

**THE CONGRUENCE – NOVELTY PARADOX: EXPLORING THE  
EFFECTS OF SELF-CONGRUENCE AND NOVELTY ON MEMORABLE  
TOURIST EXPERIENCES**

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# **THE CONGRUENCE – NOVELTY PARADOX: EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF SELF-CONGRUENCE AND NOVELTY ON MEMORABLE TOURIST EXPERIENCES**

## **Abstract**

The current study intends to explore the destination attributes that specifically influence memorable tourist experiences and subsequently tourist satisfaction. In doing so this study clarifies pre-existing measures and tourism theories. Additionally, the study will examine the moderating effects self-congruity and novelty have on the relationship between destination attribute performance and memorable tourist experiences. A mixed-method approach will be utilised to clarify specific destination attributes that impact on memorable experiences as well as to test the relationships in the research model. The study will extend existing theory memorable experiences and develop a theoretical model of how destination attribute performance impacts on memorable tourist experience.

## **Introduction**

Experience is the foundation of the tourism industry, highlighting why garnering knowledge into what makes these experiences memorable is so vital. An American Express survey indicated that tourists demanded more personal fulfilment with 72% of respondents prioritising experience over tangible goods (Peak DMC, 2014). Similarly, Trip Advisor has had a 125% increase in historical and heritage experience bookings in 2017, and culinary experiences such as cooking classes saw a 57% increase over the previous year (TripAdvisor, 2018). These statistics are indicative of tourists' preference for more experiential aspects from their holidays. Pizam (2010) classified experience, particularly memorable tourist experiences (MTEs), as the essence of the tourist industry. Tourists seek unique and attractive experiences that go beyond the mere provision of a product (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010; Kastenholz et al, 2012; Wang et al, 2012). This is evident in Loureiro's (2014) study which underscored that experiences are demanded within a challenging and heterogenous tourism market. Furthermore, the evolution of the tourism industry is part of a larger shift in focus from offering products to experiences in the broader economy (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Schmitt and Zarantonello, 2013; Walls et al., 2011). Therefore, research into tourist experiences and, by extension, MTEs, is necessary in today's contemporary tourist environment to actuate insight into modern tourist behaviour.

Research suggests that the tourist experience has no purpose unless it is remembered (Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Mossberg, 2007; Bosangit et al., 2015). Kahneman (2011) states tourism assists tourists to construct and develop memories. Kim and Ritchie (2014) postulated that memorable tourist experiences are crucial to the overall experience at a destination. According to Kim (2014) MTEs comprise dimensions of hedonism, novelty, culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge, all of which are prevalent constructs within tourism research and the broader tourism industry (Sthapit, 2013). Hence, it is crucial that research truly understands what

an MTE constitutes and what drives the formation of these memorable experiences. Furthermore, studies have also demonstrated that MTEs are crucial in bringing about satisfaction in tourists (e.g. Chen and Chen, 2010; Dunman and Mattila, 2005). This study aims to gain a better understanding of the notion of MTEs and their impacts on tourist satisfaction.

Memorable experiences are formed based on an interaction with the various attributes at a destination (Tung and Ritchie, 2011). Studies have shown that destinations are a collection of physical (e.g. Ryu and Han, 2011), social (e.g. Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), cultural (e.g. Hwang and Seo, 2016; Jauhari and Bharwani, 2017), products/services (e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Lorentzen, 2013), and service quality (e.g. Chua et al., 2015). These attributes have all been cited as contributing to the experience at a tourist destination (Kim, 2014). Gao et al (2012) noted that destination attributes primarily have a direct effect on tourist experience, as well as perceived monetary value, and destination loyalty (Chen and Tsai, 2007). Thus, this study will aim to further delineate the various attributes of a tourist destination and how they impact on the memorable experience.

