

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Modern tourism involves the provision of a wide variety of experiences for travellers who want to see and experience diverse scenery, cultures, and local life styles of 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 contemporary emphasis is on delivering unique, extraordinary and memorable tourism experiences to potential visitors in order to maintain a sustainable competitive advantage over competitors. This has resulted in increasing recognition of the significance of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) among both tourist experience researchers and tourism professionals. However, the existing knowledge on the topic is still at an early stage of development, with relatively few scholarly research publications available. The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to add further knowledge to the limited understanding of this important experiential phenomenon by investigating it in a pragmatic and comprehensive manner from the perspective of leisure travellers themselves.

This chapter introduces the main topic of the research, the underlying motivation behind the study and what it aims to achieve. Firstly, the background of the study is introduced with a discussion of the recent developments in the global tourism industry and how this has led tourism marketers to focus more on MTEs. Secondly, the key research questions and objectives of the study are presented together with a brief introduction to the research approach used to realise these objectives. The significance of the study is then discussed and, finally, an overview of the thesis is provided.

1.2 Background of the Study

Tourism is the act of travelling and visiting places for various purposes, such as business visits, visiting friends and relatives, or simply utilising leisure time more meaningfully (Williams, 2006). Over the last 50 years, tourism has been continuously growing and has become one of the 'largest and fastest-growing' economic sectors in the world (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 2). An ever-increasing number of tourists and tourism journeys are taking place in the world nowadays, which can be attributed, in part, to an expanding middle class in developing countries and associated increased affluence and leisure time (Marschall, 2012). The latest figures from the World Tourism Organization

(WTO) illustrate that this expansion is likely to persist for the next couple of decades with global tourist arrivals expected to increase by 3.3 per cent a year from 2010 to 2030, and reaching 1.8 billion by 2030 (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 2). According to other figures published by WTO, international tourism expenditure for 2012 was US\$ 1,075 billion worldwide, which implies that the expenditure by visitors on accommodation, transport, food and drink, entertainment, and shopping are important sources of income for many local people at tourist destinations, creating a considerable number of employment opportunities (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 5). As a consequence, many nations are increasingly relying on the tourism sector to provide a foundation for economic development and a means for improving the prosperity of their citizens (Baker & Cameron, 2008).

Tourism creates employment and raises local income levels, resulting in the reduced government spending on social welfare payments and increased taxation revenue from the tourism industry, enabling both developed and developing countries to realise positive economic benefits (Bull, 1991; Razaghi & Alinejad, 2012). Foreign investments are increasing for tourism projects in remote destinations and regional areas, transforming even isolated villages into world-class island resorts catering to tourists from around the world (Lai 2002, cited in Hundloe, 2002, p. 8). Many newly emerging destinations have promoted themselves as attractive destinations when compared to the traditional destinations of Western Europe and North America. The share in international tourist arrivals received by emerging and developing¹ destinations have steadily risen, from 32 per cent in 1990 to 47 per cent in 2009 (World Tourism Organization, 2010, p. 2) and are expected to increase at double that pace in advanced economies¹ in the future (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 2).

As new destinations appear in the global market and existing destinations intensify their promotions, destination marketing is becoming extremely competitive and increasingly challenging worldwide with a larger number of rival destinations offering similar benefits (Buhalis, 2000; Pike & Mason, 2011). Morgan, Pritchard, & Piggott (2002) point out that many destinations have similar ‘amenities and offers’, such as excellent five star resorts and hotels, stunningly beautiful attractions, and unique cultures and heritage, making such differentiators less effective. Similarly, destinations, such as sun, sea and sand markets, are becoming increasingly ‘substitutable’, making each one difficult to distinguish from its competitors (Baker & Cameron, 2008). Williams (2006) further notes that consumers and

¹ Classification based on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), see the Statistical Annex of the IMF World Economic Outlook of April 2012, p. 177, at www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2012/01

consumption opportunities within the tourism sector are becoming increasingly complex, showing, what he describes, as a growing post-modern demand. For example, tourism consumption is becoming more qualitative, demanding and varied making the marketing of places characterised by increased sophistication and professionalism (Bouchet, Lebrun, & Auvergne, 2004; Deffner & Metaxas, 2005; Scott, Laws & Boksberger, 2009).

Travellers no longer expect just traditional services at tourist destinations but seek unique, gratifying and diverse ranges of experiences during their travels (Azevedo, 2010; Lagiewski & Zekan, 2006). However, conventional destination marketing approaches are still mostly driven by the delivery of satisfactory and quality services that are mostly focused on the amenities and facilities of the destination, ignoring the increasing demand for unique and memorable experiences by many present-day travellers (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 can no longer stimulate future behavioural intention of visitors on their own. These new developments in tourist behaviour have led destination marketing organisations (DMOs) to find new ways of marketing their destinations; this has called for a paradigm shift from ‘a features and benefits based approach’ towards an experienced-based approach (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Williams, 2006). As a result, an increasing number of scholars are recommending that provision of MTEs is the most viable option for tourism operators to be competitive in the present global tourism industry (Kim, 2009, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b).

The key reason behind this growing significance of MTEs is the scholarly recognition of memory involvement in tourist experiences (Braasch, 2008a; Marschall, 2012). As Braasch (2008a, p. 1) notes, ‘tourism is often seen as something to be remembered, and therefore certain expectations are connected with it’. According to Clawson and Ketch (1966), experiences are valuable only when they are stored and remembered through the recollection phase. People create both personal and collective memories about tourist experiences. Personal memories take place inside the head of an individual, for example, an individual can recall previous tourist experiences again and again, whereas collective memories take place by sharing experiences among groups of people, for example, family memories about a particular trip or shared cultural memories by specific communities (Braasch, 2008b; MacDonald, 2008; Marschall, 2012). As MacDonald (2008, p. 5) asserts, ‘remembering is

something that does not only take place inside the heads of individuals but also in all kinds of social situations and collective practices'. Hence, Marschall (2012) asserts that memory is a crucial factor in tourism because it affects travellers' decisions about choice of destinations, their evaluation of tourist experiences during a tour and the sharing of experiences with others after the trip.

Tourism marketers are utilising both collective and personal memories in order to market their tourism products. For instance, in heritage tourism, 'historical sites, artefacts and cultural landscapes are preserved as embodiments of collective memories and commoditised to attract tourists' (Marschall, 2012, p. 321). MacDonald (2008) points out that history museums are now really dealing with 'collective memories' of people instead of representing 'history' of countries. Scholars are also identifying the significance of personal memories in tourism because personal memories can be a powerful information source and a decisive factor for individual travellers when making tourist decisions (Andereck & Caldwell, 1994; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Kozak, 2001; Lehto, O'Leary, & Morrison, 2004; Marschall, 2012; Mazursky, 1989; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998; Wirtz, Kruger, Napa, & Diener, 2003). Memory involvement can be especially relevant in decision making for travel because tourists cannot trial the tourism products before the actual consumption, thus they have to rely on either the memories of previous travels or information provided by travel agents and other personal or media sources. However, scholars have found that the information search phase of decision-making starts first internally (retrieving past memories) and extends to external sources if memory does not provide adequate information to make the decision (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). In most cases, consumers use both internal and external sources to make decisions but can be biased to information retrieved from memory because they tend to believe that they already possess sufficient information and knowledge about the product rather than seeking for external information (Alba, Hutchinson, & Lynch, 1991, p. 4). Hence, Braun-LaTour, Grinley, & Loftus (2006, p. 360) claim that 'memory is perhaps the single most important source of information [that a traveller] will use in making a decision about whether or not to revisit' a particular destination.

Personal memories also have a powerful impact on the post travel experience perception of a destination and are especially associated with memory recollections and sharing experiences with others (Marschall, 2012). People retain memories of important events of their lives and they recall such tourist experiences over and over again. Their memories are represented in numerous modes, such as photographs, personal movies, travel blog narratives and telling

stories (Braasch, 2008a). Telling stories is central to tourism memory because various stories are created by tourists during a trip and presented to others as their memories (Bendix, 2002; Moscardo, 2010). MacDonald (2008) points out that the sharing of memories with others in terms of ‘memory talk’ and ‘conversational remembering’ creates social memories about tourist experiences in travellers’ minds. Such memory recollections and storytelling can facilitate word-of-mouth recommendations (WOM), which is a powerful communication source influencing travel decisions (Murphy, Moscardo, & Benckendorff, 2007). Even if travellers use recommendations made by others rather than their own previous memories in decision-making situations, such recommendations can be based on recommenders’ previous memorable experiences. Therefore, the facilitation of memorable tourist experiences (MTEs) by travel agents and destination marketers is believed to be able to bring more repeat visitors to a particular destination and also attract more first-time visitors through WOM publicity (Kim, Ritchie, & Tung, 2010).

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. For example, based on a comprehensive literature review of tourist experience research, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) identified MTEs as the most contemporary research theme within the tourist experience literature; MTEs are increasingly recognised as the most valuable attribute for marketing in the present-day global tourism industry (Kim, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2010; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b). As Ritchie, et al. (2011, p. 431) highlight, ‘providing tourists with high quality, extraordinary, memorable experiences lies at the heart of what tourism is all about’ today. A focus on the provision of memorable experiences will enable tourism marketers to capitalise on intangible differentiation and thereby to stand out from competitors who continue to offer the same old products and services (Azevedo, 2010).

However, what makes a tourism trip memorable for travellers is still unclear because very few studies have been undertaken on the topic. A number of research limitations were identified during the literature review which are discussed in detailed in the next chapter and are summarised here to justify this study:

- The topic is still under-researched for developing a comprehensive theory of MTEs. Few academic publications are available on the topic, and those that exist are of a highly fragmented nature and do not offer a holistic picture of MTEs.

- External validity of these studies has been limited by the fact that many of the studies have relied upon student samples for collecting empirical data (Kim, 2009, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Kim, et al., 2010; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). It is obvious that students are hardly ‘typical’ tourists, thus results obtained from student samples are not robust enough to enable generalising findings to more authentic travel populations.
- Existing studies do not provide adequate empirical evidence to support the claim that facilitating MTEs can benefit tourism destinations in terms of promoting repeat visitation and positive WOM recommendations, which has been a major argument for supporting MTEs by scholars. Verifying the link between enabling MTEs and repeat visitation will be vital information for tourism marketers so that they can effectively allocate their resources for facilitating MTEs.

Since the existing literature provides inadequate explanations about MTEs in terms of the aforesaid limitations, further scholarly effort is deemed important to enrich the limited knowledge on this topic. The purpose of the present study is, therefore, to fill these knowledge gaps in a more comprehensive and reliable way by adopting a mixed method research epistemology. This study aims to better understand what constitutes MTEs for leisure travellers and how MTEs, in turn, influence travellers’ future travel decisions. As Ritchie and Hudson note:

[It is important] to continue to document the ongoing evolution of studies that contribute to our understanding of the experience, the extraordinary experience; and, the memorable experience — so as to properly acknowledge those who make the most significant contributions to these constantly changing foundations of the tourism economy (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009, p. 123).

This research goes one step further by explaining the ongoing development of tourist experience research, and enhances the current understanding of MTEs. This study is the most comprehensive and realisable investigation into the topic ever undertaken to date.

1.3 Research Questions and Study Objectives

Before specifying the research questions and study objectives, it should be noted that the conceptualisation of the construct of MTEs is generally undertaken by asking respondents to recall their most memorable trip, that is, the trip that first comes to their mind (Kim, 2009;

Kim, et al., 2010; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). In other words, MTEs are generally referred to as memorable experiences associated with a particular trip that first comes to travellers' mind rather than memorable experiences across a number of trips. Therefore, the term 'MTEs' in this thesis refers to tourism experiences that the study respondents recalled as their 'most memorable leisure trip'.

The study aims to answer the following specific research questions:

1. What constitutes MTEs for leisure travellers?
2. How can MTEs be measured?
3. What effects do MTEs have on travellers' memory and future behavioural intentions?

To address these research questions, the following objectives were set for the study:

1. To obtain an emic understanding of MTEs from the perspective of leisure travellers
2. To develop a reliable instrument for measuring MTEs
3. To test the structural relationships between MTEs and other dependant variables: autobiographical memory, intentions to visit the same destination, intentions to visit new destinations and intention to generate word-of-mouth recommendations.

1.4 Research Approach Employed to Realise the Research Objectives

A mixed method research approach was adopted for use in the study because the research objectives called for combinations of both qualitative and quantitative methods. The first research objective required qualitative methods and the remaining three objectives required quantitative methods. Basically, since developing an instrument for MTEs was a primary objective of the research, an exploratory (sequential) mixed method research approach was the most pragmatic one to adopt (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.71). The approach is illustrated in Figure 1.1.

The exploratory sequential design begins with an exploratory phase during which qualitative data is gathered, and is followed by a quantitative phase to test the findings obtained from the qualitative data. In other words, in an exploratory sequential mixed design, different research methods are implemented sequentially starting with qualitative methods in phase 1 followed by quantitative methods in phase 2 which builds on the findings of phase 1 (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 73). The philosophical partner of the mixed method research is ‘pragmatism’ which emphasises a practical approach to solve research questions using different methods and paradigms at different stages of a study (Denscombe, 2010, p. 148). In this research, phase 1 was guided by a constructivist paradigm which was then changed to a post-positivist paradigm in the phase 2. The underlying rationality was that a mixed methods research design enables researchers to address both individualistic and consensual (objective) aspects of tourism experiences by employing both qualitative and quantitative methods (Ryan, 2000). As Gummesson, (2006, p. 175) points out: ‘In the end, all research is interpretive, and all interpretation is a combination of the systematic and objective as well as the intuitive, emotional and subjective’.

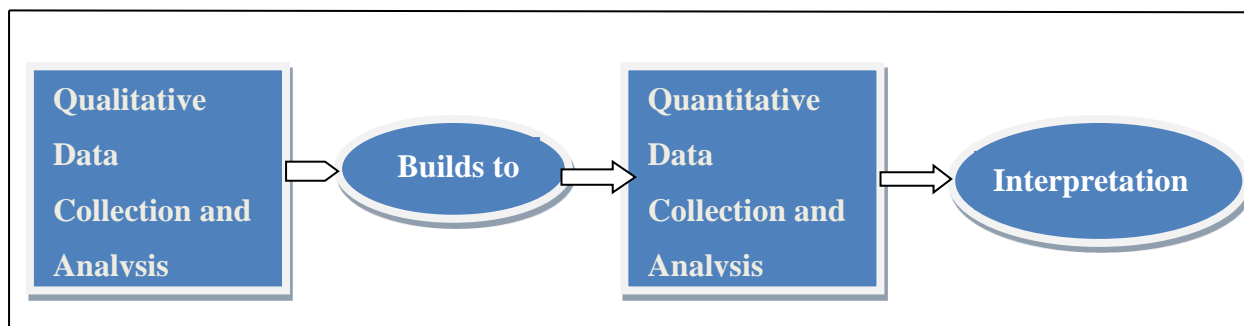


Figure 1.1: The exploratory sequential design (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 69)

1.5 The Scope and Context of the Study

Due to the nature of the research problem, that is, developing a reliable MTE instrument which can be applied to a wider leisure travel population, the scope of the study was not limited to ‘experiences of a particular destination’ or ‘respondents of a particular country’. Instead, it attempted to investigate the MTEs of a wide range of leisure travellers who were available at some of the major tourist attractions in Sydney, Australia, during the survey period regardless of their country of origin or the destination when they had experienced their MTEs in the past.

Data was collected in the major tourist areas in Sydney, Australia, during the summer period in 2012, when both domestic and international travellers could be easily intercepted for the

survey. Australia is a major tourist destination for many worldwide travellers, for example, 5,817,261 visitors from all over the world had visited Australia during the year ended 30 June 2013 and the majority were visiting for holiday and leisure purposes; tourists stayed a total of 73 million nights in Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2013, p. 1). Many international holiday travellers visit New South Wales (NSW) and, especially, the major tourist attractions in Sydney during their trips; for example, 57 per cent of all holiday tourists to Australia visited NSW during the year ended 30 June 2013 and Sydney attracted the majority of them as depicted in Table 1.1 (Tourism Research Australia, 2013, p.1 and p.19). Tourism areas in Sydney, therefore, offered an ideal location for conducting the research, providing opportunities to intercept many tourists from around the world, including Australian travellers.

Table 1.1: Total number of visitors for selected regions (000)

Region	Sydney	Melbourne	Brisbane	Gold Coast	Perth	Adelaide	Darwin
Number of visitors	2775	1779	993	778	723	325	116

Source: Tourism Research Australia (2013, pp. 19-20).

The study limits its scope to the investigation of MTEs based on the leisure and recreation' category only, and does not cover experiences related to other travel categories, such as business, education, health and VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) travels (Appendix 1 on page 230 describes these various travel categories). Limiting the study to one category of travel was the practically viable option since the inclusion of all categories of travel would have conflated the 'purpose of travel' within the findings from MTEs and, therefore, yielded less rigorous findings. According to the WTO, tourists who travel for 'holidays, leisure and recreation' represent the largest single category of all tourist categories (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 4). Therefore, the findings will have profound relevance for destination marketers, travel agents and tour operators.

Finally, the quantitative stage of the study (instrument developing and hypotheses testing phase) was limited to investigating only positive MTEs. This was for several reasons: firstly, the findings of the qualitative stage of the study revealed that MTEs are mostly related to positive experiences rather than negative ones; secondly, positive MTEs are the most valuable for marketing purposes as they act as strong motivating factors for repeat business; and thirdly, examining both positive and negative MTEs would have been unfair from

respondents' perspectives because it was likely to be very time consuming for them to complete the survey. Therefore, the central focus of the present study is to examine positive MTEs.

1.6 Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is twofold: academic and managerial. This study is academically significant in a number of ways. The study employed a mixed methods research that enabled the analysis of MTEs in a more holistic way. For example, the study was able to obtain more detailed emic descriptions of MTEs in the minds of leisure travellers during the exploratory stage, which helped better define the domain of the MTEs construct. Two qualitative data sources, that is, 'travel blog narratives' (secondary data) and 'face-to-face interviews' (primary data) were used during the exploratory phase, and this produced more reliable and trustworthy qualitative findings (Denscombe, 2010, p.347). This was significant because more reliable exploratory findings are necessary as a good platform for undertaking an effective quantitative phase in mixed methods research. The exploratory findings were then validated through a larger sample of leisure travellers during the quantitative stage in order to widen the validity of the findings and test them with a wider travel population. The quantitative phase also enabled the examination of important relationships between MTEs and other behavioural variables; a research question which has generally been neglected in previous studies. Overall, adoption of a mixed methods research design permitted the present study to obtain a more accurate and a comprehensive picture of MTEs than current research endeavours reveal. In addition, it assured a more valid and reliable set of findings by using a triangulation approach to data gathering.

The study is also academically significant in terms of collecting data, which was from a more 'typical' sample of authentic leisure travellers than previous research on MTEs. In-depth interviews were conducted with 35 frequent leisure travellers in the exploratory phase and the subsequent field survey was carried out with 700 domestic and international leisure travellers who were actually on leisure trips in Australia during the time in which the survey was being conducted. Therefore, the findings of the study are based on a broad spectrum of genuine leisure travellers, enabling more accurate results than existing studies that have relied upon student samples in collecting empirical data (Kim, 2009, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Morgan & Xu, 2009). Student samples are not particularly robust when studying tourist experience phenomenon 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. Generally, relying on student samples in research endeavours can adversely affect the external validity of the findings (Johnston & O'Malley, 1985; Landis & Kuhn, 1957; Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005).

A number of managerially significant issues related to the study can also be highlighted: the findings will provide fruitful insights about MTEs from the perspective of leisure travellers so that DMOs and experience providers can incorporate them into designing more memorable tourism products for visitors – particularly the MTEs dimensions proposed by the study offer a pool of potential experiences for tourism marketers so that they can design unique and memorable experiential products in the future; and this study offers a valid and reliable measurement instrument for MTEs that tourism marketers can use to collect important feedback about visitor experiences and thus help improve their products over time – such an instrument can also be used to assess the relative strength and weaknesses of tourism destinations and help improve the competitiveness of a particular destination so that Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and governments can potentially increase the number of visitors and tourism expenditure and enhance the economic development and quality of life for the residents of their countries (Dwyer & Kim, 2003).

The quantitative phase of the study will test a number of research hypotheses with reference to the link between MTEs and future behavioural intentions. The purpose of this was to assist tourism marketers to determine whether the provision of MTEs have any significant effect on future behavioural intentions of travellers, either through revisit intentions or through WOM recommendations. As previously mentioned, empirical support for the link between MTEs and future behavioural intentions is very limited in the literature, thus practitioners really do not know whether it is economically viable to allocate resources in future to design costly MTEs. This study offers valuable new insights for tourism suppliers to re-think these concerns.

As a whole, the present study will benefit travellers as well as tourism marketers. Travellers will gain benefits in terms of improved visitor experiences through the realisation of unique and memorable travels. Whereas, tourism marketers, including DMOs, will gain more information about how to strategically plan their tourism products so that leisure tourists will chose their products more often.

1.7 Overview of the Thesis

The thesis consists of seven chapters. This first chapter presented introductory information about the thesis, including: the background for the research, major research questions and objectives; an overview of the methodological approach adopted; and the significance of the research. The second chapter reviews the literature and research which are pertinent to the topic and the research questions of the study. The chapter discusses the complex nature of the tourist experience concept, the evolution of tourist experience research, the role of memory in the tourist experience, the emerging significance of memorable tourism experiences and a review of the existing MTEs research. Chapter two concludes by outlining what further research is needed to enrich the current understanding of the topic. The third chapter outlines the research methodology adopted in the study to realise the study objectives. The discussion includes an overview of the mixed methods research design, the underlining philosophical paradigm, and a detailed description of the two stages of the research, beginning with the exploratory stage and followed by the confirmatory stage. The fourth chapter presents the findings from the qualitative phase of the research and discusses the major themes of MTEs that emerge from the data analysis. It discusses themes associated with both positive and negative MTEs and the results of the likely impacts of MTEs on future behavioural intentions. Chapter 4 was the foundation for Chapter 5, which outlines the conceptual framework of the study along with the development of the research hypotheses. Chapter 6 discusses the major findings of the quantitative phase of the study, which presents the results derived from descriptive statistical analysis, exploratory factor analyses (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and path analysis. The final chapter, Chapter 7, is a discussion of the findings and conclusions from both phases of the study, the implications of those findings and suggestions for further research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide an overview of the purpose and aims of the thesis. Firstly, the background of the study was discussed, highlighting MTEs as the most sustainable contemporary experience marketing approach to face the challenges posed by emerging developments in the global tourism industry. Secondly, the major research questions and objectives were established in order to examine MTEs in a more holistic way. The study primarily aims to develop a reliable instrument to measure MTEs and to examine how the provision of MTEs can benefit tourism marketers in terms of stimulating re-visit

intentions and WOM recommendations. A brief overview of the research approach adopted to realise the research objectives was presented and, finally, both the academic and managerial significance of the study was discussed.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the thesis topic and discussed the background, objectives and the significance of the research. This chapter presents a review of the literature related to the major concepts of the thesis. First, the importance of tourist experiences to the practice of marketing tourism is briefly discussed, highlighting the complex nature of the construct. Then the importance of the concept of ‘memory’ in the context of tourism is explained with a discussion of the various ways memory can be applied in the tourism industry. Also, scholarly views about the importance of personal memories in determining travel decisions of tourists are discussed within the context of MTEs, which is the major topic of the thesis. After dealing with the emerging significance of MTEs as the latest experiential marketing approach in the current global tourism industry, scholarly attempts to investigate MTEs are covered in detail, starting with a review of research on ‘memory retention and retrieval’ and followed by more specific research on MTEs. A review of research on MTEs is then presented with two major research issues emerging, namely: (a) what constitutes MTEs for tourists: and (b) the impact of MTEs on future behavioural outcomes. The review also provides an appraisal of the gaps and limitations of the existing research and literature on the topic.

2.2 The Importance of the Tourist Experience

It is widely accepted among both academics and practitioners in the field of marketing that the ‘marketing of experiences’ is the most profitable marketing orientation for service businesses (Morgan, 2006; Mossberg, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Williams, 2006). Since the seminal article by Vargo and Lusch establishing the dominant logic of a focus on services, the marketing of experiences has become a peak expression of service logic dominant (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) first noted that consumption is an experiential phenomenon driven by the pursuit of fantasies, feelings and fun, which highlight the symbolic, hedonic, and aesthetic nature of consumption. Pine and Gilmore (1998) also discussed the importance of experience marketing by detailing the ‘emerging experience economy’ in which the marketing of experiences is the latest value creating and value delivering option for business organisations. They asserted that, ‘The next competitive battleground lies in staging experiences’ (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p. 98).

Experiential marketing holds that consumers have both rational and emotional motives, and that they are driven to achieve pleasurable experiences. Therefore, the ultimate goal of experiential marketing is to create holistic and memorable experiences (Schmitt 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Such memorable experiences can make an impression in consumers' minds enabling them to recall such experiences more easily and vividly in subsequent decision-making situations (Sthapit, 2013).

According to some theorists, tourism, hospitality and leisure sectors exist primarily to deliver experiences because 'experience' is the core product attribute that customers are seeking and paying for in tourism and leisure (Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Watson, 2007; Mossberg, 2007). From a marketing point of view, 'the tourist' is a consumer who consumes via their experiences throughout their travels (Mossberg, 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004). Destinations can no longer be viewed as geographical areas alone, such as towns, islands or countries, but are increasingly recognised as perceptual concepts which consist of amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience for visitors (Buhalis, 2000). As Fuchs and Weiermair (2003) point out, even if tourists consider destination attributes during the evaluation phase of their decision-making, experiential benefits are critical during that process. Therefore, the importance and significance of 'tourists experiences' in the marketing of tourism and destinations have been widely acknowledged by both academics and tourism professionals (Murray, Foley, & Lynch, 2010).

Researching the constructs that make up the tourist experience dates back to the 1970s when several pioneering scholarly works led to the foundation of the academic scrutiny of the topic (Cohen, 1972, 1979a, 1979b; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; MacCannell, 1973). For example, MacCannell (1973, p. 593) attempted to explain the tourist experience as a modern form of religious voyage for authenticity: 'The motive behind a pilgrimage is similar to that behind a tour: both are quests for authentic experiences'. However, Cohen (1979b) made a distinction between the two by arguing that pilgrimage journeys are always related to the spiritual centre of a traveller's religion whereas tourists tend to be interested in the environment as well as religious and cultural experiences. Cohen (1972) proposed a fourfold typology of tourist experiences: (a) the organised mass tourist (b) the individual mass tourist (c) the explorer and (d) the drifter. The central notion behind this classification was a tourist's preference towards familiarity or novelty seeking from their travels. As Cohen (1972) notes, tourism is a modern phenomenon because modern man is less attached to his own environment and is driven by

his or her desire for strangeness and novelty to observe different environments, people and cultures.

Scholars have attempted to understand the tourist experience concept from a social science perspective and a marketing management perspective. The social science approach conceptualises tourist experiences in terms of ‘peak experiences’ that are in sharp contrast to the daily experiences of the tourists. The marketing approach, however, views the whole of the tourist experience as a consumer experience and conceptualises the tourist as a normal consumer (Murray, et al., 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004). Both of these approaches are correct in the sense that travellers could be viewed as trying to escape from their day-to-day life through their travel experiences but, at the same time, they act as consumers since they consume a variety of goods and services during their travels. Nevertheless, scholars generally acknowledge that the ‘tourist experience’ is a highly complex phenomenon that needs further research to properly conceptualise (Jennings et al., 2009; Murray, et al., 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004). Jennings and Nickerson (2006) argue that it is not possible to provide one concise definition for the tourist experience because the construct can encompass a complex variety of elements associated with tourism activities with the environment and the social context embedded in the activities (Ooi, 2003). The complex nature of the tourist experience can be seen in the plethora of experiential dimensions offered by tourist experience studies as illustrated in Table 2.1.

Experiential perspectives of tourism consumption highlight the *hedonic* nature of the products and services associated with tourism, such as, seeking fun, amusement, fantasy, arousal, sensory stimulation and enjoyment (Hightower, et al., 2002; Pine & Gilmore, 1998). The term ‘hedonism’ generally refers to seeking sensual pleasure from tourist experiences but the term is also used interchangeably to represent affective emotions such as fun, happiness and enjoyment (Trauer & Ryan, 2005). Swarbrooke and Horner (2007) connect the meaning of ‘hedonism’ to 4Ss: sea, sand, sun and sex, which also highlight pleasurable experiences.

In addition to hedonic pleasures, travellers are searching for unfamiliar and unique experiences through tourism, and, therefore, *novelty* has been identified as a major motivation for people to undertake travels (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Kim, 2009; Leiper, 1984; Petrick, 2002; Petrick & Backman, 2002). According to sociological perspectives, tourist experiences are ‘peak experiences’, which are different from mundane day-to-day activities. As Cohen (1972) points out, tourism is a modern phenomenon because modern mass tourism

emerged with the need to observe the world beyond one's own native habitat. Tourists may even take various physical and psychological risks when seeking such varied and novel experiences through travels (Sthapit, 2013). Thus, novelty has been commonly acknowledged as an inherent component of travelling and as an enduring concept of travel research (Cohen, 1974; Ross, 1993). Especially, Csikszentmihalyi's (1975) "optimal experience" concept is highly pertinent to such novel and adventurous travel experiences. People enjoy "optimal experience" when they report feelings of concentration and deep enjoyment. According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), what makes experience genuinely satisfying is a state of consciousness, which he calls "flow": a state of concentration so focused that it amounts to absolute absorption in an activity. The flow theory predicts that "experience will be most positive when a person perceives that the environment contains high enough opportunities for action (or challenges), which are matched with the person's own capacities to act (or skills)" (Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989, p. 816), which are essential elements for adventurous travels. Hopkins and Putnam (2013) argue that such adventurous activities can facilitate a personal growth for travellers involved.

Table 2.1: Dimensions of tourist experience construct

Dimensions	Literature
Hedonism and Affect	Aho, 2001; Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005; Cheng & Lu, 2012; Duman & Mattila, 2005; Farber & Hall, 2007; Hightower, Brady, & Baker, 2002; Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Jansson, 2002; Kim, 2009, 2010; Lee, Dattilo, & Howard, 1994; Mossberg, 2007; Murray, et al., 2010; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Pullman & Gross, 2003; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a
Novelty/Adventure	Bello & Etzel, 1985; Chang, 2011; Cohen, 1972, 1974; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Duman & Mattila, 2005; Farber & Hall, 2007; Gandhi-Arora & Shaw, 2000; Gunter, 1987; Kim, et al., 2012; Lee & Crompton, 1992; Leiper, 1984; Petrick, 2002; Petrick & Backman, 2002; Ross, 1993; Scott, 1995; Trauer & Ryan, 2005; Uysal & Hagan, 1993
Refreshment	Cohen, 1979a; Gunter, 1987; Hull & Michael, 1995; Kim, 2009, 2010; Kim, et al., 2012; Mannell, Zuzanek, & Larson, 1988; Sharpley & Sundaram, 2005; Tinsley, Hinson, Tinsley, & Holt, 1993; Wang, 1999
Involvement	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Gross & Brown, 2006; Kim, 2009, 2010; Larsen, 2007; Mossberg, 2007; Murray, et al., 2010; Oh, et al., 2007; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Smith, 1994
Social interactions	Ap & Wong, 2001; Arnould & Price, 1993; Falk & Dierking, 1990; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Obenour, Patterson, Pedersen, & Pearson, 2006; Tung & Ritchie, 2011b; White & White, 2009; Williams, 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006
Meaningful-	Bruner, 1991; Jamal & Hollinshead, 2001; Kim, 2009, 2010; MacCannell,

Dimensions	Literature
ness	1973; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Noy, 2004; Tuohino & Pitkänen, 2004; Wilson & Harris, 2006; Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012
Knowledge/Learning	Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, & Mansfeldt, 2008; Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991; Kim, 2009, 2010; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Prentice, Guerin, & McGugan, 1998
Mindfulness	Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1990; Frauman & Norman, 2004; Moscardo, 1996, 2008; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a
Environment to experience	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Lengkeek, 2001; Morgan, 2006; Moscardo & Pearce, 1986; Mossberg, 2007; Murphy, Pritchard, & Smith, 2000; Oh, et al., 2007

Another motivation behind travelling is to escape from every-day life and seek various psychological benefits such as sense of freedom, liberation and self-revitalisation, and these benefits are generally categorised under the *refreshment* dimension of tourist experiences (Kim, 2009; White & White, 2009). During tourism trips, travellers feel freedom from daily routines and responsibilities; they can lose a sense of time (timeliness) and free from intense commitment because they do not have contact with the same people (Blackshaw, 2003; Gunter, 1987; Ooi, 2003). They become fully *involved* in tourism activities both physically and mentally and forget work, family and other commitments related to their normal life routines. Tourists may also have a pre-experience *involvement with* travelling through powerful mental images and expectations of the experience. Such an involvement means they put pressure on themselves to participate in tourism activities throughout the journey due to the co-creational nature of experiences (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Kim, 2009; King, 2002; Murray, et al., 2010).

Scholars also point out that tourists are increasingly seeking to gain new *knowledge* and acquire new skills through tourism instead of just visiting places and gazing at tourist attractions (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov, & Mansfeldt, 2008; Kim, 2009; Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Sthapit, 2013). According to the Canadian Tourism Commission (2004), learning and discovery is now a core expectation of present-day travellers by which they expect to foster their personal growth. Some scholars attribute these personal beneficial outcomes to a broader dimension called *meaningfulness*, which refers to the realisation of the meaning of life, including a search for a self-identity and even self-empowerment through tourism experiences (Wilson & Harris, 2006). Travellers may also realise some personal development via tourist experiences in terms of intellectual development, self-discovery and broadened perspectives about life and self, which may ultimately improve the feeling of subjective well-

being of themselves (Noy, 2004; Tarssanen & Kylänen, 2007; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a; Uriely, 2005; Uysal, Perdue, & Sirgy, 2012). For instance, there is a growing interest among travellers in wellness tourism by which they seek educational, psychological and spiritual benefits while travelling (Chen, Prebensen, & Huan, 2008). As Morgan (2010, p. 246) asserts, “places and journeys which provide an encounter with ‘Otherness’, whether in terms of different cultures or the ‘more than human realm’ of nature and wilderness, have significant transformative potential” for travellers. Travellers tend to experience a degree of challenge to their worldview and inner consciousness through such travels, which can facilitate a transformative learning for them.

Social interactions is another important aspect of the ‘tourist experience’ construct because traveling provides many opportunities for tourists to interact with other people during their travels (Murphy, 2001; Murray, et al., 2010; Ooi, 2003; White & White, 2009). According to Wilson and Harris (2006), people use ‘consumption’ to develop relationships with others and travellers can make use of their travels to establish meaningful relationships with travelling companions, other travellers and locals. The significance of social interactions during the tourist experience has been empirically validated by numerous studies (Falk & Dierking, 1990; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011b).

The *environment* in which tourist experiences occur can also vastly influence the nature of experiences travellers have. According to Mossberg (2007), the physical environment is a crucial component, what he describes as, the ‘experiencescape’, where experiences are co-created by both marketers and tourists. Mossberg (2007) also believes that marketers cannot create experiences for consumers but they can facilitate the circumstances and the environment where consumers create experiences for themselves. Therefore, Urry (2002) suggests that both ‘landscapes’ and ‘sensescapes’ are essential aspects of tourist experiences.

Scholars also claim that during travels, tourists are more *mindful* in the sense that they are in a state of alertness and lively awareness of the environment through active information processing (Langer, 1989, p.138). As Langer (1993) explains, mindfulness is ‘a state of mind that results from drawing novel distinctions, examining information from new perspectives, and being sensitive to context’ (p. 44). Bendix (2002) further notes that while travellers physically move their bodies to unfamiliar places, ‘it is the mind that craves the experience and that will process the peregrination into strips to be remembered and communicated’ (p. 471). This indicates that *memory* is closely related to the tourist experience concept because

experiences are frequently interpreted by consumers as ‘enjoyable, engaging, memorable’ (Oh, et al., 2007). According to Erll (2011, p. 111), the term ‘experience’ denotes a complex phenomenon which is closely related to memory itself. What consumers ultimately expect from products in the experienced-based marketplace is ‘memorable experiences’. As Pine and Gilmore (1999, p. 2) state, when a consumer buys a service, they purchase a set of intangible activities carried out on their behalf but when they buy an experience, the consumer pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events. Since the provision of experience is an inherent feature of tourism, memory is a major concept associated with it and is closely intertwined in tourism practice (Marschall, 2012).

2.3 Memory Application in Tourism

It has been widely acknowledged that two concepts of memory, namely ‘collective memory’ and ‘personal memory’ have a wide variety of implications for tourism, especially in stimulating demand for tourism products (Marschall, 2012). Collective memories are the memories shared by groups of people, such as, memories shared by a particular family or cultural memories shared by a specific community group, whereas, personal memories are the memories created by each individual in their own minds.

2.3.1 Applications of ‘Collective Memory’ in Tourism

There has been an increase in memory research in recent times due to its importance in understanding human behaviour. MacDonald (2008, p. 3) says, ‘We are in the midst of a “memory boom”’. At the same time, there has been an increased interest in tourism related to historical events. Often termed ‘memory wave’, ‘memory craze’ or ‘turn to memory’. Such tourism causes a growing demand for memory products such as heritage sites, monuments, museums, commemorative events, festivals, historical documentaries and war movies (Cubitt, 2007; Hewison, 1987; Marschall, 2012). With this increasing demand for ‘memory products’, commodification of memory is becoming a common phenomenon in the tourism industry. For example, heritage tourism is primarily connected with the commodification of ‘collective memories’ in order to market historical and culturally significant sites for visitors. As Marschall (2012) notes:

Tourism advertisement[s] often taps into popular myths, the collective memory of great civilizations and legendary heroes, culturally grounded imaginings of paradisiacal landscapes, and ‘primitive’ cultures frozen in time, hence evoking the collective memory

of a lost world which the tourist – it is suggested – can (re)connect with through travel (pp. 324-325).

Commodification of nostalgia is another application of memory tourism, which is related to the contemporary social and cultural context in late modernity in which people feel ‘a radical crisis of memories’ (Bartoletti, 2010, p.23). Such tourism marketers sell nostalgic experiences in which travellers are provided opportunities to reconnect with their bygone past. Bartoletti (2010) provides two examples of this: tourists who visit Heidiland village and, the tourists who nostalgically visit former East Germany. The first case is associated with visitors’ nostalgia about disappearing pre-modern rural life and the ancestral connection with nature, whereas, the second case is linked to visitors’ nostalgia of the way of life that disappeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Bartoletti, 2010, p. 25-26). Marschall (2012) uses the example of ‘colonial nostalgia tourism’, which is characterised by tourists from former centres of colonial power who visit developing nations as ‘a longing for a lost sense of order, control, and grandeur once associated with Empire’ (p. 328).

Battlefield tourism and war-memorials are other examples of memory tourism, which utilise ‘collective memories’ to create demand for them. For example, Winter (2009) notes that an ever-increasing number of tourists, including those who have a connection with the Great War, are visiting important battlefields and war memorials across the world. Winter goes on to say that, even though the purpose of the larger memorial sites is mainly associated with commemoration and remembrance, they are increasingly attracting tourists due to their distinctive architecture. Some sites have even changed their basic nature through the adoption of modern technological aids and display materials in order to suit current generations. Scholars also point out that ‘dark tourism’ or ‘thanatourism’, referring to visitations to various death sites such as certain prisons, combat zones and other places where various kinds of human tragedies, massacres and disasters had taken place, is becoming an increasingly popular tourist destination (Marschall, 2012; Slade, 2003; Winter, 2009). Marschall (2013) concludes that, due to the emotional elements associated with memory and identity, many tourists tend to incorporate ‘memory trips’ into their various travel plans and journeys, thus providing the tourism industry many ways to attract tourists.

2.3.2 Importance of ‘Personal Memory’ in Tourism

In addition to the various ‘collective memory’ applications, as discussed above, the concept of ‘personal memory’ has been identified as a very important facet of tourism due to its

various implications in the tourism industry. 'Personal memory' are people's individual memories about past experiences which can influence their future actions and behaviour. Marschall (2012, p.330) claims that:

... personal memory tourism is perhaps most predominantly about emotion, longing, and very personal psychological needs that may even exist solely in the subconscious ... The memory tourist has a desire to travel to the sites associated with these memories, because they occupy an important place in his or her psyche or sense of self. The act of travel fulfils a deep psychological need to revisit one's own past, to relive important moments, and to confront an element of one's consciousness.

Marschall (2012) illustrates three important factors of 'personal memory' that can affect the tourism industry. Firstly, personal memories can influence travel decision-making, especially decisions about destinations. Secondly, previous memories can dictate how the traveller evaluates their experience of a particular trip. Thirdly, personal memories are recollected over and over again by travellers and are associated with sharing memories with others through storytelling, showing souvenirs and making recommendations. Therefore, increasing scholarly attention is drawn towards the influence of memory on the decision-making of leisure travellers. The purpose being to assist tourism marketers to gain more insights into the decision-making processes of travellers and to solve problems for leisure travellers when they are making decisions about where to travel in the future.

2.3.2.1 Personal Memory and Tourist Decisions

Marketers understand that people rely on past knowledge and memories when they are in decision-making situations. The concept of 'the prospective brain' indicates that a very important function of the human brain is to use stored information to imagine and predict the future (Spreng & Levine, 2006, p. 1649). This is similar to the 'directive function' of autobiographical memory, which emphasises the use of past experiences and knowledge to guide present and future decisions and behaviour (Bluck, 2003). According to Klein, Cosmides, Tooby, and Chance (2002, p.306), 'Memory evolved to supply useful, timely information to the organism's decision-making systems' and it enables humans to adjust their behaviour based on the information and experiences stored in their heads. For example, individuals use memories of past experiences as an aid to solve problems and develop opinions and attitudes (Williams, Conway, & Cohen, 2008, p. 24). Since consumer decisions are also one kind of problem-solving situation, memory can provide important information related to past experiences for aiding such decision-making.

Memory involvement in consumer decisions generally occurs during the information search and product evaluation stages of the consumer decision-making process. Previous research has found that prior knowledge and memory have a direct impact on information search activity (Bettman & Park, 1980; Philippe & Ngobo, 1999; Rao & Sieben, 1992). Engel, Blackwell, and Miniard (1995, p. 41) define information search behaviour as a motivated activity to search for information stored in memory (internal search) or acquisition of decision-relevant information from the environment (external search). In most cases, information search activity starts on the basis of past knowledge or prior memories. It starts internally first (retrieving information from memory) and is only extended to external information sources if the content of memory is not adequate to make the decision (Fodness & Murray, 1997; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004). Johnson and Russo (1984) say that consumers also use past experiences with and knowledge of products to limit their external search, and Alba, et al. (1991, p. 4) claim that consumers are biased to information retrieved from their own personal memory when making consumer decisions.

Lynch and Srull (1982) support the above claims, stating that consumers do not always make ‘stimulus-based’ decisions (i.e. decisions made by consumers when all the relevant information is present) but often rely on past experiences stored in memory. They argue that rational consumer behaviour models focus only on the conscious aspects of information processing but ‘most of the memory and attentional factors that affect our judgements are simply unavailable to consciousness’ (Lynch and Srull, 1982, p. 19). This view is supported by Zaltman (2003, p. 9) who stresses that ‘Ninety-five percent of thinking takes place in our unconscious minds—that wonderful, if messy, stew of memories, emotions, thoughts, and other cognitive processes we’re not aware of or that we can’t articulate’. Bettman and Park (1980) suggest that knowledge structures of individuals have an impact on the types of information processed and heuristics used by them. For example, when comparing product attributes to standards, more experienced individuals usually use standards at an earlier stage of the decision process than do inexperienced individuals. Hoch and Deighton (1989) list three factors which make past experiences stored in the memory more significant: product involvement and motivation to purchase the product are high when the information is drawn from past experiences; consumers tend to perceive past experiences as valuable and credible information sources; and past experiences have a great influencing power on future behavioural intentions.

Memory involvement can be especially pertinent in tourist decision-making situations since travellers are sold intangible experiential products that cannot be physically evaluated or trialled before consumption (Bendix, 2002). They have to rely on either previous experiences retrieved from memory, or external information coming from the media, recommendations made by travel agents and other personal sources. However, scholars acknowledge that travellers generally have more confidence when it comes to relying upon their memories than upon the information that comes from external sources and, more importantly, memories can be highly influential when it comes to subsequent travel decisions (Andereck & Caldwell, 1994; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Kozak, 2001; Lehto, et al., 2004; Marschall, 2012; Mazursky, 1989; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). For example, Wirtz, et al. (2003) revealed that remembered experience is a better predictor of travellers' intention to repeat the same experience in future than is anticipated or on-line experiences (i.e. experiences during the trip). Similarly, Lehto, et al. (2004) revealed that past memories significantly impact on election of activities and pattern of spending at subsequent vacations by travellers.

2.3.2.2 Personal Memory and WOM Recommendations

The scholarly works discussed above indicate that travellers' personal memories have a significant influence on travel decisions such as for destination choice and selection of travel activities. In addition, scholars acknowledge the importance of personal memories in the post-experience behaviours of tourists. That is, travellers often share their personal memories of tourist experiences with others, for example, through narration, photography and souvenirs (Marschall, 2012). Telling stories about travels is central to the memory of tourist experiences. As Bendix (2002) points out, travellers are even willing to sustain terrifying and gruelling tourist experiences in order to ensure that a great story can be told after their trip.

Memory sharing is closely associated with the social functions of memory and memory is used for social purposes, such as to develop or maintain intimacy in relationships, to teach or inform others and elicit empathy from others or provide empathy to others (Alea & Bluck, 2003, p. 165). MacDonald, (2008, p. 6) calls this 'social memory', which highlights the social relations backed by conversations of past memories. According to Bluck, Alea, Habermas, and Rubin (2005), people may share past memories with others who were present at the particular event or with those who were not participating in the event. In the latter case, memory performs an informative function in that it provides information about the event to the listener, whereas remembering the experience with someone who participated in the event

can lead to 'joint remembering' whereby intimacy and a social bond can develop between two people based on a sense of shared memory (Fivush, Haden, & Reese, 1999, p. 341). For example, in the context of travelling, tourists create stories during a trip and then present these stories to others (Moscardo, 2010, p. 46) or recollect these stories jointly with fellow travellers who shared the journey. This is a 'conversational remembering' during which stories are repeatedly told among themselves so that they can create a common memory of an event (Braasch, 2008b, p. 15).

In addition to face-to-face conversational memory sharing, a growing number of travellers are sharing their memories via social and internet media such as 'facebook' and travel blogs because the internet has become an important and convenient electronic media for them with which to share experiences with the rest of the world (Niininen, Buhalis, & March, 2007). Travellers share their experiences online via email messages, by publishing blogs and forming interest group communities. Volo (2010) notes that publishing experience narratives on travel blogs is becoming the most popular option for travellers and is facilitating virtual word-of-mouth (WOM) communications – sometimes called 'word-of-mouse'. For example, some leisure and tour companies, such as Walt Disney, have created social media platforms by promoting Facebook, Twitter, YouTube accounts and companies' own blogs, so that their clients can share their experiences with others after their vacation.

From a marketing point of view, such memory sharing with others in terms of storytelling and publishing blog narratives can reinforce WOM recommendations and thus significantly influence the travel decisions of others (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bieger & Laesser, 2004; Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007; Dodd, 1998; Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Murphy, et al., 2007). As pointed out previously, travellers rely heavily on past memories and WOM recommendations due to the intangible nature of tourism products (Bendix, 2002).

Furthermore, even if travellers do not predominantly rely on their own previous memories, they have to rely on what others recommend based on their own memories of past experiences due to the fact that the product cannot be tried beforehand. Crofts (1999) points out that such advice and recommendations from other travellers who have had prior authentic experiences of a tourist destination may be perceived as more reliable than information coming from advertisements, editorials or other such media when making expensive travel decisions. Due to the fact that travel decisions are highly influenced by travellers' own memories as well as the memories of others who make recommendations, tourism marketers focus on how to facilitate personal memorable tourism experiences for visitors because such

experiences may add to a superior competitive advantage for tourism destinations in terms of an increased number of repeat visitors and attracting new visitors through WOM publicity.

2.4 Memorable Tourism Experiences

Growing recognition of the involvement of memory in tourist decisions has led tourism marketers to re-think how to capitalise on the influence of memory in stimulating the growth in tourism numbers and thereby improve financial performance. An increasing number of scholars are recommending that tourism marketers go beyond the widely applied current marketing practices in the tourism industry which focuses mostly on ‘customer satisfaction’ and ‘service quality’ towards the provision of unique, extraordinary and memorable experiences (Kim, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). The underlying argument is that ‘regular’ tourist experiences are not strong enough to make an impression in travellers’ minds. However, if a tourism provider is able to deliver highly memorable experiences that will imprint strongly in travellers’ memories and enable them to recall such experiences more easily and vividly in subsequent decision-making situations as well as when sharing such memories with others, demand for such experiences will grow (Kim, et al., 2012; MacDonald, 2008; Marschall, 2012).

As discussed previously, scholars admit that ‘satisfaction and quality alone are no longer adequate descriptions of the experience today’s tourists seek’ (Kim, et al., 2012, p. 13). Tourists want more than that, and contemporary scholars say they want ‘memorable experiences’ (Kim, et al., 2012; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). This claim has been further supported by the scholarly argument that satisfaction and quality do not necessarily influence behavioural intentions (Jones & Sasser, 1995; Keiningham, Vavra, & Kenningham, 2001; Keaveney, 1995; Kim, et al., 2012; Mazursky, 1989; Oliver, 1999; Reichheld, 1993). Morgan and Xu (2009) suggest that a unique and memorable experience is significantly different from a satisfactory experience. They argue that satisfaction and quality research mainly focuses on customers’ cognitive evaluation of product attributes and service processes and neglect affective responses to the overall outcome. That is, scholars acknowledge that hedonic and emotional aspects such as fantasies, feelings and fun are also part of tourist experiences (Decrop, 1999; del Bosque & Martín, 2008; Oliver, 1993; Yu & Dean, 2001). Hence, Pritchard and Havitz (2006) propose two practical reasons for developing a valid approach for assessing tourist experiences: (a) to evaluate the tourist experience as a whole (evaluation of overall outcomes) and (b) to provide accurate feedback about tourist experiences to service and experience providers in the industry. Such accurate

feedback is important in order to identify good standards and enable the issue of industry guidelines to improve tourists' experience at a destination (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996).

MTEs, therefore, are increasingly recognised as the most effective way that tourism marketers can deliver competitive experiences for their clients in the dynamic global tourism industry of today. For example, based on a comprehensive literature review on tourist experience research, Ritchie and Hudson (2009) acknowledge that the phenomenon of MTEs is the most contemporary research interest in the ongoing evolution of tourist experience research, depicted in Figure 2.1.

