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## **Towards a Better Understanding of Memorable Souvenir Shopping Experiences**

### **Abstract**

This study investigates the influence of objective authenticity, substantive staging of servicescapes, experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences. The study also examines the relationship between a memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention. Data were collected from 304 tourists who had taken a vacation in the preceding year and bought souvenirs during their trip. The results showed that experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction had positive effects on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences. Relationships between memorable souvenir shopping experiences and nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention were also supported.

Keywords: Souvenir, memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment, revisit intention

## **Introduction**

Today, offering consumers memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) is key to competitiveness in the tourism industry (Sthapit & Jiménez-Barreto, 2018). According to Kim and Chen (2019), an MTE is highly self-centred and considered a special subjective event in one's life that is stored in long-term memory; others define an MTE as a 'tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred' (Kim et al., 2012, p. 13). MTEs represent a new benchmark that destination managers and tourism businesses must strive to meet (Kim et al., 2012) and are pivotal in gaining a sustainable competitive advantage (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

The study of MTEs is not only theoretically relevant but also practically beneficial to the tourism industry (Hosany et al., 2022). MTEs can be a crucial component of destination competitiveness (Ye et al., 2021), and tourism service providers can gain numerous advantages when they successfully foster MTEs (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Stone et al., 2018). For example, travellers who have satisfactory MTEs at a particular destination are more likely to tell others about that place and their experience there (Kim, 2018; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). In addition, travellers who enjoy positive MTEs are more likely to revisit a destination (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022; Zhang, Wu et al., 2018). Positive MTEs also enhance tourists' place attachment (Tsai, 2016), and some elements of MTEs can affect tourists' subjective well-being (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018).

Shopping experiences comprise an important part of many consumers' travel experiences (Lin & Wang, 2012). While on holiday, tourists often acquire memorable reminders of special moments and life events that occurred during a trip with the purchase of souvenirs (Trinh et al., 2014), and many tourists feel that their trips would be incomplete if they failed to purchase any souvenirs (Swanson & Horridge, 2006). Souvenirs are commercially produced merchandise purchased as tangible representations of special and ephemeral travel experiences (Swanson & Timothy, 2012).

Choi (2016) defined souvenirs as mementos of places and occasions. Thus, tourists bring back souvenirs as mementos of these ephemeral experiences (Wilkins, 2011).

Souvenir purchase is recognised as a prime example of experience intensification by way of making tangible an otherwise intangible experience (Dong & Siu, 2013). Despite the recognition of the importance of souvenir purchase to tourists, souvenir-shopping experiences have remained a minor subtheme within the tourism literature (Suhartanto, 2018; Wei, 2018). This raises interesting, and hitherto largely unexplored, questions, such as what makes souvenir shopping memorable and whether such memories create nostalgia and drive destination attachment. Recent tourism studies on souvenirs have focused on the values of souvenir purchase (Wei, 2018), additive manufacturing technologies (Anastasiadou & Vettese, 2019), endowment effect and religion (Shtudiner et al., 2019), authenticity (Anastasiadou & Vettese, 2021; Soukhathammavongsa & Park, 2019), choice overload (Sthapit, 2018), the meaning of tourist souvenirs (Masset & Decrop, 2021), purchasing behaviour (Amaro et al., 2020) and self-presentation (Kuhn, 2020).

Despite the above-mentioned studies of various aspects of souvenirs, few scholars have investigated tourists' souvenir-shopping experiences (Oviedo-Garcia et al., 2014) and particularly the impact of such experiences on the memorability of the trip (Sthapit et al., 2018). In the same vein, only a handful of studies have examined the dimensions that influence a memorable souvenir shopping experience and its impact on other outcome variables, such as revisit intention and place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2018; Sthapit & Björk, 2019). For example, Sthapit and Björk (2019) identified uniqueness, usability and functionality as central elements that prolong the memorability of the travel experience and encourage revisit intention. In another study, Sthapit et al. (2018) highlighted how satisfaction and co-creation during onsite souvenir shopping at a tourism destination create memorable souvenir shopping experiences and, thus, that such memories enhance tourists' feelings of attachment to the destination. Both studies were highly destination specific, restricting participants to visitors to Rovaniemi, Finland. Therefore, modelling new

antecedents and outcomes of a memorable souvenir shopping experience remains an important goal in the study of tourism (Sthapit et al., 2018). That is the focus of this study.

To bridge the research gap identified in the tourism shopping literature, this study extends the MTE construct by identifying the critical antecedents and consequences of memorable souvenir shopping experiences. More specifically, based on the existing literature, this study proposes an integrative conceptual model of memorable souvenir shopping experiences that integrates five main antecedents (objective authenticity, substantive staging of the servicescape, experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction) and three outcome variables (nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention) of memorable souvenir shopping experiences. This study also examines how nostalgia impacts destination attachment and revisit intention. A better understanding of tourists' experiences with souvenir shopping will be beneficial for both tourism scholars and industry stakeholders as they work to improve the memorability of travellers' souvenir shopping experiences.

