Memorable wildlife tourism experience: Evidence from the Mole National Park

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to develop and validate an integrative model for memorable wildlife tourism experience. The study examined how escapism, experience co-creation, existential authenticity, and experiential satisfaction serve as drivers of memorable wildlife experience. It further explored the connection between memorable wildlife tourism experience and hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour. The sample consists of 361 international tourists aged 18 years or more who visited the Mole National Park in Ghana between October 2022 and September 2023 for a wildlife safari. Results reveals that as experience co-creation, experiential authenticity, and experiential satisfaction increase, the more memorable wildlife tourism experience becomes. Enhanced experiential satisfaction and memorable experiences are associated with heightened hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour. The theoretical and managerial implications as well as recommendations for future studies are presented.

1. Introduction

Wildlife tourism represents a prominent facet of nature-based tourism, serving as a primary avenue for human engagement with wildlife within their natural habitats, and fostering non-consumptive experiences (Rizzolo, 2023). Non-consumptiveness encompasses viewing, photographing, and educating oneself about wildlife (Rizzolo, 2021). Wildlife tourism offers many benefits, for example, wildlife tourism may benefit local communities and their residents through income generation and employment (Shang & Luo, 2023) including increasing support for conservation (Charles & Hamid, 2022). Wildlife tourism is seen as imperative to tourists' appreciation of conservation and sustainable development (Shang & Luo, 2023), one that supports economic development goals, wider social justice, and ecologically sensitive use of wildlife resources (Cong, Newsome, Wu, & Morrison, 2017). This makes it greatly appealing as a consumer product (Mangachena, Geerts, & Pickering, 2023). Recent studies on wildlife tourism are related to spatial and temporal patterns in wildlife tourism encounters (Mangachena et al., 2023), the key quality-related factors and their associated value to the wildlife tourism experience among tourists (Shang & Luo, 2023), and links between wildlife tourism and wildlife consumption (Rizzolo, 2023), while other studies have focused on wildlife equity theory for multispecies tourism justice (Kline, Hoarau-Heemstra, & Cavaliere, 2023), animal welfare syllabus for wildlife tourism (Fennell, Coose, & Moorhouse, 2023) and philanthropic support for conservation (Hehir, Scarles, Wyles, & Kantenbacher, 2023).

Simultaneously, within the realm of tourism, there is a crucial emphasis placed on creating memorable tourism experiences, which form the core of both production and consumption in the industry (Chen, Huang, Wu, Ip, & Wang, 2023). Memorable tourism experiences revolve around the individual and embody significant events that remain ingrained in a person's enduring memories (Kim & Chen, 2019). Today, service providers have directed their efforts toward crafting more memorable offerings to elevate tourists' experiences to secure a competitive edge over other competitors (Hosany, Sthapit, & Björk, 2022). Tourists who encounter memorable tourism experiences tend to

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revisit the destination (Cheng, Huang, & Ye, 2023), and develop connections with places visited (Badu-Baiden, Kim, & Wong, 2023; Peng, Yang, Fu, & Huan, 2023). However, a notable feature of existing memorable tourism experience studies is the prevalent use of the seven-construct memorable tourism experience scale proposed by Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012) including refreshment, hedonism, meaningfulness, involvement, local culture, knowledge, and novelty in different geographical contexts (Sthapit, Coudounaris, & Björk, 2019). The study conducted by Kim et al. (2012) utilized a sample consisting of students, rendering the scale non-representative of the broader category of typical tourists (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015). Another limitation is a time-lag bias as respondents were required to assess their experiences over the past 5 years after their tourism experience. Park and Santos (2017) maintain that memory biases tend to amplify over time.

Another constraint is the scarcity of studies incorporating additional constructs that could elucidate memorable tourism experiences (Zhang, Wu, & Buhalis, 2018). Memorable tourism experiences represent a complex phenomenon, with minimal agreement regarding the theoretical underpinnings of the exact constructs shaping them (Hosany et al., 2022). Regardless of the contextual nuances, existing research tends to adhere to the initial seven dimensions of memorable tourism experiences (Stone, Migacz, & Sthapit, 2022). However, it is widely acknowledged that the formation of memorable tourism experiences is highly dependent on the specific context in which they transpire (Ye, Wei, Wen, Ying, & Tan, 2021). The relevance of Nature-Based Tourism can be attributed to multiple factors, standing out prominently for two main reasons. First, nature-based tourists tend to be motivated by the opportunity to have encounters with wildlife in its natural habitat (Arnegger, Herz, & Campbell, 2024). Second, Nature-Based Tourism is a form of tourism that is directly dependent on natural resources such as scenery, topography, fluvial features, vegetation and wildlife (Mushawemhuka, Fitchett, & Hoogendoorn, 2024). Prior studies on memorable tourism experience fails to acknowledge the distinct features of diverse types of Nature-Based Tourism, including wildlife tourism. Most have, indeed, tended to follow Kim et al.'s (2012) model, failing to consider alterative constructs that might explain memorable tourism experiences (Hosany et al., 2022). The outcomes of their investigation, encompassing the seven dimensions of memorable tourism experiences they outlined, cannot be reliably generalized (Sthapit et al., 2019).

Thus, using stimulus-organism-response (S–O-R) theory, this research aims to test a novel model that amalgamates four primary antecedents (escapism, existential authenticity, experience co-creation, and experiential satisfaction) of memorable wildlife tourism experience. The uniqueness of the suggested framework lies in its foundation on a contextual comprehension of the consumption and reproduction of wildlife tourism. This approach is utilized to construct an empirical model of memorable wildlife tourism experiences, examining different potential factors and consequences. Consequently, there exists a significant distinction in the emphasis between the current study and prior research. First, Nature-Based Tourism allows tourists to escape from the mundane routines of their everyday lives (Mykletun, Oma, & Aas, 2021; Conti & Farsari, 2022) and some studies indicate a positive relationship between escapism and memorable tourism experiences (Chen, Huang & Ye, 2023; Dias & Dias, 2019). Second, existential authenticity within tourism settings, in this context, Nature-Based Tourism, fosters more profound experiential connections with oneself, such as seeking self-meaning or existential growth (Fu, 2019). Some studies indicate a positive relationship between existential authenticity and memorable tourism experience (Chen, Huang & Ye, 2023; Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2024; Yi, Fu, Lin, & Xiao, 2022; Sthapit & Björk, 2017). Third, today, tourists are active participants and collaborators in value creation (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy, & Prebensen, 2016). Memorable tourism experiences is considered as a desirable outcome of experience co-creation (Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott, 2017) and tourists will tend to derive greater benefits from tourism experiences that are more memorable (Mathis et al., 2016). Fourth, experiential satisfaction refers to the overall

satisfaction derived from an experience, stemming from the provision of services, such as those encountered during a wildlife safari (Kao, Huang, & Wu, 2008). Some studies indicate that higher satisfaction levels correlate with increased memorability of an experience (Sthapit et al., 2018). In addition, given the dominance and application of traditional outcome variables in studies related to experiential satisfaction, for example, revisit intention (Keskin, Aktaş, Yayla, & Dedeoğlu, 2024), this study tests the relationship between experiential satisfaction, memorable wildlife tourism experience and three outcome variables: eudaimonic well-being, hedonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour to advance and augment the collective understanding of the outcomes related to experiential satisfaction. A questionnaire administered online was employed for data collection from international tourists participating in a wildlife safari tour, specifically a nature-based tour held at the Mole Wildlife National Park in Ghana during the period spanning October 2022 to September 2023.