Studies in tourism research have demonstrated that the perceived self-congruence of destination image attributes have been found to result in more positive emotions (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011), favourable attitudes (e.g. Lee and Kim, 2011), higher satisfaction ratings (e.g. Alegre and Garau, 2010; Song et al., 2012), and loyalty behaviour (e.g. Bosnjak et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). Thus, this study aims to further understand the moderating effects of self-congruity on the relationships between destination attribute performance (DAP) and memorable tourist experiences in an in-consumption context. Further, in an opposing view to the self-congruence hypothesis, novelty has also been found to be a driving force of tourism in general (George and George, 2012; Assaker et al., 2011; Chai, 2012). The concept of novelty is an essential characteristic in some tourists, as it is a distinctive factor in how tourists decide on which destination they travel to (Petrick, 2002; Liu et al., 2016; Mahasuweerachai and Qu, 2011). Numerous other studies have demonstrated that novel experiences are attained by immersive exploration of aboriginal cultures, whereby novelty serves as a pull factor to entice tourist to visit a destination (e.g. Chang et al, 2005; Cohen et al, 2014; Elands and Lengkeek, 2012). This presents a paradox as, on the one hand, tourists seek the comfort of congruent attributes at a destination, while, on the other hand, seek 'dissonance' through novelty-seeking behaviours. It could thus be argued that novelty-seeking could potentially, moderate the moderating effects of self-congruence on the destination attribute performance-memorable experience relationship.

Urban tourist destinations are characteristically defined as touristic activities taking place within a predominately city environment (Ashworth and Page, 2011). Contrastingly, heritage destinations encompass culturally dominated destinations, whereby tourists visit spaces associated with a historical past (Chen and Chen, 2010; Weaver, 2011). However, to the best knowledge of the researcher, no studies have been conducted to compare visitors to urban and heritage destinations. The aesthetic and cultural differences between these destination types attract different tourists which brings forward the argument that different destination attributes could contribute variably in the formation of MTEs (Battour et al., 2011; Kim, 2014). Thus, the current study will examine the differential effects of destination typology on MTE.

## Research Gaps

Based upon a thorough literature review, the following research gaps have been identified:

- RG1:** The majority of studies examining MTE have been qualitative in their nature (e.g. Kim, 2014; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Tsai, 2016). Only few studies have utilised quantitative methods in the examination of MTEs (e.g. Kim et al., 2012; Sthapit, 2013). Thus, there is a clear need for more quantitative examination of the drivers, dimensions and impacts of MTE in a tourism context.
- RG2:** Some studies have examined the relationship between MTE and satisfaction (e.g. Hosany and Witham, 2010; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2013) while other studies have examined the destination attributes that link to MTE (e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Lorentzen, 2013; Ryu and Han, 2011). Yet, no studies that have examined a comprehensive model of how specific destination attributes performance (DAP) on memorable tourist experience (MTE) and subsequently, satisfaction. Thus, there is a requirement for an encompassing model to investigate what destination attributes contribute to a memorable experience and subsequently, satisfaction.
- RG3:** Self-congruity has been extensively researched in a tourism context, replicating self-congruity studies from consumer behaviour, as Usakli and Baloglu (2011) explored tourist congruence with destination personality. However, the role self-congruity in the context of memorable tourist experiences is a relatively unexplored dynamic (Boksberger et al, 2011). This research intends to explore the moderating effects of self-congruity on the relationship between DAP and MTE.
- RG4:** Novelty-seeking is a prevalent notion within tourism (Assaker et al., 2011; George and George, 2012; Tung and Ritchie, 2011). While novelty seeking has been analysed in a tourism context in regard to tourist motivation (Som and Badarneh, 2011), the role it has within what constitutes how these novel choices and intentions become memorable is relatively uncharted. Thus, there is an opportunity to explore the potential for the moderating effects of novelty-seeking on the moderation of self-congruity on the DAP-MTE relationship.
- RG5:** Tourism studies are often context specific with some studies focusing on urban destinations (e.g. Ashworth and Page, 2011) and others on heritage destinations (e.g. Chen and Chen, 2010; Weaver, 2011). Different kinds of destinations elicit differing motivations, tourist personalities and preferences for varying destination attributes (Kim, 2014; Ashworth and Page, 2011). Thus, there is a clear need for a comparative study between an urban and heritage destination in the examination of MTEs.