### **Theoretical foundation, research hypotheses and framework**

The conceptual framework used in this study comprises nine key constructs: objective authenticity, substantive staging of the servicescape, experience co-creation, involvement, shopping satisfaction, memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention.

#### ***Theoretical foundation (Stimulus-organism-response theory and cognitive appraisal theory)***

In the present study, memorable souvenir shopping experiences represent a cognitive dimension, and the proposed conceptual framework is based on two theories: stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory and cognitive appraisal theory (CAT).

S-O-R theory is used as the theoretical foundation to link the two antecedents (objective authenticity and substantive staging of the servicescape) and the three outcomes of memorable souvenir shopping experiences (nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention). S-O-R theory was proposed by Mehrabian and Russell (1974) in the environmental psychology literature. In the S-O-R theory, stimuli refer to factors that influence an individual's internal states, generally conceptualised as an influence stimulating an individual (Eroglu et al., 2001). In empirical investigations in tourism, constructs such as authenticity (Kim et al., 2020), novelty and meaningfulness (Rodrigues et al., 2022), servicescape (Durna et al., 2015) and perceived quality (Jang & Namkung, 2009), have been widely adopted as stimuli. In this study, objective authenticity, substantive staging of the servicescape, experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction are considered stimuli.

As the mediating component in the S-O-R model, the organism comprises the internal processes and structures that intervene between external stimuli and an individual's subsequent actions and responses (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In the original model, the organism mainly includes emotional and cognitive states (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). In subsequent empirical research in tourism, constructs such as memories (Manthiou et al., 2016) have been used to constitute tourists' organism component. Recent studies have indicated that MTEs, linking tourists' memories, represent a cognitive internal state within the organism component of the S-O-R theory (Chen et al., 2021). In the context of this study, organism is represented by the memorable souvenir shopping experience.

In the S-O-R model, response, as the consequence component, has been conceptualised as consumers' final outcomes and/or decisions, originally referred to as consumers' 'approach or avoidance behaviours' (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Some tourism studies have often adopted revisit intention (Rodrigues et al., 2022) and word-of-mouth intention (Durna et al., 2015; Wu &

Li, 2018) as response constructs, while nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention are used as the response construct in this study.

CAT is another theoretical foundation used to link the three antecedents (experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction) and three outcome variables of memorable souvenir shopping experience (nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention). Individual tourists have different cognitive interpretations, which means that their memories are evoked differently even if they engage in the same travel activities at the same time and place (Roseman & Smith, 2001). In other words, even when different travellers participate in the same activity, their interpretation of it and their perception of its value can vary substantially based on their respective motives, goals and needs (Lazarus, 1991; Roseman & Smith, 2001). Appraisal refers to an evaluative judgment and interpretation of experiences (Lazarus, 1991). Cognitive evaluations of an experience elicit emotions that affect behavioural responses (Lazarus 1991; Watson & Spence 2007). Thus, CAT addresses three issues: it elucidates (1) the underlying characteristics inherent in events that are evaluated or appraised, (2) the emotions that are experienced because of this appraisal process and (3) the behavioural responses that result from the experienced emotions (Watson & Spence, 2007).

According to CAT, a tourist's favourable evaluation of a travel experience may result in joyful emotions, which can then cause them to perform behaviours that promote this feeling (Bagozzi et al., 1999). Manthiou et al. (2016) found that memorable experiences are linked to the stimulation of individuals' cognitive systems, causing the attribution of a special meaning to and interpretation of their participation in events. Environmental cues help shape tourists' experiences, which affect their emotions and behavioural outcomes. In addition, souvenir shopping has been identified as a source of enjoyment and excitement during a traveller's trip (Timothy, 2005) and is considered an important part of the whole tourist experience at the destination (Kong & Chang, 2016). Souvenir shopping, an essential activity while at a tourism destination, involves the purchase of commercial

objects (Hu & Yu, 2007) that often remind us of places visited and that encapsulate intangible emotional experiences (Gordon, 1986). Therefore, memorable souvenir shopping is proposed as a predictor of nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention in this model. Nostalgia and destination attachment are associated with the affective process. Stern (1992) defined nostalgia as an individuals' desired emotional state based on their past experiences, while destination attachment is a person's positive beliefs and emotional connections with a specific destination resulting from their cognitive evaluations (Yuksel et al., 2010).

### ***Objective authenticity***

When tourists buy a souvenir at a destination, the authenticity of the product, which connects it to the destination, is an important factor (Trinh et al., 2014; Xie et al., 2012). In the context of a physical object, authenticity is the property of being genuine and not counterfeit (Cohen, 1988) and can be linked to objective authenticity. In the context of souvenir purchases, the perception of authenticity has been defined as the beliefs, ideas and impressions of individuals regarding the genuineness, uniqueness, workmanship, aesthetics, utility and cultural and historical integrity of souvenir products and their attributes (Littrell et al., 1993). Individuals' perceptions of authenticity, however, can differ markedly, as each tourist may evaluate souvenirs in widely varying ways (Lin & Wang, 2012).