2. Theoretical background and hypotheses formulation

2.1. Stimuli–organism–response theory

S–O-R theory delineates the impact of environmental stimuli on a person's cognitive and affective responses, subsequently influencing behavioral reactions (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). This theory posits that the stimuli (S) in an environment prompt alteration in a person's internal or organismic states (O), ultimately driving a behavioral response (R). This theory elucidates the process through which individuals interpret contextual stimuli and subsequently respond to and engage with them (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Stimuli is grounded in an internal assessment of the organism and pertains to outside factors that impact a person's internal states (Song, Yao, & Wen, 2021). In this investigation, escapism, experience co-creation, and existential authenticity are regarded as the stimuli encountered during wildlife tourism experiences.

The mediating component in the S–O-R theory, referred to as the organism, encompasses an individual's affective and psychological states (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). It symbolizes the internal mechanism by which individuals translate stimuli into perceptions, feelings, or experiences (Li, Dong, & Chen, 2012). The S–O-R theory primarily emphasized the emotional and perceptive states of the organism (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Within this research, experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experiences embody the organism aspect within the S–O-R framework.

Response, as the consequence component, has been conceptualized as consumers' final outcomes and/or decisions, originally referred to as consumers' approach or avoidance behaviors (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974). Various tourism studies have adopted different measures for this purpose, such as revisit intention (Rodrigues, Loureiro, de Moraes, & Pereira, 2023). In this study, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour are utilized as the response construct (Fig. 1).

The rationale behind using the S–O-R theory in this research stems from its increasing recognition as a framework capable of elucidating how various factors preceding memorable tourism experiences elicit diverse behaviours (Wang, Berbekova, Uysal, & Wang, 2022). This theory is considered revolutionary and vital for comprehending and modeling individuals' behaviour (Laato, Islam, Farooq, & Dhir, 2020). S–O-R theory has found application in hospitality and tourism to elucidate the behavioral responses of tourists and guests (Zhang & Xu, 2019). In this study, the key output variables under scrutiny include hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour, thereby expanding the application of the S–O-R framework in tourism to additional constructs. Consequently, this study broadens the scope of S–O-R theory in tourism by incorporating it into various tourism-related phenomena.

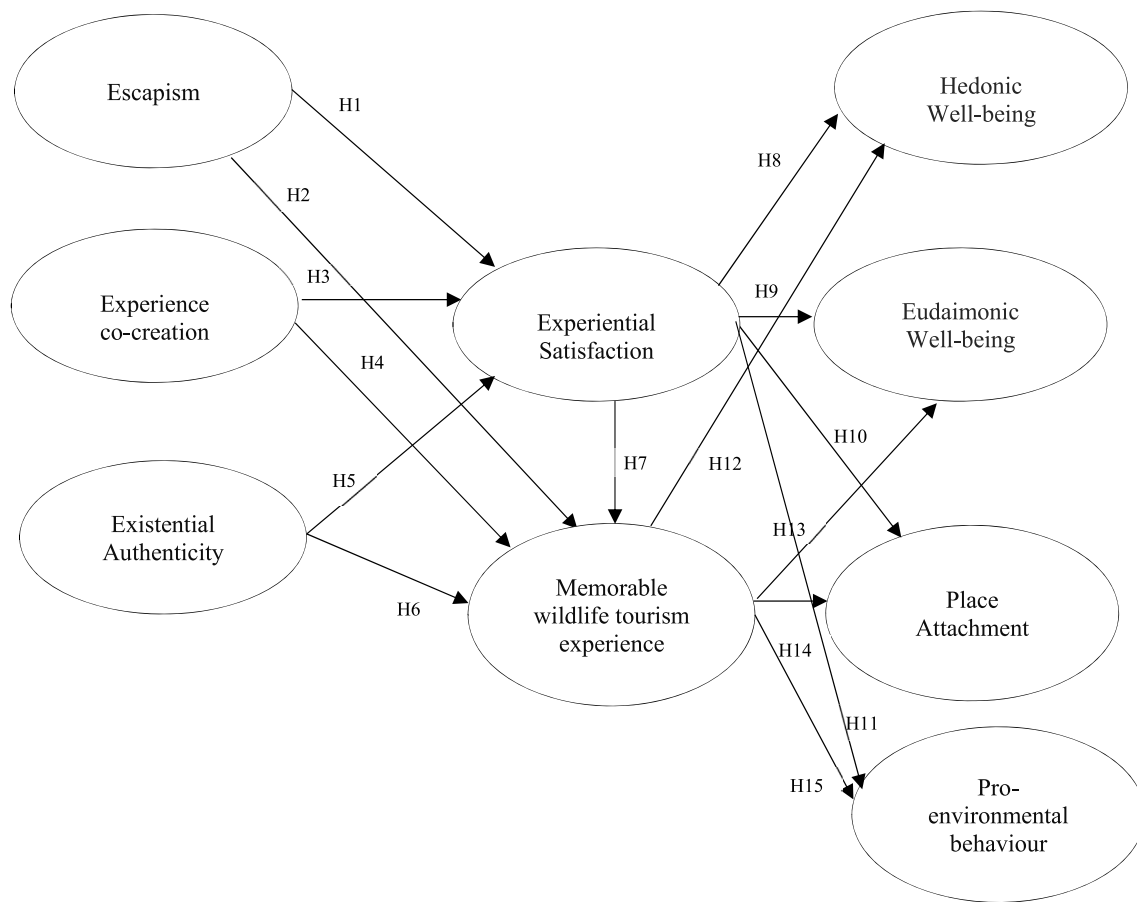The subsequent section delves into the pertinent literature and

Fig. 1. The conceptual model.

outlines hypotheses pertinent to the study objectives.

2.2. Escapism

People are primarily motivated to engage in tourism experiences to escape from their personal or interpersonal worlds (Iso-Ahola, 1982). According to Ponsignon, Lunardo, and Michrafy (2021), tourism is regarded as a temporary departure from everyday life, freeing individuals from their routines and enabling them to engage themselves in fresh realities. Existing tourism literature suggests that escapism holds allure for those desiring relaxation or an escape from daily routines of life (Ponsignon et al., 2021), making it a primary motivational factor driving individuals to engage in leisure trips away from their routine lives (Rehman & Alnuzhah, 2022). Pine and Gilmore (1999) characterize specific experiences as exceptionally deep and captivating, prompting individuals to temporarily break away from their daily routines. Existing studies support the significance of escapism in delineating and comprehending the tourism experience (Hosany & Gilbert, 2010; Sheng & Chen, 2012).

During travel, tourists' sense of escape from pressures, tension, stress, and daily routines can impact their satisfaction with the travel experience (Wang, Lai, & Wang, 2023). Tourism activities, in this context, wildlife safari, enable travelers to escape work and family life in favor of self-reflection and value changes (Sirgy, Uysal, & Kruger, 2017) and escapism persists in nature-based tourism experiences (Conti & Farsari, 2022; Mykletun et al., 2021). Accordingly, when tourists engage in activities or experiences that allow them to mentally detach from their everyday lives, they are more likely to feel satisfied with their overall travel experiences. Some studies indicate a positive correlation between escapism and satisfaction (Moon & Han, 2018; Rehman & Alnuzhah, 2022; Seyitoglu, 2020). In addition, according to Sipe and

Testa (2018), the penchant to escape is a significant antecedent to many memorable tourism experiences. This is because of the opportunity holidays provide for individuals to leave their usual routines, allowing them to perceive life differently, thereby potentially intensifying the memorability of an experience (Leblanc, 2003). Some studies showcase a favourable relationship between escapism and memorable tourism experiences (Chen, Huang & Ye, 2023; Dias & Dias, 2019). Hence, these hypotheses are posited:

H1. Escapism positively influences tourists' experiential satisfaction.

H2. Escapism positively influences tourists' memorable wildlife tourism experiences.

