

Abstract

Memorable Tourism Experience and the Post-Consumption Outcomes of Houseboat Tourism in Kerala

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The concept of experience economy is gaining significance in the marketing literature and is often used to explain, design, and execute experiential offerings. Tourism is an industry that provides a unique context to see the experience economy ideas in action, as majority of the offerings are experiential in nature. The literature review suggested that there have been only a few attempts to quantify customer experiences; the development of a comprehensive memorable tourism experience scale is one such important development. With many studies reporting the utility of seven-dimensional MTE scale it is necessary to extend its relationships with other more established constructs to ascertain and emphasize its utility. Many studies have called for studying relationship of MTEs with behavioural outcomes. Accordingly, this study extends the relationships of MTE with common measures used by practitioners and suggested by the literature to evaluate the success of tourism offerings. The dependent variables studied are *satisfaction*, *word-of-mouth intention and behaviour* as well as *re-experiencing intention* of the tourists in response to memorable tourism experiences that they receive.

We started with the following research questions:

- 1) Is MTE scale generalizable for various contexts, specifically for houseboat tourists?
- 2) Is MTE scale valid and reliable for tourist subjects?
- 3) Can the measurement of memorable tourism experiences provide an alternative for various measures used to ascertain the successful offering and expected loyalty behaviours?

Research Objectives

- 1) To establish a structural theory of relationship between memorable tourism experience construct and the post-experience outcomes namely satisfaction, re-experiencing intention, word-of-mouth intention and behaviour.
- 2) To validate the memorable tourism scale with actual tourists in some memorable tourism experience settings

To achieve these objectives we proposed to test a structural model based on existent literature using the responses from houseboat tourists in Alleppey, Kerala. This context was chosen as a houseboat tourism experience is a structured tourism offering and we expected to find commonality in the experience of the tourists, other reason was the ease of access to the target population.

Findings:

The proposed structural model was supported by the data collected from the houseboat tourists. On the basis of our structural theory we can propose that the construct of MTE has dual relationship with the behavioural outcomes like word-of-mouth intention and behaviour and re-experiencing intention; direct and through satisfaction. It can be inferred that satisfaction plays an important role in explaining the relationships of MTE with word-of-mouth intention and behaviour. We find that

satisfaction partially mediates the relationship of MTE with behavioural intentions of word-of-mouth, re-experiencing and word-of-mouth behaviour, significant direct relationships were also found. We found issues with the dimensionality of MTE scale in context of this research and similar issues has also been reported in another study (Adongo et al., 2015), hence we suggest further testing of the scale in other contexts.

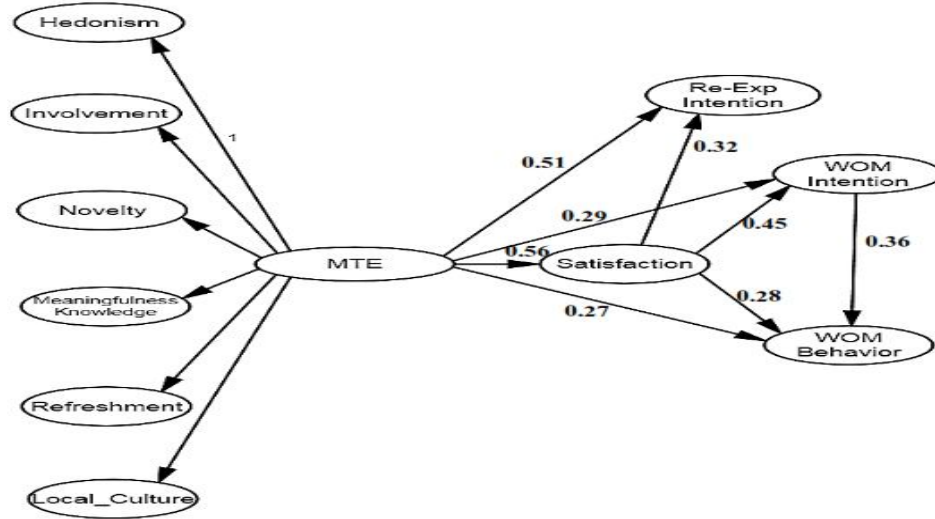


Figure1: Structural model of the relationships of MTE

Implications of the research

Based on our findings it can be suggested that the tourism managers can use MTE scale as an alternative to evaluate the performance of their experiential tourism offerings. In order to get the desired outcomes of tourist satisfaction, positive word of mouth and revisit, the tourism managers should attempt to create and communicate their offerings based on the seven dimensions of the MTE scale. For academicians, this study furthers the evidence of applicability of MTE scale to various tourism experiences and extends the known relationships of MTEs with other important outcome and evaluation constructs like satisfaction, re-experiencing and WOM behaviour.