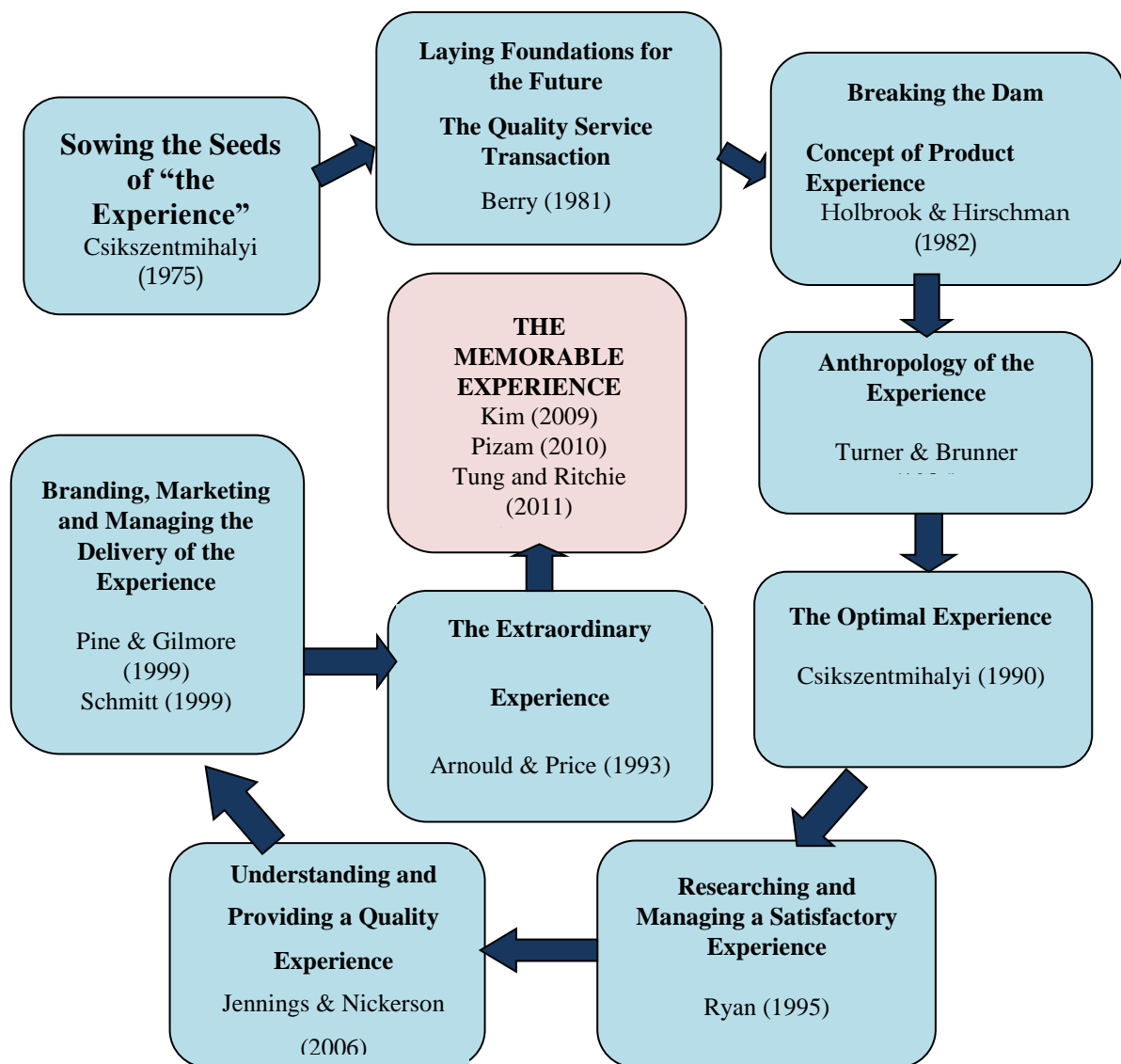


Figure 2.1: The evolution of tourism experience research (Adapted from Ritchie & Hudson, 2009, p. 121)

Pine and Gilmore (1998) laid the foundation for this trend by stating that staging memorable experiences is the next source of competitive advantage for companies to help them survive

and earn profits. According to Voss (2003, p. 2), only those companies who can deliver memorable customer experiences consistently will be able to create superior value and sustain a competitive advantage in today's highly sophisticated consumer markets. This claim is highly relevant to tourist markets as well because tourist consumption is becoming increasingly complex, demanding and multi-faceted (Bouchet, et al., 2004; Deffner & Metaxas, 2005; Scott, et al., 2009; Williams, 2006).

Hence, Ritchie & Crouch (2003, p.2) propose that the key for a tourism destination to be truly competitive is its ability to increasingly attract visitors and to increase tourism expenditure through the provision of memorable experiences. Pizam (2010) further affirms this by stating that creating memorable experiences is the essence and the reason for existence in the tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, Fuchs and Weiermair (2003, p.8) suggest that the fundamental task of destination marketing is to 'assess both the adequacy and effectiveness of the product, the facilities, services, and programs that all together provide memorable destination experiences for the visitors'.

2.4.1 Subjective Nature of MTEs

Even though the provision of MTEs has been increasingly promoted as the most important experiential marketing approach in the global tourism industry (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009), scholars also note that DMOs have few avenues to influence the creation and delivery of MTEs; this conclusion is based on an argument that travellers generally comprehend experiences subjectively meaning that MTEs are highly idiosyncratic phenomena (Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). For example, Morgan and Xu (2009, p. 231) noted that the MTEs reported by their respondents were mostly associated with social interactions during trips which were 'created by groups of people having fun together on holiday' rather than 'staged-experiences' created by DMOs. Hence they argue that memorable experiences are more authentic events rather than the stage-managed performances suggested by Pine and Gilmore (1998). Larsen (2007, p. 8) argues that tourist experiences are 'psychological phenomena, based in and originating from the individual tourist', which supports the concept of 'existential authenticity', implying that the feelings of authenticity reside inside individual tourists instead of with tourism objects displayed for them (Wang, 1999). Hence, Uriely (2005) points out that research on tourism experience has shifted its focus from the importance placed on the toured objects provided by tourist businesses to subjective negotiation of meanings.

Scholars therefore suggest that the role of tourist planners is to facilitate the environment – the ‘experiencescape’ – that enhances the likelihood that tourists can create their own memorable experiences (Morgan & Xu, 2009; Mossberg, 2007; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). This aligns itself with King’s (2002) thoughts that customers play an active role in the marketing process as a ‘co-creator’, implying that destination marketers need to engage customers more actively in the delivery and experience creating process. The term ‘co-creation’ also implies a role that tourism planners and marketers have to play in creating and delivering MTEs for visitors. Particularly in the case of Tourism players such as tour operators who cannot be mere facilitators but need also to design memorable tourism products for their visitors. The argument is that, even though tourists subjectively evaluate tourist experiences, an understanding of what constitutes personal memorable experiences is a pre-requisite for designing and facilitating memorable tours for tourists. Morgan and Xu (2009, p. 217) assert, ‘What the consumers themselves recall as memorable experiences ought therefore to be of great interest to tourism marketers’. This increasing interest in the topic of MTEs has led a number of scholarly attempts to investigate what constitutes MTEs for travellers.

2.4.2 What Constitutes MTEs for Travellers?

The previous sections of this chapter have discussed the increasing recognition of memory influence on travel decisions by tourists and hence the emerging significance of MTEs as the most favoured contemporary experience marketing approach in the tourism industry. This has led both academics and tourism marketers to focus on understanding what tourists themselves recall as MTEs (Morgan and Xu, 2009). A number of scholarly attempts have already been made to examine the likely reasons for MTEs, for example, Kim, 2009, 2010; Kim, et al., 2010; Morgan & Xu, 2009 and Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b. These studies have followed pioneering memory studies, which have examined how various event-specific characteristics impact on people’s memory retention and memory retrieval. The findings of such memory studies have also provided important insights into understanding MTEs. Therefore, a brief review of these studies is presented next before a discussion of more specific research on MTEs.

2.4.2.1 Event Specific Characteristics Affecting Memory Retrieval

It is well known that people cannot remember all memories with equal ease or with the same level of vividness (Holland & Kensinger, 2010). ‘Copy theories’ of memory hold that

personal memories of past events are more or less exact copies of the original experiences thus they can be retrieved vividly by individuals (Brewer, 1994, p. 17). According to Furlong (1951, p. 83), personal memories characterise the ‘whole state of mind of the past occasion’; there tends to be little forgetting of such memories (Wagenaar, 1986). Holland and Kensinger (2010) also assert that memories of past events are often recalled more vividly with rich sensory and perceptual detail because memories for personal episodes are often ‘organized into coherent narratives or stories complete with contextual details’ (p. 91). These ideas have, nevertheless, been criticised by some scholars from constructive theoretical perspectives who argue that personal memories are re-constructed by day-to-day life of people, thus ‘memories for most everyday life events are, therefore, transformed, distorted, or forgotten’ (Barclay, 1986, p.89). However, based on empirical evidence, Brewer suggests that both views are accurate to a certain extent in the sense that personal memories represent reasonably accurate copies of original experiences but ‘schema-based’ reconstructive process can also occur in relation to those memories (Brewer, 1994, p. 17).

The focal attention of memory retrieval research lies in understanding event-specific characteristics that may have a positive impact on memory retention and recollection. For example, numerous researchers have examined the association between memory and event characteristics such as: the valence of the event (whether it is a positive or a negative event); level of personal significance or consequentiality of the event; surprise associated with the event; emotions linked to the event; novelty, distinctive and extraordinary aspects of the event and level of cognitive processing that occurs when encoding the event (Anderson & Shimizu, 2007; Bohanek, Fivush, & Walker, 2005; Brandt, Gardiner, & Macrae, 2006; Brown & Kulik, 1977; Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Holland & Kensinger, 2010; Johnson, Foley, Suengas, & Raye, 1988; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Pillemer, 2001; Rubin & Kozin, 1984; Schmidt, 1991; Talarico, LaBar, & Rubin, 2004; Talarico & Rubin, 2003; Wagenaar, 1986). The underlying motivation behind such studies is to discover which characteristics of events lead to superior memory (Brewer, 1994, p. 16). In other words, the studies seek to understand the factors affecting the relative strength of encoding of events/information into an engram (memory trace or representation) and easy and vivid retrieval of them in later situations, which Tulving (1991, p. 7) identifies as the major two components of memory retrieval process.

A number of memory studies have revealed that memories of *positive and pleasant* experiences are retrieved with less effort and more vividly by people than memories of

negative or unpleasant events (Levine & Bluck, 2004; Wagenaar, 1986; Walker, Skowronski, & Thompson, 2003; White, 2002). For example, Johnson, et al. (1988) found that positive memories are more vivid in a sense that they contain more details about sensory (visual, taste, smell) and contextual (location, time) aspects of the event than neutral or negative events. Walker, et al. (2003) suggest two likely reasons for people to be more biased towards recollecting positive events: firstly, people generally perceive events in their lives as more pleasant than unpleasant and; secondly, memories associated with unpleasant events fade faster than memories of pleasant events. Similarly, Holland and Kensinger (2010) believe that positive events are better remembered because peoples' self-schemas are normally positive, thereby making positive experiences more self-relevant, and therefore tending towards being more memorable.

Highly vivid memories are sometimes called 'flashbulb memories' and they are caused by events which have had a great impact on an individual (Braasch, 2008b, p. 15). Brown and Kulik (1977) suggest that a high level of *surprise* and a high level of *consequentiality* (i.e. having a direct impact on self or personally relevant outcomes) are the two major determinants of such memories, for example, they found that Black Americans' memories of the assassination of Martin Luther King were more detailed and vivid than White Americans' memories because the consequentiality of that event to Black Americans was greater than for White Americans. Hence, personal significance has been recognised as a major factor behind very vivid memories because events which are self-relevant or are of high personal involvement are encoded more deeply and better remembered than less personally important events (Bower & Gilligan, 1979; Pillemer, 1990; Rogers, Kuiper, & Kirker, 1977; Symons & Johnson, 1997).

Other studies have discovered that *novel, unusual or distinctive* events are more memorable than mundane events or experiences (Brandt, et al., 2006; Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Hunt, 1995; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Rajaram, 1996; Reder, Donavos, & Erickson, 2002; Schmidt, 1991). According to Schmidt (1991), an event can be distinctive to an individual if it shares a few characteristics of other events. The scholars acknowledge that distinctive and novel events tend to be better encoded due to their attention-getting properties and are more often rehearsed than common events, thereby enhancing their persistence in memory (Anderson & Shimizu, 2007; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Pillemer, 2001; Rundus, 1971; White, 2002). Similarly, some scholars propose that *extraordinary, surprising, and unexpected* events can create very vivid and long-lasting memories in the minds of people (Kim, 2010; Lynch & Srull, 1982;

Talarico & Rubin, 2003), for example, Brewer (1994, p. 16) suggests that unique and rare phenomena can seize more attention and thus are better recalled subsequently than mundane events. Scholars especially talk about ‘salience effect’ on memory retrieval whereby physically salient information in the environment can capture more attention and thus become more retrievable (Alba, et al., 1991; Linton, 1986). According to Linton (1986, p. 64), ‘the greater the original salience of items, and the greater their continuing relevance to life, the more likely they are to be recalled.

The *level of cognitive evaluation* of an event has also been found as a predicting factor of memory retrieval (Kim, 2010). Memory researchers have shown that the processing of a stimulus can take place at a number of levels (i.e. depth of processing) and greater depth implies a greater degree of cognitive analysis, which in turn enhances the recollection of memory (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975; Lockhart & Craik, 1990). More meaningful information, for example, tends to be compatible with the existing cognitive structure of people, thus such information is generally subject to a deeper level of cognitive processing, which results in better retention. Accordingly, they suggest that retention of a stimulus in long-term memory mainly depends on the amount of attention paid to the stimulus, its compatibility with the cognitive structure of the person and the depth of processing taking place during encoding. Other scholars have found that people can more readily recall and recognise high priority events that are deeply processed than low priority events (Schulz, 1971; Tulving, 1969; Waugh, 1969).

Numerous studies have also confirmed that *emotions* attached to an event can also play an important role in the memory retrieval processes (Brewer, 1994; Holland & Kensinger, 2010; Schmidt, 1991; Wagenaar, 1986). Brown and Kulik (1977), for instance, found that people can remember emotionally significant events more vividly even after a long period of time. Emotional intensity associated with an experience or event is a good predictor of the retrieval of memory because such experiences are more often thought, talked about and recalled than moderately emotional events (Bohanek, et al., 2005; Talarico, et al., 2004). Brewer, (1994, p. 16), for example, found that ‘exciting’ thoughts are better retained and recalled than less exciting thoughts. Some studies found that events charged with positive emotions are remembered more clearly and quickly than experiences which evoke negative emotions (Levine & Bluck, 2004; Walker, et al., 2003; Walker, Vogl, & Thompson, 1997). Holland and Kensinger (2010) describes two ways that emotions can aid memory retrieval of past

events: the emotional content of the event has an impact on remembering, and emotions at the time of retrieval influences the recall of the event.

The studies discussed above propose that various event-specific characteristics, such as valance of the event, surprise and a high level of consequentiality associated with the event, personal significance of the event, perceived novelty and distinctiveness of the event, the level of cognitive evaluation occurring when processing the information of the event and emotions associated with the event, are the likely predictors of people's memory retrieval and memory vividness of a particular event. Even though these studies have not specifically been undertaken with reference to tourism experiences, the results can also be important to understand MTEs because such events-specific characteristics seem to be also pertinent to tourism experiences. One may presume that similar event-specific characteristics of a tourism trip, such as perceived novelty/distinctiveness of experiences, the benefits derived from experiences (consequentiality), surprises associated with experiences, the level of cognitive involvement in experiences and emotions associated with experiences, can strongly affect travellers' memory of a particular trip, implying that they can be integral components of MTEs.

2.4.2.2 Components of MTEs

A number of scholarly efforts have been undertaken to try to conceptualise what is meant by MTEs from both tourists' and institutional perspectives in order to provide important insights to DMOs and other experience providers in the tourism industry. Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999) have proposed *theoretical* guidelines for facilitating memorable experiences, albeit they have not been made explicitly with regard to tourist experiences. They state that experiences are intrinsically sensory, that is, what consumers see, smell, taste, hear and touch create the experiences: 'The more senses an experience engages the more effective and memorable it can be' (Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 104). They classify experiences into four broad categories, which they call the 'four realms of an experience', based on two dimensions: (a) the level of participation, that is, whether a person participates in an event actively or passively and (b) connection or environmental relationship, that is, whether a person just absorbs an event or is immersed in the event. The four realms of experiences illustrated in Figure 2.2 are: (1) entertainment experiences (high absorption and passive participation), (2) education experiences (high absorption and active participation), (3)

escapist experiences (active participation and immersion in the experiences) and (4) aesthetic experiences (immersion in the experience but passive participation).

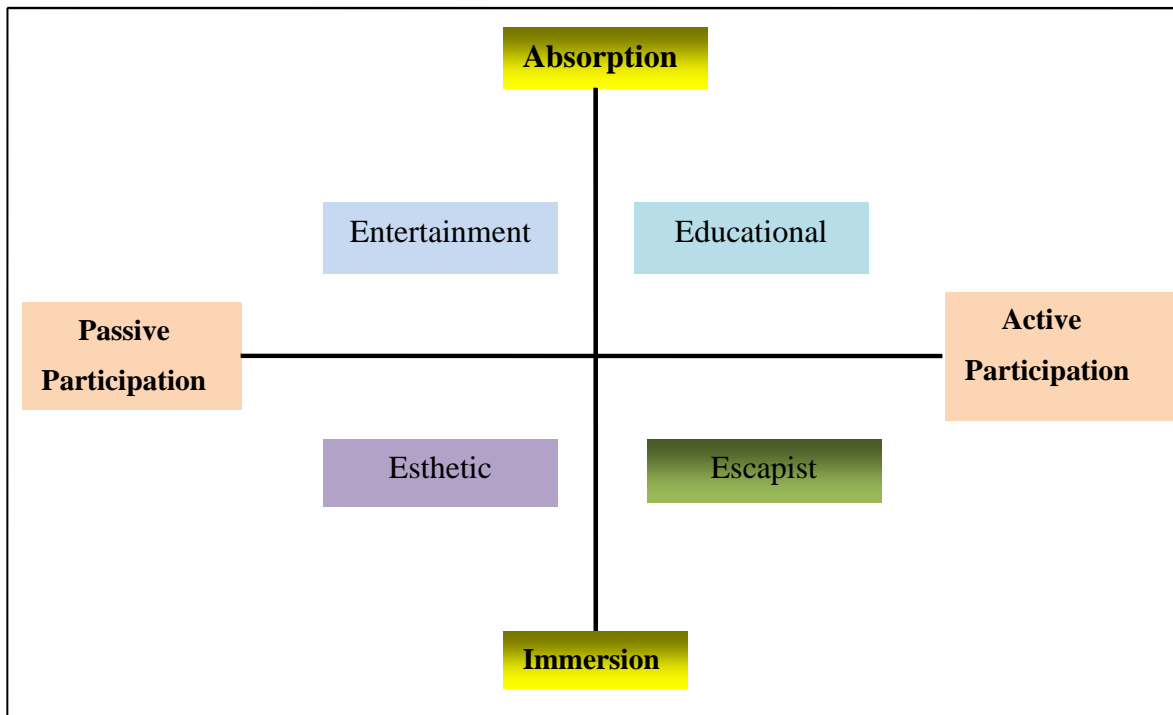


Figure 2.2: The four realms of an experience (Adapted from Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p. 102)

The four categories of experiences can be highly relevant to the tourism industry because a tourist may encounter all of these four types of experiences during a tourism trip. For example, a traveller may attend a concert or a dolphin show during a trip, which requires passive participation and absorption of the event, which Pine and Gilmore (1998) denote as ‘entertainment’ experiences. ‘Educational’ events of a traveller may include attending a ski lesson or a personal yoga training course, which requires more active participation but only an absorption nature connection with the event. ‘Escapist’ experiences require active participation and greater immersion in the event, for example, joining events of a festival or climbing Mount Everest. Finally, visiting an art gallery or just observing a festival are examples for ‘easthetic’ experiences which require travellers to engage in minimal participation but cause them to be, nevertheless, immersed in the experience. According to Pine and Gilmore (1998), encompassing all the four aspects is necessary for consumers to experience the richest and most memorable experiences; however few empirical studies are available to support this claim. Hence, further empirical investigations would be useful to test the validity of these claims, especially in the context of ‘tourist experience’ phenomenon.

A couple of empirical studies are available which are more pertinent to *leisure* experiences. For example, Gunter (1987) explored the likely reasons behind the most memorable leisure experiences of 140 university students. The study's results revealed that memorable experiences resulted from: (a) a sense of separation – freedom from routine pressures, obligations and work commitments; (b) freedom of choice – personal freedom to make choices about how to use the time; (c) affective effects – pleasure and enjoyment associated with the leisure experience; (d) spontaneity – ability to make spontaneous decisions for directing their actions; (e) timelessness – unaware of the passing of time; (f) fantasy – ability to engage in creative imagination; (g) a sense of adventure and exploration – exploring and experiencing new and unknown things; and (h) a new realisation of self – identifying who they are and their relationship with others. In a similar study, Falk and Dierking (1990) examined the memories of very early museum experiences of 12 graduate students by conducting open-ended interviews. The results suggest that students' memories were mostly related to social context of such experiences; that is, who they were with and what they did together. In addition, they were able to remember: (a) physical characteristics of the museums; (b) certain exhibits and objects observed; (c) buying souvenirs; and (d) affective feelings associated with the museum experiences.

The findings offered by Gunter (1987) and Falk and Dierking (1990) provide important exploratory insights about memorable *leisure* experiences, though there is little information about the extent to which they are relevant to *tourist* experiences, because all leisure experiences are not necessarily associated with tourist experiences. Hence, further scholarly investigations would be more beneficial to test the validity of these dimensions in the context of tourist experiences, especially through more representative samples of typical tourists rather than students who are hardly representative of the general travelling public.

A few studies have also been undertaken to examine memorable experiences associated with *festival* experiences. For example, Morgan (2006) examined visitor experiences of the Sidmouth Folk Festival, held in 2005, and found that visitors' unique and memorable experiences had resulted from: (a) abundant choice – freedom to choose from a wide variety of options; (b) moments of amazements – experiencing something beyond expectations; (c) shared experiences – social interactions before, during and after the event; (d) local distinctiveness – distinctive landscapes and foods; (e) positive values – feelings of significance of the activities that visitors had been involved in during the festival; and (f) the fringe events to the main experiences – informal but memorable peripheral activities related

to the festival experience. A similar research project was undertaken by Anderson and Shimizu (2007) in which they examined how various psychological and behavioural factors influence the long-term memory vividness of people who had visited the Japan World Exposition held in 1970 (Expo '70). The results revealed that 'affect', 'agenda fulfilment', and 'rehearsal' had a significant relationship with long-term memory vividness, but intentionality, frequency of visitation, age and gender were not found to have an effect on long-term memory of the *festival*. Since the scope of the two studies, Morgan (2006) and Anderson and Shimizu (2007), are pertinent to memorable *festival* experiences, it is worthwhile to investigate to what extent the dimensions offered by the two studies are applicable to general purpose tourists who visit destinations for a wide variety of reasons rather than just visiting festivals.

In another study, which examined school children's reasons and motivations for going on school and family trips, Larsen and Jenssen (2004) found that the most memorable aspect of a school trip was social interactions; that is, 'doing things together' with fellow students. Hence the authors describe the main reason for children's participation in a school trip was 'travelling with, more than travelling to or from' (Larsen & Jenssen, 2004, p. 43). Other frequently mentioned experiences were learning, being engaged in sport activities and certain extreme experiences (e.g. mountain climbing, rafting). In a similar study, Morgan and Xu (2009) examined the likely reasons for the most memorable holiday places from a sample of British students. The results revealed various reasons: (a) having fun with family and friends; (b) being able to experience different cultures; (c) availability of plenty of sights and scenery; (d) ability to participate in adventurous activities; (e) availability of sun and sand; and (f) being able to experience something different. More importantly, the study found that social interactions that had taken place during the trip such as 'fun with friends and family' and interactions with local people was the prime reason behind students' memories. Based on the findings, they finally concluded that MTEs are subjectively created by people themselves rather than by something that can be staged by experiential marketers.

The results of Larsen and Jenssen (2004), and Morgan and Xu (2009) are significant in the sense that they are directly relevant to tourist experiences, thus providing important insights about MTEs. The results highlight the significance of social interactions for determining MTEs for student travellers, as well as showing other important aspects of MTEs, such as participation in various leaning, sport and extreme activities. The two studies also provides further research avenues, for example, it is important to examine to what extent the results are

applicable to more typical tourists, especially to those who are employed, affluent and frequently make leisure trips. For example, one can argue that the significance of social interactions may be common to all segments of travellers but extreme and sporty experiences may not be relevant or significant for all of them. DMOs would be more interesting to know to what extent and on which elements a particular destination is memorable for more regular and frequent visitors in addition to students.

Tung and Ritchie (2011a) explored the essence of memorable tourism experiences from a psychological standpoint at a large Canadian university. They conducted a number of in-depth interviews and found four dimensions of MTEs, namely: 'affect', 'expectations', 'consequentiality' and 'recollection'. The dimension 'affect' suggests that MTEs are associated with positive emotions such as happiness and excitement whereas the 'expectations' dimension refers to fulfilment of intentions/agendas and surprises encountered during trips. The authors found that such surprises had mainly stemmed from experiences that had exceeded travellers' expectations. The study also found that MTEs are associated with various personally beneficial outcomes for travellers, which the authors denote as 'consequentiality'. This dimension covers four types of outcomes, namely: intellectual development, enhanced social relationships, self-discoveries and overcoming physical challenges. The authors explained the last dimension, 'recollection', as meaning that travellers undertake various efforts and actions that help them to remember memorable trips over time; for example, thinking back about the trip, purchasing souvenirs and telling stories with others.

Tung and Ritchie (2011b) also investigated MTEs from senior travellers' perspectives by paying special attention to their 'reminiscence bump' in MTEs. The reminiscence bump is the name given to the phenomenon that adults tend to recall a larger number of life experiences belonging to their adolescence and early adulthood (Jansari & Parkin, 1996). Based on 42 interviews with senior travellers, Tung & Ritchie found five themes of MTEs relevant to the senior travel market: (a) identity formation; (b) family milestones; (c) relationship development; (d) nostalgia re-enactment; and (e) freedom pursuits. The authors refer to the 'identity formation' theme as representing experiences that had helped the study respondents to define their self-image and to engage in identity developing activities. The 'family milestones' theme relates to experiences that had taken place with respondents' families during late 20s and early 30s of their lives. Mostly, the respondents had related such experiences to travelling with their young children during the early years of parenthood and

to various other major family events, such as re-visiting friends and relatives with children. The 'Relationship development' theme refers to the strengthening of bonds and the development of new relationships with significant others, such as family members and friends during memorable trips. The next theme, 'nostalgic re-enactment', is meant for senior travellers' travelling to relive past experiences, that is, travelling back to places where they had grown up or encountered major life events in order to reconnect with the past. The last theme 'freedom pursuits' relates to the study respondents' memories about travel experiences without work, and free from financial and family obligations. The authors found that such experiences have mostly been undertaken by the respondents in the post-retirement periods of their lives, and when their children had separated from them and lived independently with their own families.

The two studies of Tung and Ritchie (2011a, 2011b) also offer important exploratory insights about MTEs and have added to empirical knowledge in the literature. The first study acknowledges the importance of the recollection phase, which takes place after a trip when memories of the trip are shared with others in numerous ways, such as telling stories and showing souvenirs, which are essential facets of personal memories of tourist experiences (Braasch, 2008b; Marschall, 2012; Moscardo, 2010). These studies are initial important empirical evidence to support that MTEs are more often shared with other people, implying that there is high potential to make WOM recommendations as well. Hence, examining these claims are important avenues for future research on MTEs, especially through quantitative inquiries. The second study provides important insights, particularly for designing MTEs for older travellers; for example, the study suggests that tourism marketers can effectively utilise 'nostalgic re-enactment' and 'freedom pursuits' dimensions in order to attract more senior travellers to their destinations. As discussed previously, 'nostalgic tourism' is an emerging form of tourism in late modern societies that provides opportunities, especially, for older travellers to re-connect with their lost past (Bartoletti, 2010; Marschall, 2012). However, since the study is highly focused on senior travellers, one can reasonably presume that the results may not be applicable to tourists belonging to other age levels, which is an aspect worthy of examination in future MTEs research.

The first attempt to develop a measurement instrument for MTEs was pursued by Kim (2009), employing 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, namely: hedonism, refreshment, local

culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty (Kim, et al., 2012). The ‘hedonism’ dimension refers to experiences associated with various emotions such as pleasure, excitement and enjoyment. The second dimension, ‘refreshment’, relates to feelings of freedom, liberation and revitalisation realised by travellers during a memorable trip. The third dimension, ‘local culture’, represents travellers’ experiences of friendly local people and local cultures, and the fourth dimension, ‘meaningfulness’, indicates travellers’ engagement in personally meaningful activities during a trip. The fifth dimension, ‘knowledge’ refers to exploring new cultures and gaining new knowledge during a trip, and the sixth dimension, ‘involvement’ represents travellers’ active involvement and participation in memorable tourism experiences. The final dimension, ‘novelty’ denotes novel and unique experiences encountered by travellers during MTEs.

Kim (2010) published a related paper, based on the scale developed in his previous study in 2009 in which he had investigated the impact of the seven dimensions of MTEs scale (hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty) on the autobiographical memory of the trip; that is, memory recollection and memory vividness. The results showed that only three dimensions; namely: ‘involvement’, ‘hedonic activity’, and ‘local culture’ had a positive impact on autobiographical memory. More recently, Kim (2013) published a paper in which he examined whether MTE dimensions significantly differ between two student groups, namely United States and Taiwan students. The results indicated that five MTEs dimensions (i.e. hedonism, refreshment, novelty, meaningfulness, and knowledge) were significantly different between the two student groups.

Kim and his colleagues’ contributions are noteworthy in several ways. Firstly, they have undertaken the most comprehensive academic inquiries into MTEs to date, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods. Secondly, they offered a much broader conceptualisation of MTEs by identifying seven dimensions, covering both cognitive and affective domains of the construct. Thirdly, they offered an instrument for measuring MTEs, which is useful for tourism marketers to obtain valuable visitor feedback and thereby improve visitor experiences. Finally, they revealed that various MTEs dimensions may be evaluated differently by travellers from different cultural backgrounds, implying that cultural differences should be taken into consideration when designing experiential products.

While acknowledging the contributions made by Kim and his colleagues, several future research avenues can also be identified for further enrichment of their contributions. Firstly, it is worthy to assess the validity of the seven MTEs dimensions and the measurement instrument offered by Kim (2009) through further research, relying on more representative samples of typical 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 due to the fact that the limitations of the existing scale posed by choosing a student sample by Kim (2009) 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, earn money and thus have more capacity to make their own travel decisions. 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 two student groups, that is, United States and Taiwan students. Hence, extending the scope of the study into other cultural contexts and also investigating the claim from more typical tourists' perspectives will further 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 to focus on.

The first study which examined MTEs from institutional perspectives was published by the Canadian Tourism Commission (2004), which investigated the types of visitor experiences that are in demand and how to package memorable tourist experiences by similar tourist organisations. Its findings were based on qualitative focus groups and were conducted with travel planners, tour operators and DMOs across nine countries. Based on the study results, the report suggests four key ingredients for creating MTEs: (i) the importance of skills, resourcefulness and networks of tour guides and tour directors because they can directly affect how visitors evaluate a tour; (ii) importance of including local resource specialist or subject matter specialists to the travel group so that they can share knowledge of local matters and connect travellers to local communities; (iii) allowing travellers to encounter the element of surprise which can be planned or spontaneous; and (iv) making tours more flexible, that is, providing free time and spontaneity within group tour itinerary for travellers so that they can

engage in self-discovery events and unplanned opportunities (the Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004, p. 10-12).

The findings offered by the Canadian Tourism Commission (2004) are noteworthy in several ways. Firstly, the results represent institutional perspectives about MTEs, which has broadened the horizons of research on the topic in so far as it highlights several additional experiential dimensions that can positively contribute to the MTE construct. The experiential dimensions include the significance of tour guides, local resource specialists and flexible tours – the aspects that have been neglected by other studies. That may have been because other MTEs studies have mostly relied on student respondents who do not generally travel on the package tours that more affluent travellers are likely to frequent. Therefore, the research of the Canadian Tourism Commission (2004) offers valuable new exploratory insights about MTEs that are particularly pertinent to tourists who travel on package tours. Including these results in future MTEs studies will broaden the scope of such studies and provide much richer findings.

Secondly, the results provide important preliminary evidence from the *industry suppliers' perspectives* to support the claim that tourist businesses can have a significant control over designing MTEs even though some scholars argue that MTEs are highly idiosyncratic and subjective phenomena and beyond the control of tourism marketers (Tung and Ritchie, 2011a; Morgan and Xu, 2009). The report supports the notion of co-creation which admits that both consumers and marketers need to play a role in creating experiences (King, 2002). Therefore, future research on MTEs needs to investigate this evidence further by examining to what extent tourism marketers can engage in experience designing and delivering process to facilitate MTEs.

Overall, the studies discussed so far have greatly contributed to the literature on MTEs, which is still at an early stage of development. These studies have suggested a number of potential experiential dimensions to help the conceptualisation of the MTEs construct.

In summary, studies have found that a particular tourism experience is more memorable for tourists when it is associated with: novelty, consequentiality (personally beneficial outcomes), intellectual development (knowledge), meaningfulness, pleasant social interactions, surprises, refreshment, identity formation, fulfilment of prior trip expectations, professional tour guides, involvement, local culture, and various emotions such as pleasure

and enjoyment. Table 2.2 provides a summary of the MTE dimensions revealed by existing studies.

Table 2.2: Summary of the dimensions of MTEs proposed by previous studies

Study	Nature of the Study	Dimensions Suggested
Larsen and Jenssen (2004)	Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Social interactions 2. Learning experiences 3. Being engaged in sport activities and certain extreme experiences
The Canadian Tourism Commission (2004)	Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Skills, resourcefulness and networks of tour guides and tour directors 2. Importance of including local resource specialist or subject matter specialists to the travel group 3. The element of surprise which can be planned or spontaneous 4. Making tours more flexible
Anderson and Shimizu (2007)	Confirmatory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affect 2. Agenda fulfilment 3. Rehearsal
Kim (2009)	Confirmatory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Hedonism (feelings of pleasure) 2. Refreshment 3. Local culture 4. Meaningfulness 5. Knowledge 6. Involvement 7. Novelty
Morgan and Xu (2009)	Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Having fun with family and friends 2. Been able to experience different cultures 3. Availability of plenty of sights and scenery 4. Ability to participate in adventurous activities 5. Availability of sun and sand 6. Being able to experience something different.
Tung and Ritchie (2011a)	Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Affect, 2. Expectations 3. Consequentiality 4. Recollection
Tung and Ritchie (2011b)	Exploratory	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identity formation 2. Family milestones 3. Relationship development 4. Nostalgia re-enactment 5. Freedom pursuits

2.4.3 MTEs and Future Behavioural Intentions

The key rationale behind the contemporary commendation of ‘MTEs’ is the expectations of both scholars and practitioners that it will yield positive economic benefits to tourist destinations in terms of an increased number of tourist visitations and the spreading of free WOM publicity (Kim, et al., 2012). However, it is regrettable that such endorsements have been made without sound empirical evidence because there is a dearth of published studies that have examined the impact of MTEs on post-experience behaviour of tourists (Kim et al., 2010). Even the limited literature available on this aspect has not provided strong evidence in

support for a causal relationship between MTEs and future revisit intentions. For example, in a study to examine most memorable holiday places of students, Morgan and Xu (2009) found that there is no likely impact of MTEs on their future travel aspirations simply because they prefer to visit somewhere else in order to seek a difference. As Morgan and Xu (2009) explain:

Even where the memory is associated with the destination's attractions, activities or culture, as with the more long-haul destinations, the effect is not to make the students dream of going back but to look for different experiences in different places (p. 231).

Tung and Ritchie's (2011a) study also found similar results; for instance, many respondents to their study had no intention of re-visiting the same destinations for two reasons: (i) a MTE cannot be replicated because it is quite unique – that is, it is once-in-a-life-time experience; and (b) they prefer to visit a new place rather than re-visiting the same destination in future travels. Only one quantitative inquiry is available in the literature, undertaken by Kim, et al. (2010), who examined the likely relationships between the seven MTEs dimensions (hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty) and future behavioural intentions through a structural equation model. The results revealed that only three dimensions (involvement, hedonism and local culture) have a positive impact on future behavioural intentions, whereas other dimensions do not significantly influence such behavioural outcomes.

When summarising what was discussed above (see Table 2.2), it is obvious that the present understanding of the phenomenon, that is, the possible link between MTEs and behavioural outcomes is very limited with a paucity of studies available in the literature. Even the existing studies have not provided robust evidence in support for a strong link between MTEs and behavioural outcomes. Therefore, there is a significant gap in the MTEs literature which needs further academic scrutiny.

2.5 Overall Limitations of and Gaps in the Literature

The review of the literature on MTEs shows that academic scrutiny on the topic is still at an early stage of development and only a few empirical studies have been undertaken on the topic to date; for example by, Kim, 2009, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2010; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b. This paucity is notable when compared with the larger number of studies undertaken in other areas of tourist experience research, listed in Table 2.1

(p.17). The review also suggests that there is no common consent among scholars regarding the components that constitute MTEs with ‘fuzzy’ and fragmented explanations offered by the existing studies as illustrated in Table 2.2. It seems that some of the dimensions tend to be overlapping (e.g. consequentiality, meaningfulness, knowledge and refreshment) implying that further academic endeavours are necessary to provide more precise and richer descriptions about the phenomenon.

A major issue that can be addressed by future MTEs research is that many of the available studies have relied upon student samples to examine MTEs, including in the instrument developed by Kim in 2009 (Kim, 2009, 2010, 2013; Kim, et al., 2012; Kim, et al., 2010; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). It is obvious that using student samples to examine MTEs is not a very robust way of obtaining a realistic picture of the phenomenon because students are a particularised sub-group of travel populations who cannot afford to travel like most people with full-time salaries and incomes. Generally, relying upon student samples in research endeavours has been criticised by scholars due to the fact that it can adversely affect the representativeness of true populations by the sample, thereby reducing the external validity of the results (Johnston & O’Malley, 1985; Landis & Kuhn, 1957; Pappu, et al., 2005). Johnston and O’Malley (1985), for example, point out that student samples excludes those out of the age-range of students, for instance, more than 93 percent of the respondents who were in the sample of Kim’s (2009) instrument-development study belonged to age group 18-23 years, failing to represent tourists who belong to other age levels. In spite of this limitation, the existing studies should be given due credit for their early contributions and initial explorations of the topic. However, from tourism institutions’ and suppliers’ perspectives, they would prefer to rely on studies that examine MTEs based on more regular and typical tourists who have more financial freedom in their choice of travel destinations. Such research will enhance the veracity of the results so that tourism marketers can be confident to make important decisions about tourism offerings.

The review further highlights that the current literature on MTEs has ignored certain important issues that are significant for obtaining a more complete understanding of the topic. Firstly, the existing literature does not provide compelling evidence to support the significance of MTEs in terms of their ability to bring more tourists to destinations. Instead, numerous scholars have applauded MTEs as the most feasible option to be competitive in the tourism industry without sound empirical proofs to support the claim (Kim, 2010; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). Tourism marketers may really want

to know whether the provision of costly MTEs can bring substantial economic benefits through an increased number of repeat visitors and new visitors from the spreading of free WOM publicity; this seriously needs more academic attention. Secondly, the available research on the topic has not adequately considered the novelty seeking behaviour of tourists, which can prevent tourists' revisit intention on subsequent travels due to the fact that they may easily choose new destinations for their next leisure travel opportunity from a large variety of potential destinations. Omission of that factor from theorising MTEs would produce misleading findings, hence future research should pay due attention to that aspect as well. Thirdly, scholars have revealed that even very vivid 'flashbulb memories' can fade from people's minds over time and, similarly, tourists' personal memories of their past MTEs may also be weakening with the passing of time (D'Argembeau & Van der Linden, 2004; Rubin, 1982; Semin & Smith, 1999); fading memories by tourists can confound the likely associations between MTEs future behavioural outcomes (i.e. repeat visitation and generating WOM publicity). This likelihood has not been examined by any of the existing MTEs studies. Therefore, inclusion of the time factor is essential when theorising about MTEs in a more holistic and accurate way.

The present study aimed to address these limitations and gaps in order to provide an improved understanding of this important experiential phenomenon. Firstly, the study examined MTEs from more typical leisure tourists' perspectives instead of less representative students samples. Secondly, the study developed a new and reliable measurement instrument for MTEs as a substitution for Kim's (2009) scale with a view that the new scale, based on more authentic tourists, would provide a more dependable instrument for the tourism industry. Thirdly, the study aimed to address important gaps in the present literature by examining MTEs in a more holistic manner; that is, the study examined the inter-relationships among MTEs, autobiographical memory, future intentions to visit the same destination, future intentions to visit new destinations, intentions to generate WOM recommendations and the likely impact of the time factor in terms of a structural equation model.

2.6 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented a review of the existing research and literature on the key concepts that are pertinent to the thesis topic. Firstly, the importance and nature of the tourist experience was discussed in order to highlight the complex nature and 'fuzzy' understanding

of the construct. Then, the importance of the concept of memory for tourism marketing practices was described, providing examples of memory applications in the tourism industry and the significance of personal memories in individual travel decisions making situations. It was argued that personal memories can be highly influential on travel decisions due to the intangible nature of tourism products that prevent travellers from trialling experiential products prior to consumption. Next, the emerging significance of MTEs in the present-day global tourism industry was discussed, arguing that MTEs is the most viable experience marketing approach for destinations and tourism businesses to sustain a superior competitive advantage.

A review of memory research was then presented, which investigated the impact of event-specific characteristics on memory retention and retrieval with a view that the findings of such research can provide important insights to help understand what makes tourism experiences memorable for travellers. Research pertinent to MTEs was then reviewed, focusing on the two major issues of the thesis: (a) what constitutes MTEs for leisure tourists; and (b) the extent to which MTEs influence the behavioural outcomes of tourists. The review also provided a constructive appraisal of the gaps and limitations of existing MTEs research.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter Two presented a review of the existing research pertinent to the major concepts of the thesis, and helped to identify the future directions of MTEs research in order to address the current limitations and gaps in the literature. Accordingly, the prime motive of the present study was to examine MTEs in a holistic and comprehensive way through realisation of the following research objectives:

- To obtain an emic understanding of MTEs from the perspective of leisure travellers
- To develop a reliable instrument for measuring MTEs
- To test the structural relationships between MTEs, autobiographical memory and other important dependant variables

The nature of these study objectives called for ‘an exploratory sequential mixed methods’ style of research by which researchers first employ qualitative methods (the exploratory phase) followed by quantitative methods (the confirmatory phase) (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 69). The purpose of this chapter is to describe the overall research design and the research methods used during the two stages of the mixed method research process. First, the methodological paradigm of the study is briefly discussed, acknowledging the importance of ‘pragmatist’ views to obtain a fuller picture of the research phenomenon by combining different epistemological perspectives. Then an overview of the entire research design is outlined illustrating the link between the two stages of the design and the research objectives of the study. This is followed by a detailed explanation of each of the stages of the methodology, beginning with the exploratory stage and thereafter the confirmatory stage. Finally, a justification for choosing the mixed method research design for the present study is provided.

3.2 The Methodological Paradigm

The mixed method approach adopted in the study to examine MTEs is based on pragmatism as its philosophical foundation, which emphasises a practical approach to research problems (Denscombe, 2010, p. 148). It is an alternative worldview to the two dogmatic research paradigms; namely, *positivism* and *interpretivism*. Positivism assumes a singular reality which can be found through a value-free objective inquiry using quantitative research

methods, whereas interpretivism rejects the notion of ‘objective reality’, asserting that ‘subjective inquiry’ is the only promising way to gain knowledge (Feilzer, 2010). Pragmatism relies on a problem-driven approach, which recommends choosing what works in order to provide insights into the research problem. The worldview of pragmatism is closely related to ‘existential reality’ which portrays ‘an experiential world with different elements or layers, some objective, some subjective, and some a mixture of the two’ (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8). Feilzer (2010) asks: if a phenomenon has different elements or layers, how can it be examined using one paradigm? He asserts that only a mixed methods research paradigm can address both the layers of qualitative and quantitative aspects of a research phenomenon.

Morgan (2007) discussed how a pragmatic approach differs from the qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the advantages of the approach for encouraging better research inquiries, as illustrated in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: A pragmatic alternative to the key issues in social science research methodology

	Qualitative Approach	Quantitative Approach	Pragmatic Approach
Connection of the theory and data	Induction	Deduction	Abduction
Relationship to research process	Subjectivity	Objectivity	Inter-subjectivity
Inference from data	Context	Generality	Transferability

Source: Morgan (2007, p. 71)

A pragmatic approach adopts an abductive reasoning process, meaning that the researcher can move back and forth between induction and deduction in order to make and test inferences. In a sequential mixed method style of research, important insights can be inferred from an inductive qualitative phase which is then followed by a deductive quantitative phase to validate the findings of the inductive approach or vice versa. Morgan argues that a researcher cannot be completely subjective or objective during a research process. Similar to Feilzer’s (2010) questioning of the validity of using one paradigm to understand an experiential phenomenon, Morgan believes a researcher has to be inter-subjective by going back and forth between different frames of references to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. Morgan points out that this inter-subjectivity perspective allows researchers to deal with the two opposing views that ‘there is a single “real world” and

that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world' (Morgan, 2007, p. 72) because pragmatism accepts the possibility of both.

With reference to the ongoing debate on whether context-dependent findings or universal generalisable findings are more accurate, the pragmatism paradigm takes the view that findings cannot be either completely specific to a particular context (no implications for other contexts) or completely generalisable (applicable for every context). For pragmatists, what is important is transferability of the findings; that is, whether the findings of a specific context can be transferred to understand the phenomenon in other circumstances or to obtain more general implications. Thus pragmatism suggests combining different research methods within a single research project to address the research problem in a more comprehensive way. Hence, this study has applied the pragmatist perspective in order to obtain a fuller and richer picture of the MTEs phenomenon by combining both qualitative and quantitative methods within the study.

3.3 Overview of Research Design

A mixed-methods research design means combining both qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a single research project, which can provide a greater understanding of research phenomena than using either approach alone (Creswell & Clark, 2007, p. 5). The present study used the exploratory sequential mixed method design (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p. 71) to address the research objectives: first an exploratory stage to address the research questions, which needed an interpretive method, followed by a quantitative stage in order to determine if the themes that arose from the qualitative stage were robust enough to describe the MTEs phenomenon. The exploratory stage was primarily focused on an appraisal of the existing knowledge about MTEs, and on defining and specifying the meaning of the domain of the construct, whereas the subsequent quantitative stage was primarily intended to develop a measurement instrument for MTEs and to test if there were any relationship between the MTEs and the future behavioural intentions of travellers.

An exploratory mixed design generally begins with qualitative methods in phase 1 followed by quantitative methods in phase 2 (Creswell & Clark, 2011, p.73) as illustrated in Figure 1.1 (p.8). An exploratory qualitative studies as a first stage in a sequential research process is the usual approach for obtaining a 'preliminary understanding of the research phenomenon, such

as meanings, perceptual experiences and holistic and interconnected nature of the phenomenon (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 6). Sarantakos (2005, pp.136-138) asserts that exploratory investigations assist the researcher to refine the problem and objectives, define important concepts, formulate possible hypotheses, and guide the researcher to design the subsequent research stages in a more effective and efficient manner. This is especially important in research where scales are developed for a phenomenon in order to specify indicators and attributes of the construct investigated (Creswell, 2003, p. 216). Thus the initial qualitative studies will be a reliable foundation for the subsequent quantitative research stage to obtain more meaningful and generalisable findings (Mason, Augustyn, & Seakhoa-King, 2010).

Once concepts have been identified and defined through exploratory research, researchers use quantitatively based methods to test possible statistical relationships among the concepts; in other words, for confirming descriptors of the phenomenon under investigation and testing the theory (Miller & Crabtree, 1999, p. 6). Figure 3.1 shows the two stages and their relevant methods of the research design together with the research objectives to be achieved.

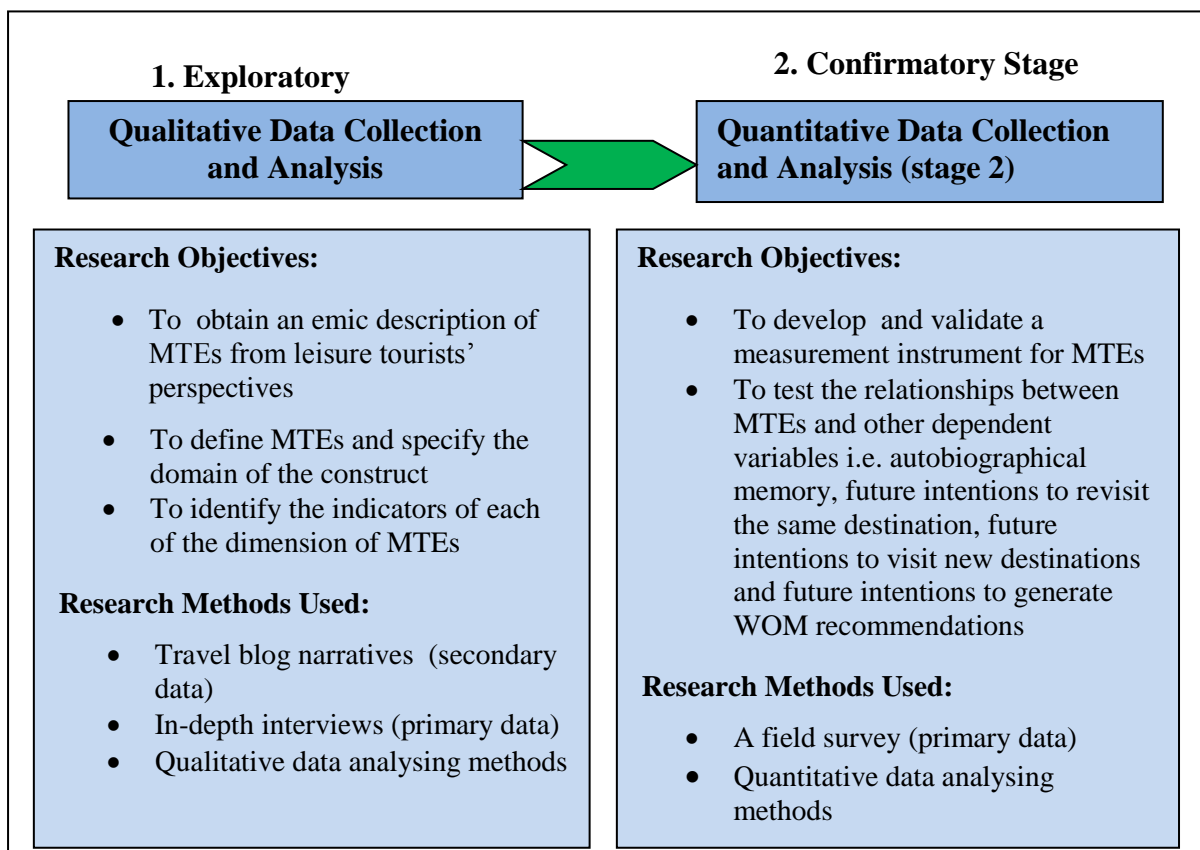


Figure 3.1: Exploratory sequential research design of the study

3.4 Design of the Exploratory Stage

The purpose of the exploratory/qualitative stage was to understand what is meant by MTEs for leisure travellers, define and specify the domain of the construct and generate indicators that represent the domain in order to develop a measurement instrument for the next stage of the study. To realise these objectives, the following two tasks were accomplished:

1. A content analysis of 100 travel blog narratives published on two popular travel blog sites as a secondary data source were analysed and
2. A content analysis of 35 in-depth interviews conducted with frequent leisure travellers as a primary data source for the study was carried out.

Exploring MTEs further by means of these two data sources was deemed important for two reasons. Firstly, the current literature on the topic has offered highly fragmented and inconsistent conceptualisations of the construct. Secondly, many of the conceptualisations have been based on student samples which may not provide a generalisable understanding of MTEs. These limitations called for a fresh exploration of the topic. 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 and more dependable data source. These two methods will now be discussed in detail.

3.4.1 Travel Blog Narratives

A content analysis was performed on 100 travel blog narratives published on two travel blog sites: Travelblog.org and TarvelPod.com, which are two popular travel blogs among international travellers (Pan, MacLaurin, & Crofts, 2007). The analysis of travel blog narratives was deemed important on three grounds: (i) it provided information-rich narratives for obtaining a preliminary understanding about MTEs at no cost; (ii) it enabled the results to be compared with the in-depth interviews (i.e. triangulation of the results); and (iii) it enhanced the horizons of the exploratory stage by providing researcher-uncontaminated and unbiased data for investigating tourist experiences. According to Denscombe (2010, p. 346), triangulation is a widely used approach to improve the trustworthiness of the qualitative findings by validating the findings from alternative methods and data sources.

An increasing number of consumers are reporting their feelings, experiences and stories online nowadays (Niininen, et al., 2007). Therefore, marketing research that is based on online stories reported on online communities, 'netnography' (Kozinets, 1998), is becoming a

popular qualitative research method among scholars. Travellers share their experiences online with family members and friends and with the general public via email messages, by publishing blogs and forming interest group communities. Among alternative social media sources, blogs have become a very popular option (Volo, 2010). Thus, travel blogs provide new opportunities for researchers to undertake netnography studies on tourist experiences because they are unbiased and unprompted responses from travellers. However, to date, no study had used this data source to explore MTEs despite the fact that researchers can easily find information-rich cases from travel blogs for investigating tourist experiences. Furthermore, it is a source of data that is widely acknowledged as an unbiased, researcher-unsolicited and unobtrusive (Martin & Woodside, 2011; Pan, et al., 2007; Volo, 2010). As Volo (2010, p.301) highlights, blogs are ‘completely unplanned and relatively researcher-uncontaminated description[s]’ of travellers’ true tourist experiences and such narratives, due to their non- researcher elicited nature, offer researchers authentic accounts of tourism experiences, feelings and reactions for investigations.