## Research Objectives

Based on the gaps above, the current study aims to:

- RO1:** To apply a mixed methodology, incorporating qualitative and quantitative methods to examine MTEs. (Addressing RG1)
- RO2:** To investigate the influence specific destination attribute performance has on MTE and subsequent tourist satisfaction. (Addressing RG2)
- RO3:** To investigate the moderating effect self-congruity has on the relationship between DAP and MTE. (Addressing RG3)
- RO4:** To examine the interaction effects of self-congruity and novelty-seeking on the destination attribute performance-memorable experience relationships. Specifically, to examine if novelty-seeking tendencies will moderate the moderation of self-congruence on the DAP-MTE relationship. (Addressing RG4)
- RO5:** To examine the differential effects destination context has on the relationships in the research model. Specifically, to examine how these relationships differ at urban and heritage tourist destinations. (Addressing RG5)

## Literature Review

### *Memorable Tourist Experience*

Predominately, there exists two perspectives of analysing tourist experiences, the social science viewpoint and the marketing viewpoint (Quan and Wang, 2004). The former depicts the tourist experience as contrastingly different to that of daily life (Chen and Chen, 2010; Nawijn et al, 2013). This is understood that the tourist experience is a peak experience, encompassing everything around the tourist journey (Mossberg, 2007). Comparatively, the marketing/management approach has the perspective of the tourist as a consumer, participating in commercial transactions within a tourist environment (Quan and Wang, 2004; Mossberg, 2007; Rageh and Melewar, 2013). The tourist experience itself is a transitory state, whereby the experience is felt at the visitation of a destination, subsequently disappearing once the instance in time has passed (Kastenholz et al., 2012; Andrades and Dimanche, 2014). Thus, MTEs are imperative when tourists can reflect and relive the experience from the past (Kim et al, 2012). Memorable experiences are unique experiences based on motivations, previous experiences, and individual perceptions, (Loureiro, 2014; Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Kim, 2014; Walls et al., 2011). Jensen and Ostergaard (2015) define MTEs as those that are social, pleasant, happy, irritated, guilty, sad, and worried. More recently, Kim and Ritchie (2014) define MTE as a tourism experience positively remembered after the event has surpassed. The authors have developed a scale to identify what dimensions constitute MTEs. These dimensions are: hedonism (Dunman and Mattila, 2005; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009), novelty (Farber and Hall, 2007; Kim and Ritchie, 2014), local culture (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), refreshment (Boo and Jones, 2009; Pearce and Lee, 2005), meaningfulness (Baumeister and Vohs, 2002; Callanan and Thomas, 2005; Noy, 2004), involvement (Kim and Ritchie, 2014; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), and knowledge (Poria et al., 2006; Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Sthapit, 2013; Io, 2013). Additionally, MTEs have been found to have profound impact on different outcomes, specifically, satisfaction (Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Larsen, 2007).

Jensen and Ostergaard (2015) acknowledge MTE has both positive and negative evaluations, e.g. happy or sad, however, this study has been delimited to only examine positive evaluations of memorable tourist experience.

### *Destination Attribute Performance*

Research in consumer experience has explored the antecedents of consumer experience extensively. For instance, studies in hospitality have identified service quality as key factor for influencing the consumer experience (Prebensen et al., 2013; Mason and Paggiaro, 2012). Similarly, in the context of tourism, service quality has been commonly used in understanding tourism experiences (Crick and Spencer, 2011). For instance, service quality was used in Chand's (2010) study to understand how services impact on tourists' overall experience at a destination. Fick and Ritchie (1991), utilised service quality to measure service experience at a ski resort, citing it a sufficient method to enumerate experience, as it measured the objective factors about the service industry. However, studies on the tourist experience indicate that the tourist experience extends beyond service quality (Chen and Chen, 2010; Guiry et al., 2013; Bhat, 2012).