2.3. Experience co-creation

Service-dominant logic focuses on value creation through the facilitation of interaction between actors in reciprocally beneficial collaborations (Vargo, Lusch, Akaka, & He, 2016; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The term 'experience co-creation' denotes the joint creation of value by service providers and customers, involving the integration of resources provided by the former to allow the latter to customize the experience to suit their personal needs and wants (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Put simply, experience co-creation is a collaborative process of shaping an experience in context involving multiple partners (Grönroos, 2011). This process integrates resources through exchanges between patrons and the providers of services. Clients actively engage with service providers to generate value (Mathis et al., 2016). In other words, experience co-creation can occur when tourists gain an enhanced experience due to their active participation or collaboration (Shaw, Bailey, & Williams, 2011). The notion of experience co-creation considers consumers as active contributors to the experience. Thus, value creation becomes a

collaborative effort where customers work with service providers to shape their distinct personalised experiences (Zatori, Smith, & Puczko, 2018). The significance of tourists taking on a proactive role as experience co-creators at travel destinations has reached a consensus among tourism stakeholders (Buhalis, Lin, & Leung, 2022).

Tourists' experiences in the socially rich context of tourism are perceived as collective and co-created events (Helkkula, Kelleher, & Pihlström, 2012). Moreover, travellers possess more agency in guiding their activities while traveling (Mathis et al., 2016). Through co-creation, they partake in events intended for self-development, exploring their surroundings, and engaging with others (Eraqi, 2011). Consequently, tourists are engaged participants in value co-creation (Nangpiire, Silva, & Alves, 2022). Experiential satisfaction (Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019) and memorability are considered outcomes of experience co-creation (Campos et al., 2017). Experience co-creation might involve interactions among tourists and tour guides and interactions among tourists themselves (Malone, McKechnie, & Tynan, 2017). These interactions are believed to profoundly drive tourists' appraisal of a tourism experience and constitute the essence of the tourist experience (Walls & Wang, 2011). Consequently, when tourists are actively involved in participating in wildlife-related activities such as guided tours or community engagement programs they are more likely to have memorable and satisfying wildlife tourism experiences. As a result, the ensuing hypotheses are proposed:

H3. Experience co-creation positively influences tourists' experiential satisfaction.

H4. Experience co-creation positively influences tourists' memorable wildlife tourism experiences.

2.4. Existential authenticity

According to Ram, Björk, and Weidenfeld (2016), existential authenticity signifies distinctiveness, genuineness, and truthfulness. It stands as a fundamental concept within the realm of tourist experiences (MacCannell, 1976). Wang (1999) emphasized the pivotal role of authenticity in the competitiveness of tourism destinations, categorising it into three sides: objective, constructive, and existential. Existential authenticity refers to a person's perception of the authenticity within an experience, shaped by observation, visuals, and emotions, fostering a unique experience (Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). Existential authenticity is activity-related authenticity (Wang, 1999). It is about becoming one's true self (authentic self) through tourism. Hence, the authenticity of a toured object is not necessarily related to existential authenticity (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). Notably, existential authenticity within tourism environments encourages more profound experiential connections with oneself, such as seeking self-meaning or existential growth (Fu, 2019). It is established through tourists' subjective authentic perceptions during their engagement in tourism activities (Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015).

Tourists encounter existential authenticity when engaging in genuine and leisurely events with others (Kolar & Zabkar, 2010) and contribute to shaping connections between tourists and various aspects of tourism themes, such as places, objects, and spaces (Ram et al., 2016). In wildlife tourism, authenticity is fundamental, reflecting the natural behaviours of wildlife and their appropriate habitats (Reynolds & Braithwaite, 2001). Within this domain, authenticity emerges as a significant factor impacting tourist satisfaction due to its capacity to evoke excitement in tourists through their experiences (Shang & Luo, 2023). Several studies suggest a positive relationship between authenticity and satisfaction (Dai, Zheng, & Yan, 2021; Dominquez-Quintero et al., 2020; Lee, Phau, Hughes, Li, & Quintal, 2016; Lu et al., 2015; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016). Besides, engaging in activities tends to create memorable experiences for people (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). According to Pearce and Packer (2013), the remembrance of intimate and existential moments further extends the longevity of travel-related memories.

Existential authenticity is found as an antecedent to memorable tourism experience (Chen, Huang & Ye, 2023; Lee et al., 2024; Yi et al., 2022; Sthapit & Björk, 2017). Consequently, the subsequent hypotheses are posited:

H5. Existential authenticity has a positive effect on tourists' experiential satisfaction.

H6. Existential authenticity has a positive effect on tourists' memorable wildlife tourism experiences.

2.5. Experiential satisfaction

Satisfaction is the outcome of comparing expectations with actual experiences (Li, Liu, & Soutar, 2021; Wang et al., 2023). In the tourism domain, satisfaction is construed as the consequence arising from the disparity between anticipated and actual experience (Chen & Chen, 2010). Specifically, tourist satisfaction involves a favourable and memorable sentiment resulting from the comparison between anticipated expectations and actual experiences upon departing from a destination (Su, Cheng, & Huang, 2011). For Bigné et al. (2005) the emotional reactions arising from positive or adverse disconfirmation serve as the foundation for customer contentment or dissatisfaction. When the experience fails to meet expectations, however, the tourist will be dissatisfied. The larger the disparity, the higher the level of discontentment will be (Kao, Huang & Yang, 2007).

Experiential satisfaction stems from service satisfaction, delving into how consumers perceive services in particular circumstances. It centres on consumers' comprehensive assessment of their post-consumption experiences. From an experiential standpoint, it represents the holistic satisfaction derived from the service connected to a particular transaction. Kao et al. (2008) observe that customers juxtapose their experiences with their initial expectations, leading to positive or adverse disconfirmation. The emotive reactions triggered by this disconfirmation form the basis for customer satisfaction or discontentment (Bigne, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005). Some studies have established a positive connection between experiential satisfaction memorable tourism experience (Sthapit et al., 2022; 2024). Furthermore, tourist satisfaction acts as an antecedent to hedonic well-being (Ahn, Back, & Boger, 2019; Park & Ahn, 2022), eudaimonic well-being (Park & Ahn, 2022; Liu, Zhou, & Sun, 2023), place attachment (Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015), and pro-environmental behaviour (Salim, Ravanel, & Deline, 2023). Consequently, the ensuing hypotheses emerge:

H7. Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on tourists' memorable wildlife tourism experiences.

H8. Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on tourists' hedonic well-being.

H9. Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on tourists' eudaimonic well-being.

H10. Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on tourists' place attachment.

H11. Experiential satisfaction has a positive effect on tourists' pro-environmental behaviour.

2.6. Memorable wildlife tourism, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour

Memorable tourism experience is a 'tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred' (Kim et al., 2012, p. 13) and introduced the memorable tourism experience scale with seven dimensions. In addition, memorable tourism experiences are conceptualized as an attitude construct, encompassing the favourable recollections of tourists following their engagement in a tourism-related activity. This construct relies on the retention of the experiential

memory (022Badu-Baiden & Kim, 2022; Hosany et al., 2022). Within the context of this investigation, a memorable wildlife tourism experience denotes an encounter characterised by positivity, vivid remembrance, and recall after the engagement in wildlife tourism.

According to Vada, Prentice, and Hsiao (2019), tourism participation has the potential to increase the happiness levels of individuals, thereby contributing to hedonic well-being. The assessment of subjective well-being, often characterised as a comprehensive measure encompassing a person's excitement, quality of life, and contentment, has frequently employed the hedonic approach. Some studies indicate a positive correlation between memorable tourism experiences and hedonic well-being (see Sthapit, Björk, & Rasoolimanesh, 2024; Trinanda, Sari, Cerya, & Riski, 2022). Hedonic well-being has links with subjective well-being, particularly focusing on the emotional dimension of well-being, encompassing favourable sentiments like joy and pleasure (see Seligman, 2002). In addition, several studies have showcased a positive association between memorable tourism experiences and eudaimonic well-being (Vada et al., 2019). Eudaimonic well-being concentrates on life's meaning, personal development, and self-realisation, defining well-being based on the extent to which an individual is fully functional. Eudaimonic well-being is significant as it defines well-being as separate from happiness (Gao, Rasouli, Timmermans, & Wang, 2017).