Several key words, such as ‘most memorable experience’, ‘memorable experiences’ and ‘most unforgettable experience’ were used to find relevant blog entries at the two travel blogs. Different numbers of entries appeared under each key word. For example, 58 entries were found on Travelblog.org website when using the search term ‘most memorable experience’ on 20 June 2011 and 78 entries were found on Travepod.com site on 5 July 2011. Of these entries, commercial blog entries, which were promoting hotels and tourist attractions, were discarded. Fifty blog entries from each of the two blogs were then purposively chosen for analysis based on two criteria: (i) relevancy – the blog entry should consist of information about a memorable tourism experience; and (ii) richness: it should consist of a sufficient description of the experience, for example, where it occurred, what the blogger and travel companions were doing at the time and why that particular experience is memorable.

The chosen blog entries were converted to PDF files and then imported into the MAXQDA10 qualitative data analysing software. Thematic inductive content analysis was employed to identify the themes of MTEs. Coding units were a phrase, sentence or a paragraph (text segments) depending on the nature of the particular text segment. Initial codes were classified under categories and the themes were developed by merging and rearranging the initial categories, and comparing and contrasting them based on their similarities and differences.

3.4.2 In-Depth Interviews

Although travel blogs provide information-rich experiential narratives for researchers, one limitation of the data source is that the accuracy and trustworthiness of such narratives are hard to verify by researchers. Taking this limitation into consideration, the present study also conducted 35 in-depth interviews with frequent leisure travellers in order to obtain more dependable descriptions about MTEs. ‘In-depth interviews’ is a widely used qualitative technique that can facilitate obtaining ‘emic meanings’ and ‘thick descriptions’ of a research phenomenon. If properly conducted, they can provide an in-depth, detailed understanding of the participant’s experiences (MacCracken, 1988; Minichiello, Aroni, & Hays, 2008). Denscombe (2010, p. 173) asserts that interviews can be a suitable method for gaining insights and understanding of people’s opinions, feelings, and experiences in an exploratory study because the meanings of their experiences need to be discussed in-depth rather than merely summarised in quantitative ways.

3.4.2.1 Preparation of an Interview Schedule

An interview schedule of questions was designed so as to conduct the interviews in a more systemic and productive manner. Attention was given to the gaps in the literature and to the research objectives when forming the questions. A number of questions were designed, which covered the major areas of the research. Prompting questions were included in case the interviewer wanted to probe for more detailed answers. The order of the questions was properly arranged to maintain a smooth flow in the interviews and to gain information-rich responses from the participants. For example, before moving to ask the main questions, the participants were asked to tell a story about their most memorable tourism experience. This was a useful way to start the interview since it helped the participant to recollect their memories more vividly and to provide more accurate and detailed answers to the subsequent questions. Story-telling is a very effective research tool for understanding human experiences because it facilitates storing, thinking and retrieving information before sharing through verbal or written communication (Volo 2010). Also, according to Schank (1990, p.12), ‘Human memory is story-based’.

The interview guide was pretested with 10 pilot interviews and was slightly amended based on the feedback received during the pre-test. For instance, a couple of questions had to be included in the schedule in order to explore negative MTEs because no pilot participant initiated a discussion about negative experiences when asked to recall their most memorable

trip. A few prompting questions were also removed from the guide and a few other questions were added. The researcher also gained training and important skills during the pre-test, which helped him to know how to probe for more detailed answers when required and to maintain a conversational style during each interview. The final version of the interview guide is shown in Appendix 2 (p.232).

3.4.2.2 Selection of Participants and Conducting the Interviews

A purposive sample of thirty-five (35) participants who frequently travel on leisure tourism trips (both domestic and overseas) was chosen for the in-depth interviews. In purposive sampling, respondents are chosen with a 'purpose' in order to include the key constituencies of relevance to the subject matter and, at the same time, to include a diverse group of respondents into the sample (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003, p. 79). In this case, the critical case sampling approach, which is a sub category of purposive sampling, was used since it enables researchers to include 'critical' cases into the sample. With reference to the present study, it was critical (Ritchie, et al., 2003, p. 80) to obtaining a valid exploration of MTEs that respondents be selected based on the criterion that they should be or should have been frequent travellers (at least undertaking leisure trips once a year).

Priority was given to respondents who were academics at the University of New England, where the researcher is pursuing his PhD, and other professionals such as accountants, solicitors and schoolteachers who were residing in Armidale in the Australian state of NSW. The underlying rationale for this was that professionals are more likely to be affluent and to have more potential to undertake both domestic and overseas travel than other groups in society. In addition, five university students who had travelled for leisure to a number of overseas destinations were chosen to represent younger travellers in the sample. Finally, six participants who did not belong to either the academic, professional or student categories but were frequent leisure travellers were chosen for the sample; these participants were found among the researcher's personal contacts. The researcher and the research supervisors believed that this sample was optimal because, as part of a mixed methods research design, the primary purpose of the interviews was to obtain rich and in-depth descriptions of MTEs from frequent leisure travellers rather than to produce more generalisable findings from a larger sample.

An email invitation was sent to potential participants with an information sheet containing the information about the research project and the purpose of the interviews. Once the researcher

obtained a positive response from a potential respondent, and after verifying if the respondent was suitable for the research based on the aforementioned criterion, both the participant and the researcher came to an agreement on the date, time and venue of the interview. In most cases, interviews were conducted at participants' office premises or homes but occasionally the researcher arranged a university meeting room in which to conduct the interview. On average, an interview lasted for 45 minutes, and all interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder.

3.4.2.3 Transcribing Interview Data and Data Analysis

All interview recordings were transcribed by the researcher using f4 software, and the resulting transcripts were subsequently imported into MAXQDA10 software, which was used to facilitate the data analysis. Inductive content analysis was applied so as to let the themes emerge from the data.

Content analysis is a widely used and flexible research technique employed in qualitative research projects 'for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns' (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). An inductive approach is the most appropriate option when existing knowledge or research literature on a phenomenon is limited and researchers cannot rely on predetermined categories and themes and need to determine them from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kondracki, Wellman, & Amundson, 2002).

Thus, the researcher read each transcript several times to immerse himself in the data before starting the coding (Kondracki, et al., 2002). Initial coding was done according to important reasons given by the participants for their personal memories of the trip. The coding unit was either a sentence or a phrase or an entire paragraph. Initial codes were classified under categories and then meaningful clusters of such categories (themes) were developed by merging and re-arranging these initial categories and comparing and contrasting them based on their similarities and differences.

3.4.3 Securing Trustworthiness of the Qualitative Findings

Maintaining rigour is a fundamental requirement for social scientific research but how to secure rigour can vary from one paradigm to another. A number of qualitative scholars have argued that well-known 'validity', 'reliability' and 'generalisability' concepts of the positivist paradigm are not applicable in the context of interpretive research projects. They have

suggested other approaches, which are more suitable for qualitative inquiries, such as ‘trustworthiness’, triangulation, audit trail and member checks (Begley, 1996; Creswell & Clark, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Richards, 2009; Tobin & Begley, 2002; Tobin & Begley, 2004). The present study employed several such techniques such as triangulation, member checking and audit trail for securing the trustworthiness of the findings of the qualitative stage.

Triangulation is a widely-used approach by qualitative researchers to illustrate the rigour and the trustworthiness of their qualitative projects. It is a validity procedure in qualitative inquiries by which ‘researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study’ (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). Various forms of triangulation are employed by scholars during their research endeavours, such as methodological triangulation (use of alternative research methods within the same research project), data triangulation (using different data sources to study the same phenomenon), investigator triangulation (using different investigators to study the same phenomenon) and theory triangulation (using different theoretical positions in understanding the research phenomenon) (Denscombe, 2010, pp. 346-348). The present study used two triangulation methods: data triangulation and methodological triangulation. Data triangulation was realised by using two different data sources: travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews to investigate the meaning of MTEs during the exploratory stage of the study. Therefore, a comparison of the themes that arose from the two different data sources could be made for ensuring the trustworthiness of the results. The qualitative findings were then validated by quantitative methods in a sequential mixed method research design which resulted in methodological triangulation.

The ‘member checking’ technique was also used to validate the themes and categories that emerged from the in-depth interviews. Member checking means ‘taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 127). Member checking with all the 35 participants was not practical and ethical, however, seven participants agreed to be involved in the process. They were instructed to read the transcripts carefully and to comment on whether they agreed or disagreed with the codes assigned by the researcher for the text segments. The researcher also maintained an audit trail, which documented all the activities and decisions taken by the researcher during the research project. MAXQDA software provides an easy option to facilitate the maintenance of an audit trail within the

program. All the steps taken and decisions made during the exploratory stage of the research were documented for scrutiny by the research supervisors or any other external party. Finally, all the themes that emerged from the data analysis were supported by direct quotations in order to meet the conformability criteria (Tobin & Begley, 2004).

3.5 Design of the Quantitative Stage

The main purpose of the quantitative stage was to develop and validate a measurement instrument for MTEs and to test the hypothetical relationships between MTEs and several dependent variables as theorised in the conceptual model of the study (p.150). To realise these goals, a field survey was carried out for collecting the empirical data and several quantitative data analysing techniques were employed. The steps and actions taken during the quantitative stage are now discussed in detail.

3.5.1 Instrument Development and Validation Process

Researchers use either existing scales or develop new ones if they cannot find one that fits their research objectives, thus developing valid measures is a never-ending process (DeVellis, 2003; Ekiz, Au, & Hsu, 2012; Hair, Money, Samouel, & Page, 2007). The limitations noted regarding the existing scale developed by Kim (2009) were a useful basis for developing a new measurement scale for MTEs. The following five-stage scale development process was adapted (shown in Figure 3.2) according to the best practices recommended by the experts in the field: Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2003; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Worthington and Whittaker, 2006.

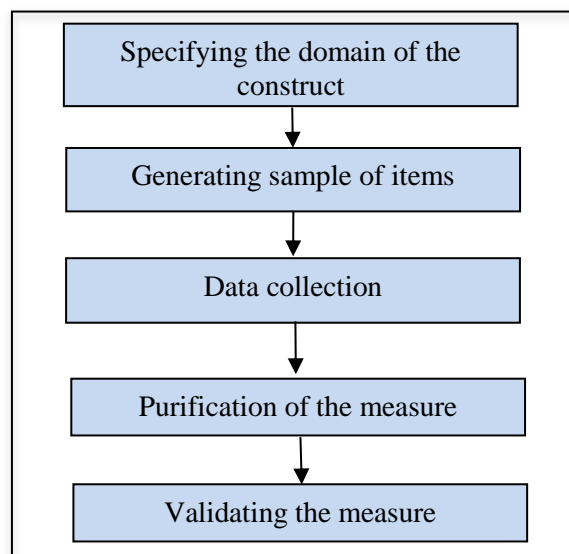


Figure 3.2: Instrument development, purification and validation process

3.5.2 Specifying the Domain of the Construct

Determining the scope of the study is very important when specifying the domain of constructs in instrument-developing research projects. As already described in Chapter 1, the present study limits its scope of examination to: (a) positive MTEs; and (b) only tourism experiences related to the category of ‘holidays, leisure and recreation’, excluding other categories (see Appendix 1). Especially, the scope of the quantitative stage was limited to positive MTEs because MTEs are mostly related to positive experiences rather than negative ones, a finding which emerged from the qualitative findings of the present study. The study also limited its scope to examining MTEs from leisure travellers’ perspectives for two reasons: firstly, because they represent the largest single category of all tourists (World Tourism Organization, 2013, p. 4); and secondly because it was the practically viable option to reduce the complexity of the study and to prevent the provision of less rigorous findings if the study aimed to examine MTEs from all categories of travel. Accordingly, MTEs were defined for the study purpose as follows:

Operational Definition of MTEs: Pleasant tourism experiences associated with a particular tourism trip, which first comes to travellers’ minds readily and vividly as their most memorable leisure trip.

As discussed previously, two exploratory research techniques were employed in stage one to specify the domain of the MTEs construct: (i) a content analysis of 100 travel blog narratives containing rich descriptions of MTEs; and (ii) a content analysis of 35 in-depth interviews conducted with frequent leisure travellers.

The ten (10) themes of MTEs which emerged from these two qualitative methods as well as one more dimension, ‘involvement’ which was found from the literature but did not emerge during the qualitative research, was chosen to represent the domain of the construct more broadly. In total, the study used eleven (11) potential dimensions of MTEs. According to Morse and Field (1995, as cited in Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1279), dimensions between 10 and 15 is considered as an ideal number to keep themes broad enough in which to arrange a large number of codes. Table 3.2 lists the eleven dimensions with their main data sources (these dimensions are discussed in detail in Chapter 4).

Table 3.2: Dimensions of MTE emerged during the exploratory stage

Dimension		Source
1	Authentic Local Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature
2	Self-beneficial experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature
3	Novel Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature
4	Local Hospitality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews
5	Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews
6	Social interactions with people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature
7	Momentous Travel Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews
8	Impressive Tour Operators and Local Guides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature
9	Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth Interviews
10	Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature review
11	Affective Emotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews • Also found within the literature

It is also noteworthy that many of the themes emerged from the two qualitative methods were consistent with the dimensions suggested by the existing research on MTEs, albeit the dimensions suggested by the present study seemed to be representing slightly different or more board meanings. For example, ‘authentic local experience’ dimension is broader than the dimension of ‘local culture’ offered by Kim (2009) and the ‘self-beneficial experiences’ dimension is more concise than the ‘meaningfulness’ dimension offered by Kim (2009). Some dimensions proposed by previous studies were also emerged as sub-categories under a border dimension during the present study. For example, ‘identity formation’ and ‘freedom pursuits’ proposed by Tung and Ritchie (2011b) and ‘relaxation’ and ‘achievements’ dimensions offered by Morgan and Xu (2009) emerged as sub-categories under ‘self-beneficial experiences’ dimension, and the ‘hedonism’ dimension proposed by Kim (2009) appeared under the dimension of ‘affective emotions’ in the present study. Some dimensions suggested by the previous studies were disregarded since they were highly context-specific

dimensions or not experiential dimensions in themselves. For example, nostalgic re-enactment (Tung and Ritchie, 2011b) was specifically relevant for their study sample (i.e. senior travellers) and it was not included in the present study. Similarly, ‘rehearsal’ dimension (Anderson and Shimizu, 2007) was not included because it is not an experiential dimension.

3.5.3 Generating a Pool of Items and Operationalisation of Dimensions

Once the domain of the construct was specified, the next task was to generate the items in order to operationalise each of the 11 MTEs dimensions (see Table 3.2). Hinkin (1995) asserts that both deductive and inductive approaches are equally valuable for generating items for measurement scales, and the present study used both approaches; for example, literature review (deductive) and qualitative research findings (inductive) – though the in-depth interviews were the more fruitful approach for achieving the task.

A total of 90 items were generated for a scale purification process. Of these 90 items, 86 were generated from the qualitative results of the study and four additional items were added to the tentative scale based on the literature in order to represent hypothetical dimensions which did not emerge from the qualitative results. As prescribed by Churchill (1979, p. 78): ‘The researcher probably would want to include items with slightly different shades of meaning because the original list will be refined to produce the final measure’. The refining process commenced with expert judging of the items, thus seven academics who are experts in tourist behaviour research were chosen as judges 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, which is an important component of content validity (Bagozzi, Gopinath, & Nyer, 1999; Chu & Murrmann, 2006; Ekiz, et al., 2012; Hardesty & Bearden, 2004; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). In quoting Nunnally and Bernstein (1994), Hardesty and Bearden (2004, p. 99) define content validity as ‘the degree to which a measure’s items represent a proper sample of the theoretical domain of a construct’, whereas the face validity is ‘the extent to which a measure reflects what it is intended to measure’. Content validity can be ensured through identifying a proper number of dimensions of the construct adequately (i.e. specifying the domain of the construct), and the use of expert judges can ensure the face validity of the identified dimensions.

The seven judges were the university academics who are specialists in the field of Tourism and Hospitality of various Australian Universities. They were initially contacted via email and invited to be the expert judges of the instrument purification process. Once they gave their consent, they were emailed the initial instrument along with instructions. They were asked to evaluate the degree to which each item is representative of each of the dimensions using a three point scale labelled with (1) not representative (2) somewhat representative and (3) clearly representative according to the operational definitions of each dimensions. In addition, a fourth label was included, ‘repetitive with’, to tick if an item is closely repetitive with one or more items of the underlying dimension. Items which were evaluated as being ‘not representative’ or ‘repetitive with’ by any of the seven judges were discarded from the item pool. In other words, for retaining an item, all seven judges had to have rated the item as ‘at least somewhat representative’. This expert judging step reduced the total number of items from 90 to 62. Table 3.3 shows the final ‘operationalisation’ of the 11 dimensions, which were included in the survey questionnaire after the step of ‘expert judging’.

Table 3.3: Operationalisation of the 11 dimensions to be included in the survey

Dimension		Operationalisation	
		Operational Definition	Measurement
1	Authentic Local Experiences	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip provided adequate opportunities to experience (a) day-to-day life of local people (b) real local villages and markets (c) local cultures and (d) local food.	Measured with 6 items with 7-point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
2	Self-beneficial experiences	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip provided adequate opportunities to achieve self-beneficial or personally meaningful outcomes such as knowledge enhancement, identity formation, broadened life perspectives, improved self-confidence and acquisition of new skills.	Measured with 8 items with 7- point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
3	Novelty	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip provided adequate opportunities to encounter with novel and unique experiences or a sense of adventure during the trip.	Measured with 10 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
4	Local Hospitality	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the local people were genuinely friendly and helpful towards them.	Measured with 3 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very

Dimension		Operationalisation	
		Operational Definition	Measurement
			much’.
5	Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which they were able to encounter unexpected but pleasant incidents and surprising experiences during the trip.	Measured with 4 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
6	Social interactions with People	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip provided adequate opportunities to engage in pleasant social moments, enhance social bonds and develop new friendships with others.	Measured with 7 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’
7	Momentous Travel Experiences	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip was significant in terms of been able to realise special, extraordinary or once in a life time experiences.	Measured with 7 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
8	Impressive Tour Operators and Local Guides	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which they were served by outstanding tour operators and highly professional guides during the trip.	Measured with 4 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
9	Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which they were able to realise experiences that fulfilled their personal travel interests and preferences.	Measured with 4 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’
10	Involvement	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which they actively involved in the trip in terms of prior information search, proper planning and energetic participation throughout the trip.	Measured with 4 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.
11	Affective Emotions	Respondents’ evaluation of the degree to which the trip delivered experiences that aroused positive emotions in their minds.	Measured with 5 items with 7 point scale with the labels ranging from ‘not at all’ to ‘very much’.

3.5.4 Data Collection

A field survey was carried out to collect the data using a self-administered questionnaire at a number of key tourism spots in Sydney, Australia. Sydney is a popular tourist destination among both domestic and overseas tourists. The survey was carried out during November-

December 2012, an ideal time for the survey because more tourists visit Australia during this period in the summer (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, p.658).

3.5.4.1 Questionnaire Development

A questionnaire was designed to collect the needed data for achieving the research objectives of the quantitative stage of the study. Primarily, it was designed to collect empirical data in order to purify the MTEs instrument, and to test any relationships between MTEs and several other dependent variables, which were hypothesised according to the theoretical model of the study, as illustrated on Figure 5.1 (p.149). The major components of the questionnaire are discussed below (the questionnaire itself can be found in Appendix 3 on page 234).

Part A included four questions which collected data about respondents' general travel behaviour: A1 – frequency of domestic and overseas travel undertaken for pleasure purpose; A2 – the total number of overseas destinations visited in that time; A3 – identification of their traveller type; and A4 – the degree of novelty seeking when travelling for leisure. Traveller type (A3) was operationalised in four statements based on the typology offered by Cohen (1979b), which classified travellers into four groups: organised mass tourist, individual mass tourist, explorer and drifter. Respondent were asked to tick the statement which most closely resembled the category to which they perceive they belonged. The degree of novelty seeking in leisure travel (A4) was operationalised based on the novelty seeking instrument developed by Lee and Crompton (1992) although one out of three dimensions of the original instrument (i.e. 'Change From Routine') was adapted in this study to reduce the complexity and the length of the questionnaire. It was therefore operationalised using eight items with a 7-point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very much'.

Part B was the central part of the questionnaire, which gathered data about MTEs. First, respondents were instructed to recollect a particular tourism trip they had experienced that first comes to their memory, and then to provide responses to a few general questions: B1 – the year of the trip; B2 – destination/s visited during the trip; B3 – total duration of the trip; B4 – total expenditure on the trip; B5 – travel companions, B6 – nature of the trip; and B7 – the total number of people in the travel group. Thereafter, the 62 items' tentative MTEs instrument (B8) was included for respondents to evaluate the trip using a 7-point scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'very much'. The next question (B9) measured respondents' overall evaluation of the trip using a one item 7-point scale (Westbrook, 1980) ranging from 'terrible' to 'delighted', which assisted in making a judgement about whether the trip had

been a positive or negative one (as mentioned previously, this study limited its scope to positive MTEs).

Part B also measured respondents' degree of autobiographical memory about the trip (B10) because: (a) memory of the trip can have important implications for travellers' future travel intentions; and (b) it can provide evidence for testing the nomological validity of the instrument. Nomological validity is the degree to which the construct behaves as it should with related constructs. In other words, MTEs must have a significant positive relationship with travellers' autobiographical memory of the trip before it is possible to concluding that the MTEs instrument demonstrates nomological validity. The scale developed to measure autobiographical memory by Sheen, Kemp and Rubin (2001) was adopted to operationalise 'autobiographical memory of the trip' construct. It consists of 10 items that tap three memory dimensions: 'memory recollection' (ability to recollect the memory of the trip), 'memory vividness' (ability to recall imagery and emotional aspects of the trip), and the 'language and narrative' aspects of memory of the trip.

Part C: This part was mainly designed to collect the data for examining the impact of MTEs on travellers' subsequent travel decisions. The questions were designed to collect data on both actual behaviours after the trip and future behavioural intentions: C1 asked if they had already revisited the destination/s where they had realised their most memorable trip; and C2 asked their future travel intentions. Two items were included under C2 with a 5-point scale ranging from 'most probably not' to 'most probably yes' measuring: (i) intention revisit the same destination/s in the next five years; and (ii) intention to visit new destinations in the next five years. A third question, C3, asked whether they had already made recommendations about the trip to others. A final question, C4, measured their intention to generate WOM recommendations about the trip in the future. C4 used a one-item, 5-point scale. It was possible to collect data on actual behaviour in addition to measuring future intentions because the respondents were evaluating their retrospective MTEs instead of experiences of the present trip.

Part D: This was the final part of the questionnaire and was designed to collect demographic data from the respondents. The questions were included to gather data on the gender (D1), marital status (D2), age (D3), education (D4), income (D5), occupation (D6) and country of residence (D7) of the respondents.

3.5.4.2 Pilot Survey

The questionnaire was first administered to 30 respondents to check for issues that respondents may face when answering the questions. The respondents were chosen using convenience sampling from among university academics and postgraduate students. Respondents were apprised of the purpose of the pilot survey and asked their opinion regarding the questionnaire once they had completed it. A number of amendments were made to the questionnaire based on the feedback received; for example:

- The structure of the question A1 was changed. Instead of using one table with two columns for measuring the frequency of domestic and overseas travels, two tables with the same options were given separately for (a) domestic travel and (b) overseas travel since respondents noted that using one table had made the question confusing to them.
- The wording and the writing style of some of the question items were also amended to make them clearer and more straightforward and to minimise ambiguity. Table 3.4 provides examples of original and amended questions.

Table 3.4: Amendments to the wording and style of questions

Question number	Original question/statement	Amended question/statement
A2	As a tourist, how many overseas destinations have you visited for leisure purposes so far?	As a tourist, how many overseas destinations (countries) have you visited for leisure purposes so far?
A4 (NS8)	I like to travel to adventurous Places	I like to feel a sense of adventure on my travels
B8 (N7)	I could taste quite different foods	I enjoyed quite different foods during the trip
C2 (R1)	I will revisit the same destination for replicating the similar memorable experiences in the near future	I will revisit the same destination for replicating the similar memorable experiences in the next five years
C2 (R2)	I will visit new destinations to seek new experiences in the near future	I will visit new destinations to seek new experiences in the next five years

- To overcome the perception that certain successive items, which were tapping slightly different aspects of the same dimension, were identical the order and location of such items were changed to overcome that perception.

- Question D6, which asked about respondents' occupation, was changed from a multiple optional question to an open ended one because some respondents seemed to be facing difficulties in choosing which category to tick.
- With reference to question B8, which consisted of 62 items across four pages of the questionnaire, the labels of the 7-point scale was placed above the first item appearing at the head of each page to remind respondents of the details of the scale because some respondents forgot the order of the labels and gave misleading ratings.

3.5.4.3 Main Survey

The main survey, using the questionnaire as amended after the pilot survey, was undertaken during November-December 2012 at key tourism spots in Sydney, Australia. The fieldwork was limited to tourism spots in Sydney for two reasons: firstly, because of time and money constraints of the study that made it necessary to select a sample of respondents from one geographical area where there would be many potential respondents; and, secondly, because many domestic and overseas tourists visit these tourism spots in Sydney as 'must visit' places in Australia, thus making it easy to find potential suitable respondents for the survey. As Table 1.1 (p.9) shows, Sydney attracts the majority of the international tourists who visit Australia for leisure. The researcher personally visited these places and intercepted tourists, inviting them to participate in the survey. Once a tourist expressed his or her willingness to participate, he or she was given an information sheet describing the survey then asked to sign a consent form – the form was signed by both the participant and the researcher. Once the consent form was acquitted, the respondent was given the questionnaire. This was the most feasible option for the researcher to recruit potential respondents for the study because random sampling approaches were not permitted by the UNE Ethics Committee on the basis that respondents have to agree to being part of the study, which means that random samples would be too difficult to arrange. Seven Hundred (700) questionnaires were administered in this way during the survey in a period of two and half months.

Adequacy of the Sample Size

There is no straightforward rule of thumb for deciding the best sample size for quantitative survey instrument development. The common agreement among scholars is that larger sample sizes are likely to result in better outcomes in scale development studies (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The most commonly recommended guideline is the minimum ratios of participants to items (5:1 or 10:1), but some scholars have found evidence to claim that these

general guidelines can be deceptive and thus should be regarded with suspicion (Gorsuch, 1983; MacCallum, Widaman, Zhang, & Hong, 1999; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001; Velicer & Fava, 1998). Others have found that factor saturation (the number of items per factor) and item communalities are more valid determinants of adequate sample size than widely-used guidelines such as 5:1 and 10:1 ratios (Guadagnoli & Velicer, 1988; MacCallum, et al., 1999). Because of the inconclusive guidelines, Worthington & Whittaker (2006, p. 817) recommend the following guidelines, which are based on an extensive literature review of scale development studies: (a) sample sizes of at least 300 are generally sufficient in most cases; (b) sample sizes of 150 to 200 are likely to be adequate with data sets containing communalities higher than .50 or with 10:1 items per factor with factor loadings at approximately |.4|; (c) smaller samples sizes may be adequate if all communalities are .60 or greater or with at least 4:1 items per factor and factor loadings greater than |.6|; and (d) samples sizes less than 100 or with fewer than 3:1 participant-to-item ratios are generally inadequate.

The present study split the total sample ($N=688^2$) 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). The inspections of indicators for assessing the sample adequacy confirmed that both the split-half sub samples were adequate for performing EFA and CFA; for example, all the communalities of the final solution of EFA were greater than 0.5 and all the factor loadings were greater than .6, indicating that the first split half sub-sample ($N=344$) was adequate (>300) for performing EFA according to the guidelines of Worthington & Whittaker (2006). Well-known Bartlett's test of sphericity and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) were also inspected for further evidence of sample adequacy. The results confirmed that the sample was adequate for performing EFA. The HOETLER criterion was used to check for the sample adequacy of the second split-half sub-sample for CFA. The results signalled that it is adequate for performing CFA (These results are discussed in detail in Chapter Six).

3.5.5 Data Analysis

Once the survey was completed, the returned questionnaires were checked for their appropriateness to use in the data analysis. Twelve questionnaires were discarded due to missing values and certain other issues; these are discussed in the following sections.

² 12 questionnaires were discarded due to missing values and other issues.

Responses from the remaining 688 questionnaires were entered into an Excel datasheet that was then imported into the SPSS package (version 20) for data analysis. Data analysis was performed in sequential steps:

- I. Performed descriptive statistics to explore the respondents' characteristics and suitability of the data for the subsequent data analysing steps
- II. Performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for purifying the MTEs instrument
- III. Performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for validating the MTEs instrument
- IV. Performed path analysis to test the relationships between MTEs, autobiographical memory and other dependent variables as hypothesised in the conceptual model of the study (see Figure 5.1, p.149)

These steps are now discussed in detail.

3.5.5.1 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were generated in order to explore: (a) the respondents' characteristics of the sample; and (b) to check the data appropriateness for the subsequent data analysing steps. Data appropriateness for the remaining data analysing steps was determined by: conducting missing data analysis, inspecting for outliers and carrying out a normality check.

(a) Treatment of missing data

Of the 700 questionnaires completed during the survey, five (5) questionnaires were discarded because respondents had either not completed the questionnaire entirely or stopped giving responses halfway through the survey. Another three (3) respondents missed at least one complete page of the questionnaire, thus these questionnaires were also discarded from the analysis. A further two (2) questionnaires were removed from the data base since these respondents failed to provide responses to the autobiographical memory scale (B10), which is a key dependent variable in the theoretical model of the study. Finally, two (2) questionnaires were discarded since the respondents had evaluated negative memorable trips.

Six-hundred-and-eighty-eight questionnaires were retained for data analysis. The frequency figures illustrated that all the variables had less than 5 percent missing values except for personal income variable (D5), which had 5.1 percent missing data. Missing value analysis indicated that missing values of variable D5 did not have a significant impact on other variables. Since there was a relatively fewer percentage of missing values, 'pairwise' data deleting option was used to handle the missing data during EFA. However, 'mean

imputation' was performed during CFA because the AMOS package is not capable of calculating 'modification indices' when missing data are present in the data sheet.

(b) Outliers and Normality Check

Histograms and boxplots were visually inspected in an attempt to identify outliers before the normality of the distribution of the scores of the observed variables was investigated. To test whether the distribution's skew and kurtosis significantly deviated from that of a normal distribution, the values of skew and kurtosis of the variables were divided by their standard errors. The results were compared with the absolute value of 3.29 ($p < 001$) (Manning & Munro, 2007, p. 58). The multivariate normality was then checked, using the AMOS package because the presence of multivariate kurtosis in the data-set can be exceptionally detrimental in SEM analyses (Byrne, 2009, p. 103). The multivariate kurtosis figure was compared with the recommended minimum threshold of 5 (Byrne, 2009, p. 104) for judging if they demonstrate problematic multivariate kurtosis for confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis.

Since the normality test results confirmed that many of the observed variables did not meet both univariate and multivariate normality conditions, data transformation techniques were attempted to solve the problem, but they did not adequately improve the situation. The normality tests results indicated that many of the observed variables were highly negatively skewed and demonstrated a leptokurtic kurtosis (showing thin and tall peaks), which meant that many of the respondents had provided more positive evaluations for the MTEs items on the measurement scale used. Obviously, it was not due to a limitation of the scale, because a 7-point scale was used, but due to the very nature of the problem of the research; that is, the survey asked respondents to evaluate their most memorable tourism trip, which generally resulted in evaluating very positive MTEs. Therefore, the researcher decided to use the data in its original form (no transformation was done) but was careful to apply certain techniques which have been recommended by experts as treatments for analysing non-normally distributed data; for example, performing bootstrap estimation during CFA in addition to the default 'maximum likelihood' (ML) estimates (Byrne, 2009, p. 330). Such treatments will be discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

3.5.5.2 Scale Purification

Having performed descriptive analyses, as discussed above, the scale purification process commenced. As recommended by Hair et al. (2010, p. 122), the total sample was randomly

split into two sub-samples. The first subsample (N=344) was subjected to exploratory factor analysis (EFA) while the second subsample was used for confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Item Analysis

As suggested by Churchill (1979), purification of the scale commenced with the computation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient, corrected item-total correlations, and inter-item correlations for each of the hypothetical dimensions. This 'item analysis' is important because skipping this step can lead to the production of many more dimensions than the expected conceptual dimensions (Churchill, 1979). Accordingly, the items which had produced a substantial drop in Cronbach's alpha (< 0.7), reported lower item-total correlation (< 0.3), and items that possessed near-zero inter-item correlations were discarded before performing EFA (Churchill, 1979). This step reduced the total number of items from 62 to 52.

Applying EFA

Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was then performed using the SPSS package (version 20) for further purification of the instrument. EFA is an effective and commonly used method in the early stages of scale purification research (Hair, et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). The principle component analysis (PCA) was chosen as the extraction method with the Promax oblique rotation, which is appropriate under the assumption that factors may be correlated with each other (Hair et al., 2010, p.116). The PCA is the most commonly used option and the typical default model of many factor analysis programs (Hair, et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996). Eigenvalues greater than 1.0 (Kaiser, 1958) and Cattell's (1966) scree test, which are the most widely known approaches (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006) were used to determine the number of factors to be retained. The issue of non-normality of the distribution of observed data was not a major issue for performing EFA since EFA is generally used descriptively to summarise the relationships in a larger set of variables rather than testing the statistical significance of the factors (Hair, et al., 2010; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1996).

The purification process involved performing a series of exploratory factor analyses, during which a number of items were removed; this process is recommended by a number of the experts in the field (Churchill, 1979; DeVellis, 2003; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair, et al., 2010; Wong & Wan, 2013; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Accordingly, the following

rules of thumbs were used for deciding which items to be eliminated at the each round of EFA:

- The items with factor loading values below 0.4 in all the factors were eliminated from the subsequent EFA because such items can be treated as not belonging to any factor.
- The items with factors loading values above 0.4 for any two or more factors (high cross loadings) were removed due to discriminant validity issues.
- Factors which had fewer than two items were also discarded because such factors could not be interpreted.
- After each deletion, the Cronbach's alpha values were re-computed for the remaining items, and the newly corrected item-total correlations were evaluated to enable further deletion of the items (Chu & Murrmann, 2006), thus items which had poor corrected item-to-total correlations ($<.3$) and produced lower Cronbach's alpha values ($\alpha < .7$) were eliminated before running the next round of EFA.

This process continued until no more items were eligible for removal.

3.5.5.3 Scale Validation

CFA was performed on the second split-half of the collected data (N=344) in order to test the validity of the factorial structure established by the EFA. CFA is the most commonly used method to support the validity of a scale following EFA, that is, scholars use it to test 'if the factor structure produced by EFA fits the data from a new sample' (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006, p. 815). Accordingly, as demonstrated by Byrne (2009, p. 54), CFA model in the present study hypothesizes a priori that:

- MTEs can be explained by 10 factors.
- Each item measure has a nonzero loading on the relevant factor that it was designed to measure and a zero loading on all other factors; that is, each observed variable loads on one and only one factor.
- The 10 MTEs factors are inter-correlated.
- Errors of measurement associated with each observed variable are uncorrelated.

A SEM approach was adapted to perform CFA using AMOS (version 20) software, which uses the covariance matrix as the input data and the maximum-likelihood (ML) estimation as the default method for estimating the parameters. 'SEM' is a powerful confirmatory technique because it allows the researcher greater control over the form of constraints placed

on items and factors when analysing a hypothesized model (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006, p. 808).

Treatment of Non-Normally Distributed Data

As mentioned previously, many of the observed variables of the present study did not demonstrate univariate and multivariate normality. Numerous scholars have found that using the default options, such as maximum likelihood (ML) and normal theory generalized least squares (GLS) methods in structural models, tends to produce very large chi-square values and to underestimate model fit indexes when the data are not normal, thus causing rejection of the models more often (Browne, 1984; Hu, Bentler, & Kano, 1992; West, Finch, & Curran, 1995). A bootstrap technique has been proposed as an alternative estimation to the ML method in order to deal with non-normality problems of data when performing CFA and structural models (Byrne, 2009; West, et al., 1995; Zhu, 1997). As Byrne (2009, p. 330) asserts:

Bootstrapping serves as a re-sampling procedure by which the original sample is considered to represent the population and multiple subsamples of the same size as the parent sample are then drawn randomly, with replacement, from this population and provide the data for empirical investigation of the variability of parameter estimates and indices of fit.

Hence, given the sensitivity of structural equation modelling to the distributional characteristics of the data and, especially because ML is based on the assumption of multivariate normality (West, et al., 1995, p.56), a bootstrap estimation was also performed using 2000 bootstrap samples for comparing the results with the default ML parameter estimates. The magnitude of the differences signals the degree to which the non-normality issue has affected the results; in other words, if the magnitude of the differences between ML estimates and bootstrap estimates are small and insignificant, it suggest that the estimates are acceptable under both normality and non-normality conditions of the data. Bootstrap results also enable a researcher to compute critical ratios for each estimate and to determine the statistical significance of each parameter estimates under the assumption of non-normality.

Model Assessment

Two aspects were examined during model assessment, as recommended by Byrne (2009, p. 67): (i) the adequacy of the overall model, and (ii) the adequacy of the parameter estimates.

(i) Overall Model Fit

The Chi Square Statistics (χ^2) is the most widely used summary statistic used for evaluating overall model fit. Its limitations are widely known; for example, it is often criticised for its sensitivity to sample size (Byrne, 2009; Hu & Bentler, 1995). In other words, the increased statistical power of the test afforded by a larger sample may lead to a rejection of the model even if the incongruity between the data and estimated model is very small, implying that the χ^2 test is not appropriate for verifying a model’s adequacy (Hu and Bentler, 1995, p. 78). Researchers have addressed this limitation by developing a number of supplementary goodness-of-fit indices ‘that take a more pragmatic approach to the evaluation process’ (Byrne, 2009, p. 77). For example, the ratio of χ^2 to the DF (CMIN/DF) is widely used as an alternative overall model fit criterion (Kim, 2009) together with other model fit indices, which are generally classified as absolute fit indices, incremental/comparative fit indices and predictive fit indices (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Table 3.5 illustrates some of these commonly used indices with their minimum threshold levels for a good model fit (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

Table 3.5: Model fit indices used to test the adequacy of the model fit

Index	Minimum threshold level
Absolute Fit Indices	
Chi-square/ <i>df</i> ratio (Marsh, Balla, & McDonald, 1988)	< 3
Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984)	> 0.9
Adjusted Goodness-of-Fit Index (AGFI) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984)	> 0.9
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) (Bentler, 1995)	< .10
Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) (Steiger & Lind, 1980)	< .08
Hoelter <i>N</i> (Hoelter, 1983)	> 200
Incremental/comparative Fit Indices	
Comparative Fit Index (CFI) (Bentler, 1990)	> 0.95
Incremental Fit Index (IFI) (Bollen, 1989)	
Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) (Tucker & Lewis, 1973)	
The Relative Fit Index (RFI) (Bollen, 1986)	
Predictive Fit Indices	
Akaike’s Information Criterion (AIC) (Akaike, 1987)	The hypothesized model should report the smallest value.
Consistent AIC (CAIC) (Bozdogan, 1987)	
Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) (Schwarz, 1978)	
Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI) (Browne & Cudeck, 1992)	

Scholars do not report all these indices for supporting overall model fit; instead, they choose some of the important indices covering all the three types of indices shown in Table 3.5 above (i.e. absolute fit indices, incremental fit indices and predictive fit indices).

Accordingly, the present study used the following indices to assess the model fit of CFA:

- Chi-square/*df* ratio (CMIN/DF)
 - Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)
 - Hoelter *N*
- } Absolute Fit Indices
-
- Comparative Fit Index (CFI)
 - Incremental Fit Index (IFI)
 - Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)
- } Incremental/comparative Fit Indices
-
- Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI)
- } Predictive Fit Indices

(ii) Assessment of Parameter Estimates

The overall model fit evaluation was followed by an assessment of parameter estimates of the model, which involved evaluating: (a) the feasibility of the parameter estimates; (b) the appropriateness of the standard errors; and (c) the statistical significance of the parameter estimates (Byrne, 2009, p. 67). The evaluation of the feasibility of the parameter estimates was performed by examining whether the parameters exhibited the correct sign and size as predicted by the underlying theory. The appropriateness of standard errors was inspected using the criteria that they should not be excessively large or small for acceptance. The critical value of the test statistics of each parameter were examined; they needed to be > ±1.96 to be concluded as statically significant (Byrne, 2009, p. 67).

3.5.5.4 Assessment of the Psychometric Properties of the Instrument

Measurement instruments need to demonstrate adequate psychometric properties, such as validity and reliability, before being used in causal models (Gaskin, 2012b). To realise this requirement, the MTEs instrument was checked for convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite reliability using the thresholds suggested by Gaskin (2012b) and Hair, et al. (2010); as illustrated in Table 3.6. The ‘Stats Tools Package’ developed by Gaskin (2012a) was used to calculate the measures.

Table 3.6: Criteria to evaluate convergent and discriminant validity and composite reliability

Criteria	Threshold
Composite Reliability	CR>.07
Convergent validity	CR>AVE AVE>.05
Discriminant validity	MSV<AVE ASV<AVE

CR= Composite Reliability
MSV= Maximum Shared Squared Variance

AVE= Average Variance Extracted
ASV= Average Shared Squared Variance

3.5.5.5 Path Analysis and Testing the Study Hypotheses

Nine (9) hypotheses were tested. They were developed primarily from the qualitative findings of the present study (development of the 9 hypotheses are discussed in Chapter 5). The first hypothesis holds that travellers are generally novelty seekers when travelling for pleasure. To test this hypothesis, one sample T test was performed using '4' as the test value since the measurement scale ranged from 1 to 7. The remaining hypotheses were tested by performing path analyses using AMOS software. The path model was developed according to the conceptual model of the study; this will be discussed in Chapter 5. The following relationships were tested by performing path analyses:

- The relationship between MTEs and travellers' intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels.
- The relationship between MTEs and travellers' intentions to visit new destinations on subsequent travels.
- The relationship between MTEs and travellers' intentions to generate WOM recommendations.
- The relationship between MTEs and travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs.
- The relationship between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels.
- The relationship between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and intentions to visit new destinations on subsequent travels.
- The relationship between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and their intention to generate WOM recommendations.
- The relationship between travellers' intention to visit new destinations and intention to visit the same destination on subsequent travels.

Model Assessment

The procedures adapted to assess the CFA model were also used to assess the path model. Thus, the model fit was evaluated through the following model fit indices:

- Chi-square/*df* ratio (CMIN/DF).
- Root Mean-Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).
- Hoelter *N*.
- Comparative Fit Index (CFI).
- Incremental Fit Index (IFI).
- Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI).
- Expected Cross-Validation Index (ECVI).

The goodness of the parameter estimates were assessed by evaluating the feasibility of the estimates, appropriateness of the standard errors and statistical significance of each of the parameter estimates (Byrne, 2009, p 67).

Treatment for Non-Normally Distributed Data

Similar to the CFA model described above, a bootstrap estimation was performed during the path analysis in addition to the default ML estimation in order to ensure that the parameter estimates were significant even under the condition of non-normally distributed data. This was carried out because many of the observed variables of the present study did not meet univariate and multivariate normality conditions.

Validating the Memory Scale

Before running the path model, the memory construct, which was used as a latent variable in the model, was validated using CFA. As mentioned previously, a scale developed by Sheen, et al. (2001) was adopted to measure the memory of the trip, which consisted of 10 items of which the first three items measured the ability to recollect memory of the trip, the next five items measured memory vividness and the last two items measured language and narrative aspects of the memory.

3.6 Justification of the Research Methodology

A mixed-methods research design means combining both qualitative and quantitative research approaches within a single research project. According to Creswell and Clark (2007,

p. 5), 'Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone'. By combining different methods, biases and weaknesses in one method could be cancelled by biases and strengths of other methods while facilitating the realisation of triangulation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Therefore, the present study adapted a sequential mixed method research design to address the different research questions of the study; each needing a different research method. Qualitative methods were initially employed to define and specify the domain of the MTEs construct. This was followed by a quantitative survey to develop and validate a MTEs scale and to test the research hypotheses of the study. Denscombe (2010, p. 140) asserts that mixed method approach is especially useful for developing measurement instruments because the validity of the instrument can be improved by means of exploratory data gathered by earlier qualitative methods. The findings of qualitative methods can be confirmed during the later stages of the research through quantitative methods.

Adoption of a mixed methods research design also enabled this research project to obtain a more accurate and comprehensive picture of the research phenomenon (MTEs) through triangulation, also called as 'convergent validation' of the findings (Jick, 1979). Triangulation means viewing a phenomenon from more than one perspective so that researchers can obtain a more accurate and complete understanding of it. Two benefits of triangulation have been proposed by Denscombe (2010, p.348): 'improved accuracy' and 'fuller picture'. Accuracy of the findings can be improved in a mixed methods research design by validating the findings from alternative methods. In other words, seeking convergent findings from different paradigms and methods (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The second benefit, 'fuller picture', means that a more complete picture of a phenomenon can be understood when complementary data provided by different methods are used, since different methods reveal different phenomena in a complementary way (Mark & Shotland, 1987). This methodology can 'enlarge [the] landscape of [the] inquiry, offering a deeper and more comprehensive picture' of a research problem (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 393).

With regard to the present study, the use of qualitative methods was better suited to obtaining: (a) the meaning of MTEs from the perspectives of leisure travellers; (b) to better define the domain of MTEs; and (c) to derive possible indicators that can tap into the domain of MTEs. On the other hand, the quantitative methods chosen were better suited for purifying and validating the MTEs instrument and to test the hypothetical relationships between MTEs

and other important dependent variables. Therefore, combining qualitative and quantitative methods enabled the present study to examine various important facets of MTEs more comprehensively and extensively in order to obtain a fuller picture of MTEs. This is an outcome not achieved by any other published study on this topic. Furthermore, the validation of the findings using alternative methods would not have been possible if either approach was used on its own.

3.7 Summary of the Chapter

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a detailed description of the research methodology used in the study in order to realise the study objectives. First, an overview of the research design and methodological paradigm were presented and then each stage of the mixed method design was discussed in detail. The exploratory stage was first discussed with its objectives and methods applied and then the quantitative stage was discussed in detail explaining the underlying objectives, and the data collection and methods of analyses. Finally, the justification for choosing a mixed method research design was discussed.

CHAPTER 4: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the two stages of the sequential mixed research design adopted in the present study. The exploratory stage of the study employed an interpretive research approach in order to obtain 'emic' meanings and a richer description of MTEs. The subsequent stage employed quantitative methods to confirm the exploratory findings. This chapter presents the findings of the exploratory stage, which gathered data using two data sources: travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews. Even though they were classified as secondary data, the travel blog narratives provided freely available, unbiased and unsolicited experiential narratives to interpret the meaning of MTEs from the perspectives of leisure travellers. In order to gather fuller descriptions and more accurate and deeper understandings of MTEs that were specific to the research objectives of the study, thirty five (35) in-depth interviews of frequent leisure travellers were also conducted as a primary data source. Trustworthiness of the qualitative results was enhanced by comparing results from the two different data sources.

This chapter first presents the major findings related to the content analysis of travel blog narratives. This is followed by a discussion of the results derived from in-depth interviews. Analysis of travel blog narratives is limited to a discussion of the major themes of MTEs because it was difficult to examine other important issues, such as the likely impact of MTEs on travellers' behavioural outcomes because such data are not frequently reported by bloggers in their blog narratives. The analysis of the in-depth interviews covers much broader concerns, such as the themes of positive MTEs, negative MTEs and the likely influence of MTEs on future behavioural outcomes.

4.2 Results from the Travel Blog Narratives

One hundred (100) information-rich travel blog narratives published on Travelblog.org and TravelPod.com blog sites were purposively chosen for the study. These were analysed using an inductive content analysis method facilitated by MAXQDA software. Bloggers' experiential narratives were mostly positive because they had seldom reported negative experiential accounts. The content analysis revealed nine (9) themes of MTEs.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Authentic Local Experiences

The theme ‘authentic local experiences’ emerged as the most frequently reported aspect of MTEs by the bloggers. An overwhelming number of bloggers (68) had linked their memorable tourism experience to this aspect by reporting that their exposure to real local life and cultures were highly memorable moments of their travel experiences. For example, the following narrative describes how ‘real local experiences’ can be very impressive and memorable for tourists:

After arriving at our hotel from the airport, many of the other tour members wanted to rest. We were faced with another ‘we wish we didn’t do a tour moment’ because we were in China. We didn’t come here to rest! We decided to go explore and go for a walk and it turned out to be one of our most memorable experiences. Since our hotel was not in a touristy area it felt a little more real and personal. We made our way down a neat alley where people were cooking on the street and selling goods from their little ‘stores’. Many of them were happy to pose or smile for pictures and excited to show us what they were cooking/selling. This was our only ‘real’ China experience. Away from the tourists - real people, real culture, real life, unforgettable! (Travelblog.org-42).

Three types of closely-related local experiences were reported within blog narratives: ‘local life’, ‘local culture’ and ‘local food’. Many bloggers (58) reported numerous occasions when they had opportunities to encounter and to share in the actual life of local people in the destinations in which they toured. According to one blogger, ‘The best scenes are not the views of Mt Everest from Tiger Hill in the Himalayas but the quiet morning sat in Durbar square in Kathmandu watching locals go about their business and the day unfolding’ (8-TravelPod.com). Such narratives were mostly associated with bloggers’ visits to real local villages and exploring remote lifestyles, markets, farming and industries etc.

This 3 day adventure with Hong and Tai was one of the most memorable experiences of our trip to date. The feeling of freedom that comes from being on the back of a motorbike, cruising the relatively car and bike free country roads, was really second to none. In particular, the ability to get right into the countryside, stopping at tiny villages and waving to smiling kids from the bike as we went past was a wonderful feeling (Travelblog.org - 4).

Some narratives even detailed bloggers’ experiences of real living experiences of locals and seeing their tough living conditions.

However the highlight and probably the most memorable experience of our travels was a home stay on Anamanti Island. We were greeted on the island by a selection of local people who were prepared to take in the worried looking Gringos for the day and night. ... We shared our family experience with travelling mates Franchesco and Frank. Franchesco - 'Mr Languages' was a great help being fluent in Spanish, English and German he was able to master communications between all of us and the family, which meant we really got to know the family and their daily life. (TravelPod.com-44)

As we continue to travel we saw a wide variety of lifestyles, from fishing villages to mud hut homes. Obvious poverty and tough living conditions. People walk miles to get water from a muddy puddle, stream or if they are lucky, a water pump. It is usual to see children with 2 or 3 jerry cans collecting water ... (TravelPod.com-13)

Another related memorable aspect for many bloggers (61) had been their encounters of authentic cultural experiences by which they had witnessed real cultural ceremonies, festivals and rituals of locals. As one blogger reported:

Our vacation in Thailand was a cultural, sensual, idyllic experience from beginning to end, from Bangkok to the hill tribes, from the Buddhist temples to the elephants. No other travelling experience matches exotic Thailand. Visiting is like entering another world of picturesque beauty, natural charm, fascinating history, and lovingly preserved customs (Travelblog.org -21).

Many of the narratives describe bloggers' experiences of impressive cultural festivals. For example, one blogger reported his experience at a festival in Pakistan: 'One of my most unforgettable experiences in Pakistan was going to Lahore's Sufi Festival. By far the craziest, most energetic festival I have ever seen – music, lights, street dancing, food – it was all there' (Travelblog.org -11). Another blogger reported a memorable experience in Tunisia where he attended a local wedding ceremony:

...this Tunisian dancing was just the beginning as Joel and I would dance the night away at a traditional Tunisian wedding in a small town on the edge of the Sahara desert; one of the most memorable experiences of my travels so far. We were so happy that we witnessed such a special event and had an insight to their culture (Travelblog.org-41).

Some bloggers had reported their visits to local religious ceremonies:

The most memorable experience of Varanasi got to be the evening Arati (traditional Hindu chanting prayers on the banks to worship river Ganges). The prayers continued for

an hour and it was a pure Indian art form the words for which I don't have words to describe. May be the pictures I have captured of the events be able to describe its divinity (Travelblog.org -30).