Mossberg et al (2007) highlight that a destination comprises of dimensions. Individual studies have shown each of these individual dimensions also contribute to the experience. The author highlights that perceptions of other elements of the destination are equally important in making up the overall tourist experience, namely the physical environment (includes perception of the built and natural environments) (e.g. Ryu and Han, 2011), social interactions (includes interaction with the locals and other tourists) (e.g. Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013; Tung and Ritchie, 2011), cultural elements (includes an appreciation of the local culture and heritage) (e.g. Hwang and Seo, 2016; Jauhari and Bharwani, 2017), and the actual products/services (includes and appraisal of the activities or attractions) (e.g. Kim et al., 2010; Lorentzen, 2013). Combined, the performance of these destination attributes contribute to the entertainment, education, aesthetics and overall experience at the destination (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

### *Tourist Satisfaction*

Within tourism research, satisfaction often serves as an outcome in relation to tourist behaviour (Correia et al, 2013; Alegre and Garaau, 2010; Lee and Kim, 2011; Song et al., 2012). Huang et al (2010) define tourist satisfaction as the evaluation of the performance of destination attributes and if they have met expectations. Similarly, Coban (2012) proposes tourist satisfaction as the degree of positive feelings associated with an experience. Prayag (2008) defines tourist satisfaction as a comparison of tourist sensations to expectations. Past research has found numerous antecedents to satisfaction including perceived value (Prayag and Ryan, 2012), service quality (Chen and Chen, 2010), authenticity (Robinson and Clifford, 2012) and experience quality (Lee and Kim, 2011). More importantly, tourist satisfaction is seen as crucial in actuating positive post-purchase behavioural intentions (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Van Ryzin, 2013). For instance, Som and Badarneh (2011) suggest that a positive tourist experience results in more positive word-of-mouth and, as a result, leads to repeat visitation. Similarly, Rajesh (2013) also support the idea that satisfaction has a direct correlation to tourist loyalty. Conversely, dissatisfaction with a tourist destination has been found to lead to disloyalty and intention to not return, as well as negative

word of mouth (Alegre and Garau, 2010). Thus, it is crucial that managers of any tourist destination should aim to elicit satisfaction to product offerings that exceed expectations.

### *Self-Congruence*

Self-congruity is defined as the alignment of the personality or image of a given object, product or place, and how with a consumer's own self-image (Ahn, Ekinci, and Li, 2013). In the extant literature, there are two prominent forms of self-congruity, namely actual self-congruity and ideal self-congruity. Actual self-congruity is how the consumer perceives themselves within their collective social constructs, what aesthetic and social factors are indicative to their social peers (Koo et al., 2014; Malar et al, 2011; Sirgy, 2015). Ideal self-congruity is how the consumer wants to be perceived within their collective constructs (Sirgy, 2015); fundamentally, what and who the consumer desires to be, an unachieved state of personal appearance or social standing, which remains to be attained (Hosany and Martin, 2012; Kilic and Sop, 2012; Usakli and Baloglu, 2011). Studies have shown that, to transition from the actual to the ideal self, consumers consume products or places that have connotative traits they aspire to align their personal needs and wants with (Hung and Petrick, 2011; Kumar and Nayak, 2014).

In the context of tourism, self-congruity is also increasingly becoming prominent in tourism research (Ahn, Ekinci, and Li, 2013; Ekinci and Sirakaya-Turk, 2013). Tourist self-congruity may be defined as a cognitive match between tourist self-image and destination image. (Hosany and Martin, 2012; Kastenholz, 2004; Litvin and Kar, 2004). The dyadic conceptualisation of self-congruence has also been supported in tourism studies with actual and ideal self-congruence cited as impacting on tourist perceptions (Kwak and Kang, 2009), evaluations (Ahn, Ekinci and Li, 2013) and attitudes toward tourism products (Claibourne and Sirgy, 2015).

### *Novelty-Seeking*

Novelty-seeking is defined as a yearning for something new or unfamiliar (Assaker et al, 2011; Orth and Bourrain, 2005; Helm and Landschulze, 2009). Psychology research on novelty-seeking propose a personality trait which drives individuals to seek out novel information for the purposes of boredom alleviation and/or curiosity (George and George, 2012; Hirschman, 1980; Khare et al., 2010). Novelty-seeking depends on individual circumstance and how amenable a person is to innovative ideas or new experiences, (Som and Badareneh, 2011; Volo, 2013); some people inherently avoid the unfamiliar or novel (George and George, 2012). In marketing research, studies have demonstrated that novelty-seeking plays a pivotal role in the consumer decision making process (Assaker et al., 2011), as well as having an impact on post consumption consumer behaviour (Assaker and Hallak, 2013).