Some studies indicate the influential role of memorable tourism experiences in fostering place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2022; Trinanda et al., 2022; Tsai, 2016; Vada et al., 2019). For instance, Trinanda et al. (2022) confirmed that memorable tourism experiences significantly impact place attachment. The level of attachment to a destination is, in part, contingent on the memorability of the tourist experience (Sthapit, Björk, & Coudounaris, 2017). Place attachment denotes the emotional connection between individuals and a place (Patwardhan et al., 2020). Place identity (PI) signifies the uniqueness of a place and evolves through accumulated experiences within that specific location (Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015), while place dependence (PD) relates to tourists' functional attachment to destinations, reflecting the extent to which destinations fulfil tourists' needs (Loureiro, 2014).

Pro-environmental behaviour encompasses individual or group actions designed to alleviate negative environmental impact (Kollmuss & Agyeman, 2002). Nature-based tourism experiences, such as wildlife safaris, enhance connections between humans and nature, effectively promoting pro-environmental behaviours (Clark, Mulgrew, Kannis-Dymand, Schaffer, & Hoberg, 2019). Some studies suggest that nature-based tourism experiences offering opportunities for environmental reflection are likely to increase pro-environmental behaviour (Salim et al., 2023). In addition, tourists' active participation in well-planned activities and acquisition of recollectable experiences can intensify their connection to the natural environment and other events, thereby fostering greater pro-environmental behaviour (Zhang, Cai, Bai, Yang, & Zhang, 2023). Thus, the following hypotheses are posited:

H12. Memorable wildlife tourism experience positively influences tourists' hedonic well-being.

H13. Memorable wildlife tourism experience positively influences tourists' eudaimonic well-being.

H14. Memorable wildlife tourism experience positively influences tourists' place attachment.

H15. Memorable wildlife tourism experience positively influences tourists' pro-environmental behaviour.

3. Methods

3.1. Data collection methods and instrumentation

The Mole National Park, located in the Savannah Region of Ghana was elected as the study area. The park is located approximately 20 km north of the regional capital, Damango. Encompassing an area of about 4577 km^2, Mole National Park was officially designated as a national park in the year 1971 due to its remarkable wildlife and the need to preserve diverse natural habitats (Acquah, Dearden, & Rollins, 2016, Fig. 2). The park is home to a rich biodiversity with at least 90 mammal species, nine varieties of amphibians, over 300 bird species, and 33 different reptiles. Mole is one of seven National Parks in Ghana (Mole National Park, 2024). The target population is international tourists who engaged in a wildlife safari tour, specifically a nature-based tour conducted at the Mole Wildlife National Park. It is, by far, Ghana's largest natural protected area and holds the reputation of being among the well-managed game and wildlife reserves within the African continent, positioned to the south of the Sahara Desert. The park is a major tourist attraction (Bonye, Yiridomoh, & Nsiah, 2023). There were 13,796 visitors to Mole National Park in 2019 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2022). Data were gathered from international tourists who engaged in a wildlife safari tour, specifically a nature-based tour conducted at the Mole Wildlife National Park in Ghana from October 2022 to September 2023. The justification for the selected time frame (October 2022 to September 2023) was to minimise potential time-lag bias and false memory creation (Santos, 2017).

Before conducting the primary online survey, a pre-test involving five professors specializing in hospitality and tourism in Ghana was executed in July 2023. During the trial, respondents were urged to provide feedback on any statements they found unclear, repetitive, or challenging to answer. After their comments, minor adjustments were made, including rectifying grammatical errors and refining sentence structures for several questions. To ensure data collection from the intended sample, filtering questions like "Are you 18 years or older?" and "Have you engaged in a wildlife safari at the Mole National Park between October 2022 and September 2023?" were utilized. The survey, distributed in October 2023, was in English and facilitated through the Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) crowdsourcing platform. Convenience sampling was used because it is cost-effective, efficient, and simple to implement. The authors acknowledge that the key disadvantage of this sampling technique is that the sample lacks clear generalisability. From the 382 received responses, 361 were considered valid from individual participants.

The survey questionnaire was sectioned into two main parts. The first section gathered responses on the demographic factors and travel behaviours of respondents. The second part covered measurement indicators assessing nine constructs within the proposed model. These were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 being strongly disagree to 5 being strongly agree. The construct of escapism comprised four indicators informed by Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung (2007). Experience co-creation was equally assessed through five – indicators sourced from Mathis et al. (2016). Existential authenticity consisted of six measurement items which were informed by Kolar and Zabkar (2010). Experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience construct employed three measures each from Oh et al. (2007). Hedonic well-being included five indicators modified from Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin's (1985) study. Eudaimonic well-being used three items from Ryff's Psychological Wellbeing Scale (PWS) (1989). Place attachment incorporated eight items adapted from Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim (2010). Pro-environmental behaviour employed three items adapted from Li, Lee, Chen, and Park's study (2023). The study employed 37 items in total (Appendix 1). The whole research process is summarised in Appendix 2.

3.2. Method of analysis

The examination of the collected data involved variance-based structural modeling using SmartPLS version 3.0, employing partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). PLS-SEM was selected as the main analytical tool over covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM) due to its alignment with the prediction-oriented methodology of
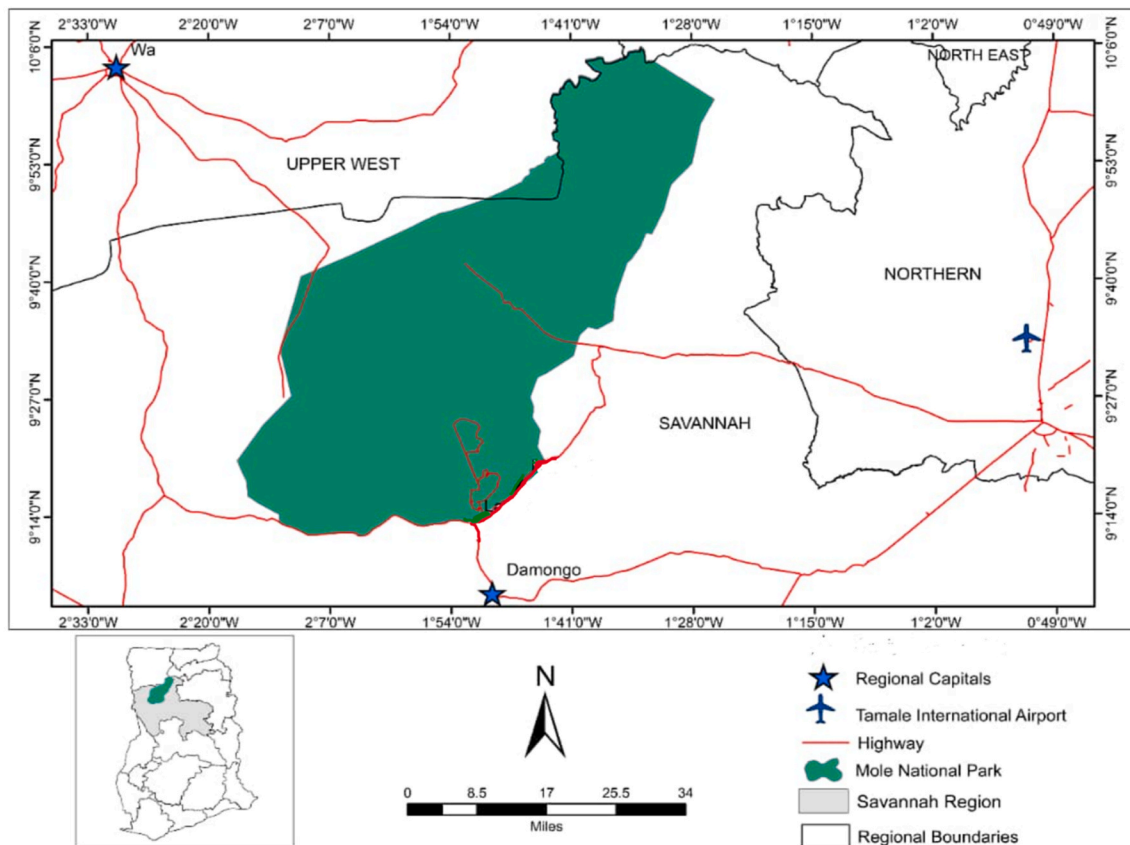
Fig. 2. Geographical location of the study area.