Authenticity, according to Wang (1999), can be studied using three different approaches: objective, constructive and existential authenticity. Objective authenticity reflects the originality of services and attractions at a destination, while constructive authenticity includes the symbolic meanings attached to attractions, which are derived from socio-cultural public discourses (Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity refers to individuals' perceptions of what makes them authentic (Wang, 1999). Authenticity has also been identified as one of the components that



contribute to the memorability of a given souvenir shopping experience for tourists (Sthapit & Björk, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1:* Objective authenticity has a positive effect on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences.

### ***Substantive staging of the servicescape***

Some studies have identified factors that might entice tourists to purchase souvenirs, such as high-quality window displays and ease of movement in the store (Cave et al., 2012; Suhartanto, 2018). These factors fall under the concept of the servicescape. The servicescape refers to the physical environment of a service context, which includes the exterior and interior design (e.g. building design, signs, symbols, artefacts) and ambient conditions (e.g. temperature, light, scent, noise, odour, music) (Bitner, 1992).

Although various definitions exist in the literature, scholars of tourism generally agree that servicescapes can be distinguished according to two dimensions: substantive and communicative staging (Dong & Siu, 2013). Substantive staging of servicescapes consists of the functional and mechanical aspects of the physical service environment (Dong & Siu, 2013). As suggested in previous literature, physical elements include the spatial layout (entry and exit) (Bitner, 1992), equipment layout (furnishings) (Ryu & Jang, 2007), the facility (architectural design, colour, outside appearance and interior design) (Lucas, 2003), symbols and artefacts (signage, style of decor and souvenirs) (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996) and ambience (internal climate, lighting, music, temperature and scent) (Bitner, 1992; Ryu & Jang, 2007).

Previous evidence demonstrates that a higher quality of servicescape leads to a higher evaluation of customer experience, and this experience further leads to a positive evaluation (Dong & Siu, 2013). In other words, physical stimuli influence the customer service experience; thus, people

respond holistically to pleasant environmental stimuli (Nilsson & Ballantyne, 2014). Appropriate lighting, background music, spatial layout and functionality enhance customers' positive emotions (Dong & Siu, 2013), which elicit better memory recall (Oh et al., 2007). Prior studies have discovered a positive relationship between the substantive staging of servicescapes and memorable experiences (Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit et al., 2019). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2: Substantive staging of servicescapes has a positive effect on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences.*

### ***Experience co-creation***

According to Vargo and Lusch (2004), the customer is not a passive recipient of pre-existing value but is always an active creator of value. In other words, modern tourists take a more active role in deciding what to do during their journey, interacting with tourism service providers at the destination, influencing other tourists and choosing how to satisfy their wants and needs (Mathis et al., 2016). For many tourists, the touristic experience would not be complete without an opportunity to go souvenir shopping (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). During this experience, they are likely to engage in diverse consumption encounters and rituals involving interactions with vendors and service providers (Murphy et al., 2011). Tourists' interactions, active participation in the experience and attitudes while sharing the experience with others are components of experience co-creation (Neuhofner et al., 2012). During a souvenir shopping experience, tourists' participation in experience co-creation may include activities such as interactions with staff (Grönroos, 2011) and will have a strong impact on their evaluation of their tourism experience (McCartney & Chen, 2020).

Due to the consideration of the concept of the co-creation of an experience, with a greater emphasis on the customer than on the service itself, marketing organisations have moved from a

goods-dominant approach to a service-dominant (S-D) one (Mathis et al., 2016). S-D logic views co-creation in terms of participatory, interactive activities that involve multiple actors, while *value* is defined as ‘value-in-use’ (i.e. ‘the value for customers, created by them during their usage of resources’; Grönroos & Gummerus, 2014, p. 209). In addition, S-D logic suggests that customers play an active role, together with the service provider, in co-creating experiences and value and that establishing a dialogue is a prerequisite for successful experience co-creation (Chathoth et al., 2016). Direct interaction between service providers and customers (in this context, souvenir sellers and souvenir consumers) is an important dimension of experience co-creation (Zhang, Jahromi et al., 2018). For example, when tourists discuss and negotiate souvenir prices in a store, the shopping experience might be better recalled than if they had merely checked a price tag. Previous studies have indicated a positive link between co-creation and memorable vacation experiences (Mathis et al., 2016; Sthapit et al., 2018). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H3*: Experience co-creation has a positive effect on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences.