In addition to reporting experiences about 'local life' and 'local culture', bloggers further reported their memorable food and culinary experiences during tours. As one blogger claimed, 'I feel that travel should be an immersive experience. I'm a bit of a foodie as well – for me, some of the most memorable experiences of a destination are the culinary adventures' (Travelblog.org -26). Bloggers' memories seem to be mostly associated with the deliciousness of local foods they consumed, and how strange and different such local foods were.

Dalat was different from everywhere we'd been in Vietnam so far, surrounded by mountain's the people were more chilled, with far more locals than travellers, ... We had a more relaxed time here, where we explored the city on foot, ate local cuisine, went to the bustling local food market - think chickens in small baskets, monkey's brains, pigs head, smokey, with street vendor's cooking and you are halfway there. The food looked interesting, the smell was even better – quite an experience (Travelblog.org-29).

One of the most memorable experiences in Korea is surely eating out! I truly love everything about Korean cuisine! Especially the fact that it's so healthy, so many veggies included in every meal, such a breathtaking variety of side dishes. I love it all! (Travelblog.org -23).

Some narratives reported their delight with food experiences that were hosted by local families:

Traditional Japanese dinner in a Japanese home! When we got back to Fukuoka it was night time. Mrs Tanaka had invited me for a traditional Japanese dinner. It was the first such experience that I ever had, and it was a very memorable one ... This first real and traditional Japanese meal was so special, so delicious and the setting so beautiful (TravelPod.com-46).

The blog narratives analysed above suggest that tourists may be more impressed by their encounters of 'actual local experiences' such as visiting actual local villages, sharing local lifestyles and cultures and enjoying local foods than more typical or prearranged tourist experiences. It seems that such local experiences are perceived to be distinctive from 'usual

tourist experiences', add more meaningful values to the tour and can, therefore, be more memorable for tourists.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Social Interactions with People

The narratives suggest that 'pleasant interactions' with people while travelling can be another important aspect of MTEs. Many bloggers (64) had stated such experiences as highly memorable moments of their travels. The following narrative best describes how important the 'people factor' and the interactions among them are for creating memorable tourist experiences:

I believe a large part of what ties people to a particular place is what they do there together. Anyone can go someplace alone, but what attaches to a particular spot is the people that make it special through shared memories (TravelPod.com -34).

Several facets of 'social interactions' that can make a tourism trip memorable were identified during the analysis, such as pleasant sociable moments or occasions, enhanced enjoyment through sharing experiences with others and development of new relationships with people during a trip.

Many bloggers had reported pleasant sociable moments or occasions, such as having parties and drinking, eating and singing with people while travelling, as an important part of memorable experiences:

After watching the stars we head back to Lhasa Low House Music Bar and this is where the evening takes an unforgettable turn ... Nobody knew anybody less than three days ago and in one evening we are all singing, drumming, laughing and trying to understand each other when spoken language is impossible (Travelbog.org-44).

We were joined by another group of travellers who were also spending the night at the hotel [and] we had a wonderful Christmas dinner. We had a lovely meal, some good wine and enjoyed the company (TravelPod.com -5).

The narratives further suggest that the degree of pleasure and enjoyment of a trip can be greater when something is experienced collectively with close companions or as a group of travellers than when it is experienced alone.

Doing the South Island with an old friend was incredible. Having an easy going, fun, active, adventurous, companion was perfect. ... We talked, we laughed, we sang, we

drove away from insanity, awed in the beauty, practiced our French, orchestrated incredible meals, conquered hikes in record times, triumphed over fear and felt alive, and had some of the most memorable experiences of my life together (TravelPod.com-21).

Damacia's many great meals (Bolivian pancakes for breakfast on fish island), Hugo's bad jokes (why dogs chase cars), our many jokes about me trying to move in on Jen, Kristin, and Alex, and our talks about life and travel. It is hard to believe that random chance is responsible for us doing the tour together. I feel very fortunate to have shared this amazing experience with them - they are a great group of people, and I will remember them in my heart always (TravelPod.com-3).

The following quotation best portrays how sharing an experience with others can add many dynamics to a tourist trip:

I also remember fondly our singing sessions in the jeep with Torbjorn playing his little guitar, bathing in hot springs, the 4 of them taking off their clothes and scratching themselves after the hot springs because of little spines in their shirts, Torbjorn and Kristin bickering like a married couple, our many discussions about British vs American English expressions, me freezing like an idiot in only a t-shirt the 2nd morning while listening to Hugo explain about an abandoned mining town, Alex and Hugo bonding, Hugo's excessive excitement over the galaxias, me getting stuck ankle deep in mud while trying to photograph flamingos, Torbjorn and Kristin saying "muyrico" after every meal, all 5 of us licking salt and trying to strike funny photos on the salt flats, Torbjorn with his little friend the dog and Jen with her laughing fits at Fish Island, me freezing while standing in the frigid 3 inch deep waters for photos on the salt flats, our education in Swedish (yowhore tresmack and vacket for example), Hugo directing the driving scene with a winged Alex on top of the jeep and Kristin on the hood, Damacia's many great meals ... (TravelPod.com-3).

In addition to reporting memorable social interactions with travel companions and other travellers, some bloggers (32) had further reported 'memorable interactions with locals' such as local families and children as a significant component of their MTEs.

I have to tell you that this has been one of the most memorable experiences of my life. Spending 3 weeks trekking in the mountains, walking every day through villages and meeting locals is an experience which I just cannot convey (TravelPod.com-19).

This moment was the most memorable experience of my travels through Bolivia. Little Geraldine lay in my arms for close to two hours, and during that time the locals started to

interact with me, talking in Spanish, smiling and joking with me as if I was one of them (TravelPod.com-35).

There were many other temples all spread out over many kilometres, mostly in pretty bad shape, the most memorable experience being mobbed by a busload of school-kids who were far more interested in me than the temple we were at, and filled up my memory card with pictures (TravelPod.com-37).

Bloggers had also acknowledged that certain experiences were more memorable for them due to enhanced bonds or new relationships or friendships developed with people during such experiences, for example:

What a difference it makes to have shared some obscure, rare or offbeat experience. Our social networking is a constant thrust and parry of life experiences, seeking some basis for a more intimate connection. If we are lucky enough to find one an immediate bond is established. And in the present circumstance, surrounded by less specific but numerous other examples of crossed paths and common interests, a fast friendship ensued. We ended up transitioning to a good Indian restaurant for dinner and spent the next several hours discussing as broad a range of topics as imaginable, continuously discovering more coincidences and connections between us (TravelPod.com-25).

As breathtaking as this scenery was, the trip would not have been nearly the same without my companions. There were five of us in total - me, a Swedish couple named Torbjorn and Kristin who I had met in Bariloche, and a couple named Alex (UK) and Jen (Canada) who I had met in Uyuni - as well as our two guides: Hugo the driver and Damacia the cook. In our four days together, the five of us shared many great discussions and countless laughs that served as the glue which bonded us into a close circle of good friends (TravelPod.com-3).

The blog narratives discussed above indicate that pleasant 'social interactions' is an integral component of memorable tourism experiences for travellers. In brief, the narratives suggest that travellers may have a greater degree of enjoyment and excitement through pleasant sociable moments such as having parties with people, sharing experiences collectively with others (e.g. with family and friends), pleasant encounters with locals and developing new friendships with people during tourism journeys. In many blogs, these experiences were described as a 'bonding' type of experiences between themselves and their travelling companions.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Momentous Travel Experiences

Some bloggers had related their MTEs to highly significant travel moments; that is, experiences which are perceived to be very significant in terms of their exclusiveness or reputation. For example, a larger number of bloggers (61) had described their visits to iconic tourist attractions such as the Great Pyramids in Egypt or the Great Wall in China as very striking travel moments:

I found myself placing my first foot on 1 of the 7 greatest wonders of the world [Great Wall of China], the only man made structure visible from space, (though not the moon). I was finally there, standing on one of the most iconic landmarks of human history ... My entire soul was erupting with more passion than I'd ever felt in a single moment before. This was the greatest sight I'd ever seen, the most incredible experience of my life so far, and something I'd dreamed of for years, leading up to this one single moment. How could I not be overwhelmed with emotion? I wiped my eyes and joined those few that'd gone ahead of me (TravelPod.com-48).

Today was spent, mostly, looking around and marvelling at the Taj Mahal. Although one of the most recognizable buildings anywhere, seeing it up close is much more of a memorable experience than I imagined. The colour changes throughout the day, with the slightly translucent marble going from a slight yellow early on to pure white later (TravelPod.com-18).

A number of bloggers had also reported certain experiences which were personally significant or very special to them. Some of them even described such experiences as a realisation of a lifelong wish or dream in their life. For example, one blogger described her excitement at being able to see the Vienna Boys' Choir church services, which is the most famous boys' choir in the world – according to the blogger:

I was thrilled to see the choir that I have heard so much about throughout my music literature classes. After the services, I saw one of the Boys walk out of the chapel. The inner-little girl in me got very excited and asked him if he would take a picture with me. He bashfully obliged and other girls quickly discovered my great idea. I caused a massive crowd around this sweet little boy of little girls asking to get their pictures taken with him (TravelPod.com-24).

Another blogger reported a very special experience – which he perceived as a lifetime experience:

After a surprisingly sound sleep, I woke up at 7.30 at our campsite by the glacier to take on a huge 12,000 ft drop out of a small plane before breakfast. This is about a third of the height at which a commercial plane flies at followed by a 45 second freefall. This has always been something I've wanted to tick off the list but didn't think I'd actually go through with it! Reassurance from Paula who did hers here a few years ago and the fact that Fox Glacier is supposed to be the most picturesque and safest place on earth to jump, made me grasp this once in a lifetime opportunity (TravelPod.com-2).

Following are some other examples of such special and dream experiences:

It's a dream I have. For many years past, before my life dream to live in France one day – a little house in a small town with a small vegetable and herb garden with fruit trees, I daydreamed of living my life on a beach. A simple life in a bamboo hut away from the crowds and tourists, away from the hectic city life and stress. Now, after travelling in South East Asia and Italy for eight months, before I return to Auckland, I'm taking the opportunity to experience my original fantasy. For five weeks, I will live the life of a beach bum (TravelPod.com-25)

During my time in Inner Mongolia a few key pieces fell into place. First, I managed to finalise the tour to Tibet. This was one of the places I always dreamed of seeing and was one of the places that was top of the wish list in the time I had remaining. (Travelblog.org-15)

The Spanish Riding School is a riding school for Lipizzaner horses. Since the school is just a stone's throw away from the chapel, we wandered in to see if we could get tickets for the 11am performance even though most performances are sold out weeks in advance. Again, we assumed we would get standing room only tickets but, once we got to the ticket counter we discovered that there were exactly 3 tickets left in the whole theatre. My Mom's eyes lit up in excitement as we bought the tickets. This was something she has dreamed about her whole life (TravelPod.com-24).

These narratives suggest that highly significant tourist experiences such as visiting world iconic tourist attractions and realising very special or dream experiences can also be an important component of MTEs. Such experiences tend to be perceived as once-in-a-lifetime experiences for travellers, thus realisation of such experiences could be significant achievements in their life and thereby be a life-long memory for them.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Novel Experiences

The importance of a 'novelty' factor for MTEs was also highlighted in numerous blog narratives (64). These bloggers reported that experiencing something new or unique is more memorable than more usual and mundane tourism experiences. Such narratives covered a broader range of novel experiences, such as experiencing something for the first time or undertaking entirely different tours or simply encountering highly distinctive or unique experiences that were different from previous experiences. Several bloggers reported exciting first-time experiences, for example, the following narrative depicts a blogger's first experience of riding a motorcycle during a particular tour:

To begin this most memorable experience, I'd like to first mention it took us going to Cambodia for me to ride on my first motorcycle. That's right, our driver casually mentioned that we would need to ride motorcycles to reach the area where the boats depart for the villages. A bit nervous, we happily smiled and said onward! We needed motorcycles because the road wasn't safe enough for cars or tuk tuk's, but naturally they were fine for motorcycles! (Travelblog.org-42)

Another blogger reported his first tourist experience outside Europe was different and memorable:

My trip to India, 8 years ago, my first outside Europe was certainly a strong influence. As much as the star attractions of the Taj Mahal, the beaches of Goa and the Amber Fort it was the intensity of city life and its assault on all the senses that captivated the imagination. This was life at its most colourful and the other end of the spectrum from 'civilised' England, but in a good way. One of the most memorable experiences of city life was taking a cycle rickshaw down Chandni Chowk (Travelblog.org-15).

Many bloggers also reported numerous experiences, which were highly distinctive or unique from previous travel experiences. The examples include experiences associated with novel tourism activities, strange tourist attractions, stark distinctive cultures, unfamiliar accommodation and uncommon wildlife etc. For instance, the following quotation depicts a unique style of tour experienced by a blogger in Vietnam:

During our time in the Central Highlands we were met by members from the Dalat Easy Riders, an informal group of motorbike riders based in Dalat who specialize in taking tourists on road trips to see the 'real' areas of Vietnam that foreigners don't normally see

... The style of the tour was unlike anything we have done on the trip to date (4-Travelblog.org).

Another blogger reported a very atypical type of accommodation where he had stayed during a tour:

Our first night accommodation was in a salt hotel on the perimeter of the salt flats and was entirely built out of salt bricks, from the walls, floors, tables, chairs and even the bed frames were constructed entirely out of salt (TravelPod.com-5).

The following entry illustrates a blogger's experience of very different daily life in India:

Again-- this is hard to explain...basically, there are no traffic rules. There are pedestrians, bikes, mopeds, motorcycles, cars, buses, COWS, dogs, cats, rats, and most importantly rickshaws EVERYWHERE. The rickshaw is a wonderful little three-tire open taxi-- very small and slow. Only three people can SQUEEZE into the bench behind the driver. We have decided that this is the most fun way to travel around the city (TravelPod.com-28)

Several blog entries had described bloggers' visits to unique and strange tourist attractions:

The Bayon was the first temple I went to. It looks nothing more than a pile of rocks from a distance, but once you get inside it you realise how stunning it is, with over 200 giant stone faces smiling down benignly at visitors. It was one of the most unusual and beautiful places I had visited so far on my whole trip (TravelBlog.org-12).

In the afternoon we visited the Grand Palace complex, a remarkable site surrounded by fortress walls stretching for over a mile. ... The complex was truly unlike anything I had ever seen or imagined, and my first impression was overwhelming: totally enchanting, gilded, graceful, and elegant, with ornately carved gables, delightful mythical creatures, colourful glass mosaics, and delicate mural paintings. This enchanting scene will remain as one of the most memorable experiences of the splendor and pageantry of Thailand (Travelblog.org-21)

Some bloggers had reported uncommon wildlife encounters as well:

The tiger temple is run by monks and was the most incredible experience. Real live tigers roaming freely - and I'm walking amongst them, petting them, feeding the little ones from a bottle! ... It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to cuddle with the tigers and I am really glad that I took part. Returned safely with no missing limbs! (TravelPod.com-50).

The night safari was AMAZING!! I think one of the most memorable experiences I've had in Singapore thus far. ... Basically a night safari is exactly as it sounds. Instead of going the zoo during daylight, this zoo (or safari. whatever) open at dusk and goes till around midnight. Most of animals aren't caged, they are free roaming and are separated from the people and by animals that might eat them by canals or rivers. Some form of water is that is deep or wide enough so that they can't reach the humans/animals that would eat them (TravelPod.com-9).

The above narratives clearly highlight bloggers' retrospective recollections and positive evaluations of such novel experiences that they had encountered during travelling. They tend to confirm that novel, distinctive and atypical tourism experiences tend to be more impressive and memorable for travellers than the more usual and common tourist experiences.

4.2.5 Theme 5: Self-Beneficial Experiences

The analysis also revealed that MTEs are closely linked with tourism experiences which are perceived to be self-relevant or self-beneficial to individual travellers. Bloggers had described numerous personally meaningful outcomes that they had derived from their past MTEs, such as knowledge enhancement, identity formation, broadened life perspectives, improved self-confidence and acquisition of new skills. For example, a number of bloggers (48) reported various occasions by which they had been able to learn and enhance their knowledge about the world and various subjects of interest to them. For example, one blogger described his learning about Buddhist meditation during a particular trip in Tibet:

I think the best experience was the Zen temple from Japan [in Tibet]. We meditated with about 20 others and the incense, monotone chanting and vibrating gongs made it one of the most memorable experiences I have had so far on this trip. We only stayed in Bodhgaya for the day but I wish we had stayed longer ... seems that it's a special place that could teach you a lot (Travelblog.org-18).

Another blogger reported a similar experience he had in Thailand:

We were unable to go to the silk factory because we had a 1:30 appointment with a monk ... The "monk chat", as they call it, was at (and this is no joke) Mahachulalonghornrajavidyalaya University. I guess it is M.U. for short. The informal lecture by a Buddhist monk gave us insight into Buddhism's teachings, one of which is to have a happy mind and to share that happiness with a smile (Travelblog.org-21).

Following is another narrative which describes the new insights about Asian religions and philosophies gained by a blogger in a memorable trip to China.

Taoism is the philosophy that inspired me to come to Asia. ...When I'd become disillusioned with Western religion, tired of distorted stories, picket signs urging me to repent my sins, clergymen assured they knew the whole truth of existence and that their path was the only one, I'd turned to Eastern Religion. Buddhism was interesting, but had elements of Christianity as well. The strict dogmas, the release from suffering, the 4 noble truths and the 8 fold path. All of it was very helpful, gave me much wisdom, but too much seemed goal oriented. Confucianism had never fit either. It was more a system of social order and personal respect than that of spiritual guidance. Taoism, however, had revealed to me the essence of all things. It made me put worth in the empty space on a page, showed me how to appreciate all the pain in life, granted me the ability to press my lips against the cosmic bowl that awaits all people of all faiths once they'd found the one for them ... (TravelPod.com-48).

Some bloggers had described their visits to some museums in Asia where they learned a lot about certain past incidents:

By far our most memorable experience was the War Remembrance Museum, which was perhaps the best and most affective museum we have been to. Although obviously biased towards the Vietnamese people, the museum presented us with 4 hours of harrowing and disturbing photographs, film and artifacts of the 'American War' - it was difficult to stomach seeing the innocent people; parents, children, grandparents, entire families being torn apart and in some cases, whole villages being massacred by American weaponry. Some of the images will remain with us forever, and we both want to know so much more about Vietnam's past and politics (Travelblog.org-29).

Perhaps the most memorable experience of our stay in Cambodia occurred on the last day when we finally had a rest from group touring. We decided to visit the Cambodian Land Mine Museum. This small and makeshift outdoor display of Russian and Chinese fighter planes, tanks and artillery receives no government funding or attention. Our excellent guide who was orphaned in the 70's by the atrocities committed by the Pol Pot regime, served as witness to this tragic genocide. This short visit gave us lots to reflect upon (Travelblog.org-43).

Some bloggers described experiences whereby they had acquired new skills, overcome physical and psychological challenges and improved self-confidence.

While we were all rather excited about the adventure, there was certainly a varied degree of anxiety in each of us; not one of us had ridden a horse outside of the state/county fair as a child!!! After a brief safety lesson, an introduction to our respective horse and a few words about how to direct our new BFF, we were on our way! Surprisingly, we were all riding as naturals (well, in our minds we were) in a short 30 minutes or so (Travelblog.org-41).

Most memorable experiences in Krabi: My depleted supply of sun block, soap and insect repellent forced me to face the fact that I'll have to go to AoNang by motorbike. I gathered up my courage and hired one. Extremely nervous and scared shitless as I didn't know how to ride one. ... The hired bike in Krabi was a Yamaha 150 cc, and luckily for me, an automatic. After fifteen minutes of practice on a quiet road, I felt ready to face the real world (TravelPod.com-25).

Even with this ridiculously long blog post, totalling out at nearly 5,000 words, (4806 so far!), it doesn't even begin to do the experience justice. Nor do the pictures capture the intensity of being completely surrounded by mountains, history, and sheer human experience. I learned more on that journey on the mountains of self-discovery than I have in 13 years of schooling. Today, I know there is clear, honest truth to one Chinese saying, though perhaps in a slightly different context. Once you climb the Great Wall, you become a man. Today, I became a man, by my own strength, will, sweat, and grit, I climbed the slopes of self-realization and achieved something greater than I could ever have imagined (TravelPod.com-48).

In addition to reporting such experiences, they also described experiences that significantly changed their way of thinking and their perspectives about life and the world. For example, one blogger reported that he would be a more generous and giving person after encountering a very helpful business owner in Thailand:

...So he drove me on his motor bike to three other places that were all full, but didn't give up and drove me two miles north to Bang Niang and dropped me off on a street that had lots of bungalows. I found one that met my needs, he smiled and waved and left. I know America is different for a lot of reasons ... but it is profound experiences like this that make me think about how I treat the random person on the street. I will forever be more generous and giving (TravelPod.com-23).

The following narrative illustrates how some experiences can be more influential in travellers' lives:

What I meant by “this” wasn’t The Great Wall. It wasn’t even the mountain or the awe inspiring scenery which surrounded it. It was the feeling. The life. The self-realization. It was liberation, complete and ultimate liberation. All anxiety, all sickness of the soul, all the anticipation and wonder and uncertainty was released simultaneously. I can never describe it, but can only say I wish every human being, saint and sinner, rich and poor, wise and dull, experiences such a feeling, such a freedom. I am changed forever (TravelPod.com-48).

A number of bloggers stated that witnessing experiences related to the highly deprived and tough living conditions of local people had changed their thinking and behaviour.

From seeing the slums of Bangkok and how the Thai's and Vietnamese get by in third world countries without a pot to piss in (excuse my French!) will hopefully change me and Ryan into better people in regards to the money we spend and learn to appreciate what we have back home (TravelPod.com-12).

Early in the week my new French friend and I walked up the mountain and looked down on the shantytown. She commented on how beautiful it was. At the time, I recognized that this town, crumbling and rambling amidst the thick dusty air, didn’t fit my previous concept of "beauty." By the time I left, I understood perfectly what she meant and my definition of beauty may have been forever changed (TravelPod.com-29).

... Jenn and I brought balloons. You should have seen how excited they were, in an instant we were surrounded by these village children, huge eyes, wide anticipatory smiles. It was awesome and really can’t put this into words ... [A]nyway so excited - just for balloons! ! ! Makes you feel certainly blessed to be born where we were born and have the opportunities that we do, just because of geography. No more complaining about anything! (Travelblog.org-8)

Some also described how they learned to tolerate difficult life conditions from their MTEs.

I have now personally experienced a large communal toilet where the walls are only 3 foot high so you can see the persons next to you and instead of a hole in the ground there is a trough, a little uncomfortable especially when you are the only one with blonde hair. ... Also I am now used to sleeping on a wooden plank, well that [is] what Chinese beds feel like, imagine taking a mattress off of a divan and sleeping on the lower bit, exactly. ... The poverty in rural China can seem quite bad to some but the family's all seem happy and content, the children have food and that’s all that matters, shoes aren't important and I know I have worse to come! ! ! We tend to eat mostly street food, don't even bother

looking in the kitchens, if there is one. They are cheap and we haven't had a bad one [yet]. I even tried to think of the positives to 'what if we lost our luggage' (Travelblog.org-50).

I learned a little Spanish, a certain degree of self-reliance, how to be more flexible and tolerant, how to write a bit better (hopefully) and a little about my own limitations. Sadly, I was also educated in some of the Humanities' too; I witnessed injustice, bigotry, greed, poverty, cruelty and intolerance but, despite all not being well in the world, I have also seen the positive side of the planet; Wherever I have been I have found kindness, compassion, generosity, faith and love. These wonderful human qualities are everywhere and in abundance too if you just take the time to notice them. (Travelblog.org-31)

These narratives suggest that, even if tough and demanding, some tourism experiences that are highly self-relevant or perceived as self-beneficial by tourists tend to be more memorable for them than just pleasure-oriented experiences. In other words, the tourism experiences that provide personally meaningful outcomes that make tourists feel better about themselves when their travels are over may be recalled more often. Such personally meaningful outcomes may include acquisition of new knowledge and skills, broadened perspectives about life and the world, and improved self-identity, self-confidence and self-tolerance to face difficult life situations.

4.2.6 Theme 6: Local Hospitality

The 'local hospitality' theme refers to bloggers' encounters with very friendly and welcoming local people who had extended generosity and helpfulness towards them during their travels. A high number of bloggers (45) commented very positively on this aspect and reported a number of such incidents on their blog entries. Most of these experiences were associated with the hospitality of the local general public. For example, one blogger reported one of his encounters with a very generous family in Mexico:

The highlight was when I approached a family to ask if they were willing to sell me a few mangoes from their huge mango tree. Soon the whole family was busy harvesting mangoes with a large iron stick to reach the ripe fruits high up in the tree. In the end, they categorically refused any of my money for the huge bag of about 20 mangoes (Travelblog.org-1).

The following is another story that a blogger had experienced in Pakistan:

... After he excused himself and our conversation came to a halt, two more men approached me and offered to take me to a sweet shop for dessert and chai. They gave me their phone number and offered to take me around on their motorcycle on their day off from work that weekend. 'Inshallah we will meet again' they said as they took off on their bike (Travelblog.org-11).

Invitations from local people to visit their homes and have meals with them were also often mentioned by bloggers.

It was one of the most memorable experiences I've ever had travelling. I've had family dinners in other countries before, and they were all great experiences, but it was always with friends who lived in that country and they knew English. Or I've also done it on a tour. But never like this. Just regular everyday people inviting me into their homes like that. You could really feel the warmth and they did all this for a stranger (Travelblog.org-19).

On this journey from Gabes to Douz we met a guy called Sadek who actually spoke English (a rarity in Tunisia). He kindly invited us to stay at his home for the night to partake in the celebrations of his cousin's wedding. The no-worries-laid-back flexible travelling style kicked right back in as we took up the offer immediately. Upon arriving in Jemnah (a poor town right on the edge of the Sahara Desert) we were introduced to Sadek's huge immediate and extended family. They were such warm and friendly people and we felt so welcome in their humble home (Travelblog.org-41)

Some bloggers also commented about the hospitality of friendly local business people and employees whom they had encountered during their trips. The following is one story reported by a blogger which describes how a local businessman helped him to find accommodation in Thailand.

Literally one minute past the second rejection the owner of the Reggae Bar ran to me wanting to help. So he drove me on his motor bike to three other places that were all full, but didn't give up and drove [me] two miles north to Bang Niang and dropped me off on a street that had lots of bungalows. I found one that met my needs, he smiled and waved and left (TravelPod.com-23).

Another blogger reported how he was helped by a security guard of a local mosque:

... How can we get into the mosque?" I asked. "Go to the end of the line" he pointed to the back of the line that extended beyond my field of vision. We made our way to the

back and waited for several minutes with all the people pushing and holding on to each other in order to secure their position in the queue. After a few minutes of trying not to fall and lose my balance the guard came to find us "come with me, I will have someone escort you into the mosque so you don't have to wait in line," he said. He called another large, AK-47 armed guard who led us past the endless queues of people and took us into the beautifully lit mosque (Travelblog.org-11).

Following is another part of a narrative which described a blogger's encounter of a friendly service in Peru.

Our first gastronomical delight was in a traditional Peruvian cafe with a very friendly owner and a Big Dutch Chef, who showed us how the meat was all cooked on black volcanic stones, he spoke perfect English and gave us confidence in the strange food that was presented to us (TravelPod.com-44).

In summary, these narratives suggest that travellers' encounters with friendly local people and witnessing their genuine helpfulness, generosity and welcoming nature towards tourists can also trigger their personal memories about certain experiences. The narratives revealed that tourists tend to be impressed by the local hospitality shown by the general public that they encounter randomly on streets and in shops as well as the local business people and friendly and supportive employees whom tourists may encounter more regularly during their travels.

4.2.7 Theme 7: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences

This theme refers to bloggers' narratives of MTEs which are associated with 'serendipity' and 'surprise' factors encountered while travelling. Serendipitous experiences are unplanned but positive and memorable incidents that happened during travel. As one blogger said, 'The most memorable experiences usually begin with something going wrong, something unexpected that leads to adventure, so long as you are willing to roll with the punches and stay open to new possibilities thus created' (26-TravelPod.com). Another blogger reported, 'I saw all these wonders 16 years ago and experience has taught me in travel [that] the most memorable experiences are the surprises' (Travelblog.org-8). The blogger goes on to say,

The best restaurants are the ones you stumble upon by accident after getting lost from the trail and diverted down a backstreet not the ones pumped up in the guidebook. The best scenes are not the views of Mt Everest from Tiger Hill in the Himalayas but the quiet

morning sat in Durbar square in Kathmandu watching locals go about their business and the day unfolding (Travelblog.org-8).

A number of such serendipitous experiences were found in the narratives of bloggers. For example, the following describes a serendipitous invitation from a local driver for a blogger to visit his house:

With an invite from our tuk tuk driver turned friend, to visit his mother's house for lunch, I was predicting that today would be one of our most memorable experiences in Cambodia. Dragon's friend Wan was also coming along for the ride and when we jumped in the moto, it was Wan that was in the driving seat while Dragon accompanied us in the back and gave us a commentary on the local sights (Travelblog.org-25).

Another blogger had described how he ended up making friends with another couple of travellers after a number of consecutive train failures in London. 'Once again serendipity provides a memorable encounter for the traveller, and they didn't even have to venture far from home for this one. All stemming from a sequence of train failures' (TravelPod.com-25).

The blogger further elaborated that:

By the time we hit London, we had discovered a range of mutual interests, and they decided to take the time to walk me towards the Tube stop I would need to take. Along the way we decided to detour for a drink at London's oldest pub, and continued swapping travel stories. ... And in the present circumstance, surrounded by less specific but numerous other examples of crossed paths and common interests, a fast friendship ensued. We ended up transitioning to a good Indian restaurant for dinner and spent the next several hours discussing as broad a range of topics as imaginable, continuously discovering more coincidences and connections between us (Travel Pod.com-25).

The following story describes how even disturbing serendipitous experiences can make memorable moments for travellers because they provide interesting stories for them to share with family and friends:

Entering Potosi was easy enough. However leaving Potosi was quite a different story. The miners were striking the day we wanted to leave. The strike was regarding working conditions and contracting arrangements (worthy causes indeed) but miners managed to put large boulders on all the roads leading out of the city, and there was even a bulldozer blocking our path. Therefore all of us had to don our packs laden with all the cheap bargains we had purchased in Bolivia (and hence very heavy) and walk for at least 1km

down a windy road to a place just out of the city where all the buses were waiting for us. I was highly amused by this experience, even if it was exhausting. In the end we arrived safely in Uyuni, if only a few hours later than expected, with one interesting story to share with family and friends (TravelPod.com-35).

Many bloggers also reported how they were surprised when they encountered something better than what they have expected or imagined. For example, they were surprised when seeing astonishingly beautiful attractions or scenes which were beyond their imagination.

It [Fox Glacier] got closer and closer and then- wow! I could not believe how beautiful it was, a sea of white, not smooth, but jagged and dangerous looking. Pools of aqua marine water dotted the bright white; a waterfall could be glimpsed falling beneath the ice creating a beautiful turquoise hue. We just sat and stared in absolute awe, I have not seen anything quite like it before (travelPod.com-4).

I was constantly surprised at the beautiful scenery of El Salvador, particularly around Lago Coatepeque. Unfortunately most of the wonderful views I encountered were through bus windows so I have no photos to back up my claims. You'll just have to come and see for yourself (Travelblog.org-27).

Humayun's tomb is a real surprise. I didn't visit it on my previous visit to Delhi and wasn't expecting much from the new city but the Mughal architecture is particularly impressive. It was built about a century before the Taj Mahal and you can see how it would have inspired the building of that monument, and it has been called the prototype of the Taj. It is surrounded by immaculate gardens and is definitely worth the visit (Travelblog.org-15).

The narratives discussed under this theme suggest that the events that travellers do not usually expect to encounter and experiences which are beyond their prior expectations or imagination tend to be highly delightful moments and therefore more memorable for them.

4.2.8 Theme 8: Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operators

Some bloggers (17) had further reported the significant role that local guides can play to make a tourism experience more pleasant and memorable for tourists. For example, one blogger reported how he was impressed by two local guides: 'What a gift these two guides were to us on our adventure this day. Together, they created the most memorable experience we could have ever imagined' (Travelblog.org-41). The bloggers had mostly been impressed by the guides' knowledge and expertise on local matters, ability to communicate well with

tourists, ability to be friendly with tourists and their genuine willingness to provide the best possible experiences for travellers. As one blogger reported, ‘Our guide [name of the guide] was very knowledgeable about the insects, Thailand, history, culture etc. and we learned a lot from him. He spoke very good English, so was able to communicate a lot of information to us’ (Travelblog.org-8). Another blogger had commented:

Their constant smiles, serene attitudes, and gracious manners were particularly exemplified by our spunky tour guide, [name of the tour guide]. What a delight she was! Her shining smile and sense of humour plus the many extra amenities, comforts, and conveniences that she provided made the trip even more memorable and enjoyable (Travelblog.org-21).

Another narrative reported:

We hired a guide and it proved to be well worth the extra money. He was extremely knowledgeable and explained many things we were unfamiliar with, such as the Hindu iconography and stories behind the carvings. One of the most memorable experiences was going into one of the Buddhist caves and our guide performing a Pali (the ancient language of Buddhist tradition, like Latin for Catholics) Buddhist prayer chant. It reverberated throughout the cavern like nothing I’ve ever heard before (Travelblog.org-16).

The following is another narrative that describes how guides can become a part of the travelling group and do extra things to please tourists.

The evening was filled with acoustic guitar playing by the guides in the guest house make-shift bar. They sang traditional mountain songs, despite not understanding the language, it was really a lovely moment (Travelblog.org-29).

In addition to describing positive memories about the guides, bloggers also recommended tour companies who provided high quality guides as well as any excellent facilities and services that had also impressed them.

The next morning we had a private vineyard tour scheduled through an amazing company: [name of the tour company], which I highly recommend for anyone who wants to venture away from greyhound buses and long lines of tourists piling out. We were able to design our tour around our own interests and just guided along the way (Travelblog.org-29).

We booked a tour with his company and that was enough - nobody felt the need to bleed us dry. In fact, the company went out of their way to help us. They helped us book bus tickets to Rio for after the tour (the woman actually just went and joined the queue at the counter for us and handled the whole thing, we paid the price on the ticket and not a cent more). We later found out we paid less for the tour than people who booked it in Campo Grande, so it turns out that not everyone who hangs around at the border is up to no good (Travelblog.org-26).

Similarly, the following is another narrative detailing a blogger's positive comments about a tour company including the tour guide:

One of the reasons why I had chosen our tour company was because that they push really hard on the first 2 days of the trek in order to get past all of the other groups doing the trail, and to get the toughest parts of the trek over and done with while we are still somewhat fresh. ... Dinner was quickly served, and we got to know more about our guide Freddy ... A totally fascinating and absorbing guy who in between cracking jokes and telling stories imparted his immense knowledge and philosophies on the Inca people, history and culture. As well his own Anthropological views on society and the human race. It made for some great dinner conversations over the 4 days, and we felt truly lucky that we had scored a guide like Freddy. He called our group, family, and ensured that we were actually like a family, working and staying together to get over the various hurdles the trek threw up at us. All of our group had the right mindset to go with Freddy's family ideal, and it worked really well as we all bonded and became quite close (Travelblog.org-47).

These narratives show that highly professional guides, as well as the tour operators who provide them, can play a crucial role in determining whether experiences tourists have during a tour are memorable. Particularly issues related to the guides' knowledge about local matters and attractions, their interpreting and communication skills and, more importantly, their social skills, such as being friendly with tourists and becoming a 'part of the group', all seem to be crucial factors in determining whether tourists will have highly pleasant and memorable experiences.

4.2.9 Theme 9: Affective Emotions

The blog analysis further suggests that 'affective emotions' are also an integral component of MTEs. Bloggers linked their MTEs to various pleasurable (hedonic) and thrilling emotions,

such as happiness, enjoyment and excitement. For example, bloggers often described how they were intensely happy and enjoyed themselves during such experiences.

We were extremely happy that we witnessed such a special event and had an insight to their culture (Travelblog.org-41).

...the three days were some of the best we'd had in the past 12 months and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves ... I would strongly urge anyone travelling to South America to look into this tour as it will truly be one of the most unforgettable experiences of your life!! (TravelPod.com-5).

We went to a very nice place called The Foreign Correspondents Club (thanks for the tip Angela!), and had most enjoyable evening on the roof terrace drinking half price gin and tonics during a generous two hour happy hour! (Travelblog.org-12).

Jenny and I enjoy[ed] one of those experiences you can only get while travelling and it is pure magic. We play[ed] until the wee hours of the morning and not once do I see anything but a smile on our bartender's face. We head home very late, laughing and singing under the blanket of stars in the sky - over and over we yell at each other - we are in TIBET! We are feeling very much like we were on the rooftop of the world (Travelblog.com-44).

In addition to reporting such pleasurable emotions, bloggers also described how they felt very excited by certain memorable experiences.

It was so exciting to think we were [going to] be on the [back] of a motorbike for the next 5 days touring the central highlands [in Vietnam] and getting to learn the culture (Travelblog.org-10)

This morning I woke up at 5:45AM, even though our wakeup call wasn't until 6:30. Once my eyes were open though, they weren't going to close again ... I don't believe I've ever been excited for anything as much as I was for this trip [climbing Grate Wall in China] (TravelPod.com-48).

New York City was awesome, as always. I love visiting the Big Apple. I have been there a few times before, and the city's energy and culture never fail to excite and invigorate me (TravelPod.com-22).

From start to finish I was amazed by the beauty and athletic ability of these horses. Their intelligence is displayed in every gracefully executed move they make. The harmony between the rider and the horse is also something very special. ... My Mom and I had a

huge grin on our face for the entire 100 minute performance. It was truly a memorable experience (TravelPod.com-24).

These blog narratives indicate that an ‘affective’ component of experience is important to MTEs and that various emotions are embodied in such experiences. The narratives show that various pleasurable feelings such as happiness, fun and enjoyment as well as feelings of excitement are closely linked to MTEs and that these feelings tend to trigger travellers’ memories.

4.2.10 Concluding Remarks of the Results of Travel Blog Narratives

Overall, the findings presented so far offer a description of MTEs that are based on an analysis of secondary data derived from a content analysis of one hundred (100) travel blog narratives. Two important overall insights were derived from the analysis: travellers mostly remember and report positive experiences as MTEs, a finding supported by very few reports of negative experiences in the blog narratives; and MTEs are associated with a number of experiential dimensions:

1. Authentic local experiences
2. Social interactions with people
3. Momentous travel experiences
4. Novel experiences
5. Self-beneficial Experiences
6. Local hospitality
7. Serendipitous and surprising experiences
8. Impressive local guides and tour operators
9. Affective emotions

Analysis of the blog narratives shows that tourists’ experiences that range across these nine experiential themes are more memorable for travellers who narrate their experiences through internet blogs.

However, several limitations of travel bog narratives as a data source for tourist experience research should be acknowledged. Firstly, researchers cannot verify the motivation behind publishing such blogs as well as the accuracy and trustworthiness of their content. Secondly, because such blogs are considered secondary data, researchers may not be able to gather certain important information because they have to rely on what had previously been written

in the blogs. Thirdly, further clarification on what has been written in the narratives in blogs cannot be obtained. It does not enable a researcher to examine other important issues, such as why tourists do not report and share negative experiences as frequently as positive ones or how past memorable experiences affect the re-visit intention of travellers or their intention to generate WOM recommendations. Considering these limitations, ‘in-depth interviews’ were undertaken to obtain a more reliable, richer and deeper understanding of MTEs, and to explore the specific research objectives of this thesis. The next section discusses the major findings that emerged from an analysis of the in-depth interviews.

4.3 Results of the In-Depth Interviews

Thirty-five (35) interviews with frequent leisure travellers were conducted in order to obtain more rich accounts of MTEs. Both positive and negative MTEs were explored, and likely impacts of MTEs were also investigated. Table 4.1 shows the profile of the 35 participants.

Table 4.1: Profile of interviewed sample

Characteristic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	21	60%
	Female	14	40%
Age	Below 30	5	14%
	30-39	4	11%
	40-49	11	32%
	50-59	9	26%
	60-69	6	17%
Marital status	Married	29	83%
	Unmarried	5	14%
	Divorced	1	3%
Household income per year	Less than 50 000	3	9%
	50-000-less than 100 000	12	34%
	100 000-less than 150 000	6	17%
	150 000-less than 200 000	7	20%
	200 000 and above	7	20%
Profession	Academic	14	40%
	Professional/Administrative	10	29%
	Students	5	14%
	Other	6	17%

The above figures show that the majority of the participants were male (60%), married (86%) and over 40-years-old (75%), with most belonging to academic and professional occupations (69%). The average number of leisure travels per year for the participants was 1.3 (45/35) and the average number of overseas destinations visited by the participants was 12 (420/35).

The frequency of their travelling and the number of destinations they have visited makes them ideal respondents for this research.

4.3.1 Positive/Pleasant MTEs

All the interviews commenced by asking participants to tell a story about their most memorable leisure trip, even if it was not their most recent trip. Interestingly, all the participants immediately recalled pleasant and positive memorable experiences; that is, the detailed descriptions of positive MTEs were reported first before the respondents recalled any negative experiences. The content analysis of the verbatim transcripts revealed 10 themes of positive MTEs; nine (9) themes were highly consistent with the themes that emerged from the analysis of the travel blog narratives. Each theme that emerged from the in-depth interviews will now be discussed in detail.

4.3.1.1 Theme 1: Authentic Local Experiences

Similar to the blog narratives, the majority of participants (22) related their MTEs to various occasions of their past travels when they were able to experience authentic local experiences such as 'local life', 'cultures' and 'food'. Many participants (19) brought their memories about experiencing the real life of local people into the discussion during the interviews. As one participant mentioned, 'in terms of what would make it truly memorable, the locals, the way they embrace you and the way that they allow you to enjoy the way they live, and their day to day things' (Interview 23). One female participant remembered how lovely it was for her family to have a real living experience with a tribal family in Thailand: 'When we went on this trekking trip through Thailand, and it was so gorgeous. We stayed with a family up in the hills over some tribal thing. That was such a lovely experience' (Interview 2). She said that she could experience truly a local life there: 'We slept on these grass mats kind of up little hut kind of ... and a chick laid an egg on my bed, stuff like that. This is so lovely to have those experiences, [experiencing] how those people live' (Interview 2). Another participant remembered how her family experienced local life during a bicycle tour in Vietnam.

... because we were on the push bikes [and] we were able to go through the villages off the main roads and so we went through villages, we've got to go into the family compounds, we've got to go into the rice fields, we've got to stop when we wanted to stop. We were expected to fit in with the local families like there were not special toilets or special way [so] we had to go to their toilets. We were able to just use the family [things], so we really got to see how people lived; it was really nice (Interview 35).

The second related aspect of authentic local experiences was ‘authentic local culture’ which refers to travellers’ encounters of various elements of foreign cultures such as festivals, ceremonies and customs. A significant number of participants (16) talked about this aspect during the interviews. For example, one participant said, ‘It is in fact the feeling of being immersed in a different culture which I really enjoyed’ (Interview 9). Another said, ‘I think that my understanding of a memorable experience is having an understanding of family or culture that's very different from my own, [so] being impressed by another culture because it is so different’ (Interview 35). Another affirmed the claim by saying:

I mean when we were swimming in a beautiful waterfall in a rain forest, I think everyone is happy but I wouldn't remember that, but I remember going back to people's house for lunch and meeting their family and been really impressed with how different their culture is (Interview 15).

One claimed that he prefers to plan his own tours rather than relying on agents and tour companies because they do not permit travellers to visit less touristic places and to experience real cultures:

I like to travel on my own package for travelling. I found that a bit easier than you know, leaving it up to the travel agents, you know. I think you [can] see a little bit of the culture and things in countries if you leave it to them but you don't really see the real cultures and things and [they do] not allow you to go to places that normal tourist don't go (Interview 15).

A larger proportion of participants (16) also talked about local food experiences as an important part of their memorable tourism experiences, as one participant stressed, ‘food is probably the main experience that comes to my mind and still I think about it often’ (Interview 21). Another said:

We always just get stuck into whatever the people on the street [are selling and] eating. I mean so many people will only go to posh restaurants but we always just eat at the side of the streets. There is a cafe here or someone selling corn from the little rickshaw on the side, whatever. Yeah, because I think that's part of experiences to eat local food (Interview 2).

Another claimed:

The best food that I've had that tended to be really local, like you know going into a little cafe of the streets and I'm not silly like you know, I look around and see if the floor looks sort of clean, if the people look healthy, then I eat there so I'm careful with my diet but some of the best food I've had is being in places where there are no other tourists, that's for sure! (Interview 35).

Similar to the bloggers, these participants highlighted the deliciousness and different nature of such local foods. For example, 'As I said the holiday in Taiwan was dictated around food. I tried jelly fish, it was something unique, and I haven't tried it before' (Interview 21). Some participants also spoke about food experiences that were hosted by local families:

One of my friends on the boat who was going to Oxford, he had a friend in Colombo and they invited us there for a dinner and we had a marvellous Sri Lankan curries, after that we've got to very keen on Sri Lankan and Indian curries (Interview 31).

The above participants' comments are consistent with the results of the travel blog narratives, suggesting that 'authentic local experiences' is an important aspect of MTEs which is linked with experiences of local life, culture and food.

4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Social Interactions with People

Similar to the results of blog narratives, many interviewees (23) acknowledged that 'pleasant interactions' with people was a crucial aspect for highly memorable travel experiences. Such memorable social interactions can take place with travel companions (friends and family members), other travellers and even with locals. The following quotations best demonstrate how important the 'people factor' is for tourists to realise MTEs:

I do remember just the feeling of being relaxed and having a good time with the people around me more than anything (Interview 7).

There is usually a higher probability of an event becoming memorable because of the people, the social events more so than just [being at] the place by itself (Interview 29).

People in particular make it fairly memorable, don't they? Good experiences with people (Interview 8).

A number of participants talked about pleasant social moments such as having parties and drinking and eating with people as an important part of MTEs.

When you are with a group of people, there is just a different dynamic there, absolutely lovely (Interview 7)

It is the fun of eating, drinking, camping, sharing and going to some of the tourist resort with people (Interview 29).

I think it's more about meeting other people and experiencing, singing and sharing it (Interview 23).

Some participants also admitted that sharing experience with their close travel companions as well as other travellers can enhance the level of enjoyment and excitement of a trip. For example, one young male participant said: 'I saw my partner really enjoying the experience, yeah, so she really enjoyed ... because she enjoyed it, I enjoyed it more' (Interview 27). Similarly, one female participant remembered memorable experiences that all of her family experienced together: 'We had a lovely time in Thailand, riding elephants down at a creek and going on a bamboo raft, and we had that lovely memorable three days, it was absolutely magical because the whole family participated' (Interview 2). Following are similar stories that emerged from the interviewees:

You know it was just so beautiful and it was a lot of fun. We took a couple of family members with us so there was a small group of us, just having a good time with people that you are with, you know, and because we didn't know what we were doing, we fell over [on snow ground] so many times you know, and just being able to laugh ... (Interview 7).

We had a very nice time in Vietnam with our family ... one day we were in Hoang, and we hired motorbikes, so we could get five motor bikes, so we could all ride and our sons have never ridden motorbikes before, so they had a great day and so I think that was very enjoyable for us and memorable, [especially] when you share the travel with other people [for example], with your family (Interview 32)..

Some participants further said that certain experiences were more memorable for them due to the 'new friendship or relationships' that developed with people during their travels. A number of participants (12) stressed this point during interviews, for example, one participant said: '... being a part of a group, getting to know people very closely, and so it's the comradeship, you know, the friendship that you form in that unique situation is what is memorable for me' (Interview 18). One young male participant remembered the friendships he had made with locals during a tour in the Northern England: 'I'm a bit of a people person,

they [were] just really stick with me, the sort of friends that I've made in the short space of a week in the Northern England. So that's something [that] really sticks in my mind' (Interview16). One female participant claimed that 'social interactions and relationship development' while travelling is what she really remembers:

...it has always been around either beautiful environments or meeting really interesting people and sometimes they invited us into their homes which is really what you remember. You don't really remember other things like museums, art galleries, no, but when you get into meet people, and my son still emails to a boy in Nepal that we met, an Indian boy who lived in Nepal. They still email each other and this is four years later (Interview35).

An important new insight that emerged from the interviews was that if there was a proper match or comradeship among the members of a travel group, this would make for a more pleasant and enjoyable trip. Obviously, this is only relevant for occasions when tourists travel in group settings, that is, package tours or small group tours. Participants confirmed that having quite similar expectations and interests among the members of the travel group and, more importantly, the pleasant interactions with each other are essential for more enjoyable and memorable group travels. For instance, one female participant recalled a particular experience during which she was travelling with a very nice group of people:

I think it was a really nice group because well, to be perfectly honest, I don't think there was any young males on there who were going to be loud and perhaps want to be drinking you know, I think there [were] a mum and daughter and two really good friends and a family and a young couple. I think we [were] just very lucky in the mix that we had because when we stopped on the Nile for the evening, another group came in and that group was not getting along very well. And yes, so I just think we were very lucky that we had perhaps very family orientated people ... (Interview 24).

Another claimed that she enjoyed a particular trip because she was travelling with people who have similar interests:

I have been on a small gardening tour in Tasmania, and that was with other people who were very keen gardeners, and we went to Tasmania to look at some of the beautiful old gardens and I enjoyed that very much because I was sharing the experience with people who had the same interest. So I also appreciate travelling in a small group with other people who have the same interest (Interview 30).

Some participants, on the other hand, recalled certain bad experiences created by a mismatch in the travelling group. For example, one participant elaborated on a disappointing experience he had a few years ago in an Asian country:

I didn't really enjoy that as much as I thought because I suppose there were people on the trip with me who were in [name of the destination] for totally different reasons why I was there. I was there to, as I said experience the culture, and just to see the places, and meet people, there was a good percentage of the people [who] were in the group [to experience the same], but at least half of the group were there to [for a different purpose]. They were really on a sex trip and I didn't like that, that was a side of the culture that I don't want to see (Interview 28).

The narratives above show that what people do rather than just the tourist places themselves create memorable experiences for tourists, as also suggested by travel blog narratives discussed previously. In summary, such social interactions with people can enhance the degree of enjoyment of a trip in several ways. Firstly, it enables memorable social and entertaining moments for tourists, such as eating, drinking, singing or having parties etc. Secondly, tourists become more excited by sharing the experience with others, for example, with family members or friends. Thirdly, it provides opportunities for tourists to enhance existing bonds and to develop new friendships with people, all of which can add a new dimension to tourism trips.

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Momentous Travel Experiences

Many respondents (18) also talked about highly significant travel moments, such as visiting world iconic tourist attractions, realising journeys that had been a life-long dream for them and engaging in highly special or extraordinary types of experiences. Such experiences were reflected in responses that highlight the perceived importance of those experiences in terms of their exclusiveness, extremeness or reputation. For example, many participants (24) remembered visitations to world famous iconic tourist attractions such as great touristic cities (e.g. Paris, Moscow), iconic man-made attractions (e.g. Taj Mahal, Great Pyramids), iconic natural wonders (e.g. Iguassu Water Falls, Mount Everest) and world famous museums and art galleries (e.g. Museum of Modern Arts in New York, British Museum in London), as some of their highly significant moments of past travel experiences. As one participant remarked, 'We took thousands of photos and some of them I'd imagine I haven't looked at but I have got a few that are my favourites and they are either in really significant places ...' (Interview 9). He went on to say, 'They mean a lot to me or there are places which just stand

out because there is a lot 'wow' and really pretty' (Interview 9). Another said; 'I think seeing movies of the Eiffel Tower and things like that and actually [having] been there and experiencing it, it was probably the one big thing' (Interview 13). The following is another story told by a participant which illustrates how she was so emotional when visiting the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York:

For example I went to MoMA which is a museum of modern art in New York, and I was looking at art works, very famous art works, and it made me feel very emotional, for me, seeing them first directly was very good not just in a book. Very strong emotions, very exciting and my daughter was with me and I was crying and she didn't understand (laughing out loudly) why I would be crying about art works, but it's just because it was so emotional (Interview 18).

Some participants described momentous travel moments as 'realising a dream or a life-long wish' for them, such as experiences that they had been looking forward to for a long time. For example, one participant said that having a tour to Egypt and seeing 'Great Pyramids' was a dream she had held for a long time: 'I think it was memorable because it had been in a dream of my mind for so long that, yes I've actually realized that dream, so that's one thing that made [it] memorable' (Interview 24). Another participant described how his wife was so emotional when she visited the Leaning Tower of Pisa:

Memorable experience, It may be something that you always have a goal to see this, [his wife's name] always wanted to see the Leaning Tower of Pisa, and when she saw it, she cried because she couldn't believe she was finally in this place, so because it's your goal, so you have an ambition to see these places (Interview 20).

