experiences are accompanied by positive emotions in travellers' minds, enhancing the retention and recollection of MTEs.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The validity of the MTEs instrument proposed by the present study could be further tested through the use of different samples and, more importantly, by recruiting potential respondents using random sampling techniques when possible. The latter would allow testing for criterion validity (e.g., comparing the MTE scale developed in this study with Kim's MTE scale). The MTEs instrument developed in this study is a generic instrument, meaning that, it did not consider travel segments whose travel preferences might be different from one another. Further studies could, therefore, be undertaken to examine the MTEs of different travel segments such as youth tourists, adventure tourists, cultural tourists, ecotourists and sport and recreational tourists, in order to uncover their experiences and provide more contextual and richer findings for tourism marketers to design better and more specialised tourism products.

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