### ***Involvement***

Involvement is defined as the level of importance a customer attributes to an object, an action or an activity and the enthusiasm and interest that is generated (Goldsmith & Emmert, 1991). Involvement also refers to the extent to which tourists are interested in an activity and the affective responses aroused from the activity (Gursoy & Gavcar, 2003). Affective responses are the feelings caused by the change in personal emotions and thoughts when an individual is immersed in a tourism experience (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). The involvement of tourists’ emotions and behaviours is the primary factor driving their travel experience (Altunel & Erkut, 2015). When tourists are immersed in an activity or environment, they are more likely to have a memorable experience (Pine

& Gilmore, 1999). The more an individual is involved with a vacation in terms of activities that they have wanted to experience, the better they can recollect and retrieve past travel experiences (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017). Prebensen et al. (2014) maintained that involvement is a core antecedent for MTEs, as the level of involvement a tourist feels with a holiday affects their level of participation in creating experience value. Previous works have explored the links between tourists' personal involvement with travel experiences and their ability to recollect them in the future (Huang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2012; Wei et al., 2019). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4: Involvement has a positive effect on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences.*

### ***Shopping satisfaction***

Souvenir shopping is an important part of the shopping experience at a tourist destination (Kong & Chang, 2012). Considering the different purposes individuals have for buying souvenirs, their purchasing behaviour with regard to various types of souvenirs, including how those souvenirs affect tourists' shopping satisfaction, can be expected to be different (Vega-Vázquez et al., 2017). Satisfaction with shopping experiences is an amalgam of shoppers' perceptions of and satisfaction with all the individual products and services that constitute a particular shopping experience (Suhartanto, 2016). Beard and Ragheb (1980) defined tourist satisfaction as the positive perception that tourists develop by engaging in recreational activities and that can be measured through the degree of pleasure. In other words, a tourist is satisfied if the outcome from a comparison between their expectations and experiences is a feeling of pleasure—specifically, a positive, memorable feeling—upon leaving a destination (Su et al., 2011). Thus, feelings of displeasure can leave a tourist unsatisfied (Chen & Chen, 2010). Others define tourist satisfaction as a psychological concept that examines the outcome from engagement in an activity or behaviour (Lee et al., 2011). According to Wong and Wan (2013), tourist satisfaction with souvenir shopping is defined as a

tourist's subjective assessment of their experience of shopping for souvenirs at a given store at a tourist destination. Some studies have identified satisfaction as an antecedent of MTEs (Sthapit et al., 2019). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5: Satisfaction has a positive effect on the memorability of souvenir shopping experiences.*

### ***Memory and the effects of memorable souvenir shopping experience***

Memory is 'an alliance of systems that work together, allowing us to learn from the past and predict the future' (Baddeley, 1999, p. 1). Memory is an active, constructive process through which information is acquired, stored and then retrieved for use in decision-making (Braun, 1999). Episodic memory, which involves individuals' long-term storage of factual memories concerning personal experiences (Schwartz, 2011), is viewed as the type of long-term memory most relevant to the study of tourism experiences (Larsen, 2007) because 'lived experiences gather significance as we reflect on and give memory to them' (Curtin, 2005, p. 3). In the context of this study, a memorable souvenir shopping experience refers to one that is remembered and recalled in vivid detail after an onsite souvenir shopping experience. Existing literature supports this claim, with multiple studies demonstrating positive relationships between memorable experiences and nostalgia (Chen & Chen, 2010; Triantafillidou & Siomkos, 2013; Ali, 2015). In addition, some studies indicate that souvenirs elicit nostalgia (Baker et al., 2006; Russell, 2008).

According to Cho et al. (2017), nostalgia means 'positive emotions evoked from remembering the past, be it an experience, an event, a person, a place, an object, and so forth' (p. 98), and, in this context, memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Caton and Santos (2007) argue that 'nostalgia involves juxtaposing particular constructions of the past with particular constructions of the present, such that the past is associated with the positive effects' of present encounters (p. 372). In other words, nostalgia brings resonance to memories and thoughts from one's distant past through

a comparison with the present experience. Nostalgia arises from the personal recollection of fond memories and stimulates one's desire to return to an unforgettable past (Sedikides et al., 2015). A sense of nostalgia is often tied to places such as one's hometown and travel destinations that are personally meaningful (Walsh & Lipinski, 2008). Memorable experiences and nostalgia are interconnected: when a memorable experience is of great value or significance, one may be inclined to recall these memories and thus become nostalgic (Marschall, 2014). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H6: Memorable souvenir shopping experiences have a positive effect on nostalgia.*

As objects, souvenirs represent experiences and recollections that are strongly connected with a visited place (Love & Sheldon, 1998). Attachment theory sees attachment as an emotional connection between a person and a specific object (Bowlby, 1979). In marketing, attachment is seen as a relational construct associated with the strength of the bond between a brand and the consumer (Park et al., 2010). Similarly, place attachment, or destination attachment, is the affective bond between an individual and a specific place (Hidalgo & Hernandez, 2001; Xu & Zhang, 2016). Destination attachment is defined as a person's positive beliefs and emotional connections with a specific destination (Yuksel et al., 2010). Studies have indicated that memories are an important component of place attachment, and that place attachment depends on positive memorable experiences (Hammit et al., 2006). Some studies have demonstrated a positive relationship between MTEs and destination attachment (Sthapit et al., 2018; Tsai, 2016). In addition, prior research on MTEs found that since nostalgia involves recalling positive tourism experiences, it is positively related to emotional destination attachment (Io & Wan, 2018). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H7*: Memorable souvenir shopping experiences have a positive effect on destination attachment.

*H8*: Nostalgia has a positive effect on destination attachment.

