

A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF TOURISTS' EXPERIENCE: A PERSPECTIVE OF INDIAN TOURISM

Kishore Kunal*

Loyola Institute of Business Administration, Nungambakkam, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India

*Corresponding author email: kishore.sona@gmail.com

Abstract

Understanding tourists' psychological behaviour is a growing concern for tourism industry. However, several studies depicted the tourist's experience on mass tourism in developing economies, the present study emerged to explore the psychological attributes of tourist experience towards Indian tourism sector. The study incorporates 300 respondents from three states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh) of India. The study's results indicates that tourism experience was positively influenced by the psychological factors such as: uniqueness, immersion and memory recollection, hedonism and meaningfulness. The also suggests that uniqueness and hedonism have positive influence on tourist experience. Furthermore, meaningfulness has different impact on tourist experience in the context of Indian tourism.

Keywords: Tourist experience, tourists' psychological factors, Indian tourism, tourist destinations, tourism experience.

1. Introduction

Tourist experiences in tourism-related activities are strongly correlated with their pleasure and inclination to return (*Otto et al., 1995; Ramires et al., 2018*). Yet, not all events can significantly influence travellers' post-trip habits. It has been stated that only remarkable or everlasting experience for visitors have a tendency to influence their decision-making in the future (*Kim et al., 2010*). These encounters serve as a bridge or mediator between the tourist site and them, reflecting the distinctive cognition and emotive advantages that travellers cherish (*Zhang et al., 2018*). Hence, a deeper comprehension of the aspects that influence the tourism experience would aid in raising the management standard for scenic spots and sustaining the growth of tourism industry. The experience of a tourist is viewed as a form of autobiographical memory that incorporates emotional and affective qualities of the travel er (*Kim et al., 2012*). Due to the diversity of the research participants, there are several aspects that influence the visitor experience. These factors may often be divided into two groups: psychological aspects affecting visitors and facilities or services variables affecting tourism destinations (*Kim, 2014*). Psychological factors examined in this study are "hedonism, uniqueness, connection, tourists' interaction, meaningfulness". Local services, amenities, and culture are all characteristics of a tourist destination. There is no denying that all prior attempts to conceive and gauge the experience of visitors were fruitful and laid the groundwork for future study.

Although the aspects that affect tourists' experiences have been examined, relatively few research have attempted to examine its psychological elements, which are most likely to evoke memories

in visitors. The majority of research on the experiences of visitors used study samples from just one trip to a single tourist location. Indeed, because of the oversimplification and partiality of that particular tourism location, it is difficult for a specific study environment to portray numerous elements that impact visitors' experiences. Also, a single trip experience cannot capture a person's entire recollection since with time, one's emotions or psychological state may change. In addition, earlier studies frequently focus on travellers' treasured memories right after their journeys (*Pan et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2018*). Just a small number of these fleeting recollections may last over time and have a massive effect on travellers' future behaviours, even if the brief memories are substantially influenced by the specific trip experience (and are occasionally immediately altered by personal emotions). The above-mentioned shortcomings in the literature must thus be filled as part of this study, which is crucial. This study looks into psychological factors that affect travellers' experiences after they've visited different tourist destinations in India. The survey respondents who were selected for the study can recall the noteworthy and important aspects of their holiday experiences since they have been assimilated into daily life for some time. Here, it is more likely to evoke general psychological features of tourists' experiences than to be exclusive to a particular travel destination or event. Before detailing the strategy and putting out particular hypotheses, this paper will first assess the applicable literature.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Tourist Experience

In recent years, a lot of studies have stressed the significance of the experience economy (*Cohen, 1979; Loureiro, 2014; Oh et al., 2007; Otto et al., 1995; Pine et al., 1999*). Experiences of tourists show a good reaction to contemporary life and the search for the centre (*Cohen, 1979; Maccannell, 1973*). It is described as a subjective mental state that results from one's own experiences throughout travel. The perception that a person has about tourism-related activities and goods is intimately tied to their travel experience. The way that tourists understand the idea of tourist sites is also influenced by their views (*Wang, 1999*). As a result, a top-notch experience at a specific location can increase visitor happiness and devotion. The idea is also put up that the tourist experience is impermanent and transient (*O'Dell et al., 2005*) Tourist experiences are recalled, kept, recreated, or recognised in the mind during the memory-formation process, which forms the foundation for more complex mental functions like pondering and imagining (*Yang, 2011*).