Several participants (6) recalled very special and extraordinary tourist experiences as their most memorable travel moments. These were the experiences that a traveller identified as truly special in terms of the rareness or extreme nature of the experience. For example, one male participant who is a football fan remembered: 'one was to go and see one of the football matches; [it] was in Liverpool in England, which is a team I always supported. So that was memorable to see something that is quite rare for many people, only living [in] those countries' (Interview 20). Another participant who is a retired teacher told a story about a special experience he had with his children:

...and taking the kids up the Gloucester trees in Pemberton in Western Australia which is a massive, ... [it] must be the biggest tree in the forest and to climb that tree, they had

steel pegs driven spiral way in to the tree so if you fell you could fall straight to the ground, you know the kids loved that. So that's one family sort of experience (Interview 22).

This is another similar story told by one participant who had an extraordinary sailing experience:

... I caught up with this guy and he turned around very nice fellow and he asked me whether I would like to go sailing and that's something I have never done before and I said yes that would be great and I expected that we were going to go just sailing for an afternoon or a few hours, [but] we sailed on a 40 foot yacht from Copenhagen down to Lisbon in Portugal, so we have sailed for six weeks, so we have sailed across the north sea, down across the English channel, and that was totally unbelievable (laughing) yeah, so that's another experience that just stuck in my mind (Interview 33).

All these comments are highly consistent with the results of travel blog narratives, which suggest that tourist experiences of very special, rare, extraordinary type tend to be very significant travel moments for tourists and, in fact, at times represent a significant achievement in their lives, and thus become life-long memories for them.

4.3.1.4 Theme 4: Novel Experiences

Similar to the results of blog narratives, novel experiences emerged as another important facet of MTEs. Novel experiences refer to experiencing something new or unique during a trip. It was affirmed by 17 participants that experiencing something new can be more memorable than experiencing mundane tourist experiences. One participant said, 'Things I remember the most are like the big things that we go to see and do, particularly things we have never seen or done before' (Interview 7). Another participant claimed:

I think to be memorable something probably [it] has to be different and stand out as special sort of experience in your life that you don't have in normal life or that you haven't had before or may not have again [in the future] (Interview 3).

Several participants remembered certain first-time experiences that are still memorable. For example, one asserted that experiencing something for the first time is what is memorable for her:

An ordinary experience for me is something that I've had before, so I've had great food before, I've swum in oceans that are beautiful, I've been in rain forests, I enjoyed it every

time, but I've done it before, and I love it, but a memorable experience is the first time that happens to me (Interview 35).

One participant recalled, 'First time I saw the Great Barrier Reef, it was just amazing, and those memories actually stay with you' (Interview 6). Another participant mentioned that his first ship tour was a memorable experience due to its novelty: '...that involves travelling by a ship and that was unique, you know, in fact I've never travelled by ship before so that was different' (Interview 3). Another explained that his first visit to India was a cultural shock to him:

I suppose when I was in India, the first time, that was back in the 70s, I probably, it was probably one of the few times that I experienced what you would call 'cultural shock' because for the first time I ever discovered a country where there were so many people, and so many people who lived in very extremely poor conditions and it shocked me (Interview 28).

Some other participants (15) also stressed experiencing something entirely new or unique from their previous experiences, and these were highly memorable for them. This does not necessarily mean 'the first time experiences' but very novel or unique from the previous experiences. For example, engaging in novel activities, visiting very different tourist attractions, being exposed to very distinctive cultures, staying in unusual accommodation and encountering uncommon wildlife, are some of the examples which emerged under this novelty aspect, as the following quotations indicate:

I mean we had a lovely time in Thailand, riding elephants down at a creek and going on a bamboo raft, and you know, we will always have that lovely, you know memorable three days and it was really tough walk that we undertook but such total new experiences than what we haven't been used to (Interview 2).

I went to Europe several times so I know what to expect there but [to go to] Egypt was a very much different just visually and culturally and language and food and yet it was quite even though it wasn't luxury sort of trip it was still very significant. I think because it was new and different (Interview 20).

...some hotels that are very different to the normal mainstream hotels, for example, in another holiday we had in Japan, instead of staying in the big hotel, we stayed in a traditional inn which they called 'a reaccan', so it's very different, where there is no bed

in the room, they rolled out the Tanami mats, and so it was very different, certainly not always you can find those in some countries (Interview 22).

Non-mainstream or adventurous types of tourist experiences were also referred to by some participants. These had been basically off-the-beaten track tourism experiences that could also deliver different and novel experiences to these participants. A number of respondents (8) talked about such experiences and elaborated instances, such as visiting niche touristic places (i.e. places where mass tourists do not visit) and pursuing uncommon or adventurous types of tours that ordinary travellers generally do not undertake. For example:

It [trekking in Himalayas] was a challenge, physically and emotionally. It meant that you had an opportunity to go to a place that wasn't frequently travelled by other tourists, and people. It was beautiful, the scenery was very beautiful, and the opportunity to stay in places that weren't hotels but were smaller, more local cottages and family homes (Interview 17).

...but the highlight of that was something completely unusual. A guy ... just a guy not a tour operator or anything like that had a mini-bus and he offered to drive the girls around the wine area and they travelled around that area and basically he would stop at a place, knowing they were going somewhere but will be coming back about an hour later and he arranged their lunch to be ready for when they came back. And it was that getting away from the mainstream tourism and just talking to some of the locals ... they really enjoyed that (Interview 9).

Most memorable, that's interesting, well, I have to be honest, the first thing I think is that my first trip was hitch hiking ... the first trip that we did was right down through England then down to France to Switzerland and then up through Germany and Belgium and back up to England and back up to Scotland. That was the first trip we did. And we did that almost only by hitchhiking. I mean we were students, we didn't have any money so it was a challenging thing because obviously you've got to stand beside a road and you've got to try to attract people to stop and pick you up (Interview 3).

These claims further support the results of the travel blog narratives, suggesting that 'novelty' is an important component of MTEs. The results propose that travellers may realise novel experiences in terms of (a) experiencing something for the first time (b) experiencing something that is very distinctive or unique from the previous experiences and (c) engaging in non-mainstream and adventurous types of tourist activities.

4.3.1.5 Theme 5: Self-Beneficial Experiences

Similar to the results of travel blog analysis, a number of participants (12) talked about memorable experiences that they perceived as self-relevant or self-beneficial to them. They talked about these MTEs as types of personally meaningful outcomes that they derived from those experiences, such as, the enhancement of knowledge that broadened their intellectual capacity, or broadened their perspectives about life and the world, the acquisition of new skills and an improved self-image and self-confidence. For example, a number of participants described certain experiences whereby they had learned and gained new knowledge about various subjects such as the history of countries and different cultures, religions, languages and some other topics of interest to them. As one participant said: 'I think that my understanding of a memorable experience is having learnt something new, and having an understanding of family or culture that's very different from my own' (Interview 35).

Another affirmed that:

The Nile river, yes, that was very good to cruise ... It was just a sail boat just cruising along, just imagining all the history that happened in these places so ... that sort of stimulates some of my prior knowledge and also brings new knowledge and new interests when you come home, so yeah, education I think is probably a very significant part of why we travel apart from pleasure as well (Interview 20).

One participant recalled his learning about 'Judaism' and some other philosophies during a particular trip:

In going to Israel I was exploring Judaism which is a sort of ancient form of Christianity and also on that journey I went to a place in Scotland called Fenton which is a new aged community where they are exploring the philosophy of new age or the age of Aquarius and so that was a whole topic of intellectual interest and religious interest and for example, they learn to meditate, in Christianity you know, we don't normally meditate but they are learned to meditate and that may be a more eastern experience. That to me was a life changing experience because meditation is a something new and that's different from my experience (Interview 3).

A number of participants (10) said that some of their previous memorable trips were life changing and perspective broadening. One said, 'a memorable experience is a life changing experience, something that alters the way you think about a place or a person or a thing, [I mean] it broadens your perspectives' (Interview 5). Another respondent said: 'Well it's about

broadening your mind really; it's about your mind, your experiences, your appreciation of beauty, human nature, all sort of stuff' (Interview 28). Another claimed, 'I think a memorable experience does transform you emotionally and physically' (Interview 25). Thus, memorable experiences can even change a travellers' self-identity, for example:

I mean, maybe I reflect on it in my own life like we don't have that or so it's very very different from my own culture, from my own experience, sometimes it's just really a bit of a wild experience, like driving down a road with no helmets, driving a motor bike, you know, something I could never do in Australia, so it's not so much the emotion of whether I'm happy or sad, it's more that it changes my way of thinking, changes my understanding of myself (Interview 30).

The following participant illustrates how a certain memorable experience can alter a traveller's way of thinking:

I guess before I went to India I was fairly shallow and took life for granted and having travelled to India and seen the way [that] millions of people lived, I became more appreciative of what I have been given, what I have been born into, and what I was given. It made me reflect considerably on that actually and I think all human beings are born with the conditions to [not clear], why haven't I got this, why haven't I got that. We call it 'whinging' in Australia and I think India cured me of whinging for life, I don't think I could ever whinge after I went to India. For me, it was a life changing experience. It was a real eye opening experience (Interview 28).

Some participants also related their MTEs to some other meaningful outcomes such as acquisition of new skills and enhancement of self-image and self-confidence through overcoming physically challenging experiences.

That was challenging to get to that height, that's some 18 000 feet above sea level, yes, so battling with things such as the altitude, yeah, in terms of combating altitude sickness and just the physical exhaustion of doing the trek and carrying the pack, It's a sort of achievement exactly ... it's something unusual that not everybody would consider doing (Interview 16).

... we sailed on a 40 foot yacht from Copenhagen down to Lisbon in Portugal, so we have sailed for six weeks, so we have sailed across the north sea, down across the English channel, and that was totally unbelievable [laughing] yeah, so that's another experience that just stick in my mind. ... It was something challenging because I had to learn to sail, well, as a part of the working crew, I actually leant to sail, you know and getting to that

end of the journey, there was a satisfaction again because that was an accomplishment (Interview 33).

The quotes from participants analysed here are also consistent with the blog narratives which suggest that travellers may remember trips better when they provide personally meaningful outcomes, and that such outcomes make them feel better about themselves after the trip. For example, experiences associated with personally beneficial outcomes such as intellectual development, acquisition of new skills, broadened perspectives about life and the world and improved self-image and self-confidence can be more memorable for tourists compared to routine tourism experiences.

4.3.1.6 Theme 6: Local Hospitality

Similar to the results of the travel blog analysis, this theme refers to the participants' experiences of the genuine generosity and the helpfulness of local people whom they had encountered during their travels. A majority of participants (21) commented very positively on this aspect and remembered a number of such incidents during the interviews. The majority of them recalled incidents they experienced with the general public of the destinations in which they toured. For example, one participant recalled an experience he had in the Netherlands many years ago,

I remember one particular memorable experience with a gentleman one day who invited us to stay in his house because normally we would stay in youth hostels which is a cheap accommodation but this Dutch person invited us to spend a night with him ... by Australian standards it was a small house and he was a very nice man and in fact in the morning he went to work and he just left us in his house and told us to close the door when we left so that was how much he trusted us. We had never met him before!
(Interview 3)

Another female participant told a story about an experience she had had in Japan:

I just found [that] people, most in Japan were really willing to go out of their way to help us. One incident was [we were] arriving at a subway station and we had to putting these little tickets to be able to get through the barrier and one of my son's ticket wasn't working properly and two women who had nothing whatsoever to do with the station or with us [but] they stopped and [actually] they couldn't speak in English and we couldn't speak Japanese but through sign language and everything they stood there and they helped him get through the barrier, just examples like that (Interview 11).

Another remembered an experience he had in Iran where some of locals he had met randomly accompanied him to show him some local attractions:

It was just a wonderful experience, being taken around by locals and their overwhelming hospitality and I have actually got a lot of experiences like that where I have met local people and they have just been so wonderful ... That is an experience [that] comes to my mind (Interview 28).

In addition to talking about such incidents with the general public, some participants also remembered very hospitable local service providers and very friendly staff members they had encountered in foreign destinations. For example, one participant recalled:

When we went on our last trip to Singapore, the service at the motel was just unbelievable. When they saw my daughter because she was nine at the time, when they saw she was actually a tall girl for nine, they immediately upgraded us and then wherever we went they called us by our name and we could talk to them (Interview 6).

In another incident, one participant described a very pleasant experience he had at a restaurant in Rome:

I mean the friendliness of the people. Rome yes, the guy in the hotel was really good but he couldn't let us in but down the road we went to a restaurant for a mate's birthday and you know, once they found out it was his birthday they were trying to fall over backwards to do things for him (Interview 9).

Another remembered a memorable experience that she had encountered at a restaurant in Paris:

I was eating in a small restaurant by myself and the waiter came up and I was quite a bit younger then and he said 'mademoiselle' ' mademoiselle ' you know, he said 'a beautiful woman should never eat alone so he went up to the back, he came back with a big fat cat and put the cat on the chair opposite me (laughing loudly). I mean (laughing loudly again) I wasn't eating alone. It was very nice (Interview 30).

The following quotation highlights how significant it is for travellers to encounter supportive and friendly hotel staff, especially in a foreign destination:

... just generally, one of the things that we look for when we travel is the staff at the hotel where we stay, because we do a lot of our own organization, we really appreciate the staff being able to help us, particularly where English is not very widely spoken so

we had some good experiences where you know the hotel staff will book your restaurant and will write the address on the card in the language of the country to make sure that we talk to the taxi driver so they know where to go, so that's one of the things that I was thinking of ...(Interview 32).

These comments provide further strong evidence for the claims that local hospitality is an important component of MTEs. The results align themselves with those of the travel blog narratives discussed previously.

4.3.1.7 Theme 7: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences

A number of participants (11) confirmed that the serendipity and surprises encountered during travels can also make a trip more memorable for travellers. As described previously, serendipitous experiences are unplanned but positive and memorable incidents that happened during leisure trips. Following is a story told by a participant who described a serendipitous moment that he had experienced at the Colosseum in Rome:

We were really lucky actually because we ran into some university students who went to the Colosseum as we do and they were doing all the guided tours and all sorts of stuff because there was a professor there, with a bunch of Italian students and they actually said don't do that, come with us. And so we went with these kids and it cost us a whole lot less. And they took us in to places because we went with them. We went from the Colosseum over into the Imperial Precinct and because the professor has rights to study there, we were able to go to various places that you can't normally go. And that was a bit of serendipity I guess (Interview 9).

According to him, he might not have been able to experience the Colosseum so well had he not encountered the serendipitous nature of the meeting and therefore this opportunity.

Another participant remembered a similar serendipitous experience he had with his wife in Australia:

There is a tiny little place right in the centre of Tasmania called Hamilton. We had never heard of it. We hadn't planned to stay there because I was going onto another place called Bothwell but my wife looked at it and she said, lets come back here tonight and see if we can find something. There was this series of little old convict cottages that had been sort of done up and we stayed there that night and it was just brilliant and we ended up going to the pub for dinner and met some of the locals and had a chat with them about what it's like to live there. That really appeals to my wife because she comes from a very small

town in New Zealand. And it was one of those serendipitous occasions that happened (Interview 9).

Following is another story told by a participant who experienced such a serendipitous moment in Iran:

I can remember, one time, many years ago, when I was travelling in Iran, when we were in a restaurant, and I guess there must have been about six were sitting around the table, and there was another table in the restaurant nearby, six Iranian young men about the same age as us, because I was quite young, and they were looking at us because we were westerners, any way eventually, they came over and talked to us, and they arranged to meet us and take us around the city (Interview 28).

Some participants considered that travellers may encounter more serendipity during independent tours than organised package tours because they have more freedom and flexibility to engage in unplanned activities. For example:

Yeah, all of this stuff associated with that is really memorable. But it's associated with that personal kind of serendipity of the associations you make, the people you meet, the places you go, and that kind of freedom about independent travelling where you don't really know what is going to happen (Interview 4).

Another noted that travellers do not have to pay for such serendipitous experiences and yet they are memorable for them:

...and it's sometimes the unexpected. They are the small things that are unexpected that you really remember, just simple things like a picnic somewhere or, yeah, often the things that I enjoy don't cost money. You know they are not things you pay money for. They are memorable because they are just incidents that happened that contribute to your enjoyment without any cost (Interview 30).

Some participants also talked about the 'surprise factor' during the interviews. Surprising experiences had taken place when the participants experienced something superior than what they had expected or imagined. A number of participants (14) said they had been surprised on several occasions, for example, by superior services delivered by certain service providers or superior quality of the accommodations where they had stayed or unimagined beauty of certain touristic attractions that they had visited. As one participant highlighted: 'I think sometimes you have an idea in your mind about something how it would be and very often it's exactly that and so satisfying, no problem but sometimes it is beyond expectations and a

surprise and that is very memorable' (Interview 18). Another affirmed this by saying: 'I guess it [MTEs] was something that exceeded my expectations, it was something that was more than we expected and something more beautiful, or more exciting, or more interesting or surprising things' (Interview 32). For example, one female participant remembered one of her experience of a superior quality hotel:

I suppose it's about giving you something you never thought you would have. When we were sipping our cocktail in the swimming pool I said to my husband, I never thought we would stay at a place like this. That was memorable because it was just well above what I expected (Interview 23).

Another remembered similar experiences that he had encountered at a tourist hotel in Singapore:

That could be an exceptional service, it could be an upgrade: we got an upgrade when we went over from economy to business class. That's a nice memory and you weren't expecting that and sometimes that happens in hotels also. When we went to our last trip to Singapore, the service at the motel was just unbelievable. When we got there ... when they saw my daughter because she was nine at the time, when they saw she was actually a tall girl for nine, they immediately upgraded us (Interview 6).

Some participants further remembered how they were surprised by stunning beauty and greatness of certain tourist attractions that were beyond their imaginations.

Standing on the Great Wall in China really to me was the most memorable, magical moment because you don't realize how vast and huge it is until you are actually standing there ... that was a huge surprise ... we tried to even tell our own family who haven't seen it about it but you can almost see them not realizing how great it is, how amazing it is, I don't think anyone would ever be able to imagine how great it is until they actually experience it (Interview 2).

The great pyramids touched me more emotionally than I thought it would, basically because I mean it's a huge structure and then when you are inside it, in this very dark oppressive space in the middle of this huge thing ... it does kind of touch something spiritually or emotionally I suppose ... in terms of the awesomeness of the space. It's just how ancient it is (Interview 4).

I think when I first saw the Taj Mahal, I had never seen anything more beautiful and I felt quite moved by that experience (Interview 30)

In summary, these claims propose that serendipity (unplanned incidents or experiences) and surprises (experiences beyond expectations) are two important components of MTEs for tourists, as previously revealed from the analysis of travel blog narratives. Such experiences may aid better retention and are recalled by them due to how they contrast with the ordinary things and what travellers generally expect to happen during their travels.

4.3.1.8 Theme 8: Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operators

Similar to the narratives of some bloggers discussed previously, some participants (7) related their MTEs to impressive services delivered by some local guides and tour operator companies during their past travels. Especially, these participants stressed that local guides can make a huge difference in tours:

Certainly sometimes guides make a huge difference (Interview 28).

[Having] a good guide is certainly extremely beneficial (Interview 22).

...how they prepared to do for you, information that they gave you, the friendliness, and their willingness to be a part of your trip [are very important] (Interview 18).

One participant described how local guides can build bonds with travellers. ‘Some guides that I had [encountered] ... when we say good bye [then] they break down and cry because they have enjoyed your company and it's very moving’ (Interview 18). Another affirmed that, ‘some guides, well, they just go off to their room and you don't see them when you get to a hotel, but other guides [are different], they join you and participate’ (Interview 28). One participant remembered a very good guide he had encountered in Nepal:

The company provided a very good guy as our guide. And I could talk to him at length [for] hours of time as we were walking, so I could ask him about anything and his patience, being able to asking questions ... sort of every opportunity, he was happy to answer (Interview 22).

The same participant also positively commented about the particular tour company, ‘... and I would certainly go again with that company, anywhere in the world (Interview 22).

Following are some other quotations that highlight the importance of local guides for delivering memorable experiences for travellers:

...the tour guide was wonderful, he was a very nice man, very warm and proud of his country and proud of his people and very well informed (Interview 35).

...we had a really lovely guide, young man, he was only maybe 20 or 21 and he just loved the kids, he just played with them (Interview 25).

In summary, these comments further affirm the results of travel blog narratives, which revealed that professional guides and tour operators can also play a vital role for delivering memorable experiences for tourists. The findings suggest that guides' expertise about the local matters and attractions, their interpreting and communication skills as well as other social skills, such as being able to be friendly with tourists and becoming a part of the group, can play a vital role for delivering very pleasant and memorable experiences for tourists.

4.3.1.9 Theme 9: Affective Emotions

This is the theme that emerged from the affective domain of the MTEs phenomenon. Similar to the results of blog narratives, many participants (27) related their MTEs to various emotions that they had felt during such experiences. For example, the importance of emotional components of MTEs is illustrated by the following comments.

The memorable experiences will be the times that you felt very emotional, like very excited or very happy (Interview 18).

A memorable experience is something that leaves me with a very positive feeling, good feelings, and something that I can remember fondly with, you know, something I have very fond memories of ... (Interview 30).

These claims suggest that emotions attached to certain experiences tend to make such experiences more memorable for tourists. Basically, two types of emotions were highlighted by the participants that are associated with MTEs: (a) feelings of excitement, and (b) feelings of pleasure (i.e. happiness, enjoyment etc.)

The most often-mentioned emotion was excitement. For example, one participant defined a memorable experience in terms of the feeling of excitement associated with it:

One that sort of a memorable experience of course is one that excites you to engage internally or externally, so it internally excites you, you remember it, you miss it, you want to have that experience again, you want to engage, but you also can externalise by telling other people (Interview 34).

One participant remembered how he became so excited and shared that excitement with his family members when he reached Mount Everest: 'I was so excited [and] I actually rang my

son when we got the first view of Everest. That was really special, the excitement of being there' (interview 22). Another participant expressed how she was excited by visiting Art Galleries and Museums in New York: 'New York was a good travel experience. I'm involved in arts, visual arts and music and so places like New York, it has got wonderful Art Galleries, and Museums and things so they make me feel excited' (Interview 18). Following are some other examples of quotations which illustrate how the participants felt the feelings of excitement during memorable experiences:

Well, I was young and adventurous and outgoing and positive and that [hitch-hiking] was wonderful. I would think it just like a big adventure, I mean exciting! I was very excited I suppose (Interview 3).

I went to MoMA which is a museum of modern art in New York, and I was looking at art works very famous art works ... and it made me feel very emotional ... because I teach about these things you know, and for me seeing them for the first time directly was a very good, not just in a book but they were there. Very very strong emotions, very exciting (Interview 18).

It (a tour in France) was fantastic. I loved it. It was just the best. And I am probably excited thinking about it even now. It always puts smiles [on my face] (Interview 23).

I see it [travelling in Vietnam with the children] has been very exciting, everything from packing to coming home (Interview 35).

In addition to talking about the 'feelings of excitement', a significant number of participants (18) further related their memorable experiences to various pleasurable feelings such as happiness, fun and enjoyment: 'To me, the difference is you know, how it made me feel. I remember the things the most where I was extremely happy and I had a really good time' (Interview 7). Another said, 'I enjoyed it [a tour to London] very much, it was marvellous!' (Interview 31). Another remembered: 'It was just happy family time, [we] walked in Cannes, so my children [were] very happy, they didn't want to go home, come back to Armidale' (Interview 16). Another remembered how he was happy during his trip to Northern England, 'Ah, just being happy you know, days of happiness, just [I] felt like – could I stay there for much longer' (Interview 16). Below are some other similar quotations that emerged during the interviews which illustrate the association between MTEs and various pleasure feelings:

It was just an evening, it was [located in] a valley in a Swiss hotel, with the meal, the cattle on the side [of the hill] you know, the bells ringing, some people singing ... having some snaps and the local beer, it was just a very happy moment (Interview 29).

[It was], sort of relaxed and that was a very enjoyable time, and makes me want to go there again, yes I enjoyed that very much (Interview 10).

Happy and very fun memories and I loved every bit of it (Interview 23).

It was a fantastic experience! Extremely happy I guess because we were always with good friends (Interview 33).

Actually the whole time it was hilarious, you know, and I think that's just the thing that I remember the most, when I do go away [these] are the ones where I had a lot of fun (Interview 7).

These comments provide further evidence to support the results of travel blog narratives that 'affect' is a significant component of MTEs, which represents various feelings attached to those experiences. The results suggest that both the feelings of pleasure (hedonic) and excitement are closely linked with MTEs, which tend to help travellers to keep memories of such experiences in their minds for a longer time.

4.3.1.10 Theme 10: Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests

This is the additional theme that emerged from the in-depth interviews. The theme suggests that tourism experiences which better fit to personal travel interests are better remembered than experiences which are less pertinent to individual travel preferences. Strong evidence to support this claim emerged during the in-depth interviews. As one participant said:

The memorable experiences are the ones that have been particularly applicable to my interests. I suppose visiting cities for an example is a satisfactory experience, doing the other stuff that I've mentioned is the extraordinary and because it's what I desire to do, it becomes more memorable (Interview 22).

Another participant said:

... because it [a trip to India] comes down to my own personal [character] who I am I suppose. I'm interested in experience. I'm interested in being a little bit uncomfortable. Many people don't like to be uncomfortable, many people don't like to see difficult things or many people are nervous about putting themselves in a foreign environment. I find it

exciting. I find that it's stimulating so I like to go or jump in to a foreign culture that's very different (Interview 34).

The following two quotations demonstrate the contrasting travel interests of two participants in terms of encountering local people and local life:

My general travel motivation is to see how other people live [and] trying to understand the culture at other countries. I actually like to see how the local people live. How people go about their everyday life, I find that is really interesting (Interview 30).

If I go anywhere where I meet other people, they are usually academics, so I don't sort of ... I am not a cultural tourist. I just don't do that kind of stuff. So, you know, I mean every one is a cultural tourist in a way but I don't seek out those kinds of experiences. I don't go to South East Asia, I don't know, going around the villages and stuff like that, I don't like that (Interview 14).

Following are some additional comments which illustrate the close association between MTEs and personal travel interests:

...a memorable experiences is something that is on top of what I expect kind of thing (Interview 27).

I guess memorable experiences are probably connected to what we like to do. We have an interest in food and wine, for example, so I guess some of those experiences ... where it is connected to what you like to do most of the time anyway can make it memorable (Interview 32).

The memorable experience probably, you are more engaged in what you are doing there and so photography is one of these ways. If I've got there and I've got these great sunset and I am taking a photo and I think 'wow' and then at the end of the day I pack up the camera and you are walking back into the car (Interview 10).

We love football, and so we were trying to see many football matches as we can [during trips] ... We saw Barcelona play which was absolutely magical. Seeing Barcelona football team playing in Barcelona, that was special and that was very memorable (Interview 24).

These comments suggest that different tourists probably have different travel interests; for instance, visiting iconic tourist attractions can be more memorable for certain travellers but may not impress others whose primary motivation of travelling is to encounter less touristic

experiences in the first place. Similarly, social interactions can be a major part of travel experiences for people-oriented travellers but for others it can be a barrier for their relaxation purpose travels. Even though travellers may prefer to encounter a cluster of different types of experiences during a particular tour, they may be primarily motivated to seek certain experiences dependent upon their individual travel interests. This implies that fulfilment of most important travel interests and experiences sought by a particular traveller seems to be crucial for determining whether the trip is more or less memorable for the particular person.

4.3.2 A Comparison of the Themes that Arose in the Blog Narratives and the In-depth Interviews

Overall, the findings of in-depth interviews and the results of the blog narratives were highly consistent. Both travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews provided evidence to claim that MTEs are mostly related to positive experiences rather than negative ones. This was indicated by the few reports of negative experiences in blog narratives and all the respondents who participated in in-depth interviews recalled positive MTEs instantaneously when asked to remember their most memorable trip. Out of 10 themes that were discussed above, nine themes are common to the both data sources, suggesting very convergent results between the two. Only one additional theme emerged from the in-depth interviews: ‘fulfilment of personal travel interests’, which suggests that, in addition to the other nine experiential dimensions – which are essential components of MTEs – some travellers felt that he or she was able to fulfil his or her prime travel motives and interests during a trip.

The purpose of employing two different qualitative data sources was to triangulate the findings. Triangulation of data is a widely-used validity criteria in the qualitative research paradigm. The high degree of consistency between the two data sources is a good sign for the trustworthiness of results. In other words, it indicates that the findings are reliable and dependable. Table 4.2 provides a summary comparison between the analysis of travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews of the themes and the sub-categories that emerged under each theme.

Table 4.2: A comparison of the themes and sub-categories between travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews

Travel Blog Narratives		In-depth Interviews	
1	<i>Authentic Local Experiences</i> -Authentic local life -Authentic local culture -Authentic local food	1	<i>Authentic Local Experiences</i> -Authentic local life -Authentic local culture -Authentic local food
2	<i>Social Interactions with People</i> -Memorable sociable moments -Enhance enjoyment through sharing experience with others -Enhanced social bonds and developing new relationships	2	<i>Social Interactions with People</i> -Memorable sociable moments -Enhance enjoyment through sharing experience with others - Enhanced social bonds and developing new relationships
3	<i>Momentous Travel Moments</i> -Visiting significant tourist attractions -Realizing special tourist experiences	3	<i>Momentous Travel Moments</i> -Visiting significant tourist attractions -Realizing special and extraordinary tourist experiences
4	<i>Novel Experiences</i> -First time experiences -Experiences which are highly distinctive or unique from previous travel experiences	4	<i>Novel Experiences</i> -First time experiences -Experiences which are highly distinctive or unique from previous travel experiences -Non-mainstream or adventurous experiences
5	<i>Self-Beneficial Experiences</i> -Learning experiences -Perspectives broadening and life changing experiences - Experiences which help to acquire new skills, improve self-image and self-confidence	5	<i>Self-Beneficial Experiences</i> -Learning experiences -Perspectives broadening and life changing experiences -Experiences which help to acquire new skills, improve self-image and self-confidence
6	<i>Local Hospitality</i> -Local hospitality of general public -Local hospitality of local business people and staff	7	<i>Local Hospitality</i> -Local hospitality of general public -Local hospitality of local business people and staff
7	<i>Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences</i> -Serendipity - Surprises	7	<i>Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences</i> -Serendipity -Surprises
8	<i>Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operators</i> -Impressive local guides -Impressive tour operators	8	<i>Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operators</i> -Impressive local guides -Impressive tour operators
9	<i>Affective Emotions</i> -Feelings of pleasure -Feelings of excitement	9	<i>Affective Emotions</i> -Feelings of pleasure -Feelings of excitement
		10	<i>Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests</i>

4.4 Additional Findings Revealed from In-Depth Interviews

As mentioned previously, the in-depth interviews enabled the researcher to examine more facets of MTEs, especially, negative experiences and the likely impact of MTEs on post experience behaviour of travellers. The results regarding these aspects are discussed in detail below.

4.4.1 Negative MTEs

In addition to identifying the themes associated with positive MTEs, the researcher also explored negative MTEs in the in-depth interviews. After discussed positive MTEs, which were spontaneously recalled by the respondents during the interviews, participants were asked to talk about highly negatively memorable experiences that they had encountered during their travels. The content analysis of the responses revealed the following key findings.

- (a) Negative experiences are comparatively harder to recall than positive MTEs
- (b) Negative experiences are comparatively fewer than positive MTEs
- (c) Negative experiences are generally not considered serious and critical events.

These findings are discussed in detail below.

4.4.1.1 Negative Experiences are Comparatively Harder to Recall than Positive MTEs

Participants had a very poor memory recall of negative experiences and took comparatively longer to recall negative as opposed to positive MTEs. Some of them even expressed their difficulty in remembering negative incidents at all. Typically, there was a longer silence from respondents when they were asked to answer this question and certain phrases like ‘just trying to think’, ‘can’t think of anything’, ‘let me think [silence]’, ‘mmmm [silence] no nothing’, and ‘[long silence] ah [again silence]’. Some other similar responses were: ‘I can’t remember having a bad tourism experience’ (Interview 10), ‘I can’t really think of any really bad experiences’ (Interview 35), and ‘I can’t think of a really negative type of situation’ (Interview 29)’.

Some participants mentioned that they tend to selectively retain only positive experiences and try to forget negative ones.

It is just, you know there [are] a lot of things that happen but when you get home then you relax and you [recover from] your fatigue and then you have memories of that trip that has been good. You only sort of selectively remember the good ones (Interview 1).

Another similar response was ‘I try not to dwell on those things [negative incidents]. I choose not to remember those things (laughing)’ (Interview 7). Following are some other quotations that demonstrate similar views:

You tend to remember the more fun times and enjoyable times than the [bad times] like the missed planes or the waiting time in an airport or something like that (Interview 29).

I guess I think of memorable as something good, if I had a bad experience, I probably would try not to remember (Interview 32).

I really enjoyed myself, and I've actually got to meet some people who were just genuinely nice people, but there was that element in ... that was that sort of really ruined yeah, I've forgotten all about that (Interview 28).

4.4.1.2 Negative Experiences are Comparatively Fewer than Positive MTEs

A majority of the participants (26) had a common view that they had encountered very few negative experiences during their travels, thus they are very insignificant comparing to positive experiences. They stressed that their past travel experiences had been pleasant and positive in most cases. For example, ‘I’ve never had any bad instances or accidents or anything like that on holidays, you know, it’s all have been pretty all right’ (Interview 8).

That response was typical of many of the responses in terms of their similarity, for example:

I can't really think of any other experiences or trips or holidays that we have had where I have sort of gone hmm ... that wasn't very good, yep, they are usually pretty positive (Interview 7).

One time the hotel cancelled our booking just before two days. But generally all our experiences are positive (Interview 14).

... but that was the experience I had from Germany but every other countries has been pretty good. I haven't had any dramas (Interview 15).

I think I've been lucky in my life. I only had really positive experiences, I've never been robbed or, you know, beaten up, or threatened anything like that (Interview 27).

4.4.1.3 Negative Experiences are generally not Considered Serious and Critical Events

Many participants (20) had the view that even if they had occasionally experienced negative incidents they do not take them too seriously. As noted by one participant, ‘the worst day on a holiday is better than the best day at work (laughing)’ (Interview 10). Some of them said that mostly those negative experiences were related to minor incidents thus they did not matter much. ‘We really haven’t had any terrible experiences. I mean you get delayed at an airport, you may lose a piece of luggage and that happens. That’s life, as long as everybody is happy and having fun’ (Interview 23). As another commented:

It’s generally minor things like you know, poor service, or sometimes we don’t worry about booking ahead, we just turn up at a place and you look for accommodation you know, sometimes that’s a bit tricky, and yeah, that sort of things, generally minor things” (Interview 19).

One respondent further said:

I guess, we don’t really see them as bad because we have never been badly ripped-off, we have been ripped-off, but not badly. We had never had any violence and we’ve never been sick, like in all the countries that we have travelled, and we ate [local foods] you know, so they are not that bad (Interview 35).

Some participants held views that encountering negative experiences is also a part of travelling, thus they do not worry about them. For example, ‘I’m sure, even if something hasn’t been good, we still put them down as an experience’ (Interview 35). This participant further clarified, ‘I’ve loved all my travelling, but that’s just what we like, even when it rains, hardness, long and that’s just a part of the adventure, and we tell the children that you know, this is just a part of it’ (Interview 35). Another commented: ‘Well, that is the way things go and that is still an experience I suppose, isn’t it? It’s a part of the deal of travelling and being a stranger abroad’ (Interview 26). Some said that negative experiences were their own fault because they had made the wrong decisions, for example, ‘...because I made the decision, I chose it so therefore I have to be self-satisfied that it wasn’t a bad choice after all’ (Interview 25). One participant explained how her family was trapped into being exploited by a taxi driver because they had not done enough research:

Well I suppose in the end we think well, we are tourists, we had been ripped off, that happens all over the world all the time and we’ve got sucked into it. I think we were cranky with ourselves, angry with ourselves that we’ve got sucked into it. It was probably

we hadn't done enough research obviously. Later on we picked up the pamphlet that said you know, only catch taxis here so it was a bit too late. So yeah, a bit angry that we had been fallen into the trap, but anyway, that's what I think (Interview 24).

Some of the participants (8) also emphasised that travellers need to be open-minded and think positively when they encounter negative experiences. 'I don't really think we've had a bad holiday experience mainly because I think whenever you go away on a holiday you should have an open mind' (Interview 23). One participant further said, 'I've always considered that whatever experience you get, wherever you go, you learn from it don't you? You enjoy and you make the most of it' (Interview 10). Another claimed that 'I just try to feel very grateful for everything, so even if I have bad or what may be a less positive experience, they are still interesting, I mean there is something to learn' (Interview 25). Of these participants, some further said that travellers need to adjust themselves to different social and cultural situations in foreign destinations. For example one considered:

I haven't had any, any dramas and I think it's a matter of just being polite and accepting the different rules in different countries, that's where people go wrong. Every country has got different rules whether they are moral rules or legal rules and you have just got to respect that and that's where people go wrong (Interview 15).

One female participant explained how she adjusted to certain situations in foreign countries:

I have had challenging rides with taxi drivers sometimes, they are trying to get a lot of money out of me, but I always smile and I keep my sense of humour and I am very strong that I'm not going to pay it and we try to joke, I think (Interview 35).

Another claim made by some participants was that they can understand the context behind the negative incidents and thus tend to tolerate them. For example talking about harassments created by local street traders, one said 'Of course they harass you, harass you in the markets but you know, that's their job but ... but in general, they are really friendly and you know, just poor people trying to make their living' (Interview 24). Another commented on higher prices charged by local taxi drivers:

I think that they are trying to get as much money as they can, I would too, you know, I respect that, so I don't see it as a [problem]. I don't see that they are trying to rip me off, they are just trying to do well, that's ok (Interview 35).

In summary, the above responses suggest that travellers generally retain more positive tourism experiences in their memories and such positive experience are more vivid and easily recalled than negative experiences. In addition, they generally feel that most of tourist experiences are positive and even if they encounter negative experiences occasionally, they are minor incidents and thus not taken as critical or serious events. Therefore, the results strongly suggest that MTEs are generally associated with positive and pleasant experiences.

4.4.2 MTEs and Post-Experience Behaviour

MTEs are expected to have an impact on the post-experience behaviour of travellers, such as sharing experience with others, deciding to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels and recommending the particular tour and destination to others such as family and friends (Kim, 2009; Kim et al., 2010; Marschall, 2012). Since the existing knowledge on this aspect is obscured in the literature, it was explored during the in-depth interviews as an initial step. Therefore, the participants were asked to talk about how their previous MTEs influenced their subsequent travel behaviour and decisions.

4.4.2.1 Sharing the Experience with Others

Travellers have a tendency to share their memorable experience with their family members, friends, and colleagues and, perhaps, with the general public. Typically sharing happens immediately after completion of a tour. This sharing can take place in numerous ways, such as telling stories about the experience, sharing photos, videos and souvenirs with others, and publishing travel narratives in travel blogs. Sometimes it is not a deliberate task but random discussions among colleagues and friends about their travel experiences. For example, one participant claimed that memorable experiences can stay alive more vividly in travellers' memories because they tend to talk about such experiences more. 'So you tend to remember it more and therefore you talk about it more so it stays alive in your memory and it's quite vivid and you can continue to experience that good feeling' (Interview 23). Another said:

A memorable experience of course is one that excites you to engage internally or externally. So it internally excites you, you remember it, you miss it, you want to have that experience again, you want to engage, but you also can externalize by saying to other people – this is fantastic, this is a wonderful experience, this would change you [etc.] (Interview 34).

Many of the participants (29) agreed that they frequently share their memorable experiences with others just after completing a tour, for example:

Whenever we come back from holidays and we tend to find that happens particularly in this office. You know, you bring back all your photos and any videos that you have done and we tend to sit down, have a monitor here, work and share them around and you know and everyone here seems to do that. Yeah and the same for the family members and friends ... lots of photos (Interview 7)

I really do love coming back and share with my students what I have done and they actually say to me can you please tell us a story about overseas. They like hearing about it and I just think it increases my knowledge so much and then I can pass that on to the children that I teach, so I think it's a really valuable exercise and a lot of fun for me (laughing) (Interview24).

Even though sharing experiences generally takes place shortly after the completion of a tour, some participants revealed that they talk about certain experiences even after months and years because they are really memorable for them. '... I am still telling people about some of our trips you know, twelve months later, which I do, like our trip to the Barrier Reef and all that and the snow, like eight years ago. I still tell people about that' (Interview 7). Another participant said she can re-collect her Paris trip which took place four years back very vividly even now:

So really memorable experience, even though it's four years ago, I can recall to you just about everything we did, every day, even the way I felt. I feel good [when] remembering that trip and I would enjoy re-telling the tales from that part of the trip (Interview 23).

Despite many participants affirming that they share their memorable experience with others a very few participants (4) held a different view about that aspect. One participant claimed that many people cannot understand or would not appreciate your experiences because they do not travel much (Interview 12). Another participant said he does not like to share his experiences with others because it can be boring for them to see photos or listen to such stories:

Not so much, I guess when you first come back from a trip or a holiday perhaps you tend to talk a bit about that with family but ... of course you take all the photographs and you know, you show here it's a photograph we did this and ya ya ya, but if they were not there and [if] they haven't enjoyed the experience and, so even though you tend to tell them about your holiday but I think it becomes less interesting [for them] after a little bit of time (Interview 33).

Another participant claimed that she does not like to boast her experiences to others:

I don't share my travelling experiences with many people, the reason [is that] I'm very fortunate because I have had a lot of travel and I have lot of travel experiences, other people maybe have not travelled and I don't want to make them feel [sad], I don't want to boast about [my travel experiences] (Interview 30).

However, a majority of participants admitted that they usually share memorable experiences with others and it is one of the major means of recollection of their past experiences.

4.4.2.2 MTEs and Positive WOM Recommendations

The previous discussion affirmed that many participants generally share their memorable experiences with others in terms of storytelling and sharing photos, videos and souvenirs etc. There is also a high possibility that travellers tend to make various recommendations to others about destinations, tours and particular hotels during such memory-sharing occasions. In order to explore the potential link between MTEs and WOM publicity, the participants were asked if they had made any WOM recommendation based on their previous memorable trips. An overwhelming number of participants (27) affirmed that they always generate positive recommendations after completing a memorable tourism trip. Following are some of the typical responses received during the interviews.

Definitely, we recommended the Egyptian trip to a lot of people because it was such a good trip (Interview 4).

Definitely you recommend to others to go where you enjoyed [your visit] (Interview 10).

Ah, I tell everybody to go to Paris (Interview 23).

Definitely [I] recommended Egypt [trip] to many people (Interview 24).

Yes, I recommend all the times (Interview 28).

Four (4) participants also claimed that they generally make such recommendations only if someone asks for information. They clarified that most of such recommendations are travel trips such as where to find good accommodation, food, and transport within a destination.

I think most of the advices are more based on 'oh, you should stop here or you should do this on your way' (Interview 17).

I mean if someone came to me and says 'look, I'm planning to travel within Australia, what would you recommend?' Then I would point out areas that I think I really interested from my perspective and if they are interested I would give a bit more information (Interview 27).

Yes, if they ask me, and if it is really good and memorable experience then I recommend (Interview 14).

However, four (4) participants expressed the view that they are fairly reluctant to make recommendations even after having a memorable trip. Various reasons were given by them for their reluctance, for example, one participant said, 'I don't really recommend ... I don't know if people really take it as "Gospel" because I say it's good, it doesn't mean it's good for everyone' (Interview 1). Two participants seemed to be cautious about recommending places due to the changing nature of touristic spots such as being highly commercialised or declining safety: 'I don't recommend. I think there are some places that are totally different compared to when I did it' (Interview 29). The other one said, '[name of the destination] seemed a lot more open to tourists and foreigners and for Christians, whereas now, [it is] not safe for outsiders' (Interview 29). Another participant highlighted that he does not make recommendations because others don't care about someone else's experiences. He viewed that those who do not travel much either cannot understand or do not appreciate what others have done. 'A lot of people who haven't travelled won't appreciate the stuff [that] you have done' (Interview 12). Nevertheless, similar to their propensity to share experiences with others, a majority of the respondents (27) acknowledged that they usually make recommendations after having memorable experiences.

4.4.2.3 MTEs and Repeat Visitation

The review of the research and literature of MTEs discussed in Chapter 2 identified that the current understanding of the relationship between MTEs and travellers' decision to re-visit the same destination on subsequent travels is very limited from both academics' and tourism practitioners' perspectives. Therefore, an initial attempt was made during the interviews to explore this important post-experience behaviour of travellers. Mainly, two questions were asked from the participants: (i) whether they had already revisited the same destination where they had realised their most memorable trip; and (ii) their intention to re-visit the same destination in future leisure travels.

When asked about whether the participants had already re-visited the same destination, the majority (27) of them said they had not except for the occasions where some participants had re-visited to see their family or friends. With reference to the second question, similar results were found; that is, many participants (26) prefer to visit new destinations to seek new experiences instead of re-visiting the same destination in future leisure travels. As one participant emphasised, ‘We would really want to go to places that we have never been to before (Interview 7)’. Another said, ‘For me personally, I would probably go to somewhere I hadn’t been before’ (Interview 1). Following are some other typical views expressed by the participants:

I think I am biased towards visiting somewhere new, [to] experience something different [and] to talk to different people (Interview 16).

... but if it's to travel, then I think I prefer to go somewhere, somewhere new. I don't think I've done enough travelling where I can say 'yeah, I'll go back to Japan now' (Interview 11).

Well, I've got a few things left on my list. I would go to new places rather than revisit it (Interview22).

The findings provided adequate evidence to develop a proposition that many travellers are generally novelty seekers in leisure travelling; that is, they prefer to visit new destinations and seek new experiences every time they travel. An overwhelming number of participants (27) affirmed this claim, while eight (8), who expressed their willingness to visit the same destination, said they even want to experience something new, for example, one participant said he does not feel bored to visit the same destination because he usually visits different places: ‘No [not bored] because there has been something different, something new every time. We don't go back to the same tourist spots, I do on different purposes’ (Interview 12). Another participant clarified he may not repeat an experience unless there is something new to add value to the experience. ‘So whenever we go back to a place or whenever I think of going back it has to add value to the experience, I have to add something that I haven’t seen before, otherwise it's an expensive repeat’ (Interview 17). Some participants (3) also made it clear that sometimes they visit the same destinations in order to experience it more deeply because they couldn’t experience it fully at the previous visits. For example, one participant said he wants to re-visit Spain to explore it more: ‘that was very brief, three days in a place like that, it is a very brief ... the rest of Spain we haven't spent much time in and we'd like to

go back and do that again' (Interview 9). Another affirmed: 'once you have been to a country we don't tend to go back again if we have seen it properly' (Interview 1).

Some of the participants (5) further made it clear that re-visits mostly take place when the trip is family-related or when visiting their friends. As clearly stated by one participant '... on the whole I prefer to visit new places, yeah, England and the States like I've been back a number of times but as I said it's friends and family, but if it's to travel then I think I prefer to go somewhere, somewhere new' (Interview 11). Another said: 'I would describe travel as going to some place we've not been before, to investigate as opposed to a holiday where we will go back to same place every year, where we would generally have family' (Interview 23). Another claimed that his re-visits are related to seeing his friends: 'I've been to the United States quite a few times because I spent four years there in the early 1990s and made many friends over there so when I go back specially in New York, I generally go back to visit friends' (Interview 11). Some participants further said that they do not mind re-visiting the previous memorable places but their first priority is to visit new places.

... before I die I would love it [re-visiting] but at this stage I have no direct intention of going so next year or five years or whatever I mean. There is a hope that I would go back and see them again but probably I wouldn't go before I see some other places that I haven't seen but if I run out of places that would be certainly be top of my list to go (Interview 2).

We would like to go to some of those special places again but there are more special places there that we haven't seen yet and that weighs down on us a little bit (Interview 9).

A number of reasons also emerged during the interviews to explain why many participants prefer to visit new destinations and to seek new experiences. As one can simply rationalise, the availability of a wide variety of potential destinations can be a major concern in travellers' minds when making destination choice decisions. They can easily seek a novel experience by visiting a new destination instead of re-visiting the same destination. For example, a number of participants considered that the world is a big place thus it is not a wise decision to visit the same place again and again. 'I wish I could [re-visit] but the world is a big place and there are lots of other places to go as well' (Interview 4). Another said 'I think I wouldn't probably go back because there are so many places to see, so we probably wouldn't go back' (Interview 8).

For some participants, re-visiting a same destination or replicating the same experience is a waste of money. Their view is that travelling is expensive and it is wise to spend limited money on new experiences rather than repeating the same experience.

If I only can afford one holiday a year, we [would be] better to go and see a new place because we just can't afford it, I mean we can afford like one trip a year at the most, [so] we want to find new places to go to (Interview 35).

Some participants also highlighted their concern of limited lifespan thus they prefer to visit as many new places as possible before they die, '... the life is short and there are so many different things to see and different cultures to experience that I want to experience more, more countries I suppose' (Interview 11). Thus, for these participants, in most cases, re-visiting the same destinations is less practical when considering the distance, their age and money involved.

Australia is so far away from everywhere, you can't go back to the same place again I think. It's better to try and visit another place (Interview 26).

... but when it comes to actually sightseeing I prefer to go to different places because there is so much to do and so little time to do it and so expensive. I sort of don't feel like I want to waste money going back to somewhere I have already seen. I want to go and see as much as I can in the time I've got (Interview 24).

These comments indicate that travellers are more concern about their limited life span and money and thus tend to be more rational when making travel decisions. Some of them further emphasised that even though they may want to replicate the same experience, they would never be able to replicate or re-live the same experience again because it is simply impossible. 'I don't think going back always is representative of the first time you went. So I think we probably move on and go to [new places]' (Interview 8). Another affirmed that by saying: 'I know if I go back, I can never copy or expect to have the same experience because every experience is really unique I think every moment is unique' (Interview 27). Another went on to say that re-visiting may even destroy the previous good memories:

We may go back to places like San Sebastian that we know were nice but you know the old saying you can't go back, you can't go back and recapture that exact feeling of that exact experience. It might be crap next time we go there because, it might be raining [or] it might be cold, I mean we might have a bad experience with it you know ... who knows

that? And it would be a shame to destroy the really good memories from the first time around by going back (Interview 9).

Some participants said re-visiting the same place can be disappointing because the place can be unlike what they experienced the first time: 'I know it was good but it would probably have changed by now so I will not get that same experience again if I went back' (interview 1). One further said 'I would like to go back not necessarily to that time because I have been back to places before and [it was a] big disappointing the second time, you probably don't really recreate the first experience' (Interview 20). Some participants' major regrets were that destinations may lose their original authenticity by becoming too commercial and touristic over time, thus a second visit would probably be a disappointing experience for travellers.

And the other thing of course is, once the word gets out amongst travellers that some places are undiscovered and beautiful and you have got to go there but you go there and next time you go back there it's different. There is a travel writer I used to read a bit who is talking about Ireland ... he said there was a place I used to go when I was a kid. It was just magnificent wild bay, just nature and that sort of stuff and now there is just billions and billions of touristy type things everywhere ... said, it just gets spoilt (Interview 9).

Some of these participants also expressed their concern about changing economic, cultural and political scenarios in the world that can be a major barrier for re-visit decisions. They said some of the countries that they had enjoyed very much in the past are no longer the same nor safe, due to these changing cultural and political times, for example one participant said Pakistan had been a good place for visits but now it has changed:

I think there are some places that are totally different compared to when I did it for example, Pakistan. Pakistan seemed a lot more open to tourists and foreigners and Christians, whereas now it seems that ... the Muslim issue is you know, it's not safe for outsiders now, there has been a lot of bombing, and kidnapping (Interview 29).

Another said he is no longer interested in China because now China is a different place. 'I don't think I want to go back to China anymore, because the China that I really saw the first time has disappeared' (Interview 28). He further went on to say that '... the people when I first went to China had a wonderful innocence about them, it was just beautiful, but now they have a harder edge, you know, now they are more interested in making money' (Interview 28). Another noted how the current generations of certain countries have different views about foreigners when compared with their previous generations.

