

Memorable Tourism Experiences (Mtes), Perceived Health Risk and Travel Behaviour? A Conceptual Exploration

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Abstract

The current COVID-19 pandemic has put the tourism industry under significant pressure as tourists have overestimated and exaggerated future travel risk perception. Regardless, there has been minimal research into the impact of perceived health risk on revisit intention among tourists with past memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). This paper proposes a conceptual model and hypotheses about the inter-dependence of memorable tourism experiences, perceived health risks, and travel behaviour. The proposed framework lays the groundwork for further empirical research. The proposed framework also can benefit tourism players in strategising post-pandemic tourism experience marketing.

Keywords

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs), Overall Satisfaction, Perceived Health Risk, Revisit Intention, Tourism Consumption System (TCSs)

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INTRODUCTION

Repeated tourist is an appealing market segment for all tourist destinations worldwide (Tan, Chong, & Ho, 2017). A tourism player's ability to attract repeated tourists is more cost-effective than attracting first-time tourists (Seetanaah, Teeroovengadum, & Nunkoo, 2020). Research shows that tourist satisfaction is one of the primary factors in attracting repeated tourists (Kim, 2018). Nevertheless, today's tourists no longer seek satisfaction but opt for memorable vacation experiences (Kim, 2018; Lee, Jeon, & Kim, 2011; Mittiga, Kow, Silva, Kutschera et al., 2019; Skiff, 2018). Most of the tourists desire more than photographs, cheap mementoes, and a cosy bed. Instead, they crave unique and authentic lifelong experiences (Park & Jang, 2014). This indicated that good memories and extraordinary experiences from previous visits are the most significant influences in developing destination loyalty or recommending a destination to their families and friends (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Conversely, offering a unique experience program will assist tourism players in possessing a sustainable competitive advantage (Kim, 2018), position their businesses (Sharma & Nayak, 2019), and increase their destination image (Kim, 2018).

Besides the internal factors, the external factors, such as perceived health risk, are also vital elements that could influence revisit intention, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The current health pandemic has put tourist destinations worldwide under tremendous stress due to increased biases by overestimating traveller's future risk perceptions (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). Resultantly, tourists begin to sense a high level of pandemic risk and are hesitant to travel (Dryhurst, Schneider, Kerr, Freeman et al., 2020). The high levels of perceived risk associated with travel have resulted in tourists feeling hesitant, rescheduling their visits, reassessing destination choices, and postponing or cancelling their travel plans (Osland, Mackoy, & McCormick, 2017). Consequently, perceived health risk in influencing tourist experience and revisit intention must be investigated, especially in the aftermath of a health crisis.

The shifting nature of tourism risks is seen as a factor that could have an impact on visitors' travel experiences and behaviour. While previous published articles have focused on the moderating role of perceived travel risk in the relationship between MTEs and behavioural intentions (Chen, Cheng, & Kim, 2020), the moderating effect of perceived health risk has received scant attention in the tourism literature. Thus, a conceptual framework was developed to investigate the moderating role of perceived health risk on MTEs, overall satisfaction, and revisit intention. This paper discusses: i) the underpinning theory, literature review on MTEs, overall satisfaction, revisit intention and perceived health risk, ii) the development of the propositions and conceptual framework.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tourism Consumption System

The Woodside and Dubelaar (2002) Tourism Consumption System (TCS) theory proposes that tourism is indeed a complex system influenced by many factors. For instance, tourism is controlled by tourists' backgrounds, previous trip experiences, decision-making, and willingness to revisit the destination. The TCS is deemed suitable for the current study because the author believes that the theory is a favourable link to MTEs and supports the outcome variables anticipated in this study. The advantage of using the TCS is that this theory exclusively focuses on tourist-specific factors (Yang, Tan, & Li, 2019). The TCS also allows tourism players to understand tourists' travel paths and develop a coherent destination management strategy (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002). To date, only a few researchers have supported the theory's fundamental premise (Han & Hyun, 2017; Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013). Hence, the TCS will likewise be adopted in the current study.

Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs)

According to Liu, Mehraliyev, Liu, and Schuckert (2020), tourists nowadays are more likely to make decisions based on their prior experiences and remember the experience instead of the purchased trip. Moreover, tourists look for unique, authentic, and emotionally engaging experiences and interact with the local community. Therefore, tourism suppliers that successfully

create memorable experiences leave tourists with enduring recollections and joy (Chandralal & Valenzuela-Abaca, 2015; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). This is supported by a psychological study that indicated that memorable events bring people greater joy than financial goods (Górník-Durose, 2020). Consequently, the memorable experiences created by tourism suppliers will assist in establishing the destination's positioning and competitive advantage (Hsu, King, Wang, & Buhalis, 2016).