2.2. Memory recollection

Memory is a spontaneous and ongoing process that involves experiences intake, processing, store, and information retrieval. Although some memories are short-lived, others might stay persistent for a very long time. The vividness of a tourist's experience refers to the ability to recall certain aspects or items, whereas memory recall refers to the ability to entirely recreate former events or experiences (*Meiser et al., 2002*). People often acquire a broad sense of a setting while recalling travel experiences. People will appropriately describe the situation as quickly as the management system in the brain is active. Occasionally a trip's memorable moments or feelings might be remembered vividly (*Pan et al., 2016*). In other words, recalling memories might encourage

imagination. Yet, there is insufficient quantitative data to back up the idea that visual imagery of memory and remembering are related. As a result, we suggest the following hypotheses.

H1: Memory recollection have a positive influence on imaginary visions of tourist experience.

2.3. Hedonism on Tourism Experience

“Hedonism is defined as the pursuit of pleasure” (Mannell et al., 1997). It is a crucial component of leisure activities (Xie, 2005). Hedonism may also be a fun emotion to experience when travelling. It is possible that customers' perceptions of the value of a good or service are impacted by the degree of hedonism they experience (Coudounaris et al., 2017). A key component of the hedonic element in travel experiences (Otto et al., 1996). Subsequent research has revealed that emotional beliefs have a significant role in memory and that individuals have a greater capacity to remember situations that are emotionally charged (Kim, 2010). (Tung et al., 2011b) discovered that a number of good emotions and sentiments connected with events can aid to establish a memory. Moreover, (Chandralal et al., 2013) discovered that post-trip emotions such as pleasure and fulfilment may affect episodic memory, indicating that people may recollect their past fulfilling travel experiences in an effort to relive the same fulfilling emotions. Another positive emotion, hedonism, can influence how tourists recall their encounters. As a result, we proposed the following hypothesis:

H2: Tourists' experience is positively influenced by hedonism.

2.4. Uniqueness

“Uniqueness is defined as a tendency to approach novel experiences” (Pearson, 1970). And it is the sensation of having something new, distinct, or unexpected happen to tourists. Travellers have an intrinsic desire for uniqueness (Cheng et al., 2013). It has a big impact on visitors' future behavioural intentions (such as returning, practising, and spreading the word) and turns into a mechanism of good feelings for a range of tourism experiences (Kim et al., 2010; Ondrej et al., 2018). Tourists are more likely to remember unique, unusual, and unconventional tourist experiences than more normal, frequent tourist experiences (Chandralal et al., 2015, p. 8). Hence, the study proposed the following hypothesis

H3: Uniqueness have a positive influence on experience of tourists.

2.5. Tourist's Engagement

The degree of a visitor's interest in an event and the way it arouses their subjective reactions are both referred to as engagement (Gursoy et al., 2003). The emotional reactions are the sensations brought on by a person's altered sentiments and ideas as a result of engaging in tourism (Pine et al., 1999). The main component influencing visitors' trip experiences is the engagement of their emotions and behaviours (Altunel et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2012). Tourists are more inclined to have a unique experience when they have fully engaged themselves in an activities or setting (Pine et al., 1999). The more people participate in the things they had hoped to do while on vacation, the easier it will be for them to recall and recover previous trip memories (Coudounaris et al., 2017, p. 1086). (Zatori et al., 2018) developed a new concept known to be “experienced-involvement which describes real time experience consumption most appropriately and has an important role in experience formation. They revealed the dimensions of this concept (emotional, mental, flow-

like and social experience-involvement) and verified that experience involvement affects memorability". These findings are centred on on-site circumstances, which are not relevant to the current research. Hence, we put up the following hypothesis:

H4: Tourists' engagement has a positive influence on tourists' experience.