Within a tourism context, novelty-seeking is also acknowledged as an inherent personality trait, characterised by active risk taking, unstructured vacations, and adventurers (Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor, 2010; Hosany and Prayag, 2013). Tourists have been found to achieve maximum emotional and physical stimulation and this serves as motivators for taking a vacation initially (Assaker and Hallak, 2013; Fuchs, 2011; Xu et al, 2012). Assaker, Vinzi, and O'Connor (2011) highlighted four dimensions of novelty-seeking, namely, boredom alleviation, surprise, thrill, and adventure. Furthermore, variations in novelty-seeking personalities have also been noted (Som and

Badareneh, 2011; Landschulze, 2009). For instance, Fuchs (2011) found that backpacking tourists with high novelty-seeking traits were less deterred by high-risk activities while travelling. Similarly, Assaker and Hallak (2013) noted that novelty-seeking moderated the relationship between destination image and long-term return intention.

## **Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development**

### American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)

The ACSI model is a cause and effect model, encompassing drivers of satisfaction, satisfaction, and outcomes of satisfaction (Deng et al, 2013; Sun and Kim, 2013). The ACSI model has been extensively utilised within marketing (e.g. Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Marzocci, Morandin, and Bergami, 2013), hospitality (e.g. Martensen et al, 2000), and for purposeful intentions for this study, tourism (e.g. Deng et al, 2013). The ACSI model consists of six key constructs: perceived quality (hard and soft), perceived value, customer expectations, satisfaction, customer loyalty, and customer complaints (Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Ivanov et al, 2013). The breadth of the ACSI model requires delimitation for the purpose of this study, only encompassing perceived quality (hard and soft), perceived value, and overall customer satisfaction. Perceived quality (hard and soft) can align with DAP dimensions, perceived value can align with MTE dimensions, and overall customer satisfaction can align with tourist satisfaction. In the context of this study, natural, built environment, and products/services are aligned to hard perceived quality. Social, culture, service quality is aligned to soft perceived quality. MTE dimensions of hedonism, meaningfulness, involvement, and novelty align with emotional perceived value, knowledge and refreshment align with functional perceived value, and local culture aligns with social perceived value.

### Multi-attribute Theory of Attitudes

The multi-attribute theory of attitudes posits that consumers make rational decisions based on the available information, this theory is rooted in behavioural decision theory (Ajzen, 2015). The multi-attribute theory of attitudes supposes three components, encompassing salient beliefs, which entail the beliefs formed by an individual whilst assessing a product (Sirkreci and Magnusdottir, 2011; Argyriou and Melewar, 2011). The second component, object attribute linkages, specifies the possible rank of a certain attribute associated with an attitude object. The third component, evaluation involves an assessment of the significance of the attribute (Kacen et al., 2013). These three components combined contribute to the formation of attitudes within an individual (Smith et al, 2008; Azjen, 2015; He et al., 2015). In a tourism context, Lee et al (2011) identified the relationship between tourist expectations, desire, and quality. Thus, a myriad of attributes at a tourist destination contribute to the overall evaluation of a destination leading to affective attitudinal responses.

In the context of this study, the attitudinal response can be argued to manifest as an affective construct, specifically, MTE (Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Chandralal and Valenzuela, 2013). Like attitude, MTEs are outcomes of the experience of individual attributes at a destination and lead to a range of behavioural outcomes. As discussed in the previous section, key destination attributes

are physical natural environment, physical built environment, social, culture, products/services, and service quality. Thus, in this study, the performance of these destination attributes is argued to impact on MTE. Thus, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H1: Destination performance (physical, social, cultural, products, and service quality) positively influences memorable tourist experience.*