this study. This method was considered more appropriate, offering enhanced statistical power and the capacity to handle non-normally distributed data, as asserted by Hair et al. (2017). The study performed Mardia's multivariate skewness and kurtosis to evaluate for likely non-normality as recommended by Cain et al. (2017) and Hair et al. (2017) using the WebPower online software tool. The results showed a coefficient of 405.63 with an associated p-value of 0.000 and a kurtosis coefficient of 2128.01 with a p-value of 0.000. Confirming the presence of multivariate non-normality, the study proceeded to use the SmartPLS software to conduct a nonparametric analysis. Furthermore, the selection of the PLS method was based on its capability to handle numerous endogenous and exogenous variables (Shiau, Sarstedt, & Hair, 2019).

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

Regarding the overall profile of survey participants, most were male (195). Concerning age, the majority (117) were aged between 18 and 29 years which aligns with the Ghana Tourism Report (2022) that the majority (33.86%) of visitors to Ghana are between 18 and 29 years. The majority were single (136) and US American (242). The latter corroborates the Ghana Tourism Report (2022) which shows that the US is the topmost inbound market for Ghana with about 118,369 arrivals in 2022. More than half of the respondents (258) had visited Mole National Park on previous occasions. Many had travelled with their partner (186) (Table 1).

4.2. Common method bias

To address the presence of common method bias (CMB), Harman's

Table 1
Demographic and travel characteristics of respondents (N = 361).

Characteristics	Number of respondents	Characteristics	Number of respondents
Gender		**Have you visited the Mole National Park before?**	
Male	195	Yes (Repeat visitors)	166
Female	166	No (First-time visitors)	110
Age		**Was this trip organised by a tour operator?**	
18–29	117	Yes	258
30–39	98	No	103
40–49	80	**Travel companion**	
>50	66	Family	65
Relationship Status		Partner	186
Single	136	Friends	92
Engaged	18	Girlfriend	7
Married	202	Boyfriend	6
Divorced	5	Colleagues	3
Nationality		Alone	2
American	242		
Dutch	37		
British	34		
German	28		
French	5		
Spanish	5		
Polish	2		
Lithuanian	2		
Swiss	1		
South African	1		
Belgian	1		
Slovakian	1		
Austrian	1		
Cameroonian	1		

single-factor analysis was performed. This method determines whether a single overarching factor could explain most of the variability among variables within the research model. The findings demonstrated that the single factor accounted for 45.74% of the variance, below the common threshold of 50% (Podsakoff et al., 2003), indicating that CMB does not significantly impact the validity of the results. Moreover, in PLS analysis, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) can assess CMB (Kock, 2015). The VIF values in this study ranged from 1.287 (lowest) to 2.287 (highest) for all variables, well below the threshold of 3.3, affirming the minimal concern for CMB.

4.3. Measurement model

Before conducting the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) test, it was imperative to evaluate the measurement model for internal consistency, reliability, and validity of the research constructs. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021). Internal consistency and data reliability were established through Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values. Following Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019), a threshold of 0.7 and above for both Cronbach's alpha and CR values is considered indicative of satisfactory internal consistency and reliability. Upon scrutinising the results of the measurement model, it became evident

Table 2
Construct and convergent validity of the measurement model.

Construct	Items	Outer loading	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE
Escapism	Esca1	0.714	0.784	0.856	0.598
	Esca2	0.814			
	Esca3	0.767			
	Esca4	0.795			
Experience co-creation	Exco1	0.760	0.844	0.889	0.617
	Ecxo2	0.758			
	Exco3	0.828			
	Exco4	0.804			
	Exco5	0.774			
Existential authenticity	Exau1	0.709	0.844	0.885	0.561
	Exau2	0.757			
	Exau3	0.728			
	Exau4	0.792			
	Exau5	0.730			
	Exau6	0.777			
Experiential satisfaction	Exsa1	0.797	0.787	0.876	0.702
	Exsa2	0.868			
	Exsa3	0.847			
Eudaimonic well-being	Euwb1	0.793	0.779	0.872	0.694
	Euwb2	0.870			
	Euwb3	0.834			
Hedonic well-being	Hewb1	0.760	0.860	0.899	0.642
	Hewb2	0.844			
	Hewb3	0.836			
	Hewb4	0.810			
	Hewb5	0.749			
Memorable wildlife tourism experience	Mwte1	0.867	0.838	0.902	0.755
	Mwte2	0.846			
	Mwte3	0.893			
Place attachment	Plat1	0.806	0.905	0.923	0.599
	Plat2	0.772			
	Plat3	0.788			
	Plat4	0.794			
	Plat5	0.774			
	Plat6	0.802			
	Plat7	0.733			
	Plat8	0.718			
Pro-environmental behaviour	Preb1	0.808	0.792	0.878	0.707
	Preb2	0.870			
	Preb3	0.843			

Note: ESCA = Escapism; EXCO = Experience co-creation; EXAU = Existential authenticity; EXSA = Experiential satisfaction; EUWB = Eudaimonic Well-being; HEWB = Hedonic Well-being; MWTE = Memorable wildlife tourism experience; PLAT = Place Attachment; PREB = Pro-environmental behaviour.

that Cronbach's alpha and CR values for all constructs in this study exceeded 0.7 (Table 2). This observation aligns with the prescribed minimum requirements for internal consistency and reliability, as outlined by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2019).

In addition, the validation of the measurement model involved the application of three distinct statistical tests, namely, convergent validity, construct validity, and discriminant validity. The assessment of construct and convergent validity was based on two key indicators: outer loading and average variance extracted (AVE). For Hair Jr., Howard and Nitzl (2020), an outer loading of 0.7 or higher for any variable is deemed satisfactory, while for AVE, a value of 0.5 or more is regarded tolerable (Hair et al., 2021). The outcomes of the measurement model analysis revealed that all variables exhibited outer loadings surpassing the 0.7 threshold, and the AVE values exceeded 0.5. These findings align with the stipulated criteria for construct and convergent validity, as detailed in Table 2.

The method proposed by Gefen and Straub (2005) was utilized to evaluate the discriminant validity in the analysis of the measurement model, which involved scrutinising the cross-loading values of the indicators of the constructs. As per the guidelines provided by Gefen and Straub (2005), the indicators of a construct must demonstrate the highest loading on their respective latent construct, especially when compared to other constructs in the PLS-SEM. This ensures the validity of the constructs within the model. The values of cross-loading of the constructs are shown in Table 3. As all items for each construct exhibited higher loadings on their respective underlying constructs than on other constructs within the structural model, the reflective measurement model confirmed discriminant validity.

4.4. Structural model

Following the establishment of internal consistency, reliability, and validity of the measurement model, the study used SEM to examine the hypotheses employing the PLS method. PLS-SEM was employed as a bootstrapping technique to assess the significance of path coefficients. The significance of the results was determined using the bootstrapping option, with this research specifically conducting bootstrapping using 5000 samples and cases for assessment.