Souvenirs concretise and preserve tourists' memories of a trip (Gordon, 1986), and these memories affect their decision to revisit a tourist destination (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Tsai, 2016). In addition, Ali (2015) reported that tourists' nostalgia is derived from their travel experiences, thus shaping future behavioural intentions. Essentially, nostalgia connects the memorability of an experience with revisit intention. Revisit intention refers to a tourist's willingness or plans to visit the same destination (Cole & Scott, 2004). Revisit intention is a key research topic in tourism and an important behavioural intention (Jani & Han, 2011; Wu et al., 2018). Tourists' behaviours include their selection of a destination to visit, subsequent evaluation of that destination and future behavioural intentions (Chen & Tsai, 2007). Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H9*: Memorable souvenir shopping experiences positively influence revisit intention.

*H10*: Nostalgia positively influences revisit intention.

It has been widely accepted that destination attachment is central to tourists' revisit intentions and behaviour (Lee & Shen, 2013; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). Destination attachment has been operationalised as an antecedent of revisit intention (Hwang et al., 2005; Yuksel et al., 2010). Some studies indicate that the intensity of destination attachment could promote revisit behaviours (George & George, 2004), as destination attachment reflects the strength of the emotional link

between the person and the destination, which in turn could increase revisit intention (Jian et al., 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H11: Destination attachment positively influences revisit intention.*

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of this study.

### **Figure 1**

## **Method**

### ***Pilot test***

This study employed a cross-sectional survey. For this study, two data collections were conducted: one for the pilot test and the other for the final study. The authors pre-tested the survey with five tourism researchers possessing expertise in topics related to the present study to confirm the relevance, clarity, flow and phrasing of the questions. A pilot test was then conducted and these participants resemble those who participated in the final data collection. Feedback on the clarity of the items and the results of the pilot test were used to make minor refinements to the survey items.

### ***Instrumentation***

The survey comprised two sections. The first included demographic variables, travel characteristics and questions linked to souvenir shopping both in general and specifically during their recent trip. The second section consisted of items for measuring the nine key constructs discussed above: authenticity, the substantive staging of servicescape, experience co-creation, involvement, shopping satisfaction, memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention. All constructs of interest in this study were measured with items adapted from



prior studies and modified to fit the current research context. Four items for measuring objective authenticity were adapted from Xie et al. (2012). Three items on substantive staging were adapted from Durna et al. (2015). Experience co-creation was operationalised using five items adapted from Mathis et al. (2016). The involvement construct was measured using three items adapted from Wei et al. (2019). The three scale items measuring shopping satisfaction were adapted from Oh et al. (2007). The memorability of the souvenir shopping experience was measured using three items adapted from Oh et al.'s (2007) study. The four items for nostalgia were adapted from Sedikides et al. (2015). The survey measured destination attachment using 14 items adapted from Xu and Zhang's (2016) study. Finally, revisit intention was measured using four items adapted from Wu et al. (2018). The appendix includes the different sources and measurement items used to measure the nine constructs. In total, the survey included 48 items, and all measurement items used a five-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'.

### ***Survey respondents***

The target population for the final study was tourists older than 18 years of age who had taken a vacation in the year preceding the time of data collection (between August 2020 and July 2021) and who had bought souvenirs during their trip. These were the screening criteria for identifying the right respondents for the survey. Out of the 310 responses received, 304 were valid responses from individuals who met these criteria. Within this sample, the majority (173) of the respondents were female. The respondents' ages ranged from 20 to 68 years old, with the largest group (127) between 30 and 39 years of age.

In terms of relationship status, the breakdown of respondents was as follows: married (176), single (86), co-habiting (24), divorced (15) and engaged (3). The nationalities of the respondents were American (230), Indian (37), Brazilian (10), Italian (9), Canadian (6), British (5), Filipino (3), Irish (2), Spanish (1) and Estonian (1). The destinations they visited ranged from Athens, Greece

to New York, USA. More than half of the respondents were repeat visitors (195); the rest were first-time visitors to their travel destination (109). The duration of their trips ranged from 1 to 30 days, and a large majority mentioned spending more than 2 days travelling (260). In terms of travel companions, the respondents travelled with their family (108), partner (107), friends (55) or alone (22). In addition, 12 people travelled with an organised travel party; the number of people in the travel party ranged from 1 to 25, with many travelling in groups of 2 (85) and in groups of more than 2 people (197).

In terms of the purpose of their travel, all reported either leisure/tourism (281) or business (23). The vast majority (287) of participants acknowledged generally buying souvenirs while on a trip; only 17 responded that they do not purchase souvenirs in general. The number of souvenirs that respondents bought on their most recent trip ranged from 1 to 12, with many reporting more than 2 (175). When asked to name some of the souvenirs purchased during the particular trip in question, common responses mentioned fridge magnets (76), postcards (32), keychains (28), ornaments (19), T-shirts (18) and wooden crafts (9). Almost all the respondents reported their overall souvenir shopping experience as positive (297) (see Table 1).