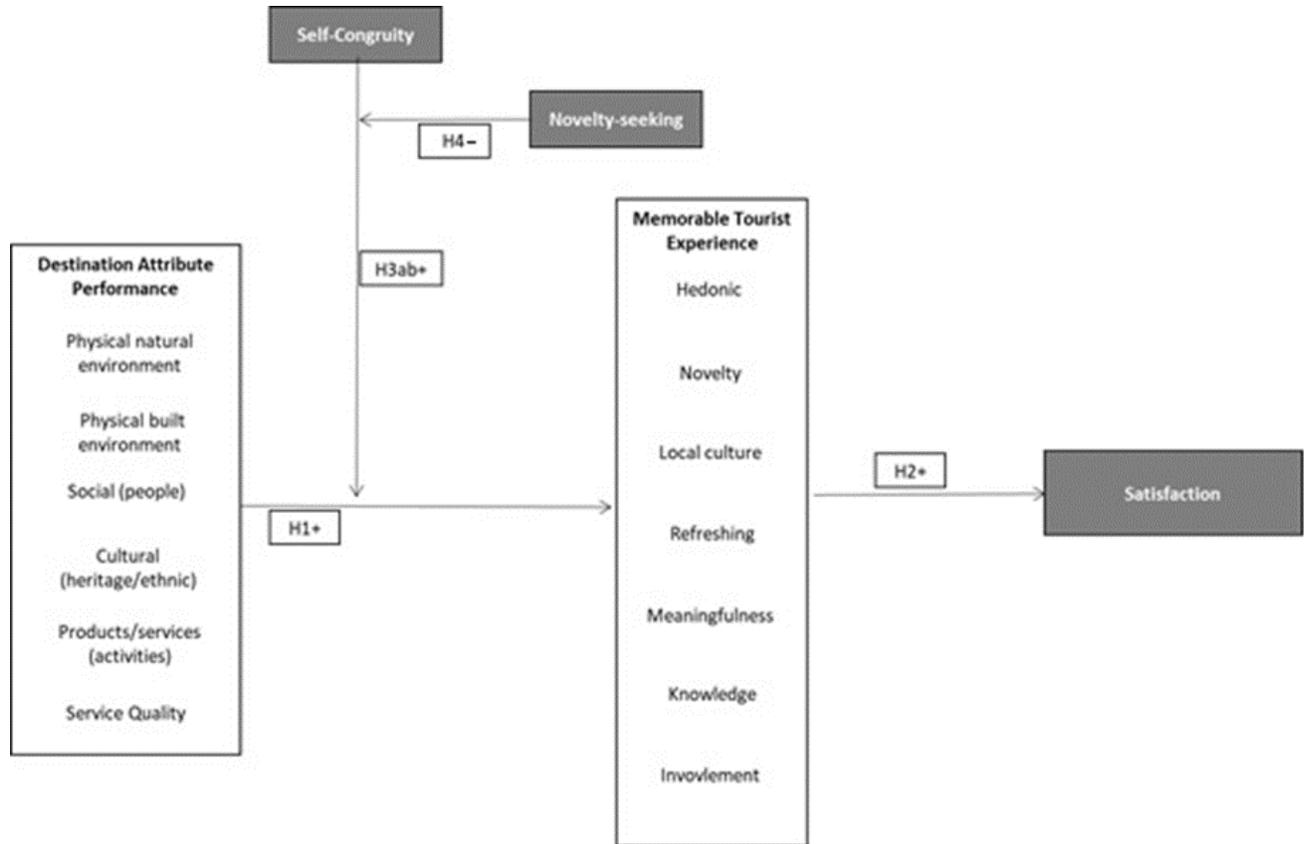
### Experience Economy Theory

Traditionally, the utilitarian value of products and services has been cited as the basis of what consumers seek (Chiu et al., 2014; Li et al., 2012). However, Pine and Gilmore (1998) postulate a divergence from this notion, suggesting that contemporary consumers want to be offered experiences instead of mere functionality. Thus, this coincides with hedonism, whereby experiences at a destination have an impact on the hedonic value the tourist gains (Yuksel 2007). Experience economy theory cites consumers strive for exclusive experiences and ideally, memorable experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012). In a tourism context, Tarssanen and Kyllanen (2005) suggest destination organisations compete for consumer attention, offering products and services around experiential factors. As destination attributes contribute to the overall experience of a destination (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011; Mason and Paggiaro, 2012), the performance of these attributes determine experience and also the extent to which these experiences are memorable.