The widely acknowledged and cited MTEs work was pioneered by Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012), who developed an MTEs conceptual model and a scale-based instrument which consist of seven dimensions: hedonism, involvement, knowledge, local culture meaningfulness, novelty, and refreshment. In addition, Sthapit (2013) further extended this model by adding adverse feelings as an additional component. Furthermore, Chandralal and Valenzuela-Abaca (2015) incorporated several additional variables, such as surprise and tour guide performance. Furthermore, Tung and Ritchie (2011a, 2011b) stated that MTEs are classified into four essential dimensions: expectations, affect, recollection, and consequentiality. Nevertheless, Chandralal and Valenzuela-Abaca (2015) identified seven MTEs themes: life and culture, local people, shared experiences, personal experiences, perceived uncertainty, perceived novelty, tour operator services, professional guides, and affective emotions.

Tourist Behaviour

Overall satisfaction is the cumulative satisfaction or the overall positive consumption experience that meets the customer's needs (Koufteros, Droge, Heim, Massad et al., 2014). According to Kim (2018), overall satisfaction is a more reliable indicator of tourist behaviour than the disconfirmation model. Additionally, Sharma and Nayak (2019) postulated that a cumulative satisfaction construct is more predictive of future behaviours and economic growth. Consequently, the complexity of the disconfirmation paradigm limitation and tourist satisfaction must be measured in different context (Assaker & Hallak, 2013; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). On the other hand, tourists' revisit intention and the desire to spread word-of-mouth are critical behavioural intention components in tourism literature (Jani & Han, 2011; Meng & Han, 2018).

Moreover, Teng, Wu, and Liu (2015) described revisit intention as tourists' inclination to return to the same destination. This revisit intention can be viewed as a component of satisfaction on a more prolonged scale (Nguyen Viet, Dang, & Nguyen, 2020). Li, Li, and Hudson (2013) stated that past travel experience, trip satisfaction, and trip value could explain individuals' travel choices; hence, we could postulate that tourist experience and satisfaction towards the destination may influence their motivation to revisit intention. According to Foroudi, Akarsu, Ageeva, Foroudi et al. (2018), satisfied tourists are critical for subsequent purchasing decisions and destination loyalty. Furthermore, it is pivotal for both Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and other tourism players to prioritise tourist revisit intention, as sustaining repeating visitors is less expensive than enticing new visitors. Subsequently, it will lead towards competitive advantage in the long run (Seetana et al., 2020).

Perceived health risk

Perceived health risk is defined as the risk that tourists perceive to their physical health as a result of uncontrollable events linked to terrorism, political situations, natural disasters, and pandemic outbreaks (Shin & Kang, 2020). Perceived health risk can lead to a drop in travel demand (Hasan, Ismail, & Islam, 2017). Perceived health risk is defined in this study as an individual's exposure to and the severity of disease (Neuburger & Egger, 2021).

Numerous studies have been conducted to examine tourist perceived risk towards health crises and consequences (Cahyanto, Wiblishauser, Pennington-Gray, & Schroeder, 2016) such as the 2009 H1N1 swine flu (S.-H. Oh, Paek, & Hove, 2015) the Ebola outbreak (Cahyanto et al., 2016), SARS and bird flu epidemics (Rittichainuwat & Chakraborty, 2009), and COVID-19 (Matiza, 2020; Neuburger & Egger, 2021). Nonetheless, nothing is known about how the present, largest COVID-19 pandemic influences tourist perceptions of risk, altering tourists' memorable travel experiences and future travel behaviour. Hence, this study uses perceived health risk as a moderator to evaluate how it affects the association between MTEs, overall satisfaction, and revisit intention among tourists.

A conceptual proposition on MTEs, travel behavior and perceived health risk

In light of the aforementioned literature review, the conceptual framework elucidates the antecedents and moderators of perceived health risk in MTEs, overall satisfaction, and revisits intention. The Kim and Ritchie (2013) model consisting of seven MTEs components (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge) is deemed appropriate to explain tourist experience. Kim (2018) framework is adapted to represent overall satisfaction and revisit intention. While perceived health risk is adapted from (Neuburger & Egger, 2021). This framework and models were integrated and selected because Kim and Ritchie (2013) and Kim (2018) works has been cited and validated numerous times in tourism literature (Sharma & Nayak, 2019; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Zhong, Busser, & Baloglu, 2017).