### **Table 1**

#### ***Data collection method***

The survey was distributed online using the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform in August 2021. MTurk is a crowdsourcing marketplace that allows individuals (Turkers) to complete human intelligence tasks (HITs). MTurk participants tend to be demographically more diverse than conventional internet samples, and the data obtained are generally as reliable as information collected via traditional methods (Buhrmester et al. 2011). According to Goodman et al. (2013), MTurk offers an inexpensive data collection method that produces high-quality data and reliable results. Despite critiques that MTurk sampling leans towards relatively educated and younger

individuals, several studies argue that its results are comparable with sampling conducted face-to-face, by mail or via telephone (Buhrmester et al., 2011). MTurk sampling has been shown to be of comparable or better quality than student and professional panel samples (Kees et al., 2017).

Several steps were taken throughout this study to reduce potential threats to validity. First, before publishing the HIT on MTurk, we chose a system qualification with an approval rating of greater than 99% (percentage of approved HITs). Second, to avoid workers providing low-quality data, we informed respondents before completing the HIT that each response pattern would be monitored and that any indication of irrelevant or random responding would result in a lack of compensation. Third, all the responses were carefully screened, and invalid responses were rejected. Those workers who failed the screening during the first attempt were not offered a second chance. The online survey link was posted on MTurk and was active for the first two weeks of August 2021.

The amount paid to survey respondents on MTurk varies widely from \$0.30 (Shim et al., 2015) to \$0.95 (Jiménez-Barreto et al., 2019) to \$1.50 (Harrigan et al., 2017). In this study, each participant was paid US\$1.00 upon completion of the survey.

## **Analysis and Results**

### ***Common method bias***

Prior research indicates that common method bias is likely to be a problem in studies where a self-administered survey is used for data collection (Conway & Lance, 2010). Data are particularly susceptible to common method bias when participants respond to items in a single questionnaire at a single point in time (Bodner, 2006). This type of bias can occur when both the independent and dependent variables are measured using one survey and the same response method, which can significantly impact the empirical results and derived conclusions of a study (Podsakoff et al.,

2012). Remedial procedures were undertaken in this study to control for common method bias, including avoiding the use of double-barrelled questions; creating questions that asked about current states to reduce the effort required for retrieval that can be problematic in studies linked to retrospective recall; selecting respondents who had the necessary experience to think about the issue of interest; emphasising to respondents that only their personal experience should be used to answer the questions; and providing clear, thorough instructions for each part of the survey (Mackenzie & Podsakoff, 2012).

The common method variance (CMV) for the data in this study was tested due to the collection of data from one single source; this was done using two methods suitable for partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (namely, full collinearity using variance inflation factor [VIF] [Kock, 2015] and the correlation matrix procedure). The value of full collinearity VIF for all constructs should be lower than 3.3 (Kock, 2015; Kock & Lynn, 2012), and the correlation between constructs should be lower than 0.9 (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021), to confirm that the model and data are free of CMV. The results of testing CMV on this study's data showed that the values for full collinearity VIF for all constructs ranged between 1.125 and 2.586, and the correlations were lower than 0.9, indicating that the data collected using this survey were free of CMV.

### ***Model assessment using PLS-SEM***

To analyse the collected data, this study employed PLS-SEM using SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2015). PLS-SEM was selected because of the complexity of the conceptual framework and prediction-oriented nature of this study (Ali et al., 2018, Hair et al., 2019). To calculate the minimum sample size needed for this study, we used G\*Power (Faul et al., 2009), and the results showed the need for a minimum sample of 199 to obtain a power of 0.95 for our analysis. According to Reinartz et al. (2009), a minimum sample of 100 can generate high power for analysis when applying PLS-SEM. Therefore, the sample of 304 respondents in this study is more than

enough to produce valid, reliable and useful results.

### *Assessment of the measurement model*

To test this study's model using PLS-SEM, the reliability and validity of all constructs, which are reflective, were assessed using outer loading, rho\_A, composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) (Hair et al., 2019). The values of rho\_A and CR should be higher than 0.7 and the value of AVE should be greater than 0.5 to establish reliability and convergent validity (Ali et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2017). The results of the assessment of the measurement model (presented in Table 2) demonstrated that reliability and convergent validity were established for all constructs involved in the framework of this study.

#### **Table 2**

To test discriminant validity, two recommended methods – the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler et al., 2015; Hair et al., 2017) – were applied. To establish discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE of each construct should be higher than the correlation of that construct with all other constructs in the framework using the Fornell-Larcker criterion or the values for HTMT for each construct should be smaller than 0.9 (Ali et al., 2018). Tables 3 and 4 show that discriminant validity was successfully established using both methods.

#### **Table 3**

#### **Table 4**

### *Assessment of the structural model*

To assess the structural model of this study, the values of  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  for all endogenous constructs, including memorable souvenir shopping experience (MSSE), nostalgia (NOS), destination

attachment (DAtt) and revisit intention (RIN), were calculated and evaluated. The  $R^2$  results were 0.605, 0.585, 0.434, and 0.411 for MSSE, NOS, DAtt and RIN, respectively, indicating high and acceptable values for behavioural studies (Hair et al., 2017). Moreover, the values of  $Q^2$  ranged between 0.228 and 0.450, demonstrating the high predictive power of the model (Hair et al., 2019).