I had a very wonderful experience with a family in Turkey and I went there in 1990 and I went back to see the family in 1991. Last year [2010] I went back to see them again, but in 1991, the boys were 16 and 18 so now they are 40. The experience was slightly disappointing because I think the change has been too big and ... they were very very conservative. [Very] conservative where they weren't before and their father had died, their father was not so conservative, but they turned to a very sort of strict religious conservatism, and it was very different (34).

Some said even the places like America and Europe are no longer safe and good for travelling, 'I may go back and start again but my thought is now that places like specially America, how it has changed since September 11. Europe since the Global Financial Crises, they are totally different places since they were ten years ago, so to go back there, that would be a different experience' (Interview 1).

These findings show that travellers tend to be more rational when choosing a destination for the next holiday due to the fact that they can choose from a large number of potential new destinations as well as their limited income and life-span that limit their intentions to undertake repeat trips. Furthermore, they tend to believe that they cannot replicate the same experience and also they think that re-visiting the same place can be disappointing due to changing nature of the tourist destinations. All these responses show that travellers are generally novelty seekers who tend to limit their future re-visit intentions. In other words, the findings strongly suggest that travellers choose to visit new destinations even if they have very positive MTEs in other destinations in the past.

Overall, the qualitative findings highlight two findings with reference to travellers' post-experiential behaviour after they had experienced a memorable trip:

1. MTEs are likely to have a strong influence on travellers' propensity to generate WOM recommendations about a particular trip or experiences; and
2. MTEs are less likely to have a strong influence on travellers' decisions to visit the same destination and repeat the same experiences on subsequent leisure travels because travellers usually prefer to seek new and novel experiences on each trip they take.

4.5 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the key findings of the qualitative data gathered during the exploratory stage of the research. Data were gathered using two methods: travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews. Inductive content analysis of these two data sources revealed 10 themes of positive MTEs of which 9 themes represent the cognitive domain and the last theme represents the affective domain. Therefore, the qualitative findings suggest that leisure travellers' memorable tourism experiences are closely linked to 10 experiential dimensions: (a) authentic local experiences; (b) momentous travel experiences; (c) novel experiences; (d) self-beneficial experience; (e) serendipitous and surprising experiences; (f) impressive local guides and tour operators; (g) local hospitality; (h) social interactions with people; (i) fulfilment of personal travel interests; and (j) affective emotions associated with memorable experiences. Of the ten (10) themes, nine (9) themes were common to both the data sources, indicating highly convergent and valid results. The additional theme that emerged from the in-depth interviews was 'fulfilment of personal travel interests', which suggest that travellers also tend to better remember tourist experiences that fulfilled their personal travel interests and preferences than less personally relevant experiences.

Additional important facets of MTEs, such as negative MTEs and the likely impact of MTEs on behavioural outcomes, were explored during the in-depth interviews. Exploration of negative MTEs suggests that: (a) negative experiences are comparatively harder to recall than positive MTEs; (b) negative experiences are comparatively fewer than positive MTEs; and (c) negative experiences are generally not considered as serious and critical events. With reference to the exploration of likely impacts of MTEs on future behavioural intentions, findings suggest that travellers are generally novelty seekers in leisure travelling, thus they prefer to visit new destinations for seeking new experiences rather than re-visiting the same destination for replicating similar memorable experiences on subsequent travels. However, such findings show that MTEs can have a strong impact on a travellers' intention to make positive WOM recommendations to other travellers. Overall, the qualitative findings show that 'WOM recommendations' is where destination marketers, tour operators and travel agents should focus the majority of their efforts when promoting their destinations.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the key findings of the qualitative research methods employed in the present study. This chapter presents the research hypotheses and the conceptual model of the study, which were developed based on the literature review (Chapter 2) and the findings of the qualitative research (Chapter 4). The conceptual model and the research hypotheses were the foundations for the quantitative stage, which was designed to test the validity of the model and the research hypotheses from a larger sample of respondents. The main purpose of testing the research hypotheses and the conceptual model was to obtain a more holistic picture of MTEs in terms of examining interrelationships among the variables of interest, such as MTEs, autobiographical memory and future behavioural intentions, which is a significant knowledge gap in the current literature on MTEs. It also helped the researcher to examine the nomological validity of the MTEs instrument which was developed as a better alternative to the existing scale developed by Kim in 2009. The chapter first describes development of the research hypotheses, which theorise expected relationships among MTEs, autobiographical memory and other dependent variables of the study. A graphical representation of the hypothetical relationships among these variables is depicted in a conceptual model (Figure 5.1 on page 149) that will be tested in a path analysis using the SEM approach in the quantitative stage of the research.

5.2 Development of the Research Hypotheses

Nine (9) hypotheses were developed based on the qualitative research findings as well as the literature review in order to test their viability during the confirmatory stage of the study. The development of these research hypotheses is discussed in the following sections.

5.2.1 Hypothesis One (H1)

Novelty seeking behaviour had been widely acknowledged as a major motivation for travelling for leisure (Cohen, 1972; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Ross, 1993). Chang (2011) points out that tourism is the ideal product for variety-seeking individuals because it enables people to satisfy their need for change from the mundane routine of daily life. As Lee and Crompton (1992) note, people travel mainly because they want to experience something new

and different. According to Cohen (1972), tourism is a modern phenomenon because modern mass tourism emerged with the need to observe things, sights and cultures different from the travellers' own native habitat. Hence, novelty-seeking behaviour is inherent in the role of tourists and an enduring concept of travel research (Cohen, 1974; Ross, 1993).

The findings of the in-depth interviews also provided strong empirical evidence to support the claim that tourists are generally high novelty seekers in the context of leisure travelling. As already discussed in Chapter 4, an overwhelming number of participants (27) in the interviews affirmed that they prefer to visit new destinations in order to seek novel experiences rather than replicating similar experiences during each leisure travel. Various reasons were given by participants in favour of their novelty seeking behaviour, such as the availability of a wide variety of destinations to explore, considering replicating similar experiences as a waste of limited money and their desire for visiting as many new destinations within their limited lifespan etc. Following are some typical comments that emerged during the interviews.

I wish I could [re-visit] but the world is a big place and there are lots of other places to go [to] as well (Interview 4).

The life is short and there are so many different things to see and different cultures to experience that I want to experience more, more countries I suppose (Interview 11).

If I only can afford one holiday a year, we [would be] better to go and see a new place (Interview 35).

Several early investigations into MTEs have also found that travellers are generally novelty seekers when travelling for leisure (e.g. Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie (2011a). Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) was developed in order to test the validity of the above-mentioned claim (i.e. high novelty seeking behaviour of travellers). Verifying this claim was important due to the fact that it can have direct implications on travellers' subsequent travel behaviour such as their decisions about destination choice (Bello & Etzel, 1985; George & George, 2004; Scott, 1995; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). Hence, it was hypothesised that:

H1: Travellers are generally high novelty seekers in the context of leisure travelling.

5.2.2 Hypotheses Two (H2) and Three (H3)

As already mentioned above, novelty seeking is a key motive of tourists when undertaking leisure travels and, more importantly, it can be a major determinant of their decisions about destination choice (Bello & Etzel, 1985; Cohen, 1972; Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Lee & Crompton, 1992; George & George, 2004; Petrick, 2002; Scott, 1995; Uysal & Hagan, 1993). For example, Feng and Jang, (2004) found that tourists who are high novelty seekers continuously switch destinations. According to Wahlers and Etzel (1985, p. 292), novelty-seeking tourists prefer to visit destinations which are perceived as being ‘different, unusual, impressive, adventuresome, refreshing, a change of pace, and exciting’. Hence, such high novelty seeking tourists may prefer not to revisit a destination on their future travel opportunities even though there is an attachment for that destination, but they are likely to switch to another destination (Baloglu & Erickson, 1998; George & George, 2004). Therefore, the desire for a high degree of novelty seeking is expected to have a negative impact on tourists’ revisit intentions (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Assaker, Vinzi, & O’Connor, 2011).

Therefore, it can be hypothesised, based on the claims discussed above, that tourists may prefer to visit a new destination on their future travel opportunities even though they had realised very pleasant and memorable experiences at other destinations that they had visited during their previous travels. Strong evidence to support this claim also emerged during the in-depth interviews. When asked about whether the participants had already re-visited the same destination where they had realised MTEs, the majority (27) of participant gave negative responses, except for the occasions when some participants had re-visited to see their family or friends. When asked about their future revisit intention, many participants (26) revealed that they prefer visiting new destinations to re-visiting the same destinations on their future travels. Following are some of the responses which emerged during the interviews supporting the claim:

I think I will be biased towards visiting somewhere new ... definitely I prefer to go to a place that I haven't been, new places and new experiences (Interview 16).

I have to add something that I haven't seen before, otherwise I mean it's an expensive repeat (Interview 17).

I prefer to visit new places, yeah, England and the States like I've been back a number of times but as I said it's friends and family, but if it's to travel then I think I prefer to go somewhere new (Interview 11).

These claims suggest that travellers' 'desire for novelty seeking' tend to hinder their willingness to re-visit the same destinations where they had realised MTEs previously. On the other hand, it may motivate them to visit new destinations with a purpose of realising more memorable experiences motivated by their strong desire for novelty seeking. As Richards and Wilson, (2003, p.6) point out, 'the main benefits gained from travel are a thirst for more travel'. Similarly, previous memorable experiences may encourage travellers to undertake more travels, visit more new destinations and realise more memorable experiences. Hence, two inter-related hypotheses (H2, H3) were developed for verification of such claims:

H2: MTEs do not have a significant impact on travellers' intentions to re-visit the same destination on subsequent travels.

H3: MTEs have a significant impact on travellers' intentions to visit new destinations on subsequent travels.

5.2.3 Hypothesis Four (H4)

It is widely known that people recollect past memorable events and share them with others on various occasions such as family gatherings, informal discussions and other get-to-gathers (Marschall, 2012). Various scholars have also suggested that tourists create stories during a trip and present them to others as their memories in numerous modes such as photographs, personal movies, travel blog narratives and storytelling (Braasch, 2008b; Moscardo, 2010). This post experience memory sharing was strongly supported by the majority of the participants (29) of the in-depth interviews who said that they often share memorable experiences with others in various modes such as telling stories and showing photos and souvenirs etc. It is also rational to assume that sharing MTEs with others can be closely linked with the tendency of tourists to generate WOM recommendations, which is a powerful communication source influencing travel decisions (Murphy, et al., 2007). Many participants (27) affirmed the claim by acknowledging that they always make positive recommendations about memorable experiences during such 'memory sharing' occasions as depicted by the following responses.

Definitely, we recommended the Egyptian trip to a lot of people because it was such a good trip (Interview 4).

Ah, I tell everybody to go to Paris (Interview 23).

Definitely [I] recommended the Egypt [trip] to people (Interview 24).

Yes, I recommended it all the times (Interview 28).

Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesise that MTEs have a strong impact on tourists' tendency to generate WOM recommendations, which leads to the fourth hypothesis of the study:

H4: MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' intention to generate WOM recommendations.

5.2.4 Hypothesis Five (H5)

Previous travel experiences are generally stored in the autobiographical memory (AM) of people because AM stores information related to the self, including past life events (Brewer, 1994; Holland & Kensinger, 2010). Rubin (2005) points out that recalling an event involves an integration of a number of sub-systems: (a) sensory information (e.g. vision, hearing and smell); (b) spatial information (e.g. location of objects and people, language, emotions); and (c) narratives. Hence, researchers generally conceptualise the autobiographical memory of people in terms of three dimensions: (a) memory recollection; (b) imagery and emotion; and (c) language and narrative (Sheen, et al., 2001; Talarico, et al., 2004). This implies that a memorable event means an event that a person can better recollect which is more vivid in terms of imagery and emotions, and the person can even recall the language and narrative aspects of the particular event. In a similar way, one can assume that MTEs are certain tourism experiences which a traveller can more easily recollect, and are more vivid in terms of emotions, language and narrative aspects of experiences. This idea is well illustrated by the following comment that emerged during the interviews:

It [a tour to Paris] is really a memorable experience [and] even though it is four years ago, I can recall to you just about everything we did, every day and even the way I felt (Interview 23).

Thus, it is rational to assume that MTEs should have a strong influence on travellers' autobiographical memory in which past episodes, including tourist experiences, are generally retained. Therefore, hypothesis five (5) was developed in order to test if there is such a strong positive impact of MTEs on travellers' autobiographical memory.

H5: MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' autobiographical memory.

5.2.5 Hypotheses Six (H6) and Seven (H7)

As discussed previously in Chapter 2, the significance of the theory of MTEs stems from the influencing power of past memory on consumer behaviour, including their travel decisions. There is strong empirical evidence to support the view that past memories have an influence on consumers' information search activity and the subsequent consumer decisions, such as product evaluations and purchases (Alba, et al., 1991; Bettman & Park, 1980; Hoch & Deighton, 1989; Kerstetter & Cho, 2004; Philippe & Ngobo, 1999; Rao & Sieben, 1992). Similar results have also been found in the context of tourist behaviour suggesting that personal memories about past travels significantly influencing future travel decisions (Kozak, 2001; Lehto, et al., 2004; Marschall, 2012; Mazursky, 1989; Sönmez & Graefe, 1998). For example, Wirtz et al. (2003) revealed that 'remembered experience' is the best predictor of travellers' intention to repeat the experience than 'predicted' (i.e. expected experiences prior to a trip) or 'on-line' experiences (i.e. experiences during a trip). Such findings provide strong empirical evidence to suggest that travellers' personal memories of previous travels, especially MTEs, can strongly affect their future behavioural intentions, such as intention to revisit the same destination or intention to visit new destinations during subsequent leisure travels. However, as discussed previously, the qualitative research results clarified that travellers are mostly novelty seekers and therefore prefer to visit new destinations for realising more memorable experiences rather than repeating the same experiences at same destination. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that travellers' personal memories (i.e. autobiographical memories) of previous memorable trips can influence them to undertake more leisure travels, visit more new destinations and to realise more memorable experiences instead of replicating similar experiences at the same destination on subsequent leisure travels. In other words, their memories of past MTEs may *not* strongly influence them to revisit the same destinations on their subsequent travels but may motivate them to visit *new* destinations for seeking more memorable experiences. Hence, hypothesis six (H6) and seven (H7) were developed in order to test those two claims:

H6: Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs does not have a significant positive impact on their intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels.

H7: Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on their intentions to visit new destinations on subsequent travels.

5.2.6 Hypothesis Eight (H8)

Marschall (2012) asserts that personal memories of past travel experiences are repeatedly recollected by travellers which also leads to sharing such memories with others in terms of storytelling, showing souvenirs and making recommendations. Travellers generally recollect their previous memorable experiences in numerous ways. Sometimes this is done intentionally, and sometimes unintentionally. Looking at the photos taken or the memorabilia bought, re-watching the videos created during the particular experiences, watching TV documentaries related to the experience, occasional conversations ('memory talks' or 'conversational remembering') about the experiences among the travel companions, or simply being nostalgic about the past memorable travel moments are some of the ways by which people recollect memorable travel experiences. This infers that travellers' recollections of such previous MTEs may encourage them to tell stories as well as to make recommendations about destinations and tours to others. Therefore, hypothesis eight (8) was developed to test if there is a link between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and their intentions to generate WOM recommendations.

H8: Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on their intentions to generate WOM recommendations.

5.2.7 Hypothesis Nine (H9)

The final hypothesis of the study (H9) was derived from some of the previous hypotheses. It was hypothesised that MTEs and autobiographical memory of a trip has a significant positive impact on travellers' intentions to visit new destinations (H3 and H7 above). These two hypotheses led to develop the hypothesis 9 of the study, which hypothesised that travellers' intentions to visit new destinations can further hinder their intentions to visit the same destination on their subsequent leisure travels. Hence, H9 was developed:

H9: Travellers' intentions to visit new destinations have a significant negative impact on their intentions to visit the same destination on subsequent travels.

The nine hypotheses discussed above aimed to test the important relationships among MTEs, autobiographical memory and future behavioural intentions. To represent such interrelationships in a holistic way, a conceptual model was developed, which is described in the next section.

5.3 Conceptual Model of the Study

A conceptual model was developed in order to demonstrate the aforementioned hypothetical relationships among MTEs and other dependent variables of the study, illustrated in Figure 5.1.

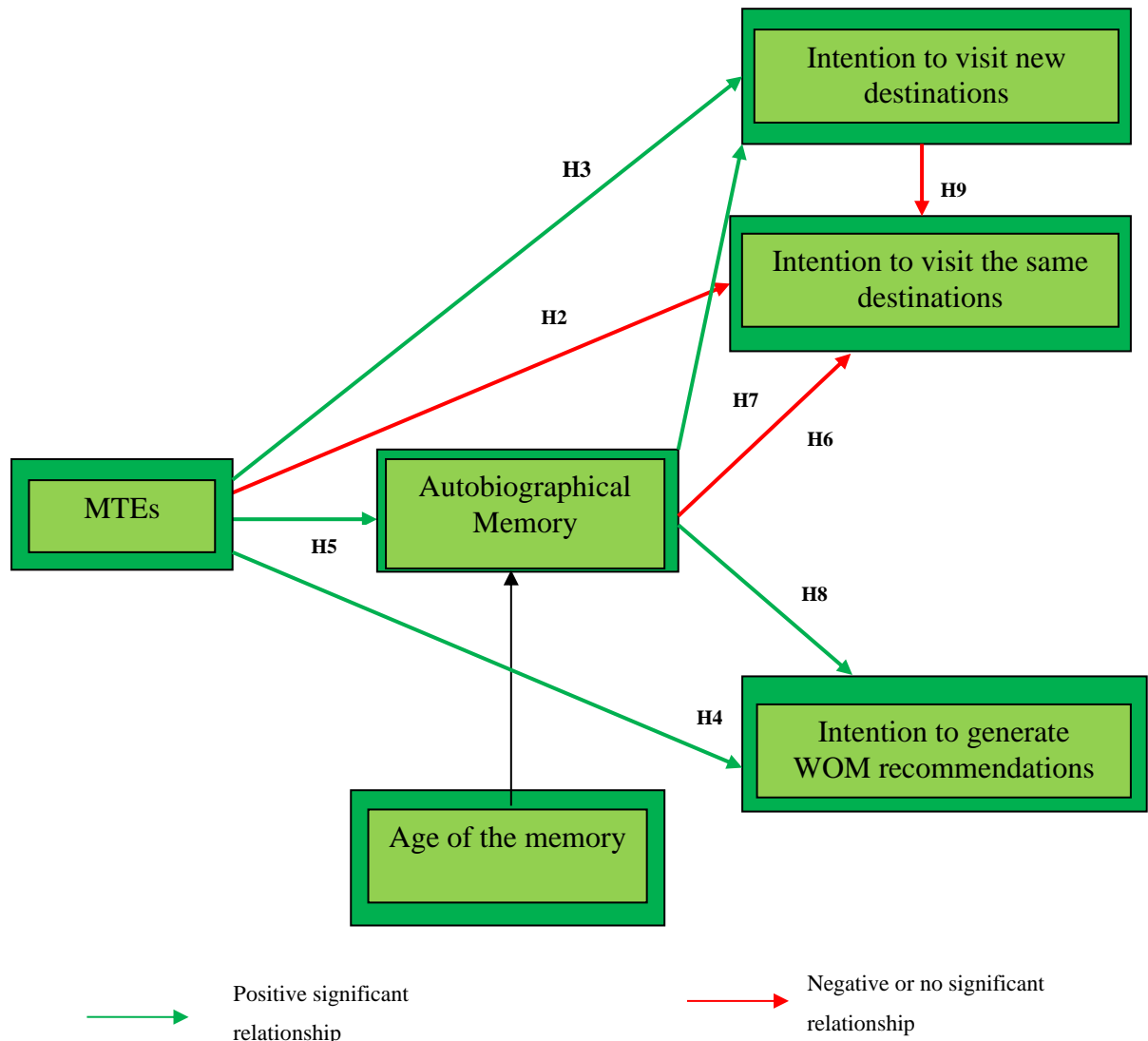


Figure 5.1: Conceptual model of the study

The efficaciousness of the model as well as the research hypotheses, outlined above, will be tested in a path analysis during the quantitative stage of the study. The model theorises the following relationships:

- ❖ MTEs do not have a significant impact on intention to re-visit the same destination on subsequent travels (H2)

- ❖ MTEs have a significant positive impact on intention to visit new destinations on subsequent travels (H3)
- ❖ MTEs have a significant positive impact on intention to generate WOM recommendations (H4)
- ❖ MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs (H5)
- ❖ Autobiographical memory of MTEs does not have a significant impact on intention to re-visit the same destination on subsequent travels (H6)
- ❖ Autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on intention to visit new destinations on subsequent travels (H7)
- ❖ Autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on intention to generate WOM recommendations (H8)
- ❖ Intention to visit new destinations has a significant negative impact on intention to re-visit the same destination on subsequent travels (H9).

Confounding Effect of Time Factor

The model also theorises that travellers' autobiographical memory of past MTEs can decline over time, as suggested by previous memory studies (D'Argembeau & Van der Linden, 2004; Rubin, 1982; Semin & Smith, 1999). Therefore, a variable called 'age of memory' which was operationalised as the time difference between the year that the most memorable trip had been undertaken by the respondents and the current year (i.e. the year that the survey was carried out) was included as a confounding variable into the model in order to incorporate this time lapse effect. The underlying rationale was that the likely relationship between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and future behavioural intentions can be confounded by the time effect (i.e. fade of memory), thus it should be incorporated into theoretical model of MTEs in order to obtain more realistic findings. Previous research has also found that the strength of the future behavioural intentions decreases over time (Butler, 1997 cited in Baloglu & Erickson, 1998).

5.4 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the research hypotheses and the conceptual model of the study. Nine hypotheses were developed based on the qualitative research findings as well as the review of the literature in order to test the likely relationship between MTEs and other dependant

variables of the study. A conceptual model was then developed to theorise the inter-relationships among MTEs and other variables, such as the autobiographical memory of the trip and travellers' future behavioural intentions, in a more holistic way. The likely confounding effect of time factor was also included into the model in order to consider the influence of memory lapse on other variables. The quantitative stage was designed primarily to test the validity of the conceptual model and the research hypotheses. The results of these hypotheses testing and model testing will be discussed in the next chapter (Chapter 6).

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS OF THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented the theoretical model and the research hypotheses pursued by the present study. This chapter outlines the major findings derived from the field survey, which was carried out during the second and confirmatory stage of the research. The field survey was primarily carried out to gather empirical data, with the purpose of developing a reliable measurement instrument for MTEs, and to test the hypothetical relationships between MTEs and several dependent variables, which were conceptualised in the theoretical model presented in Chapter 5. Data analysis involved performing EFA, CFA, Path Analysis and MANOVA to realise the study objectives. The results of these analyses are discussed in detail throughout this chapter.

This chapter first presents the sample characteristics of the survey and the results of preliminary descriptive statistics. The discussion of descriptive statistics is followed by a presentation of the results of the exploratory factor analyses (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), then the results of the path analysis and, last, the results of the MANOVA.

6.2 Descriptive Data Analysis

First, descriptive statistics were performed for inspection of the sample characteristics, missing values, and univariate and multivariate normality of the distribution of the data. Summary results of these descriptive statistics are as follows.

6.2.1 Respondents' Characteristics

As described in Chapter 3, 700 surveys were conducted using a self-administered questionnaire at major tourism spots in Sydney during November-December, 2012. Of these 700 returned questionnaires, 688 were retained for data analysis after discarding unusable ones as described in Chapter 3. Table 6.1 shows the characteristics of the 688 survey respondents.

There were approximately the same percentage of male (51.5%) and female (48.5%) respondents. However there seems to be a bias towards younger respondents; that is, around 45 per cent of respondents belonged to age category below 30. Nevertheless, the sample also adequately represents other age categories. With regard to nationality, Australians and New

Zealanders represented 48 per cent of the sample, 45 per cent were represented by Europeans, 6 per cent were accounted for by Americans, and a small percentage (1.7%) was represented by other nationalities, implying that the results mostly represent the opinions of Australians, New Zealanders and Europeans. Of the total sample, 59 per cent of the respondents usually undertake domestic leisure travels more than once every year, and another 26 per cent undertake such tours once every year. With reference to overseas leisure travels, around 21 per cent of respondents normally visit overseas destinations more than once every year and around 28 per cent undertake such tours once every year. Approximately half of the total respondents had visited more than 10 destinations (countries) on leisure trips, 24 per cent more 6-10 destinations and another 21 per cent 2-5 destinations. These figures suggest that the sample consists of more frequent leisure travellers, who had already undertaken a number of overseas leisure trips, meaning that they are suitable candidates for providing rich information about MTEs.

Table 6.1: Characteristics of the survey respondents

Item	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	354	51.5
	Female	334	48.5
Age	Below 30	317	46.1
	30-49	181	26.3
	50 and above	190	27.6
Nationality	Australians and New Zealanders	329	47.8
	Europeans	306	44.5
	US and other Americans	41	6
	Other	12	1.7
Frequency of domestic travel	Never	6	0.9
	Once every 6-10 years	14	2
	Once every 5 years	8	1.2
	Once every 2 or 3 years	80	11.7
	Once every year	176	25.7
	More than once every year	401	58.5
Frequency of overseas travel	Never	14	2.1
	Once every 6-10 years	78	11.5
	Once every 5 years	58	8.5
	Once every 2 or 3 years	196	28.9
	Once every year	190	28
	More than once every year	143	21.1
Number of overseas destinations visited	None	14	2
	Only one	41	6
	2-5 destinations	144	21
	6-10 destinations	161	23.5
	More than 10 destinations	326	47.5
Traveller type	The organised mass tourist	26	3.8
	The individual mass tourist	238	34.9
	The explorer	342	50.1
	The drifter	76	11.1

The survey asked respondents to identify their own traveller type, operationalised according to Cohen's (1972) four types of travel roles: 'the organized mass tourist', 'the individual mass tourist', 'the explorer' and 'the drifter'. The majority of the respondents (50%) viewed themselves as 'the explorers', 35 per cent ticked the 'individual mass tourist' category; another 11 per cent of the respondents chose the 'drifter' category, and only 3.8 per cent identified themselves as 'the organized mass tourist'. These figures indicate that the sample does not represent 'organised mass travellers' adequately; this factor, thus, needs to be considered when interpreting the results. However, in contrast to many of the previous MTEs research, the sample consists of various occupational groups, such as business owners, professionals, managers and public servants. More specifically, only 12.2 per cent of the sample represents students, indicating that more typical travellers (than included in samples of previous studies) were adequately represented in the sample. A full detail of the sample characteristics is shown in Appendix 4 on page 247.

6.2.2 Results of Initial Data Screening

Initial data screening was carried out in order to check the appropriateness of the data for the subsequent data analysing steps. First, missing data analysis was performed, which was then followed by the analysis of univariate and multivariate normality of the data.

6.2.2.1 Missing Data Analysis

The results of the missing value analysis of the 688 usable questionnaires showed that all the variables had less than 5 per cent missing values except for the personal income variable (D5), which had 5.1 per cent missing data. Further analysis showed that the missing values of variable D5 did not have a significant impact on other variables. These results indicated that there were no serious issues for the remaining data analysing options in terms of missing values.

6.2.2.2 Univariate and Multivariate Normality Checking

An inspection of histograms and boxplots showed no problematic outliers in the data set, but the inspection for the univariate normality of the observed variables revealed that many of the observed variables were not normally distributed and were highly negatively skewed. The multivariate normality, using AMOS package, and inspecting 'the squared Mahalanobis distance' (D^2) (Byrne, 2009, p.106) signalled no significant problematic multivariate outliers in the data set, but the multivariate kurtosis was 199.601 having a critical ratio of $37.412 > 5$,

which was highly suggestive of non-normality in the data (Byrne, 2009, p.104). Since the data transformation techniques were not successful, the researcher decided to use the data in their original form but taking certain precautions whenever possible to deal with the non-normality problem; this will be discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter.

6.3 Results of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

A major objective of the present study was to develop and validate a reliable measurement instrument for MTEs, thus a number of scale purification and validation steps were employed during the data analysis process (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Churchill, 1979; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988). The scale purification process commenced with the execution of a series of EFAs along with the application of Cronbach's alpha and item-total correlations to make decisions regarding deletion and retention of items. Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was used as the extraction method with Promax rotation, and eigenvalues greater than 1 (Kaiser, 1958) were employed to determine the number of factors to be retained. A random split-half of the total sample (N=388) was used for EFA as described in the Methodology chapter (Chapter 3). Table 6.2 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; DeVellis, 2003; Gerbing & Anderson, 1988; Hair, et al., 2010; Worthington & Whittaker, 2006).

Table 6.2: 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	29, 30, 31, 40, 56, 57, 25, 26, 27, 28	poor item-total correlation (< .3) and low Cronbach's alpha (< .7)	52 (62-10)	13 (the initial solution)
2	18, 36, 14	poor loadings (< .4)	49	12
3	41	poor loadings (< .4)	48	12
4	46 62	poor loadings (< .4), one item factor	46	12
5	15 16	one item factor, high cross loadings (> .4)	44	11
6	5, 6	poor Cronbach's alpha (< .7)	42	10
7	1, 2 17	poor loadings (< .4), high cross loadings (> .4)	39	10
8	24, 13, 58 32, 38	poor loadings (< .4), high cross loadings (> .4)	34	10

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reported a large chi-square value, which is highly significant χ^2 (DF=1326, n=344) = 6765.092, $p < .05$, and the KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) was $0.896 > 0.6$. 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 PCA to the data set.

The final solution, shown in Table 6.3, consists of 34 scale items across 10 factors, which collectively explained 73.38 percent of the total variance; well above the minimum threshold of 60 per cent in the social sciences (Hair et al., 2010, p. 109). No variables of the final solution had commonalities less than 0.4 and all variable loadings were greater than 0.6, indicating adequate convergent validity of the 10 factors and show that the factor loadings are significant based on the sample size (i.e. the loadings should be $>.3$ when the sample is greater than 300) (Hair et al., 2010, p. 117). There were no cross loadings greater than 0.4 and factor correlations greater than 0.7, which suggest that there is also adequate discriminant validity among the factors as well. The final factor solution was highly consistent with the hypothetical dimensions/themes identified during the exploratory stage of the study. For example, 10 out of 11 hypothetical dimensions were parallel with the final EFA solution, which is evidence of good face validity of the 10 dimensions. Finally, Cronbach's alpha figures for all the 10 factors were greater than 0.7, which is the cut-off criterion for minimal internal consistency reliability.

It should be noted that the 'involvement factor', which was found as a dimension of MTEs during the exploratory stage, did not appear in the final factor solution because all the four items of that dimension had to be removed during EFA due to poor internal consistency reliability ($\alpha < .7$). The last factor (F10), however, was retained in the final solution although it consisted of only two items because the two items were highly correlated ($r = .712$), with a good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .83$) (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The factors were labelled taking into consideration the experiential themes that emerged from the qualitative results. Table 6.4 shows the 10 factors with the factor labels and the relevant items appearing under each of the 10 factors.

Table 6.3: Final exploratory factor analysis solution

	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	F7	F8	F9	F10
I closely experienced the actual local cultures	.930									
I was exposed to authentic local villages and markets	.866									
I could immerse myself in local festivals and other cultural ceremonies	.811									
I visited authentic local restaurants/ food outlets	.739									
It gave me an opportunity to experience the real day-to-day life of locals	.716									
It helped me to improve my self-confidence		.880								
It helped me to develop my personal identity		.868								
It helped me to learn more about myself		.809								
It helped me to acquire new skills		.806								
Local guides were very informative and knowledgeable			.887							
Social skills of local guides were very impressive			.858							
Local guides were always very supportive			.842							
Local tour operator services were outstanding			.729							
Many aspects of the trip were novel to me				.828						
The trip provided a unique experience for me				.766						
It was an adventurous experience				.703						
I felt I was in a different world during the trip				.686						
Local people I encountered were genuinely helpful					.917					
Local people I encountered were genuinely friendly					.876					
Local people I encountered were genuinely generous					.854					
I felt very stimulated during the trip						.797				
I felt very excited during the trip						.796				
I was very pleased during the trip						.787				
It was a special experience for me personally							.833			
It was a once in a life time experience for me							.788			
It was an extraordinary experience for me							.645			
I highly enjoyed the comradeship among my travel companions of the trip								.845		
I enjoyed the trip very much because I was with a wonderful group of travelers								.796		
It enhanced the existing bonds with my friends and travel companions								.704		
I faced unplanned and unexpected good incidents/experiences during the trip									.865	
I experienced certain random things that really surprised me during the trip									.827	
I received unexpected benefits/advantages during the trip									.653	
I engage in activities which I really wanted to do										.933
I visited the places where I really wanted to go										.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

Note: * = Corrected item-total correlations, Overall Cronbach's alpha (α) = .924

Table 6.4: Final solution of EFA with the factor labels

Factor	Item No.	Item Code	Factor Label and the Items	A
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: Impressive 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: Momentous Travel Experiences				
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	
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	

6.4 Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

The final solution of EFA indicated that the resulting 34-item MTEs scale was ready to be tested for further validity through CFA (Ekiz, et al., 2012) using the second split-half of the total sample (N=388). The first order CFA was performed to test the validity of the 10 factor solution of EFA using the AMOS (version 20) package and the graphical representation of the model is shown in Appendix 5 (p.249). The model assessment was performed in two ways: (i) evaluating the adequacy of the model as a whole (overall model fit); and (ii) evaluating the adequacy of the parameter estimates (Byrne, 2009, p. 67).

6.4.1 Evaluation of the Model Fit

Table 6.5 shows some of the major model fit evaluation indices produced by the first order CFA model and the recommended minimum threshold values (criteria) for each of the indices.

Table 6.5: Model fit indices of the first order CFA model

Name of the Indices	Reported value	Criteria
Chi-square/DF ratio (CMIN/DF)	1.572	CMIN/DF <3
CFI	.968	CFI>.95
IFI	.969	IFA>.95
TLI	.963	TLL>.95
RMSEA	.041 Lower confidence interval=.035 Upper confidence interval=.046	RMSEA < .08 with a narrow lower and upper confidence interval
ECVI	2.867 (Default model) 3.469 (Saturated model) 27.260 (Independence model)	Default model should report the smallest value
HOELTER	242 at .05 level 252 at .01 level	HOELTER figures at .05 and .01 level > 200

CMIN/DF = 1.572 < 3 indicates a good overall model fit (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998) and other fit indices also showed that the model is well-fitted to the data; for example, CFI, IFI and TLI were greater than the threshold of a good model fit of 0.95 (Hu & Bentler, 1999) and RMSEA was 0.041 which is less than the 0.08 cut-off threshold associated with a narrow lower and upper confidence interval (0.035 and 0.046) (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996). Further, the default model reported the smallest value for ECVI, which indicates that the model can be cross-validated across similar samples from the same population (Browne & Cudeck, 1992). Finally, 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) according to Hoelter’s benchmark (1983). Thus, all these figures provided adequate evidence to support a good model fit of the first order CFA.

6.4.2 Adequacy of the Parameter Estimates

Three criteria proposed by Byrne (2009, p. 67) were used in reviewing the goodness of the parameter estimates: (i) the feasibility of the parameter estimates; (ii) the appropriateness of the standards errors; and (iii) the statistical significance of the parameter estimates. Checking for the feasibility of the parameter estimates involved examining whether the parameter estimates exhibited the correct sign and size according to the underlying theory; the results revealed no problem with those estimates since all the factor loadings were greater than five (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Next, the inspection of the standard errors signalled that they were acceptable (i.e. no excessively large or small values were found) and, finally, the examination of statistical significance of the estimates revealed that all the estimates were statistically significant with critical values greater than ± 1.96 ($p < .05$). Table 6.6 illustrates the estimates of standardised regression weights (factor loadings) and squared multiple correlations of each of the items.

Table 6.6: Standardised parameter estimates and squared multiple correlations

Dimension	Standardised regression weights (Factor Loadings)	Squared Multiple Correlations
F1: Authentic local experiences		
AL1	.753*	.568*
AL5	.616*	.380*
AL4	.713*	.508*
AL2	.814*	.663*
AL3	.909*	.827*
F2: Self-beneficial experiences		
SB3	.914*	.836*
SB7	.923*	.852*
SB8	.939*	.881*
SB4	.936*	.876*
F3: Impressive local guides and tour operators		
LG1	.904*	.817*
LG2	.932*	.868*
LG3	.926*	.857*
LG4	.523*	.273*
F4: Novel experiences		
NE1	.857*	.734*
NE4	.918*	.844*
NE2	.868*	.754*
NE3	.871*	.759*
F5: Local hospitality		
LH3	.789*	.623*

Dimension	Standardised regression weights (Factor Loadings)	Squared Multiple Correlations
LH2	.943*	.889*
LH1	.907*	.823*
F6: Affective emotions		
AE3	.885*	.783*
AE4	.801*	.641*
AE2	.904*	.817*
F7: Momentous travel experiences		
ME7	.879*	.773*
ME6	.844*	.712*
ME5	.846*	.716*
F8: Social interactions with people		
SI2	.937*	.878*
SI4	.497*	.247*
SI7	.924*	.854*
F9: Serendipitous and surprising experiences		
SE3	.692*	.479*
SE2	.794*	.630*
SE1	.744*	.554*
F10: Fulfilment of personal travel interests		
PTI1	.826*	.682*
PTI2	.837*	.701*

*Deemed significant at $p < .05$

6.4.3 Comparison of the Results with Bootstrap Estimates

The above parameters were based on the ML estimation method because ML is the default of the AMOS program. As discussed previously, the ML method estimates parameters under the assumption of multivariate normality of the observed variables (West, et al., 1995, p. 56), but many of the observed variables of this study did not meet the multivariate normality assumption. Therefore, as recommended by SEM experts, a bootstrap estimation was also performed using 2000 bootstrap samples to check if ML estimates were considerably different from bootstrap estimates. The bootstrap option enables researchers to compare ML estimates with bootstrap estimates when the model is performed on non-normally distributed data (Byrne, 2009; West, et al., 1995; Zhu, 1997).

The results revealed there were very small differences of the parameter estimates between the ML and bootstrap method; that is, the bias values (difference between ML estimation and bootstrap estimation) for each parameter reported very small figures, ranging from .001 to .012. Similar results were found with reference to the differences between ML standard errors and bootstrap standard errors. Thus, the critical ratios based on bootstrap results (i.e. bootstrap mean divided by bootstrap standard errors) were also greater than ± 1.96 , indicating that all the parameter estimates are statistically significant under the bootstrap method. In

other words, the results confirmed that parameter estimates were significant even under the assumption of non-normality distribution of the observed data (Appendix 6 on page 250) shows the comparison between the ML estimates and bootstrap estimates for further reference).

6.4.4 Checking for the Validity and Reliability of the Ten Factors

After ensuring the appropriateness of the parameter estimates and the model fit, further examinations were performed to check for convergent and discriminant validity, and the composite reliability of the 10 factors. This step is important because if the factors do not demonstrate adequate validity and reliability, moving on to test a causal model will be useless (Gaskin, 2012b). The criteria suggested by Gaskin (2012b) and Hair et al. (2010) as illustrated previously in Chapter three (see p.75) were used for this purpose. The ‘Stats Tools Package’ developed by (Gaskin, 2012a) was employed to calculate these figures for the 10 factors. Table 6.7 below shows the results.

Table 6.7: CR, AVE, MSV and ASV figures for the 10 factors

Factor	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV
F1: Authentic Local Experiences	0.876	0.589	0.268	0.121
F2: Self-beneficial Experiences	0.961	0.861	0.254	0.110
F3: Impressive Tour operators and Local Guides	0.901	0.704	0.220	0.095
F4: Novel Experiences	0.931	0.772	0.318	0.154
F5: Local Hospitality	0.913	0.778	0.220	0.123
F6: Affective Emotions	0.898	0.747	0.196	0.114
F7: Momentous Travel Experiences	0.892	0.734	0.270	0.122
F8: Social Interactions with People	0.845	0.660	0.154	0.083
F9: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences	0.788	0.554	0.318	0.203
F10: Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests	0.818	0.691	0.196	0.111

CR= Composite Reliability

AVE= Average Variance Extracted

MSV= Maximum Shared Squared Variance

ASV= Average Shared Squared Variance

Since these figures met all the criteria mentioned previously in Chapter three, it was concluded that the instrument illustrates adequate psychometric properties in terms of convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite reliability.

6.5 The Relative Importance of Each MTEs Dimension

Standard multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the relative importance of each of the ten dimensions of the overall MTEs construct. Table 6.8 illustrates the results.

Table 6.8: Standard regression analysis results

Dimension		Standardised Coefficient (Beta)
F1	Authentic Local Experiences	0.275*
F4	Novel Experiences	0.212*
F9	Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences	0.201*
F7	Momentous Travel Experiences	0.147*
F10	Fulfilment of Personal travel Interests	0.138*
F6	Affective Emotions	0.123*
F5	Local Hospitality	0.119*
F2	Self- Beneficial Experiences	0.113*
F8	Social Interactions with People	0.110*
F3	Impressive Guides and Tour Operator Services	0.101*

* Deemed significant at $p < .05$

The figures suggest that all of the ten dimensions are significant in determining MTEs. The standard coefficient figures, however, suggest that three dimensions namely: “authentic local experiences” (F1), “novel experiences” (F4) and “serendipitous and surprising experiences” (F9) seem to be playing a relatively more important role than the other seven dimensions.

6.6 Results of Hypotheses Testing

Nine (9) hypotheses were developed for testing their validity based on the literature and the qualitative findings of the study. These were discussed in Chapter 5. The first hypothesis was predominantly derived from findings of the in-depth interviews, and it holds that travellers are generally novelty seekers in the context of leisure travelling. The remaining eight hypotheses were derived to test the relationships between MTEs (the exogenous variable) and various endogenous/dependent variables as depicted in the conceptual model of the study (Figure 6.1). The total sample (N=688) was used for testing the nine hypotheses and the results are discussed below.

6.6.1 Testing Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis one holds that:

H1: Travellers are generally high novelty seekers when travelling for leisure.

One sample T test was performed to test this hypothesis, using ‘4’ as the test value since the measurement scale ranged from 1 to 7. The results showed that travellers’ desire for novelty seeking in leisure travelling was very high ($M= 6.45$, $SD= .99$) and the mean difference was positive, high (2.45) and significant, $p<.01$. These results supported hypothesis 1; that is, ‘travellers are generally novelty seekers when travelling for leisure’.

6.6.2 Testing the Remaining Hypotheses (H2-H9)

A path analysis was performed using SEM approach to test the causal relationships between MTEs and other endogenous (dependent) variables, which were hypothesized under H2 to H9 and depicted in the theoretical model of the study in Chapter 5 (replicated in Figure 6.2).

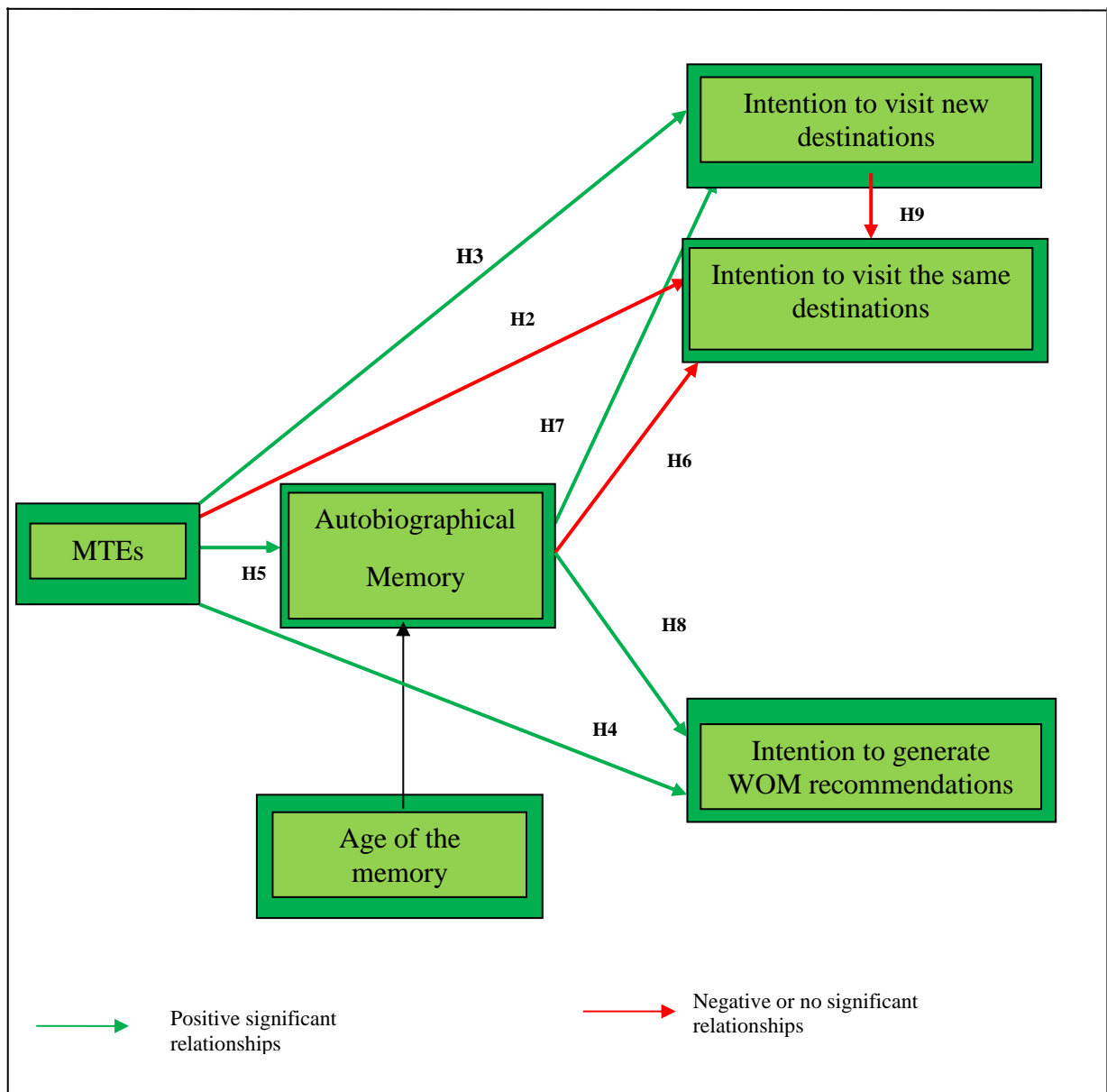


Figure 6.1: Conceptual model of the study

'MTEs' is the exogenous variable of the model and the endogenous (dependant) variables are: (a) autobiographical memory; (b) intention to revisit the same destination; (c) intention to visit new destinations; and (d) intention to generate WOM recommendations. Age of the memory was introduced as a control/confounding variable into the model, based on previous research finding (D'Argembeau & Van der Linden, 2004; Rubin, 1982; Semin & Smith, 1999). The composite variables of 'MTEs' and 'autobiographical memory' served as the latent variables in the path model, and the remaining variables were the observed variables. The composite variables were computed using the data imputation feature of the AMOS software. Thus the MTEs represents the composite variable of the 10 MTEs dimensions which were validated through a CFA model previously and "Autobiographical Memory" represents the composite variable of the 10 items of the memory scale adopted from a scale developed by Sheen, et al. (2001). All other dependent variables are the observed variables which were measured using a one-item scale.

The following hypotheses were tested using this path analysis:

- H2:** MTEs do not have a significant impact on travellers' intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels
- H3:** MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' intentions to visit new destinations on subsequent travels
- H4:** MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' intentions to generate WOM recommendations
- H5:** MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs
- H6:** Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs does not have a significant impact on their intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent travels
- H7:** Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on their intentions to visit new destinations on the subsequent travels
- H8:** Travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs has a significant positive impact on their intentions to generate WOM recommendations
- H9:** Intention visit new destinations has a significant negative impact on intention to visit the same destination on subsequent travels

Validating the Memory Scale

Prior to running the path analysis, the ‘autobiographical memory’ construct, which was used as a latent variable in the path model, was tested for its validity. A ‘10-item scale’ was adopted from the work of Sheen, Kemp and Rubin (2001) to measure respondents’ autobiographical memory, which measured three dimensions of memory: (a) memory recollection; (b) imagery and emotion; and (c) language and narrative. A second order CFA was performed to check for the validity of the memory scale for the purpose of using it in the path analysis. The model fit indices confirmed a good model fit after allowing e_6 and e_5 , and e_6 and e_8 error terms to co-vary; CMIN/DF was $4.307 < 5$, indicating an acceptable overall model fit (Hair et al., 1998, p. 658). Other fit indices also revealed a good model fit; GFI = $.965 > .95$, CFI = $.987 > .95$, IFI = $.987 > .95$, TLI = $.980 > .95$, RMSEA = $.069 < .08$ and HOELTOR values at both 0.05 and 0.01 were > 200 (233 and 271). All the parameter estimates were statistically significant: critical ratios $> \pm 1.96$, $p < .01$ according to both ML and bootstrap estimation methods. The graphical presentation of the model is illustrated in Appendix 7 (p.252) and the regression estimates and squared multiple correlations are shown in Appendix 8 (p.253).

6.6.2.1 Results of the Path Analysis

The path model was then tested using the AMOS program (version 20). Model assessment was performed by evaluating the model fit indices and the adequacy of the parameter estimates (Byrne, 2009, p. 67); these are discussed below.

Assessment of the Model Fit

The total sample (688 cases) was used for the path analysis. The first run of the model showed a less satisfactory model fit; that is, $\chi^2 (5, N=688) = 39.599$, $p < .05$ and CMIN/DF = 7.920 , CFI = $.925$, RMSEA = $.100$. Review of the modification indices suggested a new path, which was not initially hypothesised: a path from the ‘age of memory’ variable to the ‘intention to generate WOM recommendations’ variable. After that modification, the model fit indices improved considerably; that is, $\chi^2 (4, N=688) = 4.813$, $p = .307 > .05$ and CMIN/DF = $1.203 < 3$ indicating a very good overall model fit. The new path is justifiable because travellers’ willingness to make recommendations about previous tourism experiences can decrease over time with their fading memory of travels. This was indicated by the significant negative regression weight of this path (-0.211 , $p < .01$), which suggest that ‘age of memory’ has a negative impact on intention to generate WOM recommendations.

Other model fit indices also confirmed that the model fitted very well to the data: AGFI = .988 >.95, CFI = .998 >.95, IFI=.998 >.95, TLI=.993 >.95, RMSEA = .017 <.08 and HOELTOR values were 1355 and 1895 which were well above the 200 threshold level. Further, the default model reported the smallest value for ECVI (.056) compared to the saturated model (.061) and independent model (.079), indicating that the model can be cross-validated across similar samples from the same population. Figure 6.2 illustrates the final path model after the modification discussed above.

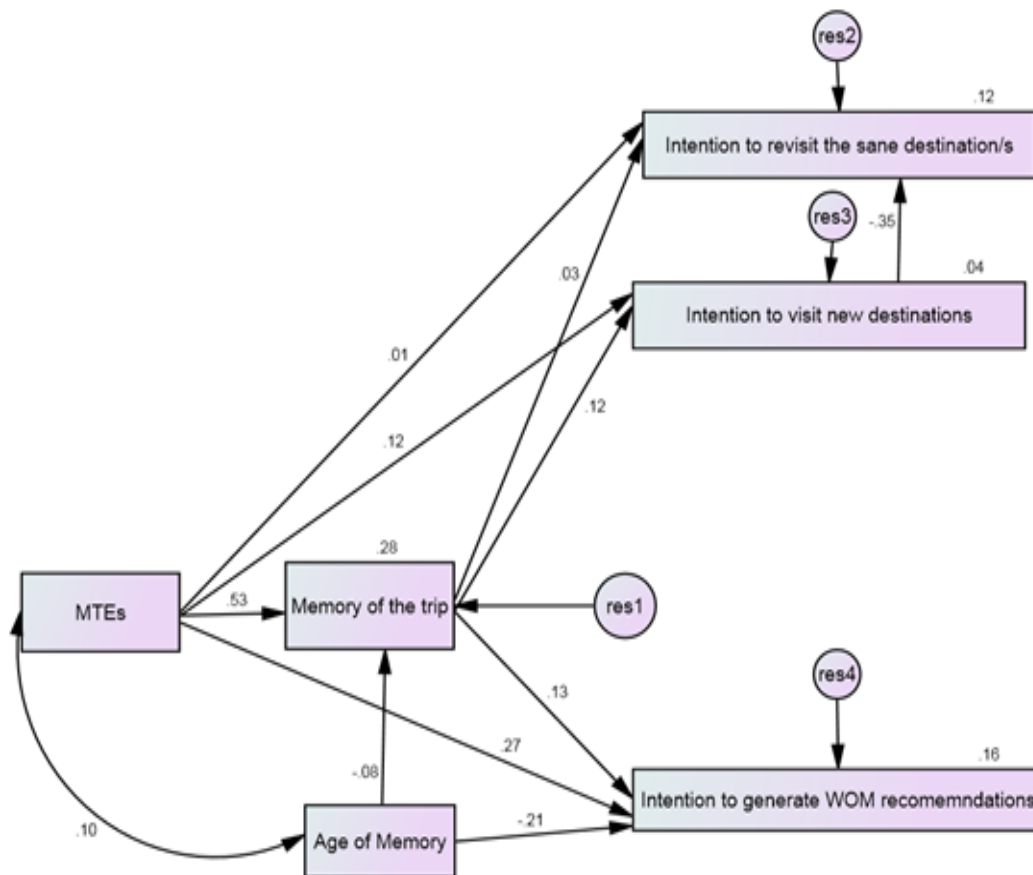


Figure 6.2: Final path model after modifications

Appropriateness of the Parameter Estimates

No parameter estimates had feasibility issues and the standard error estimates were also acceptable. Table 6.9 shows the statistical significance of each of the path estimates (the last column of the table shows the underlying hypothesis of each of the paths). The results revealed that eight out of ten paths were statistically significant, critical ratio > ± 1.96, p < .05 and only two paths, which were related to H2 and H6, were not statistically significant.