The TCS theory specifies that tourist future behaviour is influenced by the way tourists evaluate their previous travel experience (Woodside & Dubelaar, 2002). This is supported by multiple marketing studies that show memory can influence customer decision-making and set the stage for future behaviour (Ali, Ryu, & Hussain, 2016; Kim et al., 2012).

Besides, customers' prior experience with a product was also found to influence customers' decision-making process and influences future behaviour (Ali et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2012), purchase intention (Pei, Guo, Wu, Zhou et al., 2020), and repeat visitation (Mahdzar, Zaidi, & Shuib, 2016; Sthapit, Coudounaris, & Björk, 2019; Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Specifically, many tourism scholars observed a significant effect of MTEs on the revisit intention (Sthapit et al., 2019; Tsai, 2016; Zhang et al., 2018). For example, Kim and Ritchie (2013) identified five MTE components that influence tourist behaviour: refreshment, meaningfulness, local culture, involvement, and hedonism. Meanwhile, Tsai (2016) discovered that MTEs substantially impacted tourists' behavioural intentions in Taiwan through his study of local food. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2018) demonstrated that MTEs affected tourists' intentions to return to Huangshan city, home to China's famed Yellow Mountain. The following hypothesis was therefore put forth:

Hypothesis 1: MTEs have a positive influence on revisit intention.

Numerous tourism research has established that tourist experience substantially impacts satisfaction (Hosany & Witham, 2010; Kim, 2018; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). For example, a favourable experience among wine tourists had a considerable effect on tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Variables such as memorable experiences were also discovered to benefit cruise tourist satisfaction (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Furthermore, as evidenced by H. Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007), tourist experience positively affects satisfaction based on Pine and Gilmore's four dimensions of experience, which are, aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism. Similarly, the same result was obtained when MTEs significantly affected overall satisfaction among tourists in Taiwan (Kim, 2018). The study by Sharma and Nayak (2019) also asserted a strong correlation between MTEs and overall satisfaction among yoga tourists in India. Therefore, the hypothesis presented below was proposed.

Hypothesis 2: MTEs have a positive influence on overall satisfaction.

Tourism literature has extensively studied the impacts of tourist satisfaction on their behavioural intentions (Kim, 2018). It is believed that overall satisfaction will generate favourable word-of-mouth (Vega-Vázquez, Castellanos-Verdugo, & Oviedo-García, 2017) and revisits intention (Seetanah et al., 2020). For example, Seetanah et al. (2020) discovered that tourist satisfaction with airport services directly affects tourist intention to revisit. Likewise, Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, and Del Chiappa (2017) inferred that satisfied tourists recommended Mauritius island to other tourists. This is corroborated by Sun, Chi, and Xu (2013) postulated the positive influence of satisfaction on the destination among tourists in Hainan Island, China.

Conversely, there are contradictory findings by Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi, and Beheshti (2015) that inferred no relationship between satisfaction and loyalty, and Lee et al. (2011) postulated that satisfaction had no direct effect on revisit intention. Tourists switch to a different destination when they feel less satisfied (Park & Jang, 2014). Unpleasant memories and unfulfilled feelings are the primary reasons tourists avoid returning to the same destination (Latiff & Imm, 2015). Resultantly, travellers currently prioritise having memorable vacation experiences over a satisfying vacation. Therefore, the following hypothesis was developed:

Hypothesis 3: Overall satisfaction has a positive influence on revisit intention.

Limited studies are investigating the mediating influence of satisfaction on vacation experience and revisit intention. [Yuliviona, Abdullah, Alias, and Azliyanti \(2019\)](#) observed that overall satisfaction among Muslim tourists mediates tourist loyalty regardless of past quality experiences. Similarly, [Gohary, Pourazizi, Madani, and Chan \(2020\)](#) identified that overall satisfaction mediated the relationship between MTEs and behavioural intention among Iranian visitors. [Sharma and Nayak \(2019\)](#) also asserted overall satisfaction mediates the relationship between MTEs and revisit in the context of yoga tourism in India. Likewise, limited studies have examined and proven the mediating role of overall satisfaction in the relationship between MTEs and revisit intention. Hence, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 4: Overall satisfaction mediates the relationship between MTEs and revisits intention.