To test the hypotheses of this study, the significance of the path coefficients was assessed using p-value and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (Ali et al., 2018). The results of hypothesis testing using both approaches (see Figure 2 and Table 5) showed that objective authenticity (OAut) and substantive staging of the servicescape (SSServ) had an insignificant effect on MSSE (H1 and H2), whereas the results supported the rest of the hypotheses (H3-H11). The results in Table 5 and Figure 2 show the significant effects of experience co-creation (ECoc), involvement (INV) and shopping satisfaction (SSat) on MSSE (H3-H5), with the strongest effect exerted by ECoc followed by SSat. The findings also showed the positive effects of MSSE on NOS and DAtt (H6 and H7); the effect of MSSE on NOS is much higher and stronger compared to the effect on DAtt. Moreover, the results of the hypotheses testing showed a positive and significant effect of NOS on DAtt (H8).

For the effects of MSSE, NOS and DAtt on revisit intention (RIN), the results supported all three hypotheses (H9-H11), with the strongest effect being that of DAtt on RIN (H11), followed by the effects of MSSE and NOS on RIN.

#### **Table 5**

#### **Figure 2**

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study's objective was to propose and test an integrative conceptual model of memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Out of the 11 hypotheses, only 9 were supported.

Although some prior research by others indicates that authenticity is one of the components that contributes to the memorability of a souvenir-shopping experience for tourists (Sthapit & Björk, 2019; Sthapit et al., 2018) and a positive relationship was found between the substantive staging of a servicescape and a memorable experience (Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit et al., 2019), those relationships were not confirmed by the results of this study. The relationship between objective authenticity and memorable souvenir shopping experiences (H1) and substantive staging of the servicescape and memorable souvenir shopping experiences (H2) were not supported. One of the justifications for the non-significant relationship between objective authenticity and a memorable souvenir shopping experience is that authenticity is individually assessed (Asplet & Cooper, 2000; Swanson & Horridge, 2006), and individuals differ substantially in their evaluations of and perspectives on authenticity (Littrell et al., 1993).

Similarly, previous studies have demonstrated that servicescape elements such as high-quality window displays, ease of movement and layout (Cave et al., 2012) and the store environment (Suhartanto, 2018) might entice tourists to purchase souvenirs. However, this was not evident in this study. One reason for the non-significant relationship between substantive staging of a servicescape and a memorable souvenir shopping experience in this study is that some tourists are more focused on the material objects during souvenir shopping than are others (Ramsay, 2009) and therefore may be less affected by the servicescape of the shop.

The relationship between experience co-creation and memorable souvenir shopping experiences, as put forth in H3, was supported. During the experience co-creation process, souvenir shoppers become involved either passively or actively; those who co-create their souvenir shopping experiences by actively interacting with souvenir sellers should have a more memorable experience. In other words, tourists who are more inclined towards active participation and who

are engaged in the souvenir shopping experience tend to have a more memorable souvenir shopping experience. This result corresponds with existing studies that argue that co-creation is a significant predictor of the ability to remember an experience (Mathis et al., 2016; Sthapit et al., 2018).

The relationship between involvement and memorable souvenir shopping experiences was also significant (H4). Our findings concur with studies indicating that tourists' involvement in travel experiences increases their ability to recollect them in the future (Huang et al., 2010; Kim et al., 2012). The findings also support studies indicating that involvement is a key factor in tourists' memory and recall of their experiences (Di-Clemente et al., 2020). In the same vein, the more that individuals are involved with a vacation in terms of activities that they wanted to experience – in this context, souvenir shopping – the better they can recollect and retrieve memories of past travel experiences (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017).

The relationship between shopping satisfaction and a memorable souvenir shopping experience is significant, indicating that shopping satisfaction has a positive and direct impact on tourists' memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Therefore, H5 is supported. This finding contradicts some earlier studies indicating that satisfactory tourism experiences may not be recalled in the post-consumption phase and are unlikely to provide a sustainable competitive advantage to businesses in destination areas (Kim, 2010). In contrast, the results of the present study show that the higher the level of tourist shopping satisfaction, the greater the memorability of the souvenir shopping experience for the tourist. This study's findings do agree, however, with other studies indicating that satisfaction is one of the key constructs affecting tourist behaviour (Sthapit et al., 2018).

The results also revealed a positive correlation between memorable souvenir shopping experiences and nostalgia. This confirms the findings of other studies that indicate nostalgia resonates with memories and thoughts of one's distant past through a comparison with the present experience (Sedikides et al., 2015) and that memorable experiences and nostalgia are interconnected; when a memorable experience is of great value or significance, one may be inclined



to recall these memories and thus become nostalgic (Marschall, 2014). This correlation supports H6.