Table 6.9: Path estimates and their statistical significance

Path	Regression weights	Critical ratio	P value	Standardised regression weights	Hypothesis
MTEs → Intention to revisit the same destination	.014	.309	.758	.013	H2
MTEs → Intention to visit new destinations	.113	2.795	**	.122	H3
MTEs → Intention to generate WOM recommendations	.319	6.618	***	.274	H4
MTEs → Autobiographical memory of the trip	.535	16.340	***	.532	H5
Autobiographical Memory → Intention to revisit the same destination	.028	.633	.527	.027	H6
Autobiographical Memory → Intention to visit new destinations	.106	2.652	***	.116	H7
Autobiographical Memory → Intention to generate WOM recommendations	.150	3.156	**	.130	H8
Intention to visit new destinations → Intention to revisit the same destination	-.390	-9.425	***	-.346	H9
Age of memory → Autobiographical Memory	-.014	-2.406	**	-.078	NH
Age of memory → Intention to generate WOM recommendations	-.042	-5.973	***	-.211	NH

Note: NH = Not hypothesised before running the model

***Deemed significant at <.01

**Deemed significant at <.05

Comparison of Results with Bootstrap Estimates

Before making conclusions, a bootstrap estimation was also performed using 2000 bootstrap samples to compare with ML estimates shown in Table 6.11 in order to check if ML estimates were significantly different from bootstrap estimates. The results demonstrated that no significant differences existed between the ML and bootstrap estimates, implying that these results were also acceptable under the non-normality conditions of the data. The

comparison figures between ML estimates and bootstrap estimates are shown in Appendix 9 (p.254) for further reference.

The results of the path analysis led to the conclusions as summarised in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10: Summary of results of the path analysis

	Hypothetical Relationship	Support/reject the hypothesis
1	There is no significant impact of MTEs on intention to revisit the same destination during future travels (.014, $p > .05$)	Support H2*
2	There is a significant positive impact of MTEs on intention to revisit new destinations during future travels (.122, $p < .05$)	Support H3
3	There is a significant positive impact of MTEs on intention to generate WOM recommendations (.274, $p < .01$)	Support H4
4	There is a significant positive impact of MTEs on the autobiographical memory of the trip (.532, $p < .01$)	Support H5
5	There is no significant impact of the autobiographical memory of MTEs on intention to re-visit the same destination during future travels (.028, $p > .05$)	Support H6*
6	There is a significant positive impact of the autobiographical memory of MTEs on intention to visit new destinations during future travels (.116, $p < .01$)	Support H7
7	There is a significant positive impact of the autobiographical memory of MTEs on intention to generate WOM recommendations (.130, $p < .05$)	Support H8
8	Intention to visit new destinations has a significant negative impact on intention to revisit the same destination during future travels (-.390, $p < .01$)	Support H9

*No significant relationship was hypothesised.

In addition to the results presented in Table 6.11, results showed that the ‘age of memory’, which was used as a confounding variable in the model, had a significant negative impact on ‘autobiographical memory’ (-.078, $p < .05$), implying that travellers’ memory of MTEs tends to decline over time. Moreover, the path between the age of the memory and intention to generate WOM recommendations, which was introduced later as a modification into the model, also suggested a significant negative relationship (-.211, $p < .05$), which indicates that travellers’ intention to generate WOM recommendations also tends to decrease over time with the diminishing memory of MTEs.

6.6.2.2 Further Verification of the Relationship between Travellers’ Novelty Seeking Behaviour and Future Behavioural Intentions

Results discussed in the above sections showed that MTEs and autobiographical memory of MTEs do not have a significant influence on intention to visit the same destination (H2 and

H6), but they do tend to have a significant impact on intention to visit new destinations (H3 and H7). These four hypotheses were derived based on the first hypothesis of the study (H1); that is, ‘travellers are generally novelty seekers when travelling for leisure’ which suggests that they generally try to visit new destinations and seek new experiences whenever they travel for leisure. Hence, Spearman’s rank order correlation³ was performed to further testing, the influence of ‘travellers’ desire for novelty seeking’ on their intentions to revisit the same destination and intentions to visit new destinations. The results are shown in Table 6.11.

Table 6.11: The results of Spearman's rank order correlation

Travellers’ desire for novelty seeking in leisure travelling		Intention revisit the same destination	Intention to visit new destinations
	Co-relation coefficient	-.223**	.332**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	P <.01	P < .01

** Deemed significant at < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results confirmed that travellers’ ‘desire for novelty seeking’ in leisure travelling has a significant negative correlation with their intention to revisit the same destination, but demonstrates a significant positive correlation with their intention to visit new destinations on their subsequent leisure travels. Therefore, these results provided further support for the hypotheses H2, H3, H6 and H7.

6.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter presented the major findings of the field survey carried out during the quantitative stage of the study. Usable 688 surveys were retained for the data analysis and an EFA was first performed to purify the measurement scale using the first split-half of the sample. The analysis produced a satisfactory factorial structure with 10 dimensions explaining 73 percent of the total variance. A CFA was then performed using the second split-half sub-sample, and the results adequately confirmed the factorial structure proposed by the EFA. Then a path analysis was performed to test the hypothesised causal relationships between MTEs and various endogenous variables of the theoretical model of the study, and the results supported all the hypotheses. These results and their theoretical and managerial implications are discussed in detail in the next Chapter.

³ Spearman’s rank order correlation was chosen due to the non-normality distribution of the data.

CHAPTER 7: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research was twofold: Firstly, to more thoroughly examine MTEs, because a review of the tourist experience literature showed a gap in the understanding of this important attribute in the competitive global tourism industry (Kim, 2009, 2013; Kim, et al., 2010; Pizam, 2010; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b). Secondly, to contribute to an understanding of this important experiential phenomenon by using a more systematic and comprehensive academic investigation into the topic and thereby suggest strategies for tourism marketers to improve their ability to provide MTEs for leisure travellers. Existing knowledge on the topic is still at an early developmental stage with a limited number of studies available and a number of knowledge gaps, all of which were discussed in Chapter 2.

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to realise the study objectives. Chapter 4 discussed the results of the qualitative phase and Chapter 6 provided the results of the quantitative phase of the research. This chapter focuses on the overall conclusions of the study. First, the key results of the study are discussed in detail, and then the theoretical and managerial implications of these results are outlined. That will be followed by a summary of the conclusions of the thesis, and, finally, the limitations of the study and desirable further research directions are presented.

7.2 Discussion of Results

The study aimed at answering the following four research questions:

1. What constitutes MTEs for leisure travellers?
2. How can MTEs be measured?
3. What effects do MTEs have on travellers' memory and future behavioural intentions?

7.2.1 Research Question 1: What Constitutes MTEs for Leisure Travellers?

This question was raised in this research because the existing literature has not provided satisfactory and convincing answers to it. There were studies that had examined MTEs but most were of an exploratory nature, relying upon student samples to collect empirical data. Therefore, it was important to conceptualise and operationalise MTEs from the authentic experiences of leisure travellers in order to obtain a more accurate picture of the

phenomenon. The results of the qualitative and quantitative examinations carried out for this thesis confirmed two conclusions in regard to this question:

- I. MTEs are reported as positive tourism experiences more often than negative tourism experiences; and
- II. Ten (10) experiential dimensions can contribute to the facilitation of MTEs for leisure travellers.

Each of these conclusions will now be discussed.

7.2.1.1 MTEs are Reported as Positive Tourism Experiences more often than Negative Experiences

The qualitative findings initially revealed that travellers report their MTEs as positive tourism experiences much more than negative experiences. All the respondents spontaneously recalled pleasant tourism experiences during in-depth interviews, and confirmed that their past tourism experiences had been pleasant and positive in most cases – except for an insignificant number of negative incidents. The results also revealed that memories about negative incidents were comparatively harder to recall than positive ones. This finding was confirmed by the quantitative data, in which all but two respondents (out of 688) in the field survey had evaluated positive MTEs.

The conclusion, therefore, is that there is tendency for travellers to retain positive and pleasant tourist experiences in their autobiographical memories more vividly than negative ones, making such experiences easier to recall than negative experiences. This conclusion is consistent with studies reported in the literature about autobiographical memory, which affirmed that memories of positive and pleasant experiences are retrieved with less effort and more vividly by people than memories of negative or unpleasant events (Holland & Kensinger, 2010; Levine & Bluck, 2004; Wagenaar, 1986; Walker, et al., 2003; White, 2002). This finding is crucial for tourism marketers, especially for the marketing of tourism destinations, because it implies that the more positive experiences tourists encounter during travels, the more they will remember. In other words, enhancing the likelihood that visitors encounter more pleasant and positive experiences during their travels will help destinations to imprint more positive memories in travellers' minds.

7.2.1.2 Ten (10) Experiential Dimensions can Contribute to the Facilitation of MTEs for Leisure Travellers

The results of this study confirmed that MTEs are closely linked with ten experiential dimensions:

1. Authentic local experiences
2. Novel experiences
3. Serendipitous and surprising experiences
4. Momentous tourism experiences
5. Self-beneficial experiences
6. Social interactions with people
7. Local hospitality
8. Impressive local guides and tour operator services
9. Fulfilment of personal travel interests
10. Affective emotions

Dimension 1: Authentic Local Experiences

The results of this study confirmed that ‘authentic local experiences’ is a major experiential dimension of MTEs. It refers to travellers’ experiences of real local life, cultures and food at destinations visited during a leisure trip. Travellers may experience ‘real local life’, the first sub-component of the dimension, by visiting real local villages, sharing actual life experiences with locals and exploring remote markets, or farming and craft industries.

Travellers may also experience ‘authentic local culture’ by visiting culturally significant places, observing local cultural festivals, participating in local cultural ceremonies and being emotionally effected by strange cultural rituals and the behaviour of local residents. The result also revealed that the exposure of travellers to local culinary experiences during their travels, the third sub-component of the dimension, is also an important element of ‘MTEs’.

Tourism scholars and practitioners are increasingly recognising the importance of providing ‘authentic local experiences’ for travellers during their travels. According to Wilson and Harris (2006), the cultural dimension of tourism has been widely acknowledged in recent discourses, highlighting tourism as more a cultural process than just a product. The significance of ‘authentic local experiences’ was also confirmed by a study conducted by The Canadian Tourism Commission (2004, p. 3), which revealed that visitors increasingly

demand an insight into a host community in terms of meeting and socialising with local people, and participating in community and cultural activities. The MTEs scale developed by Kim (2009) included a similar dimension called ‘local culture’, but the present study offers a broader dimension, namely ‘the authentic local experience’, which incorporates a greater spectrum of local experiences (as mentioned above) than Kim’s (2009) dimension. This study concludes that providing opportunities for travellers to encounter a variety of authentic local experiences in addition to the typical and more routine tourist experiences will positively contribute to the enhancement of their memories about a particular destination visited or a tour taken by them.

Dimension 2: Novel Tourism Experiences

This study concludes that novel experiences can also be a key experiential component of MTEs for leisure travellers. These novel experiences are the experiences that are perceived as distinctive and unique from other previous tourism experiences by the travellers. The results revealed that travellers might realise such novel and unique experiences in a number of ways during their travels. For example, experiencing something for the first time (e.g. first cruise-ship experience), experiencing something entirely new or unique from the previous tourism experiences (e.g. visiting very strange tourist sites, engaging in very unique tourist activities or staying in atypical kinds of accommodation) or undertaking non-mainstream or adventurous tourism trips (e.g. off-the-‘beaten track’ tourism experiences), all of which can provide different and unique experiences for travellers.

This conclusion is consistent with previous memory research, which discovered a positive association between ‘novelty’ and ‘memory’ (Brandt, et al., 2006; Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Rajaram, 1996; Reder, et al., 2002; Schmidt, 1991). According to Schmidt (1991), an event can be distinctive for an individual if it shares few characteristics with other events. Similarly, a traveller may perceive that a particular destination or a particular travel is distinctive from other destinations or travels if they are able to encounter novel and unique experiences, which can, in turn, enhance their memories about the particular destination or the travel. In other words, the more travellers experience novel and unique experiences, the more they remember such experiences.

Dimension 3: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences

The results of this study confirmed that serendipitous and surprising moments can also be crucial for facilitating MTEs for leisure travellers. Serendipitous experiences are unplanned

but positive incidents or experiences that take place during a leisure trip, such as unplanned discoveries, unexpected benefits or initial disappointments that later leads to more enjoyable and better experiences. On the other hand, travellers may encounter ‘surprises’ when they experience something beyond their expectations or imagination; for example, encountering highly delightful services, superior quality accommodation or amazingly beautiful attractions that exceed their expectations.

In most cases, serendipitous moments are random experiences rather than something that can be planned by travellers themselves or tourism marketers. However the ‘surprise’ factor is something that can be pre-planned and delivered by marketers with sound marketing strategies, which have the capability to delight travellers. Understanding what different travel segments expect to be fulfilled during their travels and thereby designing services and experiences which are beyond what they generally expect is essential for facilitating such ‘surprising’ experiences. For example, unexpected rewards from the service provider would surprise customers and make them more loyal to the service. For instance, certain tourist hotel chains (e.g. Wyndham International and Hyatt Hotels and Resorts) use customer profile information to surprise high-value customers through a “Random Acts of Generosity” program, which randomly awards its customers with free gifts and other unexpected rewards such as a free round of golf, or a free *Wall Street Journal* newspaper in the room for a business traveller (Kumar & Shah, 2004; Dennick, 2009). Rewarding customers with such random acts of generosity can create memorable experiences for customers. Furthermore they have a strong impact on loyalty (Walker, 2009 cited in Dennick, 2009). These conclusions are also consistent with previous memory research that found that surprising and unexpected events can create very vivid and long-lasting memories in the minds of people, because unexpected information can capture more attention, is processed more extensively and is better recalled than expected information (Brewer, 1994; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Talarico & Rubin, 2003).

Dimension 4: Momentous Travel Experiences

The study also found that realisation of highly significant travel experiences, which are generally perceived as exclusive, extreme or very special by travellers, tend to be more memorable than less significant and regular travel experiences. Such experiences may include visiting highly reputable and iconic tourist attractions, realising dream trips or experiences that a traveller may have been looking forward to for a long time, or engaging in very special or extraordinary travel experiences. For example, travellers may better remember their visits

to world iconic tourist attractions such as the Taj Mahal, Great Pyramids or Iguazu Waterfalls due to the 'place significance' and the reputation attached to such attractions. Similarly, a traveller may have been looking forward to going on an expensive cruise tour in Europe for a long time, and realising that dream can be a very significant tourist experiences for that traveller. Experiences of a very special or an extraordinary nature can also add to the significance of a leisure trip due to their rarity and exclusiveness. For example, the research conducted by The Canadian Tourism Commission (2004, p. 7) revealed that there is an increasing demand among travellers for exclusive or extraordinary experiences nowadays due to their ability to enhance self-esteem and promote personal growth (Mannell, Zuzanek and Larson, 1988).

According to the flow theory of Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1990), travellers are motivated to participate in such adventurous and extraordinary travels because of the intrinsic feelings of enjoyment, well-being and personal competence they experience during such events (Priest & Gass, 1997). As Boniface (2000) asserts, such adventurous and extraordinary experiences provide opportunities for travellers to engage in positive, significant experiences due to their encouraging and demanding nature. A number of memory studies have also confirmed that rare and extraordinary events can create vivid and long-lasting memories about such events (Brewer, 1988; Kim, 2010; Lynch & Srull, 1982; Pillemer, 2001; Talarico & Rubin, 2003). A potential explanation is that travellers generally tend to have high prior expectations about such highly special and extraordinary journeys that can lead to a greater degree of cognitive analysis, resulting in more vivid memories than of average and typical tourism experiences (Craik & Lockhart, 1972; Craik & Tulving, 1975; Lockhart & Craik, 1990).

However, it is noteworthy that the perceived importance of these momentous travel experiences may differ according to the nature of individual travellers. For example, some travellers may not be comfortable with engaging in extraordinary experiences due to their extreme nature. However, the ninth dimension (see below), 'fulfilment of personal travel interests', suggests that travellers tend to fulfil their most important travel motives during travels, implying that those who travel primarily for realising such momentous and extraordinary experiences may be disappointed if they cannot realise such experiences from their travels. Therefore, from the experience providers' perspectives, appropriate segmentation of the travel market and identifying the right customers is essential for proper marketing of such momentous experiences.

Dimension 5: Self-beneficial Tourism Experiences

The present study found that experiences which are perceived as ‘self-beneficial’ to travellers tend to be better retained and recalled by travellers than less self-relevant tourist experiences. The results suggest that a traveller tends to think a particular experience has been self-beneficial or more self-relevant when it is associated with personally meaningful outcomes, such as an intellectual development, broadened perspectives about life and self, acquisition of important new skills, and enhanced self-confidence and self-image. These findings support the ideas that travellers not only travel for pleasure, but also spend leisure time more meaningfully by seeking physical, educational, emotional and spiritual fulfilment; that is, “wellness tourism” (Chen, Prebensen, & Huan, 2008; Williams, 2006; Wilson & Harris, 2006). According to Morgan and Pritchard (2000, p. 278) modern tourists are increasingly seeking discovery of themselves instead of escape from their mundane life. During their travels, they ask the question “who can we be on holiday? as opposed to, what [can] we do on holiday?” (Morgan and Pritchard, 2000, p. 278). As Morgan (2010) asserts, travel represents a potentially fruitful vehicle for transformative education and learning for travellers since travel broadens the mind and, consequently, has educative benefit. The results are also consistent with previous memory research, 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; Rogers, et al., 1977; Rubin & Kozin, 1984).

Dimension 6: Social Interactions with People

The results of this research revealed that particular tourism experiences can be more memorable for travellers because of the social dynamics among people, such as with travel companions, other travellers or with locals while travelling. According to the study results, one likely reason for this is that a traveller may perceive greater enjoyment during a tour through pleasant social moments with others, such as eating, drinking and having parties with people. Another element is that travellers tend to feel more excitement and enjoyment through sharing experiences with their close travel companions or with the travelling party rather than experiencing something alone. Moreover, social interactions can provide opportunities for travellers to enhance their existing social bonds with close travel companions (e.g. family members or friends), and also provide opportunities for establishing new 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

particular experience. The study findings further revealed that, in group travelling scenarios, a proper match or comradeship among members of a travel group is essential for a more pleasant and enjoyable tour; conflicting travel preferences or expectations among travellers or the bad conduct of some members of the group may diminish the overall tour experience of travellers.

The significance of the ‘social interactions’ dimension for pleasant and memorable experiences during travels has also been acknowledged by previous research (Falk & Dierking, 1990; Larsen & Jenssen, 2004; Morgan, 2006; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011b). According to Wilson and Harris (2006), people use ‘consumption’ to develop relationships with others. Similarly, travellers make use of travelling time to establish meaningful relationships with travel companions, other travellers and locals. The research conducted by The Canadian Tourism Commission (2004, p. 9) found that travellers increasingly demand shared experiences (i.e. social interactions and sharing experiences as a group), and such ‘shared experiences’ can create ‘collective memories’ among travel companions in addition to personal memories (Braasch, 2008b, p. 15). As MacDonald, (2008, p. 5) points out ‘remembering is something that does not only take place inside the heads of individuals but also in all kinds of social situations and collective practices’ – a claim, which is very pertinent to tourist experiences. Thus, pleasant social interactions can enhance both personal and collective memories about particular travel experiences, making such experiences more memorable for travellers.

Dimension 7: Local Hospitality

The results show that tourists are delighted when they experience local hospitality in a destination; experiences brought about by hospitable locals who extend their generosity and helpfulness towards tourists. Tourists tend to feel comfortable, safe and happy when they are welcomed and assisted by locals at hotels, on streets or in shops, and such warm welcoming behaviour can greatly affect their overall 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. They note that local hospitality includes: ‘warmth of reception by the local population; willingness of residents to provide information to tourists; [and favourable] attitudes towards tourists and the tourism industry’ (Dwyer and Kim, 2003, p. 384).

Local hospitality tends to play an important role in tourist experiences due to the fact that random encounters with local people is a part of tourist experiences. For example, tourists may encounter locals on roads, in shops, and at tourist attractions throughout a trip. Recently, The Canadian Tourism Commission, (2004, p. 3) found that there is an increasing trend for travellers to prefer to reach into 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 and mostly expected tourist experiences during a tour because ‘local hospitality’ is not something that travellers may generally expect from the basic tourism product. Therefore, encounters with very friendly and welcoming local people can significantly stimulate very positive and memorable experiences for travellers during their travels.

The research findings further revealed that travellers expect local hospitality not only during random encounters with local residents but also from the various service providers and their staff members that they encounter on a regular basis during a trip – such as tour operators, accommodation providers and transport servicers etc. The significance of friendly and helpful service staff was especially highlighted by a number of participants during in-depth interviews because such behaviour can provide great relief and comfort to travellers in unfamiliar settings; for example, by providing important information, solving various problems and helping to find reliable services. These findings support the ideas of Smith (1994) who argues that service quality is an essential but not a sufficient attribute because consumers expect ‘something extra’ in the context of tourism, which he denotes as ‘hospitality’. Smith points out that service and hospitality are two distinctive concepts.

...while the service of front desk staff refers to the efficient processing of hotel guests, hospitality emerges when this service is performed with a smile, genuine warmth, and the willingness to respond to other needs of the guest such as information on local restaurants. (Smith, 1994, p. 589)

Therefore, results from this study conclude that travellers’ experiences of genuine, friendly, welcoming and supportive local residents as well as local business owners, service providers and employees who genuinely welcome and help tourists during their travels can create long-lasting memories about destinations and tours in travellers’ minds.

Dimension 8: Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operator Services

The findings from this study revealed that local guides and tour operator services can also play a crucial role for delivering memorable experiences for leisure travellers. Especially, the quality and professionalism of guiding can make a big difference in travellers' evaluations of a tour experience. This dimension is particularly important for travellers who prefer to travel on organised tours in which they are directed by guides and other facilitators during a tour. 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 seek the assistance of local pathfinders in some circumstances (Cohen, 1985). Thus the role of a guide can be important for any type of traveller to obtain a fruitful travel experiences in a foreign destination. This dimension is also closely related to the 'authentic local experiences' dimension because these tour guides can play an important role in connecting tourists to local people and cultures more effectively. In addition, they can transfer a great deal of knowledge about tourist attractions and local matters, which is essential for facilitating a meaningful learning experience for travellers.

The results put forward that 'quality and professionalism' of guiding is judged by travellers in terms of the guides' knowledge of tourism attractions and local matters, quality of interpretations, communication abilities and, particularly, the way they pioneer interactive skills during a tour. These qualities are consistent with the two service quality categories proposed by Grönroos; namely technical quality and functional quality (Grönroos, 1984). The technical quality highlights the quality of the service output; in other words, what customers actually received from the service. The functional quality refers to the manner that the service is delivered to customers. In the context of tourism, a guide's knowledge, communication and interpretation skills all determine the *technical quality* that travellers receive from a tour, while their interactive skills – that is, the ability to be friendly with tourists, showing kindness and helpfulness towards travellers and their pleasant gestures and postures – determine the *functional quality* of guiding. Therefore, showing both types of professional qualities can significantly affect the overall value of a tour.

A number of previous studies have also acknowledged the significance of local guides and tour operator services in determining tourist experiences (Black & Ham, 2005; Cohen, 1985; Geva & Goldman, 1991; Hudson & Shephard, 1998; Lopez, 1980, 1981; Pearce, 1984; Weiler & Ham, 2001, 2002). 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 for the study respondents. The Canadian Tourism Commission (2004, p. 10) notes that skills, resourcefulness and networks of tour guides are very important for delivering memorable experiences for their clients. Other scholars have found that a guide's knowledge, personality, sensitivity, communication and presentation skills, interpretation abilities and leadership style can make or destroy travellers' tour experiences (Ap & Wong, 2001; Lopez, 1980, 1981; Wang, Hsieh, & Chen, 2002; Weiler & Ham, 2001). Therefore, the study concludes that professional local guides and tour operator services can be a crucial element to facilitate MTEs for travellers in a particular destination.

Dimension 9: Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests

The results further revealed that travellers' personal MTEs are close related with their personal travel interests; that is, travellers tend to remember experiences that better fulfilled their individual travel preferences. Leisure travellers are not the same in terms of their travel motivations and interests, thus different travellers may undertake travel for different travel motives, seek different tourist experiences and engage in different types of activities during a trip. The findings of the in-depth interviews conducted for this study provided plenty of evidence to support this claim. For example, while some participants expressed their preference for being immersed in local cultures, others expressed a preference for personal freedom during a trip (i.e. no social interactions). Similarly, some interviewees said they prefer to visit popular tourist cities and attractions but other interviewees noted that such experiences did not excite them. The MANOVA results also indicated that different travellers tend to evaluate MTEs dimensions in different ways. This, however, does not mean that tourists travel to seek only a particular kind of experience during a particular travel, but it does indicate that they can be fascinated by a range of experiences, but ability to fulfil their primary travel motives and interests tend to make experiences more memorable for them. In other words, travellers' overall evaluation of a particular travel tends to depend on the extent to which the particular travel could meet their most important travel interests and preferences. This implies that the MTEs dimensions should be treated as common experiential arenas, and, as such, they provide a rich pool of experiences for tourism marketers to design experiential products, but blending them in tourism products should be carried out with a proper understanding of different travel preferences and expectations of different travel segments.

Dimension 10: Affective Emotions

The findings revealed that memorable tourism experiences are related to various positive emotions, such as pleasure and excitement, which portray the affective effects of such experiences. It seems that the cognitive dimensions, which were discussed above, may result in affective feelings in travellers' minds, but this claim is not conclusive. Nevertheless, the findings confirmed that affective emotions are an integral component of MTEs. The qualitative findings of the study revealed two types of emotions that are more often associated with MTEs, namely, excitement and pleasure. Many participants of in-depth interviews linked their MTEs to feelings of excitement and pleasure – such as happiness, fun and enjoyment. This conclusion supports the results of previous research, which found that positive emotions are closely associated with memorable leisure and tourism experiences (Anderson & Shimizu, 2007; Falk & Dierking, 1990; Gunter, 1987; Kim, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). The results also confirm the findings of previous memory research which showed that events associated with emotions are better remembered than neutral events and, especially, events charged with positive emotions are remembered more clearly and quickly than experiences which evoke negative emotions (Brewer, 1988; Holland & Kensinger, 2010; Schmidt, 1991; Talarico, et al., 2004; Wagenaar, 1986; Walker, et al., 2003). A likely explanation could be that emotionally intensely events are more often thought about, talked over and recalled by travellers than moderately emotional events (Bohanek, et al., 2005). Hence, it can be concluded that pleasant memorable tourism experiences take place together with the manifestation of various positive emotions in travellers' minds, which enhances the retention and recollection of MTEs.

Summary of the Results related to the Research Question One

Overall, the discussion so far has presented the answer to the first research question of the study; that is, what constitutes MTEs for leisure travellers? In summary, MTEs are mostly associated with positive experiences rather than negative ones and such positive MTEs are closely linked with 10 experiential dimensions that are embodied in MTEs, namely: authentic local experiences, novel experiences, self-beneficial experiences, momentous tourism experiences, serendipitous and surprising experiences, social interactions with people, local hospitality, impressive local guides and tour operator services, fulfilment of personal travel interests and affective emotions. The first nine dimensions tend to arise from the cognitive domain and the last dimension from the affective domain of the construct. These ten experiential dimensions offer tourism marketers a pool of potential experiences for designing

and delivering MTEs for travellers. However, as revealed by the regression analysis (see section 6.5), three experience dimensions tend to play an important role for determining MTEs; that is, “authentic local experiences”, “novel experiences” and serendipitous and surprising experiences”, implying that, DMOs and tour companies need to pay more attention to these three dimensions. Furthermore, to facilitate MTEs more effectively, tourism marketers may require a proper understanding of travel motivations and preferences of different segments of the travel population.

7.2.2 Research Question 2: How Can MTEs be Measured?

A second research question was raised in the present study, motivated primarily by the limitations of the existing scale developed by Kim (2009), which was discussed in Chapter 2; that is, it was deemed necessary to develop a new measurement instrument for MTEs. After a series of instrument purification and validation steps, the study confirmed a reliable MTE instrument having 34 items across the 10 experiential dimensions: authentic local experiences; novel experiences; self-beneficial experiences; momentous travel experiences; serendipitous and surprising experiences; local hospitality; social interactions with people; impressive local guides and tour operators; fulfilment of personal travel interests and affective emotions associated with experiences. The final instrument illustrated adequate psychometric properties to meet reliability and validity criteria. The instrument cumulatively explained 73.38 percent of the total variance, and all the ten dimensions illustrated a good internal consistent reliability ($\alpha > 0.7$). In addition, all the ten dimensions met convergent validity, discriminant validity and composite reliability requirements, and the path analysis confirmed the nomological validity of the instrument (Appendix 10 on page 256 illustrates the final version of the instrument).

The instrument is expected to be more reliable and more accurate in its application to a wider travel population than the scale developed by Kim (2009) because it was purified and validated using a relatively large sample of authentic leisure travellers (N=688); that is, travellers who were actually on leisure trips during the survey, whereas the scale developed by Kim (2009) used non-representative student samples. DMOs and other tourism marketers, such as travel agents and tour operators, can obtain valuable visitor feedback by this instrument so that they can use such feedback to continuously improve travel experiences of their visitors/clients.

7.2.3 Research Question 3: What effects do MTEs have on travellers' autobiographical memory and future behavioural intentions?

This third research question was incorporated into the study because MTEs have been recommended as a better approach to designing marketing strategies in today's competitive global tourism industry; but there is little empirical proof to support such a recommendation (Kim, 2009, 2013; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a). There is dearth of studies in the literature that examines how MTEs can benefit tourist destinations in terms of stimulating repeat visitations and WOM publicity.

A structural model was performed in this study to test the hypothetical relationship between MTEs and other important dependent variables, including travellers' future behavioural intentions, as illustrated in Figure 6.2 (p.168). Consequently, the following major conclusions were reached:

- I. MTEs do not necessarily influence travellers' intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent leisure travels but do have a significant positive impact on intentions to visit new destinations and intentions to generate WOM recommendations.
- II. MTEs have a significant positive effect on travellers' autobiographical memory.
- III. Travellers' autobiographical memory does not necessarily influence their intentions to revisit the same destinations on subsequent leisure travels but does have a significant positive impact on intentions to visit new destinations and intentions to generate WOM recommendations.

These major conclusions will now be discussed:

- I. *MTEs do not necessarily influence travellers' intentions to revisit the same destination on subsequent leisure travels but do have a significant positive impact on intentions to visit new destinations and intentions to generate WOM recommendations.*

The study's results confirmed that there is no positive significant relationship between MTEs and travellers' intention to re-visit the same destination on subsequent leisure travel; this was tested using the second hypothesis (H2) of this study. The hypothesis was based on the findings of in-depth interviews because many of the participants (27) expressed the view that they do not intend to revisit the same destination where they had realised their most

memorable leisure trip, but are willing to visit new destinations to seek new memorable experiences on their subsequent leisure travels. The quantitative findings confirmed that many travellers are novelty seekers when travelling for leisure (H1) and the results of path analysis confirmed that MTEs have a positive effect on travellers' intention to visit new destinations (H3), which in turn negatively impacts on intention to revisit the same destination on their subsequent travels (H9). Feng and Jang (2004) point out that tourists who are high novelty seekers continuously switch destinations, implying that they visit new destinations even though they had realised their most memorable trip in another destination in the past. A potential explanation could be that travellers' desire for novelty seeking is a major motivation for undertaking new leisure travels and also a major component of MTEs urging them to visit new destinations (Crompton, 1979; Dann, 1981; Leiper, 1984; Kim, 2009; Petrick, 2002). In other words, past memorable leisure experiences may further motivate them to undertake more travels, visit more new destinations and realise more new memorable experiences, which in turn hinders their revisit intentions. However, this does not mean that destinations cannot find loyal visitors. Visitors can be loyal to certain destinations, tourist resorts and tour companies for different reasons, such as price promotion, club membership and other loyalty programs, but the finding suggests that provision of MTEs alone does not significantly affect re-visit intentions of leisure travellers. Another important point to be noticed is that this study investigated MTEs only from leisure-oriented travellers by excluding other travel categories, as shown in Appendix 1. Hence, there might be a possibility that destinations may find more loyal visitors among those who travel for routine holiday and VFR purposes than more novelty-seeking leisure travels.

Although the link between MTEs and re-visit intention was not supported by the study, the results confirmed MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers' intentions to generate WOM recommendations; this was tested under the fourth hypothesis (H4) of the study. The actual behavioural data of the survey respondents also showed that around 89 per cent of the respondents had recommended their most memorable trip to others, such as family members, friends and colleagues. It is a well-known fact that travellers generally share pleasant travel experiences with others after returning from a trip via storytelling and sharing of photos, videos and souvenirs of the trip with other people, which can also facilitate WOM recommendations. Increasing use of social media platforms by people has positively affected this process. For example, according to a survey conducted by Lab42 website in 2012, 72 per cent of travellers post vacation photos on a social network while still on vacation and 70 per

cent update their Facebook status while on vacation. The website further reveals that 76 per cent post vacation photos on a social network, 46 per cent post hotel reviews and 40 per cent post activity/attraction reviews after their travels (<http://blog.lab42.com/techie-traveler>).

Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that travellers tend to make positive recommendations after a memorable leisure trip even though they do not intend to re-visit the same destination during their future travels. These results imply that, for tourism marketers, ‘word of mouth publicity’ and not increased repeat visitations is the main benefit derived from focusing on and facilitating MTEs for leisure travellers. However, such positive WOM recommendations will eventually have the effect of increasing repeat and new business to destinations.

II. MTEs have a significant positive effect on travellers’ autobiographical memory

The results of this study confirmed that MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers’ autobiographical memory, supporting the fifth hypothesis (H5) of the study. The impact of MTEs on travellers’ autobiographical memory was examined for two main reasons: firstly, travellers’ memories of MTEs can have important implications for their future behavioural intentions; and, secondly, to test the nomological validity of the MTE instrument. The scale developed by Sheen et al. (2001) was adapted to measure the memory construct and was included in the path model to test the relationship between MTEs and memory. A significant positive relationship was found. However, the results further revealed that travellers’ memories of MTEs can decline gradually with the passing of time. This finding is consistent with previous memory research, which has acknowledged the negative effect of the time factor on memory of people (D’Argembeau & Van der Linden, 2004; Rubin, 1982; Spreng & Levine, 2006). Thus, it was concluded that the greater a leisure trip provides memorable experiences for travellers, the higher that travellers can recollect those experiences more vividly, but such memories can decrease or fade over time.

III. Travellers’ autobiographical memory of MTEs does not necessarily influence their intentions to revisit the same destinations on subsequent leisure travels but does have a significant positive impact on intentions to visit new destinations and intentions to generate WOM recommendations

As discussed above, MTEs have a significant positive impact on travellers’ autobiographical memory, which further implies that such memories can influence travellers’ subsequent travel behaviours, such as revisit decisions and word-of-mouth recommendations. Hence, the study examined the likely association between travellers’ autobiographical memory of MTEs and future behavioural intentions. The results were consistent with the previous results with

reference to potential relationships between MTEs and future behavioural intentions, confirming that travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs does not have a positive significant impact on their intentions to revisit the same destination (H6) but does have a positive impact on intentions to visit new destinations during subsequent travels (H7). The same explanations discussed previously can be provided for these results; that is, travellers are generally novelty seekers in leisure travelling, meaning that their autobiographical memory of MTEs itself does not significantly influence them to make revisit decisions but it can positively influence them to visit new destinations to realise new MTEs.

Similar to the relationship between MTEs and intention to generate WOM recommendations, a significant positive relationship was found between travellers' autobiographical memory of MTEs and their intentions to generate WOM recommendations, supporting the eighth hypothesis (H8) of the study. This infers that travellers' recollection of previous memorable experiences may encourage them to tell stories and make recommendations about destinations and tours to others. Such memory recollections may take place from time-to-time in numerous ways. For example, looking at the photos or memorabilia, re-watching the videos created during their memorable travels, seeing TV documentaries which bring the memories to mind again, occasional memory talks or conversational remembering about such experiences among travel companions, or simply being nostalgic about the past memorable travel moments. However, as already mentioned, this memory effect on travellers' propensity to spread WOM recommendations can be confounded by the time lapse factor, thus the strength of this link can decline over time with the fading of memory of MTEs. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that, in most cases, travellers tend to recommend memorable destinations and experiences to others immediately after returning from a trip and that may persist perhaps for another few days or weeks during which the memory of the trip is still alive in travellers' minds. However, the time period during which travellers tend to make most recommendations should be further investigated in order to reach more concrete conclusions.

7.3 Theoretical Implications

The overall results of the study provided a number of theoretical implications.

7.3.1 Need for Defining the Domain of MTEs more Broadly

A number of scholars have attempted to conceptualise ‘MTEs’ and have offered a variety of dimensions to define the domain of MTEs, as shown in Table 2.2 (p.42). The variety demonstrates that there is lack of consistency in the conceptualisation of MTEs in terms of both the scope and number of dimensions. For example, some studies have offered comparatively few dimensions – for example, Morgan and Xu (2009) Anderson and Shimizu (2007) and Tung and Ritchie, (2011a) provided only two or three – whereas other studies offered more dimensions, for example, Kim (2009, p. 77) found seven MTEs dimensions. The present study proposes an even broader spectrum of dimensions, covering all the important components of MTEs. For instance, the present study confirmed ten (10) dimensions of MTEs, which cover all the fragmented dimensions offered by the existing studies plus certain other dimensions that previous studies have neglected, such as ‘serendipity’, ‘local guides’ and ‘fulfilment of personal travel interests’. These ten (10) dimensions suggest that MTEs must be conceptualised broadly in order to capture the best operationalisation of the construct.

A couple of factors contributed to defining the domain of MTEs more broadly. Firstly, the comprehensive qualitative inquiry undertaken during the exploratory stage of this study to explore the meaning of MTEs revealed the breadth of the domain of the concept. Two qualitative data sources (travel blog narratives and in-depth interviews) were used to better understand what MTEs means for a leisure traveller, which helped provide a more complete and correct understanding of MTEs. Secondly, data were gathered from the perspective of typical and frequent leisure travellers who could provide an accurate and authentic picture of MTEs. Eleven (11) dimensions emerged during the exploratory stage; 10 derived from the qualitative research phase of the study and one from the relevant literature, as summarised below in Figure 7.1. However, the dimension ‘involvement’ was eliminated during EFA due to poor internal consistency reliability but the remaining ten dimensions were confirmed in both EFA and CFA analysis as reliable and valid dimensions of MTEs.

It is also noteworthy that certain dimensions proposed by the previous studies emerged as sub-categorises under a border dimension during the present study. For example, ‘identity formation’ and ‘freedom pursuits’, proposed by Tung and Ritchie (2011b), and ‘relaxation’ and ‘achievements’ dimensions offered by Morgan and Xu (2009), emerged as subcategories under the ‘self-beneficial experiences’ dimension and the ‘hedonism’ dimension proposed by

Kim (2009) appeared under the ‘affective emotions’ dimension, in the present study. Furthermore, the present study found several new dimensions such as ‘local hospitality’, ‘serendipity’ and ‘momentous experiences’, which were not found from any of the studies available on the topic. Hence, the study suggests that ‘MTEs’ is a broader concept than what has been conceptualised by existing studies.

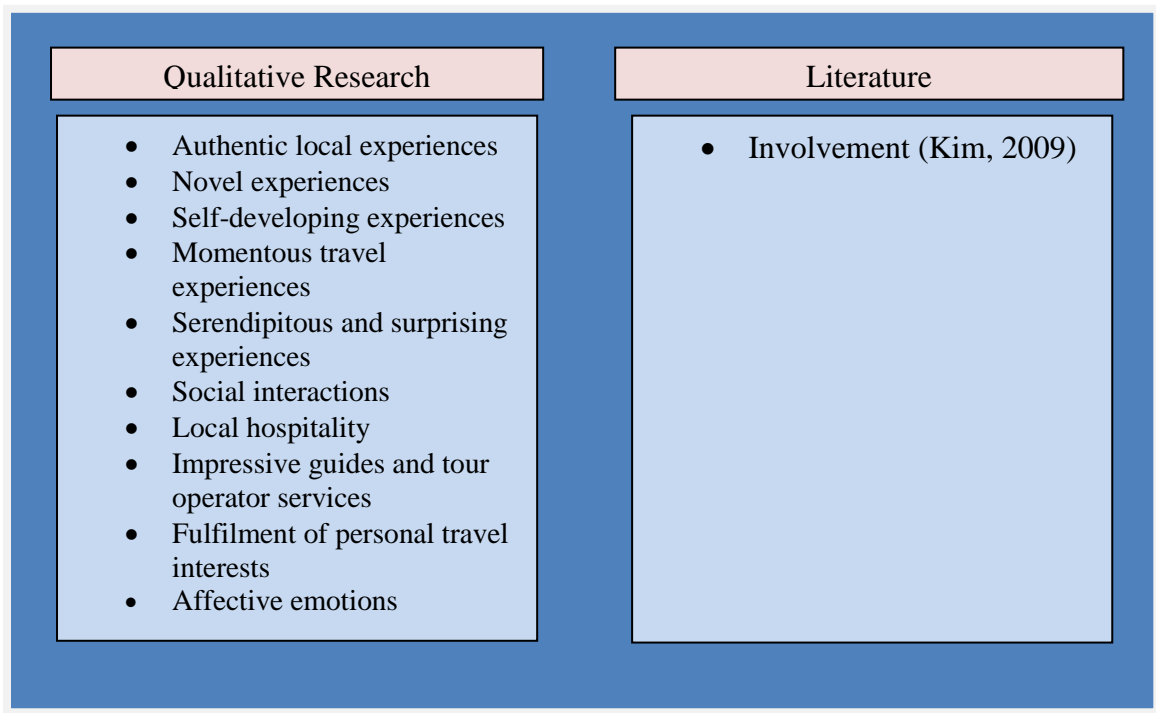


Figure 7.1: Dimensions emerged from the qualitative research and literature

7.3.2 MTEs Dimensions are not Mutually Exclusive Experiences

The results of the exploratory factor analysis revealed that the ten dimensions are co-related to a certain extent, suggesting that they are not mutually exclusive dimensions. In other words, the overlaps between the dimensions should be acknowledged, which provide important insights for MTEs research. For instance, authentic local experiences and novelty dimensions can be overlapping because certain authentic experiences can also be novel experiences for a traveller. This can result in some difficulties when undertaking qualitative investigations to identify and define likely dimensions of MTEs. Furthermore, these inter-correlations can be more problematic for incorporating regression models into the analysis because they may lead to a multicollinearity problem. Hence, these inter-correlations should be properly addressed when analysing data, especially when using regression models to theorise MTEs.

7.3.3 Moderating Effect of Novelty Seeking Behaviour

The literature on the topic of MTEs has suggested that facilitating MTEs can support tourist destinations to achieve a superior competitive advantage in the modern global tourism industry (Kim, 2009, 2013; Kim, et al., 2010; Pizam, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a, 2011b). However, existing research has not focused on whether MTEs can bring repeat visitors to a destination or encourage WOM publicity about a destination. The present study found that the benefits of MTEs stem mainly from its ability to increase WOM publicity rather than ability to bring repeat visitors, since no significant relationship between MTEs and intention to revisit the same destination was confirmed by the results. The major reason, which was found for this insignificant link between MTEs and re-visits intention, was travellers' novelty seeking behaviour when travelling for leisure. Both qualitative and quantitative findings provided adequate evidence to support that leisure travellers are generally high novelty seekers and they prefer to visit new destinations, which, in turn, hinder their revisit intentions on subsequent leisure travels. These results suggest that travellers' novelty seeking behaviour should be given due scholarly attention and thus included in theoretical models of MTEs in order to obtain a more accurate and realistic picture, otherwise, such models may result in wrong conclusions.

7.3.4 Need to Consider the Time Factor

The time factor is a very important element in any type of memory study, because people's memories of past events are expected to fade over time (Rubin, 1982). The results of the present study confirmed that travellers' memories about MTEs can decline over time and, for this reason, the expected effect of MTEs on behavioural outcomes can also decrease with the fading memory of travellers. For example, MTEs have a positive significant effect on travellers' intention to generate WOM recommendations but this relationship can be confounded by the time factor. In other words, travellers' willingness to generate WOM recommendations about MTEs can be negatively impacted by their declining memory about the trip with the passing of time. Surprisingly, this confounding effect of the time factor has not been considered by any of the existing MTEs studies, which may have produced unrealistic findings and recommendations. Therefore, the present study suggests inclusion of the time factor in theoretical models of MTEs for obtaining more realistic and accurate results.

7.4 Managerial Implications

The results of this study also propose several managerial implications with reference to DMOs and other tourism operators such as travel agents, tour operator services, tourist attractions and accommodation providers.

7.4.1 Implications for Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs)

The present study supports the previous recommendations for DMOs that they need to re-evaluate their current destination marketing strategies, which are highly focused on promoting destination attributes, thereby shifting from ‘a features based approach’ to an ‘experienced based approach’, putting more emphasis towards the realisation of memorable experiences (Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; King, 2002; Lagiewski & Zekan, 2006; Pizam, 2010; Williams, 2006). Since DMOs are generally not directly involved in delivering experiential products for visitors, they have to play a facilitator role – in the sense of facilitating an ideal environment that enhances opportunities for visitors to realise more memorable experiences.

The results of the study suggest that the ten dimensions of MTEs are not mutually exclusive but are inter-connected themes, implying that MTEs should be facilitated and managed in a holistically rather than separately. For instance, certain authentic local experiences can also be novel experiences for a particular visitor and, at the same time, such experiences may facilitate travellers to acquire learning experiences during a trip. This interconnectedness among the 10 dimensions was evident in the results of both exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses. For example, the EFA results indicated that the ten (10) factors were correlated with each other, implying that, attempting to facilitate memorable experiences in a holistic way is more feasible and practical for DMOs because travellers ultimately seek a complete travel experience and thus evaluate the overall experience of a particular destination rather than thinking about individual experiential elements (Buhalis, 2000; Hsieh & Chang, 2006). Planning MTEs in a holistic way can also produce synergy among these different yet closely related experiential dimensions. Hence, DMOs need to facilitate MTEs in the sense of enabling travellers to access as many experiential arenas as they wish during their visits. It would also be beneficial to make these experiential dimensions more interconnected and coordinated so that travellers can experience them simultaneously during their engagements in tourism activities. Therefore, the study proposes “the flower model of MTEs”, conceptualising “MTEs” as the heart of a flower surrounded by carefully designed ten petals of experiential dimensions, as illustrated in Figure 7.2.

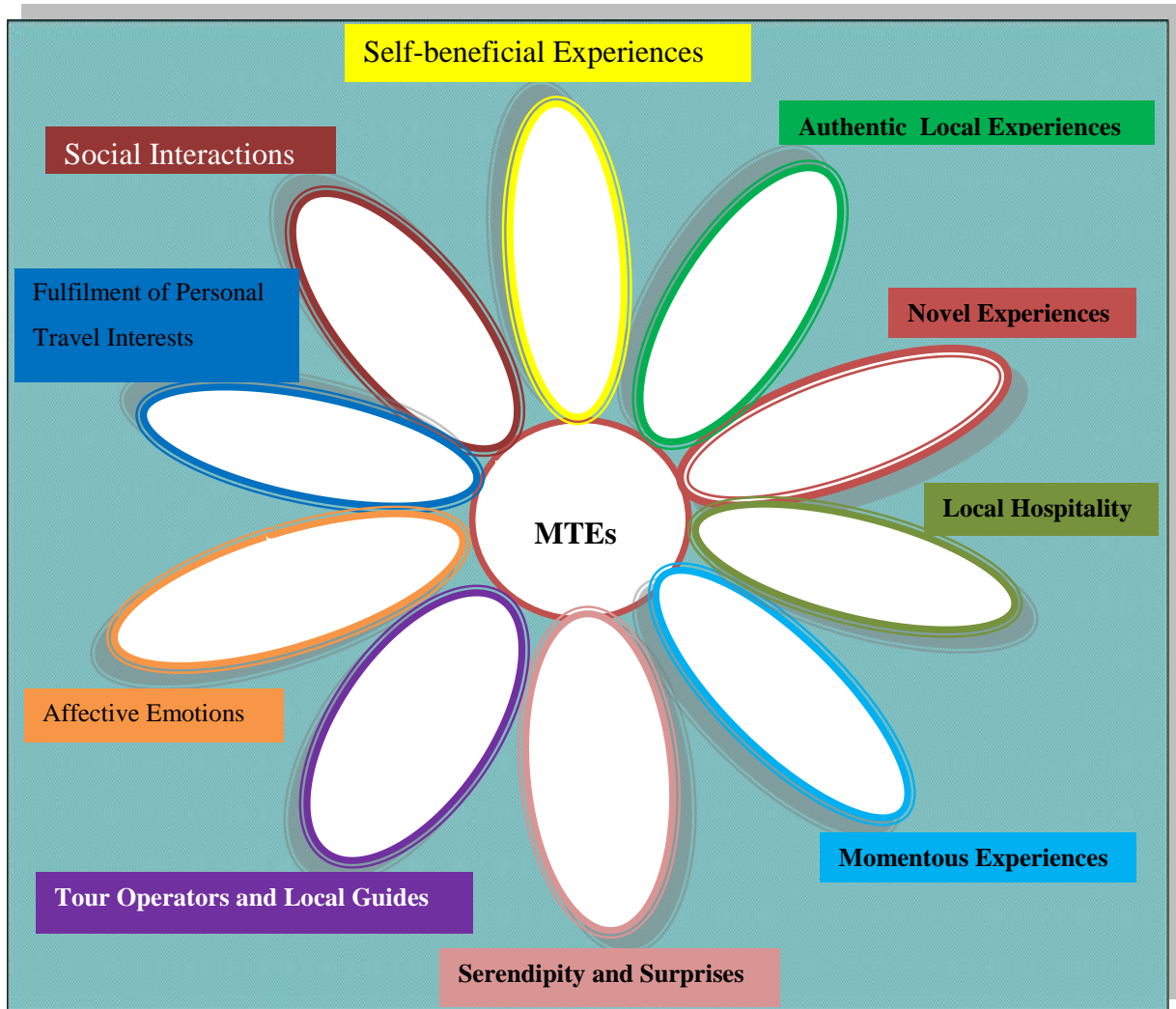


Figure 7.2: The flower model of MTEs

However, the flower model of MTEs’ does not suggest that every traveller tries to realise all of these experiences during a particular tour. As qualitative results of the study suggested, what travellers primarily seek from a visit may vary according to their individual preferences. However, facilitating all MTEs experiential dimensions within a destination may enable even different visitor segments to obtain what they really want to experience during a tour. DMOs can also use certain strategies which can enable potential visitors to customise their travels. A number of destinations use these techniques now for delivering more memorable experiences for visitors, for example, “Explorer Quotient”, developed by the Canadian Tourism Commission, offers potential visitors the opportunity to identify their travel profile and choose tourism products accordingly (<http://en-corporate.canada.travel/resources-industry/explorer-quotient>). The Commission has also developed a toolkit, called “the EQ toolkit” which helps tourism businesses to know more about their visitors and offer customer-

tailored tourism products. Similarly, the “Discover America” website offers visitors a facility to customise their tourism trips to the US through ‘Tune your USA trip’ webpage (<http://www.discoveramerica.com/usa/trip-tuner.aspx>).