2.6. Meaningfulness

"Meaningfulness refers to the perceived importance and meaning of traveling when an individual can find his way, know himself, keep good relationships with others and so on" (Wilson et al., 2006). Most people's dream of leading worthwhile lives (Ritchie et al., 2016). The acquisition of significant experiences is thought to be facilitated by travel. Travellers hope to feel physically, emotionally, or spiritually satisfied while on their vacation. Meaningfulness in this situation might support growth and transformation on a personal level (Tarssanen, 2007). Meaningfulness may be retained for a very long period at a profound level of memory, according to (Tsai, 2016). According to (Tsiotsou et al., 2012), "when the meaningfulness of experience is enhanced, experience will become more memorable". Hence the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H5: Meaningfulness has a positive influence on tourists' experience.

3. Framework of the Study

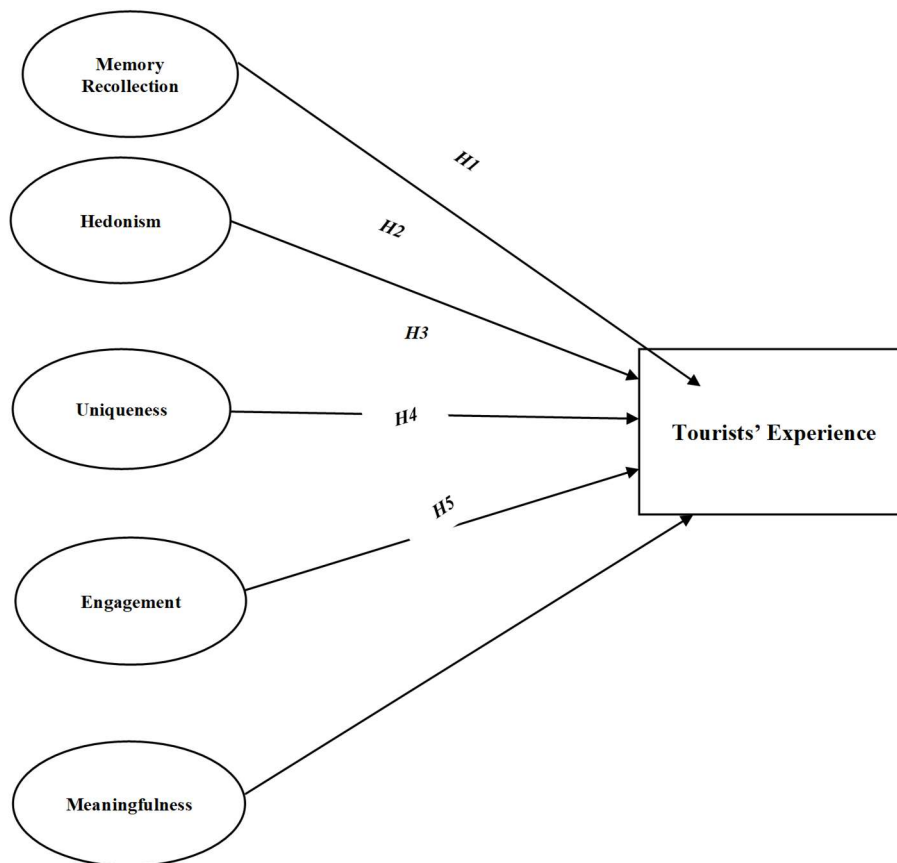


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of the study

Source: (Wei et al., 2019)

4. Methods

4.1. Questionnaire Design

The investigation was conducted using the questionnaire. Two sections made up the questionnaire. The research sample's fundamental demographic data was presented in the first section. The second section dealt with the main themes of this study. In this section, related scale items were used to measure five contributing characteristics of visitors' experiences (memory recollection, hedonism, originality, engagement, and meaningfulness). These items were found in the already published literature. Items from *Kim's* study (2010) were used to assess memory recall, hedonism, distinctiveness, engagement, and meaningfulness. Using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 stood for "I have not encountered at all" and 7 for "I have experienced very lot", all of these items were scored. The following Table 1 represents the demographic profile of the respondents:

Items	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	166	55.3
	Female	134	44.7
Marital Status	Single	122	40.7
	Married	178	59.3
Age	Below 20	55	18.3
	21 – 30	108	36.0
	31 – 40	87	29.0
	41 – 50	34	11.4
	Above 50	16	5.30
Education Level	Higher Secondary School or below	72	24.0
	Undergraduate	152	50.7
	Post graduate or above	76	25.3
Frequency of Travel	2 times or below	162	54.0
	3 to 6 times	93	31.0
	7 times and above	45	15.0
Travelling Partners	Relatives	94	31.3
	Friends	136	45.3
	Colleagues	41	13.7
	Alone	29	9.70
Destination	Tamil Nadu	105	35.0
	Kerala	121	40.3
	Andhra Pradesh	74	24.7

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

4.2. Data Collection

The study chooses three major states of India (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra) as research contexts. All of these states were located in the south of India with wide variety of tourist spots. Each states have earned their own tagline such as: Tamil Nadu – *Enchanting Tamil Nadu*, Kerala – *God's Own Country*, Andhra Pradesh – *The Essence of Incredible India*. These three states have large number of unique and scenic destinations to attract the foreign as well as local tourists. Therefore, the study collected data from the participants to gather reliable information about the psychological factors which affects their tourism experiences on visiting the destination spots of three states. The percentage of female participants was nearly equal to the percentage of male participants (see Table 1). Participants who were younger than those who were older predominated. Just a small number of senior participants were willing to participate in this study and had a variety of travel experiences. The vast majority of participants took longer trips than three. It was suggested that nearly everyone could remember their favourite travel memories. The respondents were more inclined to travel with friends, relatives, or co-workers as their travelling companions. The southern regions of India, including Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Andhra Pradesh, were the most popular tourist destinations.

5. Results

Every measuring scale build was constructed using ancient literature as the foundation in terms of approach. Also, the pre-test as well as the expert judgements both changed the scale. Because of this, only a two-step analysis of the data was performed in this section: Initially, the measuring model was assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and the validity and reliability of the data were also examined. Both convergent and discriminant validity were present. Second, using the greatest likelihood technique, the whole structural model was examined and the hypotheses were confirmed. The moderating impact of age was also investigated throughout this technique. A stepwise regression analysis technique was utilised to find the moderating impact of the hypotheses that passed the test on the correlations between the latent variables.

5.1. Measurement Model

Through Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), the total model fit was found to be satisfactory with fair values of index, “(CMIN/DF = 2.001, NFI = 0.883, AGFI = 0.847, CFI = 0.937, GFI = 0.885 and the RMSEA = 0.059)”. From the following Table 2, it has been found that Cronbach's α ranges from 0.817 to 0.854 for all measurement which indicates the internal consistency of the items were found to be acceptable. Furthermore, the estimated values of composite reliability measures from 0.807 to 0.871, as well as the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) of the entire constructs were found to be greater than 0.5. In addition, factor loadings of all factors lies within 0.7 as shown in the following Table 2 (Anderson et al., 1988). The results of CFA will be shown in the following Table 2:

Variables and Items	t-value	AVE	Composite reliabilities	Cronbach's α
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	Standardized				
	factor				
	loading				
<i>Memory Recollection (MR)</i>			0.672	0.860	0.854
I can remember this trip in my mind	0.804	16.293			
	0.859	17.995			
I can remember the tour process	0.792	15.920			
I can recollect the activities involved in the tour					
<i>Hedonism (HD)</i>			0.615	0.825	0.823
I feel delightful during the trip	0.833	16.012			
	0.815	15.552			
I feel excited with the travel experience	0.695	12.803			
I involved in activities during the trip					
<i>Uniqueness (UQ)</i>			0.601	0.818	0.817
During the trip I saw new things	0.760	14.260			
	0.783	14.800			
I had a unique experience from the trip	0.781	14.761			
It's not similar to that of previous trip					
<i>Engagement (EG)</i>			0.631	0.836	0.834
I am really interested in trip activities	0.810	15.760			
	0.834	16.393			
I visited the places that I liked the most	0.733	13.823			
I involved in the activities					
<i>Meaningfulness (MF)</i>			0.617	0.827	0.823
I involved in meaningful activities in the trip	0.752	14.021			
I trip was something important to me	0.885	17.093			
	0.707	13.031			
I met myself in the trip					