The associations between souvenir shopping experiences and destination attachment (H7) and nostalgia and destination attachment (H8) were significant and positive. In other words, when tourists have a memorable shopping experience, they are more likely to evaluate the destination as a place that meets their functional needs, represented in this context by the purchase of souvenirs; this is linked to personal identification with the destination. This finding supports studies indicating that place attachment depends on positive memorable experiences (Hammit et al., 2006) and a positive relationship between MTEs and destination attachment (Sthapit et al., 2018; Tsai, 2016). These findings also support studies suggesting a positive relationship between nostalgia and destination attachment (Io & Wan, 2018).

Additionally, the proposed positive association between memorable souvenir shopping experiences and revisit intention as well as nostalgia and revisit intention were confirmed by our results, supporting H9 and H10. This concurs with existing studies indicating that tourists' memories affect their decision to revisit a tourist destination (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Tsai, 2016) and that nostalgia shapes future behavioural intentions (Ali, 2015).

Finally, this study determined that destination attachment has a significant positive effect on revisit intention, which is congruous with studies indicating that destination attachment is central to tourists' intentions and behaviour (Lee & Shen, 2013; Prayag & Ryan, 2012). The study found that tourists' destination attachment positively and significantly influenced their revisit intentions, supporting H11.

### ***Theoretical contribution***

The theoretical contributions of this study include the extension of the existing literature on MTEs and souvenir shopping experiences through the testing of an integrative conceptual model of

memorable souvenir shopping experience that incorporates objective authenticity, substantive staging of the servicescape, experience co-creation, involvement, shopping satisfaction, memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention. The findings extend Kim et al.'s (2012) MTE scale by identifying other constructs (experience co-creation, involvement and shopping satisfaction) that have an impact on MTEs, and, in this context, on memorable souvenir shopping experiences. In addition, the findings also extend Sthapit et al. (2018) and Sthapit and Björk's (2019) conceptual framework of a memorable souvenir shopping experience, as well as include involvement as a crucial variable that affects tourists' memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Previous studies on memorable souvenir shopping (e.g. Sthapit et al., 2018) were limited to outcome variable of place attachment, while the present study examined the relationship between a memorable souvenir shopping experience, nostalgia, destination attachment and revisit intention. The findings suggest that tourists with vivid memories of their souvenir shopping experiences are more likely to have nostalgia for and attachment to that destination as well as to revisit the destination.

### ***Practical implication***

This study has interesting managerial implications for souvenir retailers. First, tourists have diverse tastes and needs. Thus, offering a variety of souvenirs should enhance the tourists' sense of autonomy and cater to diverse preferences, thereby contributing to increased customer satisfaction and, consequently, to memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Second, employees at souvenir shops should actively interact with tourists. Tourists should not be viewed as passive agents but rather as active producers of their own consumption experiences. In fact, souvenir sellers should be enthusiastic about customers' desires to co-create their experiences by actively interacting with staff to learn about the different souvenirs for sale. Employees should recommend a variety of souvenirs to best satisfy tourists' individual needs. This study calls for a shift in the role of the staff

of souvenir shops from sellers to memorable-experience co-creators. Thus, souvenir retailers should ensure high levels of training to improve the quality of staff customer interactions.

Third, souvenir sellers should tell stories about the origin and meaning of souvenirs, particularly those that are locally produced (for example, local food products and clothes) which may immerse tourists in the souvenir shopping activity and arouse positive emotions. Fourth, souvenir retail managers should provide a large assortment of souvenirs. Souvenir retail managers who employ these practices will provide tourists with a better chance of finding their desired souvenirs. Additionally, souvenir retailers should encourage their staff recommend a variety of souvenirs and offer memorable souvenir shopping experiences through active interactions with customers, such as linking local folklore with the operations, to immerse them in the activity. Lastly, souvenir retailers should strive for improvement of other service provisions, such as extending opening hours, accepting different payment types, and increasing the variety of products for satisfactory service delivery.

### ***Limitations and recommendation for future research***

The findings of this study are exploratory in nature, and convenience sampling was employed, limiting the study's generalisability. The study was also limited by the use of a web-based survey platform; this limitation might be overcome by adopting a greater array of research and recruitment methods. The study was also limited in that the survey was only available in English, which prevented non-English speakers from participating. Future studies should make the survey available in other languages. In addition, the time lapse between the experience and completion of the survey was as long as one year, depending on the individual respondent, which might have impacted survey responses. Data should be gathered shortly after a trip has been taken to avoid the creation of false memories. Further research should explore the antecedents and outcomes of memorable souvenir shopping experiences in more detail. It would be interesting to investigate

other antecedents relevant to memorable souvenir shopping experiences, such as price and choice overload.

Another limitation is that the conceptual framework included only nine key constructs and selected objective authenticity out of the three different types of authenticity (objective, constructive and existential) (Wang, 1999). Future studies could test the model by incorporating other independent variables, for example, constructive and existential authenticity and outcome variables, such as hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, which might provide a broader understanding of tourists' memorable souvenir shopping experiences. Lastly, in every study, the findings depend on some characteristics of context (e.g., COVID-19 for this study), which open new avenue for future studies to generalise the developed model. We suggest that this study be repeated in future studies to generalise the developed model.

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