Table 4 presents results from the SEM analysis. Table 4 illustrates that the influences of escapism on both experiential satisfaction (β = 0.003) and memorable wildlife tourism experience (β = −0.059) are insignificant, thus rejecting hypothesis one (H1) and hypothesis two (H2). Experience co-creation has a positive relationship with experiential satisfaction (β = 0.340) and memorable wildlife tourism experience (β = 0.260). Existential authenticity has a positive relationship with experiential satisfaction (β = 0.486) and memorable wildlife tourism experience (β = 0.212). Experiential satisfaction has a positive relationship with memorable wildlife tourism experience (β = 0.444), hedonic well-being (β = 0.539), eudaimonic well-being (β = 0.399), place attachment (β = 0.434), and pro-environmental behaviour (β = 0.470). Memorable wildlife tourism experience also has a positive relationship with hedonic well-being (β = 0.342), eudaimonic well-being (β = 0.311), place attachment (β = 0.284), and pro-environmental behaviour (β = 0.258). The results revealed that, apart from Hypotheses H1 and H2, the t-values of the path coefficients for all other hypotheses were greater than 1.96, indicating that Hypotheses H3 through H15 were supported at 0.05 significance level.

In addition, as per Hair et al. (2021), the R^2 values and Stone--Geisser's Q^2 values were used in this study to assess the explanatory power and predictive relevance of the model respectively. In terms of R^2 values, 0.75 is deemed significant, 0.50 is seen as moderate, and 0.25 is regarded as weak according to the guidelines of Hair et al. (2021). Since the R^2 values in this study are close to or above 0.50, but below 0.75, it shows explanatory power with moderate effect. The results of Q^2 obtained from a blindfolding procedure all exceed the threshold of 0.15 for moderate predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2021), suggesting

Table 3
Loading and cross loadings for the constructs.

	ESCA	EXCO	EXAU	EXSA	EUWB	HEWB	MWTE	PLAT	PREB
Esca1	**0.714**	0.414	0.372	0.309	0.352	0.314	0.180	0.481	0.231
Esca2	**0.814**	0.499	0.454	0.341	0.446	0.372	0.289	0.554	0.317
Esca3	**0.767**	0.497	0.489	0.502	0.474	0.457	0.439	0.475	0.359
Esca4	**0.795**	0.503	0.52	0.363	0.495	0.386	0.42	0.539	0.348
Exco1	0.488	**0.760**	0.598	0.460	0.520	0.539	0.558	0.497	0.437
Ecxo2	0.402	**0.758**	0.530	0.562	0.482	0.546	0.530	0.483	0.477
Exco3	0.492	**0.828**	0.665	0.615	0.573	0.645	0.613	0.577	0.468
Exco4	0.587	**0.804**	0.678	0.606	0.601	0.626	0.577	0.600	0.548
Exco5	0.480	**0.774**	0.633	0.598	0.538	0.610	0.523	0.540	0.567
Exau1	0.506	0.586	**0.709**	0.584	0.488	0.546	0.456	0.549	0.428
Exau2	0.497	0.580	**0.757**	0.523	0.530	0.591	0.470	0.603	0.417
Exau3	0.553	0.583	**0.728**	0.520	0.533	0.567	0.438	0.635	0.435
Exau4	0.440	0.631	**0.792**	0.572	0.557	0.632	0.601	0.587	0.519
Exau5	0.322	0.574	**0.73**	0.569	0.489	0.578	0.620	0.466	0.563
Exau6	0.439	0.606	**0.777**	0.621	0.581	0.660	0.608	0.577	0.532
Exsa1	0.473	0.558	0.632	**0.797**	0.525	0.640	0.577	0.596	0.509
Exsa2	0.424	0.632	0.607	**0.868**	0.539	0.677	0.653	0.517	0.589
Exsa3	0.386	0.635	0.663	**0.847**	0.536	0.692	0.687	0.525	0.577
Euwb1	0.491	0.551	0.557	0.509	**0.793**	0.617	0.518	0.639	0.510
Euwb2	0.499	0.590	0.621	0.531	**0.870**	0.603	0.494	0.602	0.583
Euwb3	0.467	0.589	0.589	0.549	**0.834**	0.581	0.527	0.548	0.555
Hewb1	0.446	0.570	0.594	0.582	0.561	**0.760**	0.556	0.600	0.502
Hewb2	0.451	0.660	0.670	0.690	0.571	**0.844**	0.628	0.628	0.581
Hewb3	0.343	0.617	0.671	0.695	0.562	**0.836**	0.667	0.576	0.598
Hewb4	0.400	0.607	0.669	0.634	0.588	**0.810**	0.573	0.590	0.549
Hewb5	0.406	0.576	0.585	0.592	0.612	**0.749**	0.585	0.583	0.534
Mwte1	0.416	0.690	0.680	0.687	0.560	0.694	**0.867**	0.551	0.528
Mwte2	0.362	0.556	0.559	0.619	0.477	0.574	**0.846**	0.498	0.498
Mwte3	0.413	0.609	0.628	0.682	0.562	0.686	**0.893**	0.551	0.58
Plat1	0.526	0.618	0.687	0.634	0.623	0.670	0.614	**0.806**	0.569
Plat2	0.563	0.510	0.586	0.443	0.559	0.547	0.384	**0.772**	0.399
Plat3	0.524	0.625	0.624	0.577	0.571	0.640	0.551	**0.788**	0.536
Plat4	0.547	0.584	0.606	0.547	0.593	0.583	0.514	**0.794**	0.550
Plat5	0.504	0.462	0.527	0.444	0.521	0.499	0.385	**0.774**	0.444
Plat6	0.519	0.500	0.577	0.498	0.582	0.560	0.477	**0.802**	0.447
Plat7	0.434	0.430	0.505	0.380	0.444	0.501	0.411	**0.733**	0.350
Plat8	0.451	0.465	0.512	0.411	0.495	0.542	0.377	**0.718**	0.464
Preb1	0.341	0.471	0.483	0.518	0.542	0.537	0.465	0.491	**0.808**
Preb2	0.401	0.577	0.589	0.598	0.579	0.626	0.541	0.589	**0.870**
Preb3	0.311	0.550	0.560	0.563	0.542	0.577	0.546	0.475	**0.843**

Note: ESCA = Escapism; EXCO = Experience co-creation; EXAU = Existential authenticity; EXSA = Experiential satisfaction; EUWB = Eudaimonic Well-being; HEWB = Hedonic Well-being; MWTE = Memorable wildlife tourism experience; PLAT = Place Attachment; PREB = Pro-environmental behaviour.

satisfactory predictive relevance (Table 5). Finally, effect size was also evaluated to assess the determinant variance of endogenous variables. The f^2 value, represents the impact of a specific exogenous latent constructs on an endogenous latent variable, as reflected in changes in the R^2 value (Hair, Black, et al., 2019).

Consequently, the calculation of effect size (Cohen, 2013) yielded f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, suggesting weak, moderate, and strong effects, respectively. The effect size of each latent construct in this study is presented in Table 5. Thus, except for the effect sizes of escapism on experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience, all the other effect sizes of exogenous variables on endogenous variables surpassed the threshold of 0.02.

5. Discussion of results

This study, grounded in the S–O–R theory, explores the relationships among escapism, experience co-creation, existential authenticity, and experiential satisfaction as precursors to memorable wildlife tourism experiences. Additionally, it investigates the connections between experiential satisfaction, memorable wildlife tourism experience, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour. Of the 15 hypotheses posited, 13 received empirical support. Different from studies reproducing the original memorable tourism experience scale in different contexts, this current research extends their framework by incorporating other drivers (including escapism, experience co-creation, existential authenticity,

and experiential satisfaction) which could influence memorable wildlife tourism experiences; a response to the call to explore additional variables that could elucidate memorable tourism experiences within tourism (Hosany et al., 2022). Considering the emphasis on creating memorable tourism experiences (Hosany et al., 2022), the current study makes meaningful contributions to the understanding of memorable wildlife tourism experiences and nature-based tourism, offering significant managerial implications for wildlife safari service providers.