Table 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis results

5.2. Structural Model

From the following Table 3, it has been found that correlation coefficients of factors and AVE square roots ensured the proof of good discriminant validity. According to (Fornell et al., 1981), “the AVE must exceed the corresponding correlation estimate between the two factors (the square of their inter-correlations)”. The results represented that the entire AVE square roots exceeded the correlation coefficients of the variables. Moreover, the overall results shown a strong evidence for the validity and reliability of the measurement model. To estimate the overall model, maximum likelihood method was implied after the CFA test. Initially, for the fitting index, the values of DF was 2.557 and RMSEA was 0.070. Moreover, the values of other index such as AGFI was 0.793, CFI was 0.897, GFI was 0.835 and NFI was 0.841, were found to nearer as well as higher than 0.8 which indicates a good model fit. Simultaneously, the standardized path coefficients among the dependent and independent variables were tested as shown in the following Figure 2. It has been found that the factors such as memory recollection, hedonism, uniqueness, engagement and meaningfulness have a positive impact on tourists' experience. Therefore, the hypotheses H1 ($\beta = 0.784$), H2 ($\beta = 0.261$), H3 ($\beta = 0.491$), H4 ($\beta = 0.373$) and H5 ($\beta = 0.215$) were supported for the study.

Variables	Memory Recollection (MR)	Hedonism (HD)	Uniqueness (UQ)	Engagement (EG)	Meaningfulness (MF)
<i>Memory Recollection (MR)</i>	0.784				
<i>Hedonism (HD)</i>	0.261	0.776			
<i>Uniqueness (UQ)</i>	0.491	0.497	0.781		
<i>Engagement (EG)</i>	0.373	0.376	0.311	0.793	
<i>Meaningfulness (MF)</i>	0.215	0.295	0.216	0.356	0.823