Another related important task of DMOs is facilitating easy and reliable information for potential visitors so that they can undertake proper pre-planning and make wise decisions to gain the most enjoyment from their leisure trips. The key task of DMOs in this aspect is to enhance the likelihood that potential visitors can experience as many memorable experiences during a trip through effective promotions and proper information management. Lack of access to important information about all the potential tourism products available for visitors can lead to various missed opportunities that travellers could have enjoyed to make their trip more memorable.

With reference to the promotional role of DMOs, the study suggests that DMOs need to focus more on WOM publicity because MTEs have a strong impact on travellers’ intentions to make positive WOM recommendations to other travellers. Such a finding supports the frequent use of testimonials in marketing to promote destinations. However, such testimonials should include unique and original quotations from recent travellers who talk about all of the ten experiential dimensions of MTEs that have been shown to be important to leisure travellers in this research. That will also provide information about all the potential experiences available within a destination for travellers so that they can properly plan and realise MTEs in a more holistic way. Creating social media platforms by DMOs such as Facebook accounts and blogs would further facilitate sharing experiences and making recommendations by visitors after their vacation. The official website of the DMOs should be linked to all social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube accounts for travellers to record their “preferences” for destinations, post “reviews and comments” about travel experiences. DMOs can also maintain their own blogs for travellers to share their experiences with others; all of which will facilitate free publicity for destinations.

Another vital function that DMOs have to perform is coordinating and fostering cooperation among various stakeholders in the tourism industry who directly or indirectly affect visitor experiences in numerous ways. This is very important because tourism is not a single product which can be controlled by single owner, but involves a large number of players (Baker & Cameron, 2008), implying that visitor experiences are shaped by all the encounters which take place with these individual persons and organisations. According to Bennett (1999),

even uncontrollable external events can affect visitor experiences and, thus, the image of a destination. Therefore, DMOs need to go beyond their simple promotional role towards the realisation of delightful and memorable experiences for their visitors through proper coordination and balancing of all the stakeholders' interests (Buhalis, 2000; Baker & Cameron, 2008) and, more importantly, fostering cooperation among stakeholders to involve joint marketing programs, make joint decisions and undertake integrated marketing communication efforts, which will eventually benefit all the parties but especially visitors.

Another important role of DMOs is to obtain the local residents' support and encourage favourable attitudes towards tourists and tourism in general, because visitors' memories of a particular destination can be triggered by friendly, helpful and welcoming local residents, and, conversely, local rudeness can create very negative memories in visitors' minds (Chandralal & Rindfleish, 2012). It is impossible to sustain tourism in a destination that is not supported by the local community. Consequently, DMOs need to understand community aspirations and obtain their support for facilitating pleasant experiences for visitors (Chandralal, 2010). In doing so, it is necessary to reduce the likely conflicts between tourists and a local community which can destroy tourists' perception about the destination.

Especially, there is potential for community unrest and negative reactions towards tourists when large scale tourism projects are taking place without considering community feedback or the voice of the local communities (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2012). Tourism authorities need to be transparent in such situations and they need to communicate the benefits of tourism developments for rural communities more effectively in order to obtain and keep the local community support that will make local communities more favourable towards such tourism developments and tourists. DMOs can also educate local communities about the importance of tourism and tourists for economic development and social welfare of people. This can be achieved through conveying the message through community leaders and other opinion leaders in the society who can convince people about the benefits of tourism and consequently results in treating tourists appropriately.

Meantime, DMOs have to take the necessary precautionary measures for minimising visitors' chances for getting trapped in dangerous situations and unethical local business practices, such as 'ripping off' foreigners by local vendors and private transport providers (e.g. taxi drivers). Proper information and visitor education can be important for preventing tourists from making such blunders and helping them to choose safe options. DMOs can also train local youth to become friendly and effective guides for tourists, which can facilitate tourists

to obtain a more secure and enjoyable experiences during their travels. That may also be helpful in addressing the unemployment problem among youth.

Finally, DMOs can obtain periodic visitor feedback about how memorable and pleasant the destination experiences were, and the results should be disseminated among tourist-provider stakeholders so that they can work together to solve problems and improve visitor experiences on a continuous basis.

7.4.2 Implications for Other Tourism Operators

The results of the present study offer a number of managerial implications in regard to other tourism players in destinations, such as travels agents, tour operator services, tourist attractions and accommodation providers.

Implications for Tour Companies

The study discovered that highly professional and quality tour facilitators such as travel agents and tour operator companies can significantly contribute to the delivery of MTEs for potential visitors who prefer to obtain a more controlled and hassle-free leisure trips. The current study suggests a number of important factors for consideration of such tour facilitators in order to plan more memorable tourism products for their potential customers. Although tourist experiences are interpreted as highly subjective phenomena by some scholars (Kim, et al., 2010; Morgan & Xu, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011a), the present study suggests that deliberate managerial efforts of experiential designers can considerably affect the facilitation of MTEs for their clients. In other words, tourism marketers have many avenues for actively engaging in designing and delivering memorable experiences for their customers. The potential managerial actions listed below are some examples that tourism suppliers can consider in order to add more memorable elements to their tourism products:

- Providing more opportunities for travellers to reach authentic local villages; to stay at accommodation places which are closer to real local life; to interact with locals and to experience the actual way of local living; to immerse and appreciate local cultures; and to enjoy more authentic local foods and cuisines during a tour. For example, some of the tactics may include: reducing the group size of tours, arranging family visits and accommodations; organising meals with real local food in real local settings prepared by actual local families; bringing visitors to experience more authentic cultural customs and ceremonies that take place in rural villages and cities; and

include more knowledgeable, experienced and friendly local leaders to the group who can properly relate tourists to local people and local settings. The inclusion of these experiences to tours will enable travellers to engage in more authentic local experiences in addition to routine and more 'touristic type' experiences.

- Ensuring that travellers can feel a sense of adventure and encounter novel and unique experiences during tours. That will help tourism companies to distinguish their tourism products from those of competitors, and make the experiences more memorable for their clients. Including certain unique and rare experiences and visitations into tours that competitors do not usually provide for their clients, such as providing unusual/atypical accommodation options for the clients to stay in during tours; allowing tourists to encounter strange but safe culinary experiences which are not typical during tours; obtaining different but harmless medical treatments; and participating in distinctive religious and other cultural activities, are some of the potential tactics for tour companies to deliver such rare and novel experiences. From a broader perspective, to carry out such tactics will require two managerial tasks: (a) a continuous managerial commitment to identify potential differentiators that can distinguish their tourism products from competitive products as well as typical 'mainstream tourism products'; and (b) undertaking continuous product innovations in order to offer such distinctive and innovative tourist experiences to their clients.
- Enhancing the probability for travellers to encounter more serendipity during a tour, which can be planned to some extent or facilitating travellers to encounter more serendipity by themselves in terms of organising more flexible tours and providing personal freedom so that they can make their own discoveries and more serendipitous moments during a tour. Although the term "serendipity" suggests that it cannot be pre-planned by marketers and travellers themselves, tour companies can use some deliberate tactics to provide serendipity of a certain kind for their clients during tours. For example, tour operators can bring their clients to some special locations or organise some special events that were not originally included in the tour and not communicated to the clients, thereby making the tour more serendipitous for travellers. The tour directors and guides should also be given adequate empowerment by tour companies so that they can make quick and independent decisions to provide serendipity to the clients during tours.

- Planning tours in the sense that travellers feel better about themselves by engaging in personally meaningful experiences such as learning experiences that help travellers to acquire new skills, broaden their life-perspectives and improve self-identify and self-image, will also make tours more memorable than mundane, routine site-visiting experiences. Despite the fact that these types of experiences are more important for independent travellers, for instant, back packers, tour operators might also include these experiences at a certain level for tourists who prefer to travel in organised package tours. For example, including experiences such as bringing the clients to remote villages of the destination in order to see the hardships that local people experience daily or visiting certain attractions, battle sites and war museums, which depict previous human disasters may provide profound learning and reflective experiences for clients. Tour operators also could customise their tours to offer more challenging experiences, such as trekking and river rafting for those who prefer to encounter such adventures. Furthermore, tour companies can offer more flexible tours so that the clients can choose such experiences during tours if they wish.
- Providing adequate opportunities for travellers to engage in pleasant sociable moments and, more importantly, maintaining agreeable and pleasant interactions among travellers during tours (i.e. minimising conflicts and encouraging comradeship). These aspects are important because a traveller's perception of a group tour is directly influenced by the degree to which group cohesiveness and the level of pleasant interactions are attained among the travellers. One option to realise this objective is to encourage and provide incentives for people to travel in small groups (e.g. with the family or friends) that can enhance perceived enjoyment and excitement of a tour through "shared experiences". In order to enhance the interactions with other travellers, tour companies can organise relatively small group tours, which would provide more opportunities for travellers to interact with each other and create comradeship among the tour-group members. Tour companies can also be more cautious when selecting potential customers for tours, For example, trying to include travellers who have similar travel interests into tour groups can reduce likely conflicts among the members and also enhance the level of excitement and enjoyments of tours due to "common tour agendas" among the group members. Segmenting the travel market based on different travel preferences and offering more theme-based tours that will be suitable for different travel segments would be more helpful to realise the above-mentioned objective.

Various tactics can be implemented in order to enhance customer-to-customer interactions among travellers during tours as well, For example, organising group meals (arranging dinner settings at larger tables) so that travellers can meet each other and build friendships and bonds gradually; dividing the total tour group into small groups who can share the same coach or boat when they undertake excursions and other tourist activities so that they can build friendships quickly; and organise various group, activities such as games and parties, which enable travellers to socialise more with other travellers.

- Delivering highly delightful services/experiences to travellers. This will help tour facilitator services to include the ‘surprise’ factor into tours. In this regard, tour operators have to make sure that travellers experience a consistently superior service throughout the tour; for example, even at hotels, restaurants and other service encounters over which tour operator companies may not have a direct control. First, tour operator services need to make efforts to understand their clients’ expected service level and then to make sure that the actual service delivered offers the clients more than they expected or at least to meet their expectations. The execution of the service with reference to the tour plan, timing of the tour, the quality of guiding and the additional services expected from travellers should be managed with great care. Tour guides, in particular, should be properly trained through guides training programs, which will help them to acquire both technical quality (e.g. knowledge about the attractions and local matters, language skills and interpretation skills) and function quality (friendliness, politeness, helpfulness, gestures and postures) so that they can deliver professional and memorable services during the entire tour. In addition, maintaining good marketing relationships with other service providers, such as tourist attractions, tourist hotels and restaurants, is essential for tour companies to offer a reliable and delightful overall experience to their clients. The provision of occasional surprises, such as giving free gifts or memorabilia for the clients, could be another tactic for delighting the clients. Obtaining client feedback after the tour would provide valuable information for tour operators about the satisfaction level of the tour and insights to improve it further.

Trying to encompass these experiential dimensions to a best possible level will help tourism operator companies to facilitate all the four realms of an experience (entertainment, education, esthetic and escapist) into a tour, which is necessary to stage the richest experiences for consumers according to Pine & Gilmore (1998). In other words, that will

bring travellers into the ‘sweet spot’ where all the four realms of experiences meet, as shown in Figure 7.3 (Pine & Gilmore 1998, p. 102).

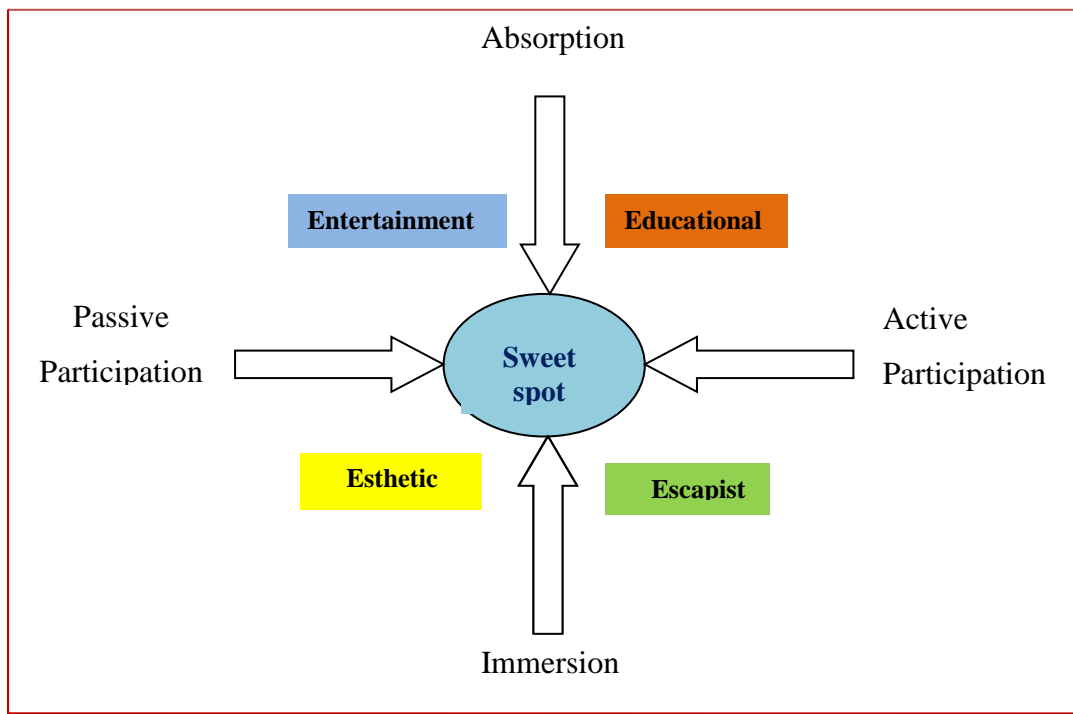


Figure 7.3: Sweet spot of four realms of experiences (adapted from Pine & Gilmore, 1998, p 102)

Such an accommodation will also enable tourists who travel on such organised tours to realise their most preferred travel experience. This does not mean that tour companies need to blend all ten dimensions into one tour but they need to try to seek potential synergy between the dimensions during tours. In doing so, tour companies need to identify the interconnectedness among the different experiential dimensions and blend them to provide more “synergy effect” to tours that will be more economical plus memorable for tourists. However, different travel preferences of different travel segments should be given due attention in such managerial efforts. Especially, many of the MTEs dimensions revealed by the present study are related to growing areas of tourism, such as culinary tourism, education tourism and religious tourism, suggesting that such experiential arenas should be incorporated into tours. As already mentioned, tour companies can organise theme-based tours which provide opportunities for different travel segments to experience such emerging experiential categories adequately while enjoying other experiences as well.

Implication for Tourist Attractions and Other Service Providers

Past research suggests that travellers are increasingly seeking intellectual development during their leisure travels in addition to seeking pleasurable experiences (Chen, Prebensen, & Huan, 2008; Morgan, 2010; The Canadian Tourism Commission, 2004). This implies that when visiting significant tourist attractions, visitors expect to learn something rather than simply observing the feature. Therefore, the relevant authorities of such tourist attractions can convert such simple observational experiences into meaningful learning experiences for visitors by employing certain strategies. One option is issuing free booklets and brochures including the location maps that contain important information about the attractions in relevant languages. Another option is encouraging visitors to engage professional interpreter services or self-guided audio and video facilities whereby visitors can obtain an adequate knowledge about such attractions. In addition, creating short digital documentaries/videos about important attractions and making them available for travellers to purchase will enable them to watch those documentaries during their free time during or after their trip. This may allow them to absorb the knowledge about such attractions more effectively and at a more leisurely pace.

When it comes to service providers, such as hotels, restaurants and transport services, the results suggest that surprising the clients through deliberate managerial actions can be a very effective strategy for delivering memorable experiences. Offering unexpected benefits, such as free gifts and certain other exclusive services to the clients, can be highly pleasing to them and make them more loyal to the particular service provider. The importance of such random acts of kindness to build strong relationships and create loyal customers has been well acknowledged by previous research (Palmatier, Jarvis, Bechkoff, & Kardes, 2009; Emmons, 2004; Emmons and McCullough, 2004; Morales, 2005). For example, scholars have found that that the provision of even small favours, such as meals, gifts, or personalised notes, can generate customer feelings of gratitude, which lead to gratitude-based reciprocal behaviours – that is, becoming more loyal customers – and failure to repay obligations can lead to guilty feelings (Buck 2004; Dahl, Honea, and Manchanda, 2005; Palmatier et al., 2009).

The results also confirmed visitor experiences can be greatly enhanced by highly hospitable services, especially through friendly and helpful staff members. The pleasant conduct of friendly and supportive staff in terms of solving visitor problems, providing valuable information and helping them to obtain credible other services, was found to be very

important for travellers because such services provide welcome relief for them in the context of the unfamiliar cultural setting of a foreign destination. Smith (1994) asserts that present-day travellers expect highly hospitable services in addition to quality services. Hence, it is necessary to go beyond the delivery of 'quality services' towards the provision of highly 'hospitable services' in order to facilitate memorable client experiences. That will require two managerial tasks: (a) the recruitment of hospitality staff with these attributes; and (b) the continuous training of staff in these skills.

Overall, the potential managerial actions discussed above will provide more avenues for travellers to realise MTEs during their travels, which will, in turn, bring more business to tourist destinations and satisfied customers for the various tourism players concerned.

7.5 Conclusion

The present study examined MTEs in a holistic and comprehensive way, facilitated by a mixed methods research epistemology. A number of conclusions were reached from the results. Firstly, it was concluded that MTEs are mostly related to positive experiences rather than negative experiences. Secondly, the results confirmed that ten experiential dimensions are embedded in leisure travellers' MTEs namely: authentic local experiences, novel experiences, self-beneficial experiences, momentous tourism experiences, serendipitous and surprising experiences, social interactions with people, local hospitality, impressive local guides and tour operator services, fulfilment of personal travel interests and affective emotions. However, the study suggests that tourism marketers need to consider different travels preferences of different travel segments in order to better design and facilitate MTEs. Thirdly, the study found that the major benefit derived through MTEs is increasing WOM publicity about the particular destinations rather than increased repeat visitation due to the fact that travellers are high novelty seekers when travelling for leisure. However, WOM publicity will indirectly help DMOs to attract more new businesses and thereby to increase revenue and other economic benefits. Hence, the major role of DMOs is to enhance the likelihood that potential visitors can experience as many memorable experiences during a trip through effective promotions, information management and coordination among various stakeholders within a destination. Giving more emphasis to activating WOM publicity will be more effective in promotional activities. With reference to other tourism players such as travel agents, tour operator services and tourist hotels, the study concludes that deliberate actions by the management of such tourism suppliers can enhance the likelihood that their

clients can realise more MTEs during their travels; especially by designing tourism products in a holistic way to provide fruitful results for both travellers and tourism marketers.

7.6 Limitations and Further Research

The researcher acknowledges several methodological and theoretical limitations of the present study that indicate potential future research directions in order to enrich the knowledge of MTEs already gained through the present study.

First, data was collected by employing a convenience sampling method. Such a sample method may limit the generalisability of the study's findings. However, this was in accordance with the University of New England Human Ethics requirements; that is, respondents have to agree to be part of the study, which means that random samples are not allowed. Nevertheless, the researcher attempted to minimise this limitation in two ways: (i) data was collected from a large sample of respondents (N=700); and (ii) data was collected from authentic leisure travellers who were actually on a leisure trip during the survey. These two tactics helped the researcher to collect data from a relatively representative sample of leisure travel population rather than the samples used by MTEs studies to date.

However, it is acknowledged that there can be a possible sample bias in the study due to the adoption of the convenient sampling method. For example, more than 80 per cent of respondents who participated in the study came from European, Australian and New Zealander backgrounds. Therefore, the sample tends to over represent these nationalities and under represents other nationalities, such as Americans and Asians. Representation of Chinese and other Asian tourists, such as Japanese, Korean and Indian travellers, is not adequate in the sample because such Asian tourists account for a considerable percentage (around 40%) of the total international tourists arrivals in Australia (Tourism Research Australia, 2013), which is a major limitation of the study resulting from the employment of the convenience sample of the study. Consequently, it is not certain whether the study conclusions are applicable to those various nationalities that were not represented adequately in the sample.

Similarly, the sample mostly consisted of explorers (50%) and the individual mass tourist (35%), which may cause the findings to be more biased towards that those types of traveller categories and less representative of the other two broad traveller types: organised mass travellers and the drifters. There is a question as to whether the relative importance of MTEs

dimensions may differ if the sample included more of these two latter traveller types. However, these traveller type figures should be taken with caution because respondents tend to be engaged in strategic bias (i.e. they do not like to identify themselves as mass organised travellers) when answering these kind of questions. In a similar vein, the sample might have been more biased towards more novelty-seeking travellers, which may have an impact on the results. For example, there can be a possibility for different results emerging regarding the association between MTEs and future behavioural intentions if a different sample of travel population was used based on more probability sampling approaches.

Thirdly, the study focused only on tourists who travel for the intended purpose of leisure and recreational reasons. Therefore, the conclusions are valid only for this travel category and do not represent other categories, such as business tourists and tourists who travel for the sole purpose of having a holiday and visiting friends and relatives (VFR). This may be a likely reason behind the low squared multiple correlations of the dependent variables of the path analysis which should be addressed by future research. These figures may significantly improve if the tourist whose primary objective of travelling is to spend their holiday with the family, and to visit friends and relatives were included into the sample. Another possibility would be the impact of the novelty seeking behaviour of tourists. Thus inclusion of “novelty seeking construct” into the model may produce improved squared multiple correlation results. Furthermore, the inclusion of travel categories such as VFR and holiday travellers into the sample would also provide more positive and convincing results regarding the link between MTEs and re-visit intention. Nevertheless, focusing only on the ‘leisure and recreational’ category was the practically viable option since the inclusion of other categories of the tourist population would have made the study too large and unwieldy.

Furthermore, the present study did not examine the influence of the likely moderating variables on MTEs. The relative importance of the MTEs dimension may vary across a number of variables such as travel motivation, traveller type, destination visited, cultural background and other demographic factors, such as age, gender, family-life-cycle stage and income. Therefore, future research should investigate MTEs incorporating the likely influence of these factors in order to broaden the understanding of the topic. Future research can also examine how MTEs may differ according to cross-cultural differences.

The study primarily focused on positive tourism experiences in order to examine MTEs. Future research can investigate negative experiences, especially negative MTEs in more

detail because deeper insights into negative experiences will provide more opportunities to recover service and experience failures, which will create more loyal visitors.

The validity of the MTEs instrument proposed by the present study could be further tested through the use of different samples and, more importantly, recruiting potential respondents using random sampling techniques when possible. Other scale development procedures could also be employed in such research endeavours, such as the procedures suggested by Rossiter (2002) and Sweeney and Soutar (2001). Such research could also test if the results confirm or significantly deviate from the results of the present study by adequately including other nationalities (e.g. Americans, Asians and Africans) and other traveller types (e.g. mass organised travellers and drifters) into the study samples. Furthermore, proper manipulation of recruiting respondents in order to include both high novelty seekers and low novelty seekers into the sample could also yield a more accurate picture of the moderating effect of novelty seeking behaviour between MTEs and future behavioural intentions.

Finally, the MTEs instrument developed in this study is a generic instrument, meaning that it did not consider different 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, eco tourists and sport and recreational tourists, in order to uncover their experiences and provide more contextual and richer findings for tourism marketers to better design their tourism products.

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Appendix 1

Classification and definitions of tourism trips according to the main purpose

1. Personal	This category includes all purposes of tourism trips that are not classified as business and professional
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holidays, leisure and recreation 	This category includes, for example, sightseeing, visiting natural or man-made sites, attending sporting or cultural events, practicing a sport...as a non-professional activity; using beaches, swimming pools and any recreation and entertainment facilities, cruising, gambling, attending summer camps for youngsters, resting, honey-mooning, fine dining, visiting establishments specialized in well-being (for example, wellness hotels), fitness except in the context of a medical treatment...etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visiting friends and relatives 	This category includes, for example, activities such as visiting relatives or friends; attending weddings, funerals or any other family event; short-term caring for the sick or old, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and training 	This category includes, for example, taking short-term courses paid either by employers or others, which should be identified separately, where relevant... following particular programmes of study (formal or informal) or acquiring specific skills through formal courses, including paid study, language, professional or other special courses, university sabbatical leaves, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health and medical care 	This category includes, for example, receiving services from hospitals, clinics, convalescent homes and, more generally, health and social institutions, visiting thalassotherapy and health and spa resorts and other specialized places to receive medical treatments when they are based on medical advice, including cosmetic surgeries using medical facilities and services. This category includes only short-term treatments because long-term treatments requiring stays of one year or more are not part of tourism
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religion/pilgrimages 	This category includes, for example, attending religious meetings and events, pilgrimages, etc.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping 	<p>This category includes, for example, purchasing consumer goods for own personal use or as gifts except for resale or for use in a future productive process, (in which case the purpose would be business and professional), etc.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit 	<p>This category consists of stopping at a place without any specific purpose other than being en route to another destination</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other 	<p>This category includes, for example, volunteer work (not included elsewhere), investigative work and migration possibilities; undertaking any other temporary non-remunerated activities not included elsewhere, etc.</p>
<p>2. Business and professional</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This category includes the activities of the self-employed and employees as long as they do not correspond to an implicit or explicit employer-employee relationship with a resident producer in the country or place visited, those of investors, businessmen, etc...for example, attending meetings, conferences or congresses, trade fairs and exhibitions; giving lectures, concerts, shows and plays... participating in professional sports activities; attending formal or informal on-the-job training courses; being part of crews on a private mode of transport (corporate jet, yacht, etc.), etc.

Source: The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2010, p.24-26)

Appendix 2

In-depth Interview Guide

1. General background information about respondents' travel interests and behaviour:

- When do you usually travel for holidays?
- How often do you travel each year?
- What types of destinations do you prefer to travel?
- Whom do you like to travel with?
- What is your main purpose of traveling?

2. Memorable Tourism Experiences:

- When asked to recall a tourism experience, what particular experience first comes to your mind?
- Can you describe that experience more fully for me? (Allow time for this)
- Possible prompting questions:
 - Is there a particular thing that stands out in your memory from that experience?
 - Can you tell me why it stands out for you?
 - Can you describe the scene? (Date, place, atmosphere etc.)
 - What were you thinking about at the time?
 - Can you describe how you were feeling during that experience?
 - How important do you think the natural setting/ place / people / activity was in making the experience memorable?
 - Were you looking for this sort of experience or was it more of a surprise?
 - What will be the influence on your future trip decisions of such an experience?

3. Likely impacts of MTEs on future behavioural intentions:

- Have you revisited the same destination in order to replicate the same or similar experiences again?
- Do you intend to revisit same destination in the future?
- Have you recommended the trip to any one such as your family members, friends and colleagues?

- Do you intend to recommend it for someone in the future?

4. Closing the interview:

Thank you for answering the questions openly and participating in this research. It is really appreciated. Is there anything that you would like to add or ask?

Appendix 3

Questionnaire

PART A

The questions below ask about your general travel behaviours and preferences. Please tick (✓) in the box representing the most appropriate response/responses for you.

A1. On average, how frequently do you travel domestically and overseas as a tourist for leisure purposes?

(a) Domestic:

(b) Overseas:

1	never	
2	Once every 6-10 years	
3	Once every 5 years	
4	Once every 2 or 3 years	
5	Once every year	
6	More than once every year	

1	never	
2	Once every 6-10 years	
3	Once every 5 years	
4	Once every 2 or 3 years	
5	Once every year	
6	More than once every year	

A2. As a tourist, how many overseas destinations (countries) have you visited for leisure purposes so far?

1	None	
2	Only one	
3	2-5 destinations	
4	6-10 destinations	
5	More than 10 destinations	

A3. Which one of the following four travel scenarios best describes your general travel behaviour and preferences?

1	I always like to travel under package tours where everything is pre-planned by a tour operator and the entire tour is well guided. I need comfort and familiarity in foreign destinations and do not like to take any risks. Travelling with a group of other travellers is fully acceptable for me.	
2	Mostly I plan my own trips (e.g. destinations, tourist spots etc.) but I usually use travel agents for making major arrangements such as booking hotels, organizing tickets, flights etc. I like to have control over my tour but I feel using travel agents to arrange the trip is more comfortable and safer.	
3	I generally plan the entire trip and book flights and transport by myself. I do not use travel agents to make these arrangements. I like to go off-the-beaten track (not what the typical tourists do); I prefer to interact with locals and to be close to local culture, but my accommodation and itinerary is pre-planned by myself to prevent unnecessary problems during the trip.	
4	I prefer to totally immerse myself in local life and culture and do not want to be a typical tourist. I try to live with locals and share their food and shelter. I prefer not to have a fixed itinerary or pre-planned travel goals.	

A4. Use the list of statements below to characterise your general preferences towards seeking novel travel experiences. Please circle the number that most closely reflects your ideal travel experience.

		Not at all			Very much			
							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS1	I like to find myself at destinations where I can explore new things.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS2	I want there to be a sense of discovery involved as part of my vacation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS3	I like to experience new and different things on my vacation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS4	I want to experience customs and cultures different from those in my own							

	environment on vacation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS5	I enjoy the change of environment which allows me to experience something new on vacation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS6	My ideal vacation involves looking at things I have not seen before.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS7	I feel a powerful urge to explore the unknown on vacation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
NS8	I like to feel a sense of adventure on my travels							

PART B

To answer the questions in this part of the survey, please **recall a tourism trip (only for leisure) that first comes into your memory**. Before answering the questions, take one or two minutes to recollect the trip experiences more vividly i.e. places visited, setting of the tour, travel group, weather, activities done, feelings you had etc.

.....Please recall your memory now.....

Now answer the following questions based on your memory of the trip.

B1. When did you have that trip (year)?

B2. Which destination/destinations (i.e. countries/cities) did you visit during the trip?

.....

B3. The total duration of the trip (in days)

B4. Total expenditure spent on the trip (give a rough figure) AU\$

B5. With whom did you travel on the trip?

1	Alone	
2	With my spouse/partner	
3	With my children	
4	With my family	
5	With my friends	
6	With an unknown group of travellers	
7	Other (please specify)	
	

B6. What was the nature of the trip?

1	It was 100% a package tour	
2	It was a totally independent tour organised by myself/my family	
3	Partly independent and partly a package tour	
4	I planned most parts of the trip but I accessed the service of a travel agent to make major arrangements	

B7. How many people were in your travel party?

B8. Use the following statements to characterise how you evaluate the experiences of the trip. In doing so, rate the degree to which each statement applies to your experiences by circling the number which most closely represents your evaluation on the scale provided. If the statement is not relevant to your experiences, please tick (√) the ‘not applicable’ box.

Not at all..... Very Much

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not Applicable
SB1	The trip provided a real learning experience for me (e.g. about the history, languages and cultures.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB2	It broadened my perspectives about life and the world in general	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB3	It helped me to acquire new skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB4	It helped me to improve my self confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB5	I was totally liberated during the trip i.e. from day to day stresses, responsibilities etc.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB6	It helped me to refresh/renew myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB7	It helped me to learn more about myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SB8	It helped me to develop my personal identity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

NE1	Many aspects of the trip were novel to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE2	It was an adventurous experience i.e. new and risky	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE3	I felt I was in a different world during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE4	The trip provided a unique experience for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE5	I visited very alien and strange places during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE6	I stayed at quite different accommodation places (i.e. different from mainstream tourist hotels) during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE7	I enjoyed quite different foods during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE8	I was exposed to quite different cultures and local lifestyles during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE9	I was exposed to quite different wildlife experiences during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
NE10	During the trip, I engaged in quite novel activities that I had not done before	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

		Not at all Very much							Not applicable
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL1	It gave me an opportunity to experience the real day-to-day life of locals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL2	I was exposed to authentic local villages and markets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL3	I closely experienced the actual local cultures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL4	I could immerse myself in local festivals and other cultural ceremonies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL5	I visited authentic local restaurants and food outlets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AL6	I enjoyed very delicious real local cuisines/foods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
IN1	I was personally involved in planning the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
IN2	I was really engaged throughout the whole trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
IN3	Before the trip, I was very excited about it (i.e. high prior expectations)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
IN4	I/we actively collected a lot of information before the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
ME1	I visited world reputable tourist icons (e.g. cities, attractions, museums, parks) during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
ME2	I visited world iconic natural wonders (e.g. highly beautiful landscapes,	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

	waterfalls) during the trip							
ME3	I attended world renowned events (e.g. sport events, exhibitions) during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME4	I was waiting for the trip for a long time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME5	It was a special experience for me personally (e.g. it related to some of my family milestones or my personal achievements etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME6	It was a once in a life time experience for me (e.g. very expensive or difficult to repeat)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ME7	It was an extraordinary experience (i.e. not something that everybody can do)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
SI1	It provided good opportunities to interact with other people	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Not at all

Very much

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not applicable
SI2	I highly enjoyed the comradeship among my travel companions of the trip.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SI3	I enjoyed the trip very much because some of my close friends were with me to share the experiences	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SI4	I enjoyed the trip very much because I was with a wonderful group of travellers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SI5	I enjoyed the trip very much because I experienced it with my spouse/partner/boyfriend/girlfriend/children/parents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SI6	It provided good opportunities to develop new friendships								
SI7	It enhanced the existing bonds with my friends and travel companions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SE1	I faced unplanned and unexpected good incidents/experiences during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SE2	I experienced certain random things that really surprised me during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

SE3	I received unexpected benefits/advantages during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
SE4	Some of the things/incidents/places of the trip were well above my expectations	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LH1	Local people I encountered were genuinely friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LH2	Local people I encountered were genuinely helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LH3	Local people I encountered were genuinely generous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LG1	Local tour operator services were outstanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LG2	Local guides were very informative and knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LG3	Social skills of local guides (e.g. ability to be friendly with tourists) were very impressive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
LG4	Local guides were always very supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Not at all Very much

.....
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Not applicable
PTII	I visited the places where I really wanted to go	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PTI2	I engage in activities which I really wanted to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PTI3	It was a very disappointing experience	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
PTI4	Weather was perfect throughout the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AE1	I was very happy during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AE2	I was very pleased during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AE3	I felt very excited during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AE4	I felt very stimulated during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
AE5	I felt emotionally aroused during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

B9. Please indicate **your overall evaluation of the experiences** of the trip by circling the number, which most closely represents your experience on the scale provided.

PART C

This part of the survey intends to measure (a) how often you have remembered the trip (b) your willingness to replicate the same experience in the near future and (c) your willingness to recommend your experiences to others.

C1. Have you since re-visited the same destination/destinations?

(1) Yes

(2) No

C2. Use the following two statements to indicate your **future travel intentions in the next five years**. Please tick (✓) the box which most closely represents your intention.

		1 Most probably not	2 Probably not	3 Not sure	4 Probably yes	5 Most probably yes
R1	I will revisit the same destination/destinations for replicating the similar memorable experiences in the next five years					
R2	I will visit new destinations to seek new experiences in the next five years					

C3. Have you ever recommended that tour/experience to any of your friends, colleagues or family members?

(a) Yes (b) No

C4. What is your propensity to recommend the trip to someone in the next 12 months? Please circle the number that most closely reflects your intention.

1	2	3	4	5
Most probably not	Probably not	Not sure	Probably yes	Most probably yes

PART D

This is the last part of the survey asks for your basic demographic information. Please tick (✓) the box which most closely represents your response.

D1. Gender: 1. Male

2. Female

D2. Marital status:

1	Single	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Married	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Living with a partner	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Divorced	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Widow/Widower	<input type="checkbox"/>

D3. Which one of the following age categories do you belong to?

1	Below 20	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	20-29	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	40- 49	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	60- 69	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	70 and above	<input type="checkbox"/>

D4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

1	Primary school	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Secondary School	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Vocational Education and Training	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Higher education	<input type="checkbox"/>

D5. Which of the following categories best illustrates your annual gross personal income?

1	Less than \$20,000	
2	\$20,000 to \$39,999	
3	\$40,000 to \$59,999	
4	\$60,000 to \$79,999	
5	\$80,000 to \$99,999	
6	\$100,000 to \$119,999	
7	\$120,000 to \$149,999	
8	\$150,000 to \$249,999	
9	\$250,000 or more	

D6. What is your occupation.....

D7. Your country of residence

.....**Thanks for participating in this survey**

Appendix 4

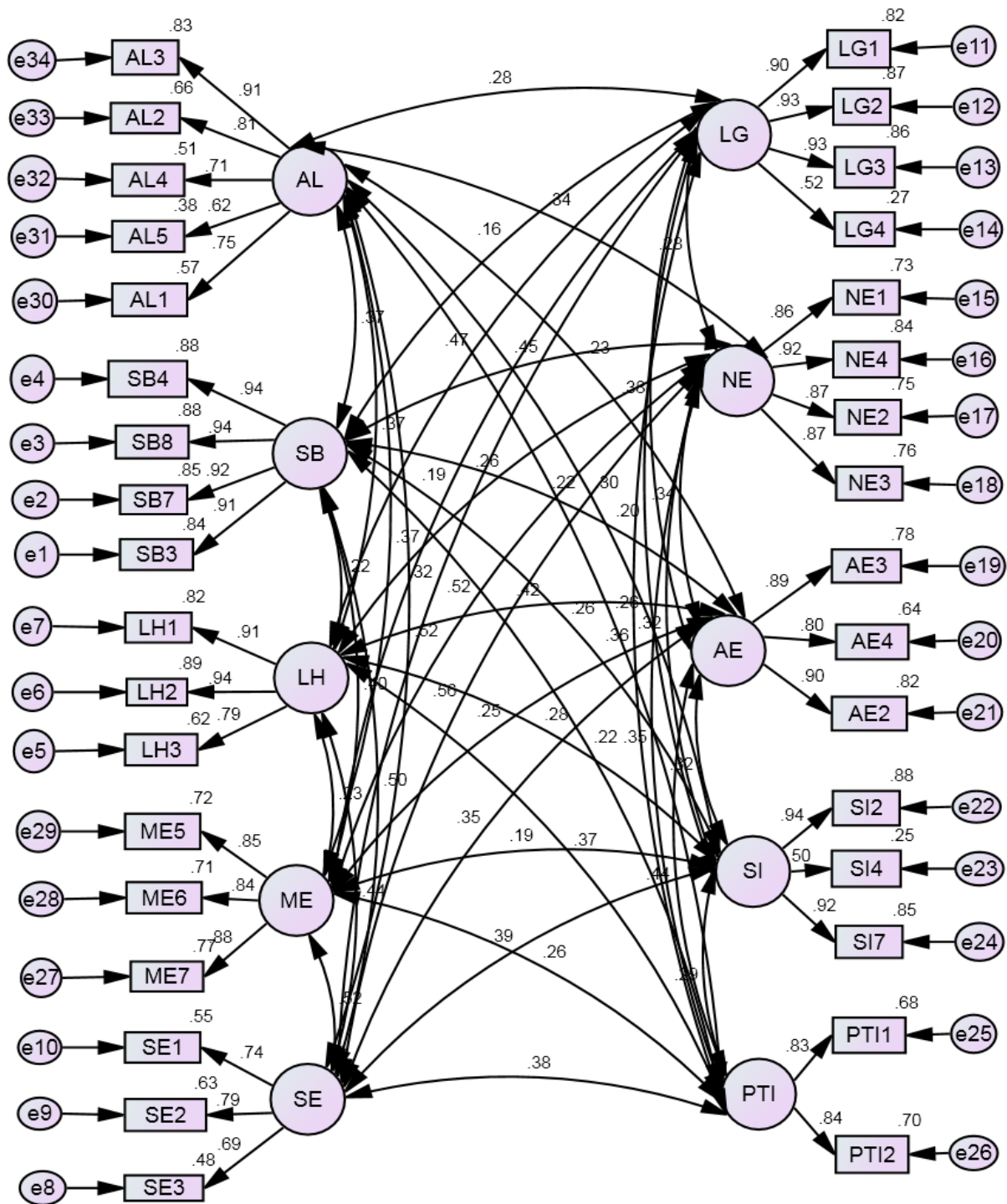
Characteristics of the survey respondents

Item	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	354	51.5
	Female	333	48.5
Age	Below 30	317	46.1
	30-49	181	26.3
	50 and above	190	27.6
Marital Status	Single	278	40.4
	Married	239	34.8
	Living with a partner	135	19.7
	Divorced	24	3.5
	Widow/Widower	10	1.5
Level of Education	Primary School	3	.4
	Secondary school	111	16.2
	Vocational education and training	91	13.3
	Higher education	480	70.1
Level of gross annual personal income (in AUD)	Less than 20 000	162	24.8
	20 000-39 999	117	17.9
	40 000-59 999	106	16.2
	60 000-79 999	89	13.6
	80 000-99 999	69	10.6
	100 000-119 999	41	6.3
	120 000-149 999	37	5.7
	150 000-249 999	23	3.5
	250 000 and above	9	1.4
Nationality	Australians and New Zealanders	329	47.8
	Europeans	306	44.5
	US and other Americans	41	6.0
	Other	12	1.7
Profession	Academic/professional/scientists	181	26.3
	Managerial/administrative	61	8.9
	Business owner/investor	24	3.5
	Office assistance/administrative assistant/clerical staff	20	2.9
	Public/local government servant	10	1.5
	Technical/mechanical staff/skilled labourer	21	3.1
	Self-employed	17	2.5
	Sales/service staff	65	9.4

	Part-time/casual workers, unskilled labourer	30	4.4
	House wife	6	0.9
	Student	84	12.2
	Retired/Pensioner	84	12.2
	Unemployed	28	4.1
	Other	33	4.8
Frequency of domestic travel	Never	6	.9
	Once every 6-10 years	14	2
	Once every 5 years	8	1.2
	Once every 2 or 3 years	80	11.7
	Once every year	176	25.7
	More than once every year	401	58.5
Frequency of overseas travel	Never	14	2.1
	Once every 6-10 years	78	11.5
	Once every 5 years	58	8.5
	Once every 2 or 3 years	196	28.9
	Once every year	190	28
	More than once every year	143	21.1
Number of overseas destinations visited	None	14	2
	Only one	41	6
	2-5 destinations	144	21
	6-10 destinations	161	23.5
	More than 10 destinations	326	47.5
Traveller type	The organised mass tourist	26	3.8
	The individual mass tourist	238	34.9
	The explorer	342	50.1
	The drifter	76	11.1

Appendix 5

Graphical representation of the first order CFA model



Note: AL= Authentic local experiences, SB= Self-beneficial experiences, LH= Local hospitality, ME= Momentous travel experiences, LG= Impressive local guides & tour operators, NE= Novel experiences, AF= Affective emotions, SI= Social interactions, SE= Serendipitous and surprising experiences PTI= Fulfilment of personal travel interests.

Appendix 6

Comparison between the ML estimates and bootstrap estimates (First order CFA model)

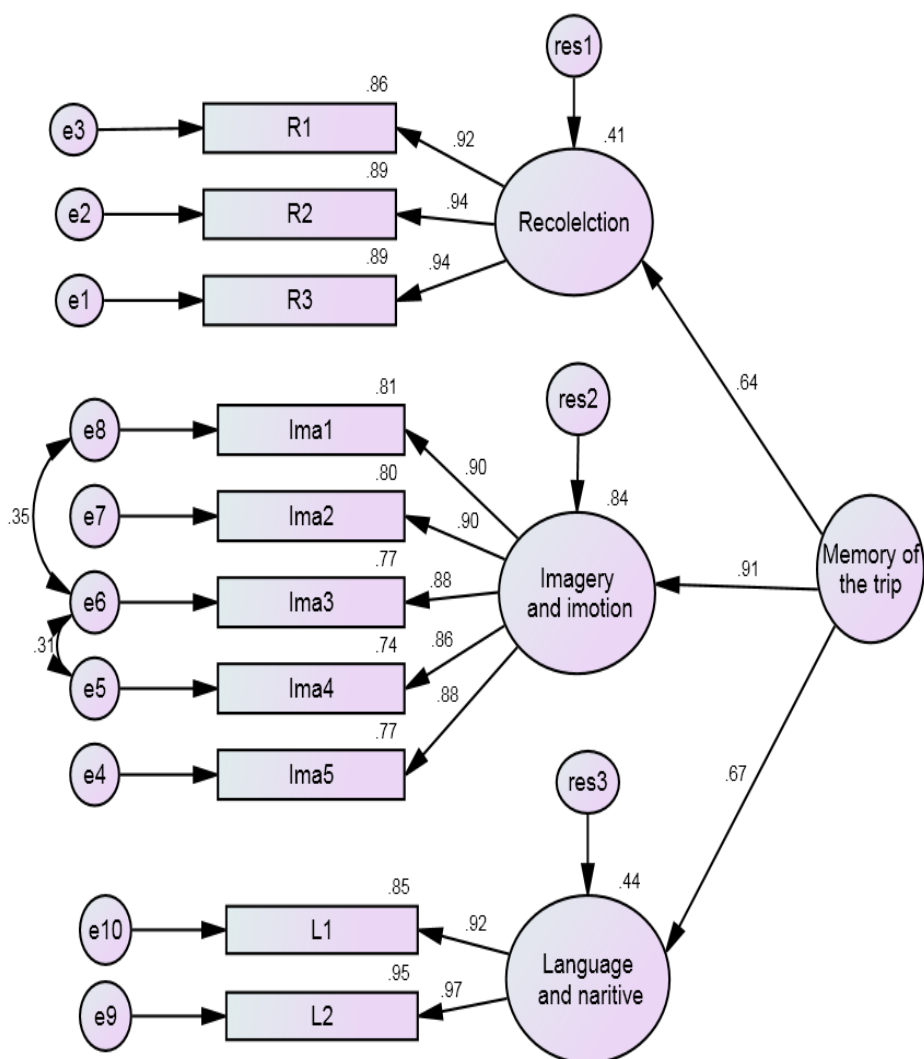
Dimension	ML regression weights	Critical ratio based on ML estimates	Bootstrap Mean estimates	Bootstrap standard errors	Calculated critical values of bootstrap estimates
F1: Authentic local experiences					
AL1	1.000		1.000		
AL5	.762	11.259*	.763	.073	10.452*
AL4	.986	13.252*	..990	.067	14.776*
AL2	1.080	15.322*	1.084	.075	14.453*
AL3	1.168	17.003*	1.174	.070	16.771*
F2: Self-beneficial experiences					
SB3	1.000		1.000		
SB7	.992	29.504*	.992	.035	28.342*
SB8	1.033	30.993*	1.034	.033	31.333*
SB4	1.033	30.566*	1.034	.026	39.769*
F3: Impressive Local Guides and Tour Operators					
LG1	1.000		1.000		
LG2	1.068	28.214*	1.070	.038	28.158*
LG3	1.019	27.831*	1.022	.039	26.205*
LG4	.653	10.579*	.656	.067	9.791*
F4: Novel experiences					
NE1	1.000		1.000		
NE4	1.134	23.455*	1.136	.047	24.170*
NE2	1.098	21.190*	1.100	.053	20.754*
NE3	1.103	21.344*	1.105	.072	15.347*
F5: Local hospitality					
LH3	1.000		1.000		
LH2	1.014	19.900*	1.014	.045	22.533*
LH1	.958	19.336*	.958	.050	19.160*
F6: Affective Emotions					
AE3	1.000		1.000		
AE2	.922	18.473*	.924	.052	17.769*
AE4	.993	21.766*	.994	.044	21.454*
F7: Significant Travel Experiences					
ME7	1.000		1.000		
ME6	1.021	19.189*	1.023	.061	16.770*
ME5	.992	19.293*	.994	.059	16.847*

F8: Memorable Social Interactions and Improved Social Bonds					
SI2	1.000		1.000		
SI4	.623	9.767*	.622	.071	8.761*
SI7	.919	20.011*	.921	.056	16.446*
F9: Serendipitous and Surprising Experiences					
SE1	1.039	11.606*	1.047	.110	9.518*
SE2	1.084	12.087*	1.094	.118	9.271*
SE3	1.000		1.000		
F10: Fulfilment of Personal Travel Interests					
PTI1	1.000		1.000		
PTI2	1.080	10.469*	1.091	.131	8.328*

* Deemed significant at $p < .05$

Appendix 7

The second order model of the autobiographical memory of the trip



Appendix 8

Standardized regression estimates and squared multiple correlations

Factor	Standardised regression weights	Squared Multiple Correlations
Factor 1 (Recollection)	.644*	.415*
Factor 2 (Imagery and Emotion)	.915*	.836*
Factor 3 (Language and Narrative)	.666*	.444*
Recollection 1	.925*	.855*
Recollection 2	.945*	.893*
Recollection 3	.942*	.887*
Imagery 1	.900*	.811*
Imagery 2	.896*	.802*
Imagery 3	.876*	.767*
Imagery 4	.859*	.738*
Imagery 5	.875*	.766*
Language 1	.922*	.849*
Language 2	.974*	.948*

* Deemed significant at $p < .05$

Appendix 9

Comparison between ML estimates and bootstrap estimates (Path model)

Path	Regression weight (ML)	Standard error (ML)	Critical ratio (ML)	P value (ML)	Mean (BT)	Standard error (BT)	Critical ratio (BT)	P value (BT)
MTEs → Intention to revisit the same destination	.014	.044	.309	.758	.013	.042	.309	.768
MTEs → Intention to visit new destinations	.113	.040	2.795	.005	.114	.046	2.478	.013
MTEs → Intention to Generate WOM recommendations	.319	.048	6.618	***	.319	.054	5.907	.001
MTEs → Autobiographical Memory	.535	.033	16.340	***	.536	.034	15.765	.001
Autobiographical Memory → Intention to revisit the same destination	.028	.044	.633	.527	.029	.046	.630	.527
Autobiographical Memory → Intention to visit new destinations	.106	.040	2.652	.008	.105	.044	2.386	.022

Path		Regression weight (ML)	Standard error (ML)	Critical ratio (ML)	P value (ML)	Mean (BT)	Standard error (BT)	Critical ratio (BT)	P value (BT)
Autobiographical Memory	→ Intention to generate WOM recommendations	.150	.048	3.156	.002	.149	.049	3.040	.002
Intention to visit new destinations	→ Intention to revisit the same destination	-.390	.041	-9.425	***	-.389	.046	-8.456	.001
Age of memory	→ Autobiographical Memory	-.014	.006	-2.406	.016	-.014	.006	-2.333	.011
Age of memory	→ Intention to generate WOM recommendations	-.042	.007	-5.973	***	-.042	.008	-5.250	.001

*** Deemed significant at $p < .01$

Appendix 10

MTEs instrument

Not at all Completely

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	AL1	It gave me an opportunity to experience the real day-to-day life of locals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	AL2	I was exposed to authentic local villages and markets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	AL3	I closely experienced the actual local cultures	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	AL4	I could immerse myself in local festivals and other cultural ceremonies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	AL5	I visited authentic local restaurants and food outlets	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	SB3	It helped me to acquire new skills	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	SB4	It helped me to improve my self confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	SB7	It helped me to learn more about myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	SB8	It helped me to develop my personal identity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	NE1	Many aspects of the trip were novel to me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	NE2	It was an adventurous experience i.e. new and risky	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	NE3	I felt I was in a different world during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	NE4	The trip provided a unique experience for me	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	ME5	It was a special experience for me personally (e.g. it related to some of my family milestones or my personal achievements etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15	ME6	It was a once in a life time experience for me (e.g. very expensive or difficult to repeat)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	ME7	It was an extraordinary experience (i.e. not something that everybody can do)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	SI2	I highly enjoyed the comradeship among my travel companions of the trip.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	SI4	I enjoyed the trip very much because I was with a wonderful group of travellers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	SI7	It enhanced the existing bonds with my friends and travel companions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	LH1	Local people I encountered were genuinely friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	LH2	Local people I encountered were genuinely helpful	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	LH3	Local people I encountered were genuinely generous	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	SE1	I faced unplanned and unexpected good incidents/experiences during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	SE2	I experienced certain random things that really surprised me during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	SE3	I received unexpected benefits/advantages during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	LG1	Local tour operator services were outstanding	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	LG2	Local guides were very informative and knowledgeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	LG3	Social skills of local guides were very impressive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	LG4	Local guides were always very supportive	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	PTII	I visited the places where I really wanted to go	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	PTI2	I engage in activities which I really wanted to do	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

32	AE2	I was very pleased during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	AE3	I felt very excited during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	AE4	I felt very stimulated during the trip	1	2	3	4	5	6	7