Customer experience studies have clearly highlighted that the experience of products and services lead to greater consumer satisfaction (e.g. Angelova and Zekiri, 2011; Chand, 2010; Jung et al., 2015; Mason and Paggiaro, 2012; Prebensen et al., 2013). For instance, Jung et al (2015) examined consumers of food festivals and noted that favourable experiences lead to greater satisfaction with the product. Similarly, Chen and Chen (2010) has found that tourists visiting Tainan, Taiwan have noted that their enjoyment in experiencing heritage activities impacted on their satisfaction with their visit. Thus, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H2: Memorable tourist experience has a positive influence on tourist satisfaction.*

Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model



### Self-Image Theory

Self-image theory suggests consumers consume products, brands, services, for two main reasons, for its utilitarian function and, more importantly, the symbolic meaning derived (Hosany and Martin, 2012). In contemporary society, these symbolic meanings serve as psychological aids, constructing self-identity and assist in the facilitation with other peers (Choi and Riffon, 2012). Ultimately, it could be argued that the self-image of an individual dictates their choice and consumer behaviour (Usakli and Baloglu, 2011; Kastenzholz, 2004). As mentioned previously, there are two types of self-congruence: actual and ideal. Actual self-congruence occurs when the current aesthetic and social state of an individual aligns with that of what they are appraising (Litvin and Kar, 2003). Ideal self-congruence occurs when an idealistic state for which and individual strives for aligns with the appraised object (Litvin and Kar, 2003). Tourists have been found to prefer destinations that reflect traits they want to adopt (Hosany and Martin, 2012). For instance, Kumar and Nayak (2014) has shown that visitors to Shimla, India who perceived greater self-congruity with their self-concept reported more favourable experiences. Thus, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H3: Self-congruity (actual and ideal) will have an enhancing moderating effect on the relationship between destination attribute performance and memorable tourist experience.*

### Optimum Stimulation Theory

The theory of optimum stimulation level (OSL) is entrenched in psychological literature which stipulates that individuals are driven to attain a certain level of optimum stimulation (Orth and Bourrain, 2005). Optimal stimulation theory suggests that the desire for an ideal stimulation level motivates individual to explore activities that are outside of their usual routine and comfort zones (Keng et al., 2015). OSL, like most conceptual theories in consumer behaviour is a subjective notion by which each individual differs, often reactive to their surroundings and environment (Helm and Landschulze, 2009). Richard and Chebat (2016) stipulate that OSL is dependent on an individual's arousal level, hence, people seeking high OSL are more prone to personality traits such as novelty-seeking compared to those with low OSL. OSL represents the arousal elicited by a stimulus and is a desired state that is strived for (Mohan et al., 2012). It is noteworthy that OSL relies on each individual having their own threshold of optimal level (Sharma et al., 2010).

Research has shown that individuals who possess high novelty-seeking traits seek out optimum stimulation in their everyday lives and consumption experiences (Richard and Chebat, 2016; Punj, 2011). These individuals seek novel experiences which are outside of their daily routine by consuming unique and novel products and services (Mohan et al, 2012; George and George, 2012). Tourists who are high in novelty-seeking often visit destinations that are novel to them, as it is a primary motivator for pleasure and hedonistic tendencies (Chen et al., 2014). Thus, these tourists seek experiences that are often outside of their comfort zone. It can therefore be argued that novelty-seeking can reduce the need for self-congruent stimulation as this contradicts the desire for the excitement of novel and dissonant experiences. Thus, based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed.

*H4: Novelty-seeking will attenuate the moderation of self-congruity on the DAP – MTE relationship.*

### **Research Methodology**

This study will adopt a pragmatist paradigm (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007) and will utilise a mixed method consisting of a qualitative and a quantitative phase (Yvonne-Feilzer, 2010). The mixed method offers greater depth and breadth of understanding and corroboration and is in line with the underlying of this study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The study will be conducted in two phases. The qualitative phase will comprise 4-5 focus groups to establish crucial destination attributes that contribute to memorable experiences. The focus groups will comprise of participants of various demographics to ensure varied responses constitute to the results. Analysis of the focus groups will be transcribed via NVivo software, to isolate key themes relating to memorable tourist experiences. The quantitative phase will comprise two survey studies, one for an urban destination site and one for a heritage destination site.