Table 3: Square roots of AVE and correlation coefficients of factors

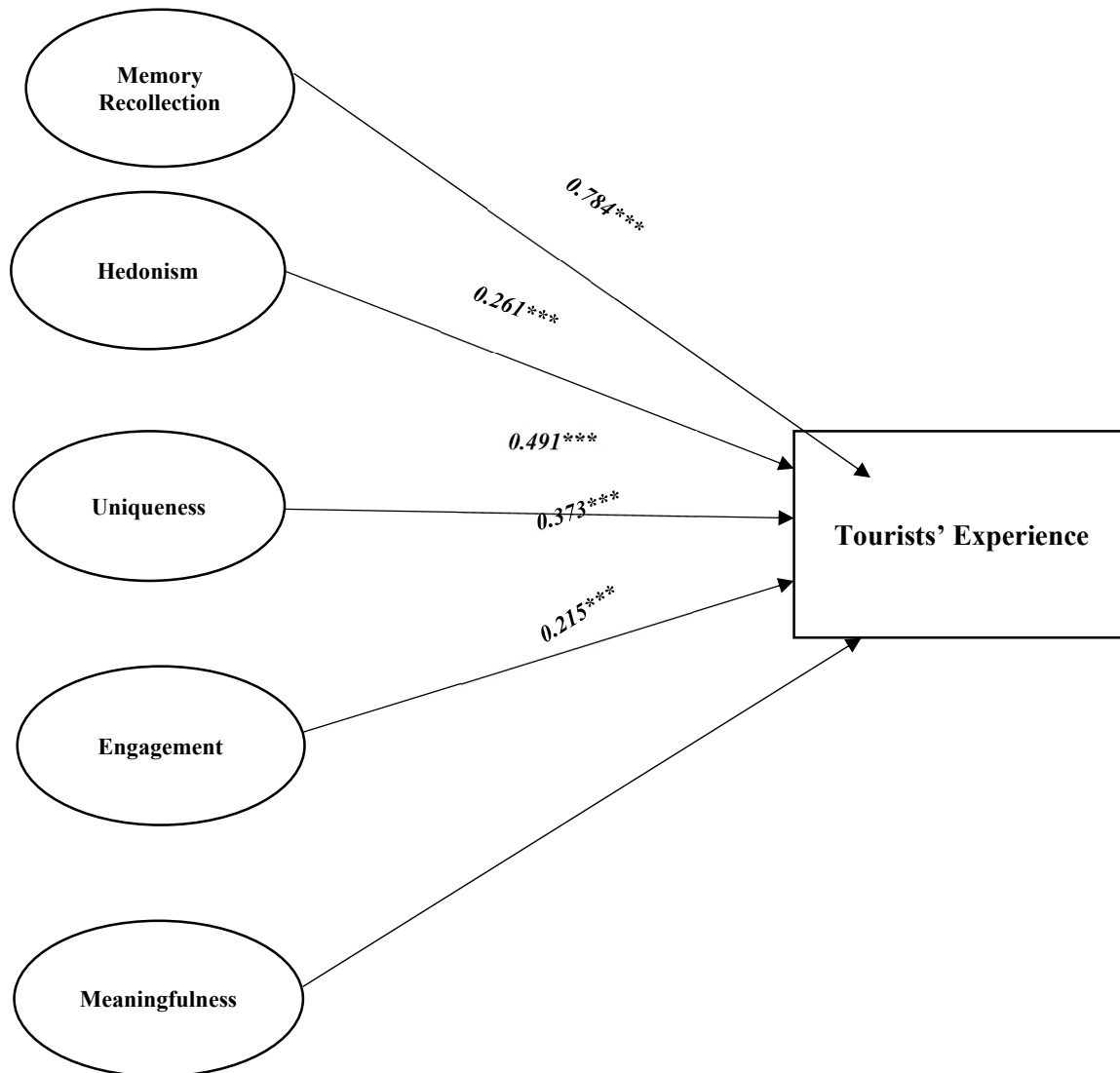


Figure 2: Structural Model of influencing factors of tourist's experience

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Firstly, the study's results shown that tourists' experience is positively influenced by the five factors (Pan *et al.*, 2016). However, recollection of memory have significant effect on remembering the pleasant moments of tourists, the data analysis also shown that other four factors such as hedonism, uniqueness, engagement and meaningfulness have positive influence on tourists' experience. It has been implied that the five factors and its influence found to be high and steady on experience of tourists which is less affected by cultural variations (Kim, 2010; Pan *et al.*, 2016). The positive influence of these factors shown that the respondents have high level of involvement towards Indian tourism. Through the results it has been obtained that most tourists are ready to spend their time and emotions enthusiastically in the trip.

The study suggests that the findings can contribute to the progress of Indian tourism in several ways. The study acquired data from the urban residents of the three states (Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra) who visited tourist destinations of these states. Since the tourism industry is highly competitive in nature, it is necessary for the Indian tourism sector to have a proper understanding on tourists' psychology to create brand image and brand loyalty. Additionally, understanding tourists' mentality may maximise the possibility of revisits to the destinations. Furthermore, the findings of the also provided few implications and recommendations to have sustainability in tourism in the three states. The study has been undertaken with general psychological factors such as memory recollection, hedonism, uniqueness, engagement and meaningfulness which affects tourists' experience significantly. Further, the study suggests the managers to incorporate certain specific factors and activities to enhance the relationship among the tourists and the destination spots. There are also few limitations exists in the study, through future research can make up on studying the tourists' experience. The study lacks cultural influence which become one of the major limitations, since culture and heritage tourism can also incorporate the factors of this study.

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