Firstly, contrary to expectations, escapism during a wildlife safari tour did not positively impact experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience (H1 and H2). This finding contradicts studies suggesting a positive association between escapism and satisfaction (Rehman & Alnuzhah, 2022; Seyitoglu, 2020) and memorable tourism experience (Sipe & Testa, 2018; Chen et al., 2023; Dias & Dias, 2019). The degree of escapism did not demonstrate greater predictive power for experiential satisfaction than memorable wildlife tourism experience.

Secondly, the relationship between experience co-creation, experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience was supported (H3 and H4). This corresponds with past studies indicating that experiential satisfaction (Prebensen & Xie, 2017) and memorability result from the co-creation of experience (Campos et al., 2017). Tourists actively engaging with wildlife, service staff, and other tourists to co-create a non-consumptive nature-based tourism experience were more likely to have satisfactory and memorable wildlife tourism experiences. These findings highlight the significance of experience

Table 4
Structural model assessment.

Hypothesis and path	Coefficient (β)	t-value	p-value	Decision	f^2
H1: Escapism → Experiential satisfaction	0.003	0.065	0.948	Rejected	0.000
H2: Escapism → Memorable wildlife tourism experiences	−0.059	1.204	0.229	Rejected	0.006
H3: Experience co-creation → Experiential satisfaction	0.340	5.130	0.000	Supported	0.102
H4: Experience co-creation → Wildlife tourism experiences	0.260	3.894	0.000	Supported	0.06
H5: Existential authenticity → Experiential satisfaction	0.486	7.095	0.000	Supported	0.216
H6: Existential authenticity → Memorable wildlife tourism experiences	0.212	2.838	0.005	Supported	0.037
H7: Experiential satisfaction → Memorable wildlife tourism experience	0.444	7.351	0.000	Supported	0.217
H8: Experiential satisfaction → Hedonic well-being	0.539	10.757	0.000	Supported	0.387
H9: Experiential satisfaction → Eudaimonic well-being	0.399	5.815	0.000	Supported	0.119
H10: Experiential satisfaction → Place attachment	0.434	7.365	0.000	Supported	0.144
H11: Experiential satisfaction → Pro-environmental behaviour	0.470	7.559	0.000	Supported	0.174
H12: Memorable wildlife tourism experience → Hedonic well-being	0.342	6.928	0.000	Supported	0.156
H13: Memorable wildlife tourism experience → Eudaimonic well-being	0.311	4.372	0.000	Supported	0.073
H14: Memorable wildlife tourism experience → Place attachment	0.284	4.637	0.000	Supported	0.062
H15: Memorable wildlife tourism experience → Pro-environmental behaviour	0.258	3.607	0.000	Supported	0.053

Table 5
Values of R^2 and $Q.^2$.

Variable	R^2	Q^2
Experiential Satisfaction	0.616	0.426
Memorable wildlife tourism experience	0.651	0.482
Hedonic Well-being	0.688	0.434
Eudaimonic Well-being	0.446	0.303
Place attachment	0.456	0.259
Pro-environmental behaviour	0.473	0.329

co-creation in the context of wildlife tourism and had a greater predictive power concerning experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience.

Thirdly, existential authenticity was identified as a predictor of experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience. This supports H5 and H6, suggesting a direct and positive impact on tourists' experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience. In other words, the greater the existential authenticity experienced by a tourist during a wildlife tourism experience, the greater the experiential satisfaction and the memorability of the wildlife tourism experience. This finding aligns with studies indicating a positive relationship between experiential authenticity and experiential satisfaction (Dominquez-Quintero et al., 2020) and memorable tourism experience, specifically memorable wildlife tourism experience (Chen et al., 2023; Sthapit & Björk, 2017).

Fourthly, experiential satisfaction emerged as a crucial predictor of memorable wildlife tourism experience, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour (H7, H8, H9, H10, and H11), suggesting a direct and positive impact on tourists' memorable wildlife tourism experience, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour. This aligns with prior research findings that suggest that experiential satisfaction stemming from positive wildlife safari encounters contributes to memorable wildlife tourism experience (Sthapit et al., 2022). Tourist satisfaction is achieved when the result of evaluating their expectations against actual experiences is a positive and memorable sensation upon departing a destination (Su et al.,2011). The findings give credence to studies indicating that experiential satisfaction contributes to hedonic well-being (Ahn et al., 2019), eudaimonic well-being (Liu et al., 2023), place attachment (Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2015), and pro-environmental behaviour (Salim et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the study establishes relationships between memorable wildlife tourism experience, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour. These findings corroborate existing studies which indicate that memorable tourism experiences is a contributor to hedonic well-being (Bigne et al., 2020; Trinanda et al., 2022), eudaimonic well-being eudaimonic well-being (Vada et al., 2019), place attachment (Sthapit et al., 2022; Vada et al., 2019), and pro-environmental behaviour (Zhang et al., 2023). Hence, when tourists have a memorable wildlife tourism experience, they are more like to experience hedonic well-being and eudaimonic well-being and showcase place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour.

5.1. Conclusions

Underpinned by the S–O-R theory, the current study investigated the extent to which escapism, experiential co-creation, experiential satisfaction and existential authenticity interact to influence memorable wildlife tourism experience. The study also examined the extent to which memorable wildlife tourism experience, eudaimonic well-being, hedonic well-being, place attachment and pro-environmental behaviour relate statistically. Using MTurk, data were collected from 361 inbound tourists aged 18 years or more who travelled to the Mole National Park in Ghana between October 2022 and September 2023 for a wildlife safari experience. Existential authenticity, experience co-creation and existential satisfaction proved to be drivers of memorable wildlife tourism experience, while the relationship between memorable wildlife tourism experience, eudaimonic well-being, hedonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour was supported. The conclusions drawn are important contributions to the extant literature on memorable tourism experiences and wildlife tourism by examining an inimitable model that introduces other concepts into the existing memorable tourism experience theory (escapism, experience co-creation, existential authenticity, experiential satisfaction, eudaimonic well-being, hedonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour).

5.2. Theoretical implications

First, this study addresses an important invitation by tourism researchers to conduct studies that distil and confirm additional drivers of tourists' memorable tourism experiences (Kim, Badu-Baiden, Kim, Koseoglu, & Baah, 2023; Stone et al., 2022), based on the context of experiences. Various factors could serve as significant determinants in the context of wildlife tourism. Going beyond the discoveries of Kim et al. (2012), the current study includes and confirms additional drivers of memorable tourism experiences within the context of wildlife tourism. Recognising that distinct factors may drive memorable tourism experiences in wildlife safari experiences, this study generates and confirms new drivers – specifically, experience co-creation and experiential authenticity. The results affirm the association of these factors with experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience, supporting hypotheses H3–H6. Considering the dearth of studies concerning wildlife safari experiences and the lack of consensus on the specific factors characterizing memorable wildlife tourism experiences, this study offers deeper insights of this phenomenon. Consequently, the outcomes of this research can steer future investigations and initiate fresh discussions. Additionally, the findings reaffirm that memorable tourism experience is a complex concept influenced by context (Sthapit & Jimenez-Barreto, 2018). While the conventional memorable tourism experience model might be suitable, an alternative variable-based model could potentially yield superior results.