Numerous studies have examined perceived risk as a moderator between satisfaction and loyalty. For instance, [Curras-Perez, Ruiz, Sanchez-Garcia, and Sanz \(2017\)](#) revealed that that perceived risk moderates satisfaction, trust and purchase intention, in the context of Spanish purchasers of accommodation via online platform ([Aldas-Manzano, Ruiz-Mafe, Sanz-Blas, & Lassala-Navarre, 2011](#)) and services ([Lai-Ming Tam, 2012](#)). Moreover, [Casidy and Wymer \(2016\)](#) also established that perceived risk moderates satisfaction, loyalty, and the willingness to pay among hotel guests in the United States of America (USA). However, limited studies have examined the moderating effect of perceived health risk on overall satisfaction and return intention in the context of MTEs. Consequently, the following hypotheses was postulated:

Hypothesis 5: Perceived health risk moderates the relationship between overall satisfaction and revisit intention.

The possible antecedents and moderators of perceived health risk is shown in (Figure 1). The framework is adapted from [Kim and Ritchie \(2013\)](#), [Kim \(2018\)](#), and [Neuburger and Egger \(2021\)](#).

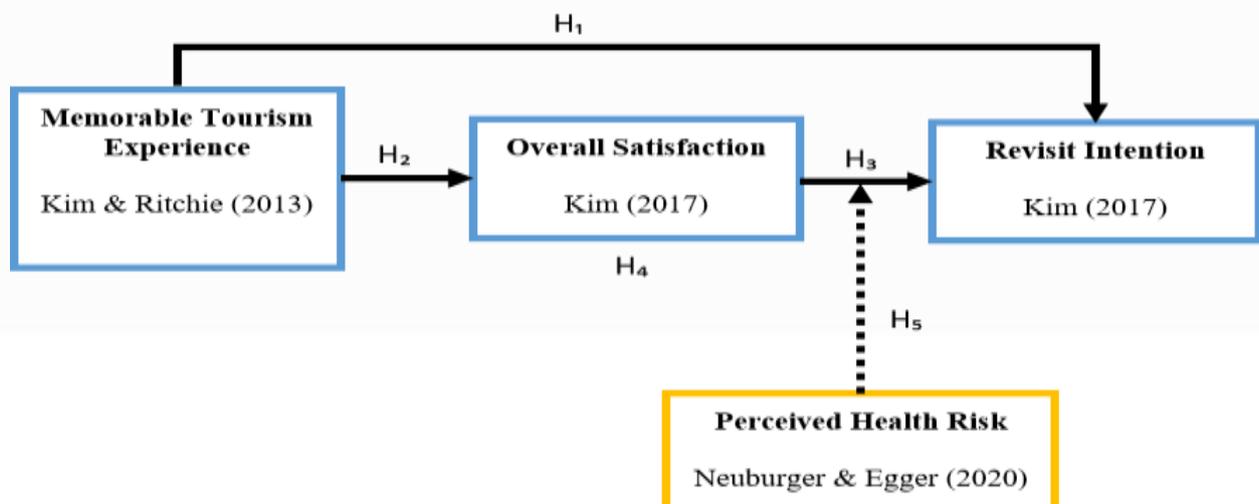


Figure 1. A Conceptual Framework of MTEs, Tourist Behaviour and Perceived health risk

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study proposes the operationalisation of MTEs, perceived health risk, and tourist behaviour in this conceptual paper. This model is congruent with the findings of a critical analysis of a variety of research agendas concerning the effects of the present COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, five hypotheses were proposed on the potential relationships between those drivers, overall satisfaction, and resulting behavioural intentions. This model also postulates that perceived health risk triggers the link between all variables and is expected to add value to the current tourism literature. This study also extends the established correlations between MTEs and other significant outcome and evaluation constructs such as overall satisfaction, perceived health risk, and revisit intentions.

Moreover, this study expands knowledge on the effect of COVID-19 perceived health risk on tourist memorable experience and behaviour. The conceptual model serves as a basis for future tourism demand research and would be applicable to different destinations or other types of tourism risks. Additionally, it is necessary to evaluate the conceptual model's robustness across multiple destinations and phases of the disaster management process.

DISCUSSION

Finding from this conceptual paper will provides excellent insight into the concept of MTEs among DMOs and other tourism stakeholders in refining their post-pandemic marketing strategies by emphasising destination experiential features rather than destination attributes. Additionally, tourism stakeholders can also use the suggested MTEs scale as an alternative to evaluating the performance of their experiential tourism offerings. Likewise, the findings of this study will enable tourism players to pay attention to the specific preferences of tourists and develop various experience-related activities that deploy safety and preventive measures to meet tourists' different tastes upon visiting destination. Finally, the findings are instructive for policymakers and tourism businesses regarding risk perceptions, enabling a quicker recovery of the tourism industry post-COVID-19.

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