Instrumentation will constitute a self-administered questionnaire collected by trained data collectors. Tourists at key tourist destination sites will be approached to complete the

questionnaire. Data collection will be conducted between July 2019 and August 2020 and will take place at different times of the day to ensure a cross-section of the general population. Each study will have a minimum target sample of 450 respondents based on the sample size benchmarks of Hair et al (2010). The questionnaire will utilise adapted and established scales for the other key constructs identified in the research model, as can be seen in Appendix 1.

This research will be conducted at urban heritage and rural heritage destination sites. Studies have shown that tourist psychology at urban and tourist destination sites are vastly different due to the substantial relationship the tourist develops dependent of their distinct environment (Ashworth and Page, 2011; Rasoolimanesh et al, 2017; Kelly, 2017; Cui and Ryan, 2011). The current study will collect data in Tokyo in Japan. Japan is a popular tourist destination, rich in both urban and rural tourism offerings tourist destination. Over 20 million annual visitors visited Japan in 2017, a stark contrast to the mere 3.3 million visitors in 1995, making Japan a popular tourist destination (Telegraph, 2018). Tokyo is the primary destination for visitors to Japan with over 2.6 million overseas visitors in August 2018 (Japan National Tourism Organisation, 2018). The city is rich in both urban tourist offerings (e.g. Tokyo Tower, Harajuku, and Shibuya) as well as heritage sites (e.g. Meji Shrine, Senso-ji, and The Imperial Palace). Thus, Tokyo will serve as an ideal study site to examine differences between visitors to both urban and heritage tourist sites.

The sampling frame will comprise international tourists in Japan aged from 21 to 70 years. A systematic sampling method will be employed to reduce sampling bias. Every fifth visitor will be intercepted at designated public areas and requested to complete the survey. This will ensure a cross-section tourist who will be identified by a screening question and reduce sampling bias.

SPSS 24 will be utilised for exploratory factor analysis and reliability testing of the scales for the constructs in the research model. Then, AMOS 25 will be used for the confirmatory factor analysis, hypothesis testing and multigroup moderation. Finally, the moderated moderation will be tested using Process in SPSS24. Instead of direct relationships between the dimensions of DAP and MTE, we will consider using formative specification for DAP and MTE. This will help reduce the number of direct relationships between constructs.

## **Significance of Study**

### Theoretical

- This study will further develop the literature on MTE research adding to the relatively limited research on the concept. It integrates literature from psychology, marketing and tourism research.
- This study will develop a theory-driven model of how DAP impacts on MTE and subsequently, satisfaction.
- This study will examine memorable tourist experience within a heritage and urban context, developing greater insight into the different aspects that define those categorical destinations.

- The moderation analyses will add to the understanding of how self-congruence impacts on the DAP to MTE relationships. Specifically, unlike previous studies it examines self-congruity in an in-consumption situation rather than pre-consumption.
- The current study adds to novelty-seeking research by proposing a three-way interaction whereby novelty seeking moderates the moderation of self-congruity on the DAP to MTE relationship. This is a novel conceptualising of the effect of novelty-seeking which, to the best of this researcher's knowledge, has not been examine before.

### Methodological

- By utilising the mixed method approach, the research will benefit from integrating advantages of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.
- The current study contributes to the growing body of quantitative studies conducted on tourist experiences.
- It develops a research framework, which is theory driven and can be replicated in other studies on MTE such as ecotourism, adventure tourism, and sports tourism.
- The current study also aims to validate existing scales for DAP which can be used in future studies.

### Managerial

- This study creates a framework for destination managers to develop an understanding of their destination's performance and could help underpin market research projects and to gain a better understanding of visitors.
- The current study will uncover a better understanding of what attributes lead to memorable experiences. This offers managers greater insight into which attributes need to be improved or maintained to ensure MTEs for their visitors. Managers will also be able to identify and highlight key attributes that may lead to MTE in their marketing communication campaigns.
- The current study will also offer insight into segments of tourists that differ in their novelty-seeking traits and how this personality trait can be leveraged for greater memorability of the tourist experience and satisfaction.
- Guides their ability to market their destinations, develop different branding, marketing to different target markets, creating different destination image in the competitive marketplace.

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