Second, the results expand the literature on wildlife tourism experiences, establishing grounds for future studies in this area. The study enriches the literature on nature-based tourism, particularly wildlife tourism experiences, by demonstrating that memorable wildlife tourism experiences go beyond experiential satisfaction and lead to memorability, hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour. Apart from determining the drivers of memorable wildlife tourism experiences, the study also finds memorable wildlife tourism experiences as predictors of hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour, advancing the shared understanding of outcomes associated with memorable wildlife tourism experiences.

Third, previous researchers have investigated memorable tourism experiences from the perspectives of psychology, environmental psychology, organisational management, and sociology (Hosany et al., 2022). This study, which used S–O–R theory, complements the literature by identifying both the determinants and outcomes of memorable wildlife tourism experiences. The results align with the theoretical foundations of S–O–R theory, illustrating that environmental stimuli – specifically, experience cocreation, and experiential authenticity – influence an individual's cognitive and emotional responses (experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience), which, in turn, drive response behaviours (hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour). Put differently, the study demonstrated its predictive relevance in interpreting tourist behaviour, indicating that tourists experience cocreation (external stimuli) determined tourists' experiential satisfaction and memorable wildlife tourism experience (organism) and that these responses had a knock-on effect on their hedonic well-being, eudaimonic well-being, place attachment, and pro-environmental behaviour.

5.3. Managerial implications

This research holds important implications for wildlife safari providers seeking to enhance memorable wildlife tourism experiences. When strategizing and executing wildlife tourism experiences, it is essential to integrate elements such as experience co-creation, experiential authenticity and experiential satisfaction into their design.

First, rather than viewing tourists on wildlife safaris as passive participants, it is essential to recognise them as active contributors who shape their own experiences. Thus, it is pivotal for safari providers to actively involve tourists in creating their experiences. This involvement could include sharing information about wildlife and their habitats and helping visitors understand observed behaviours. Therefore, building the capacities of tour guides to be able to encourage tourists to actively engage in shaping their experiences is crucial since tour guides play a pivotal role in shaping tourists' experience. Tourists can have their interest sustained and make the most out of their time during safari tours by involving them in social and mental engagements. We recommend that service providers should play an active role by helping guests cocreate their safari experiences. This could be done by giving priority to visitors through interactions to enhance their memorable experience. This requires a transformation in the role of the provider, moving beyond just offering wildlife safaris to actively co-creating remarkable experiences with tourists.

Second, wildlife safari providers should reinforce tourist perceptions of existential authenticity by including immersive activities such as viewing wildlife exhibits and special exhibitions including storytelling linked to the history and culture of the national park. Such activities may inspire tourists to acquire knowledge about wildlife, local culture, and the natural habitat including discovering their inner selves and enhancing their emotional interactions.

Third, wildlife safari providers must devise strategies that maximise tourists' satisfaction whereby the wildlife safari experience exceeds their expectations. For example, for tourists to consider the wildlife safari experience worthwhile, different stakeholders in wildlife tourism, local authorities, wildlife tourism managers and providers of wildlife safaris should prioritize the conservation of vegetation, aesthetic landscapes, and wildlife in their respective locations, as these are the primary attractions sought after by visitors during wildlife safaris. The focus should be environmental and wildlife protection and monitoring should be conducted frequently.

5.4. Limitations and suggestions for future studies

Like many studies, this study has a couple of limitations worth noting. First, by using tourists who had engaged in wildlife safari tours as its sample, this study's findings may not be directly transferrable to other forms of nature-based tourism. Future research should replicate the current study and extend the findings to other national parks in different destinations. Second, this study was confined to examining only four antecedents and outcomes related to memorable wildlife tourism experiences. Future studies should broaden the scope of the investigation to encompass additional antecedents to substantially enhance the understanding and augment the current study's conclusions. Third, the research involved a relatively small number of participants. Future studies incorporating larger and more diverse samples across various cultures could corroborate the present study's findings. Fourth, data collection for this study took place during the post-visit phase, utilising convenience sampling. This method relied on participants' recollections of memories with varied timeframes (October 2022 and September 2023). A likely recall bias could be reduced in subsequent studies by collecting data from tourists shortly after their safari experience. Fifth, the study relied on an online survey which is susceptible to potential biases. Future research could adopt an additional interpretive approach to validate the quantitative results through, for example, in-depth interviews. Lastly, conducting comparative studies between first-time and repeat visitors, as well as between domestic and international tourists, could provide valuable insights to complement those obtained from the present study.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Erose Sthapit: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Chunli Ji:** Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis. **Frederick Dayour:** Writing – review & editing, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Frank**

Badu-Baiden: Writing – review & editing, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix 1

Operationalisation of the constructs used in this study (variables sources and measurement items).

No.	Items	Source
Escapism		Oh et al. (2007)
X1	I felt that I played a different character during my wildlife safari experience.	
X2	My wildlife safari experience let me imagine being someone else.	
X3	I completely escaped from daily life during my wildlife safari experience.	
X4	I felt like I was living a different time or place during my wildlife safari experience.	
Experience co-creation		Mathis et al. (2016)
X5	Working alongside service staff and other tourists at the Mole National Park allowed me to have a great social interaction during my wildlife safari experience, which I enjoyed.	
X6	I felt comfortable working with service staff and other tourists at the Mole National Park during my wildlife safari experience.	
X7	The setting allowed me to effectively collaborate with service staff and other tourists during my wildlife safari experience at the Mole National Park.	
X8	My recent wildlife safari experience enhanced because of my participation in the experience.	
X9	I felt confident in my ability to collaborate with service staff and other tourists during my wildlife safari experience at the Mole National Park.	
Existential authenticity		Kolar and Zabkar (2010)
X10	I liked the exhibits, special exhibitions, and demonstrations linked to wildlife at the Mole National Park.	
X11	The wildlife safari gave me a deeper insight into the history and culture of the Mole National Park.	
X12	During the wildlife safari, I felt the related history and culture of the Mole National Park.	
X13	The wildlife safari experience visit enriched me as a person.	
X14	I liked the calm and peaceful atmosphere of this place.	
X15	I felt connected with wildlife.	
Experiential satisfaction		**Wu, Li and Li (2018)**
X16	The wildlife safari experience was beyond my expectations.	
X17	I really liked the wildlife safari experience.	
X18	It was worthwhile visiting the Mole National Park for wildlife safari experience.	
Memorable wildlife safari experience		Oh et al. (2007)
X19	I have wonderful memories of the wildlife safari experience.	
X20	I will not forget my wildlife safari experience.	
X21	I will remember my wildlife safari experience.	
Hedonic well-being		Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985)
X22	In most ways, my wildlife safari experience was close to ideal.	
X23	The conditions of wildlife safari experience were excellent.	
X24	I am satisfied with my wildlife safari experience.	
X25	I achieved the most important things during my wildlife safari trip.	
X26	I would not change the plans I made for this wildlife safari trip.	
Eudaimonic well-being		Ryff (1989)
X27	I feel like living life 1 day at a time	
X28	I feel like I have a sense of direction and purpose in life	
X29	I enjoy making plans for the future and working to make them a reality	
Place attachment		**Gross & Brown, 2008; Yuksel, Yuksel and Bilim (2010)**
X30	The Mole National Park is a very special to me.	
X31	I identify strongly with the Mole National Park.	
X32	Holidaying in this tourism destination means a lot to me.	
X33	I am very attached to this tourism destination.	
Place dependence		
X34	Holidaying in this tourism destination is more important to me than holidaying in other places.	
X35	This tourism destination is the best place for what I like to do on holidays.	
X36	I will not substitute this tourism destination with any other place for the experience I had there.	
X37	I get more satisfaction out of holidaying in this digital free tourism destination than from visiting similar destination.	
Pro-environmental behaviour		Li, Lee, Chen, and Park (2023)
X38	When I see garbage and debris in the destination, I put them in the trash	
X39	If there are wildlife conservation activities at the destination, I am willing to attend	
X40	I will deter any behaviour damaging the environment of the destination	

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