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Effect of perceived authenticity on tourism experience, satisfaction, and memorability: differences between settings and authenticity orientations

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to argue the importance of tourists' authenticity perception. The study presented a novel way of categorizing tourists into three groups based on perceived objective and constructive authenticity levels: tourists who perceived the site as more objectively authentic, more constructively authentic, and equally objectively and constructively authentic. Further, this paper is based on the premise that there will be a universal preference toward (perceived) objective authenticity. Hence, it was hypothesized that the group that perceived the site as more objectively authentic than constructively authentic will have a more positive experience than the other two groups. The positive tourism experience was examined from three aspects: authenticity, satisfaction, and memorability. These hypotheses were tested on visitors of Bukchon, the Korean traditional house village, and Minsokchon, the Korean fork village. The proposed research model is visualized in Figure 1.

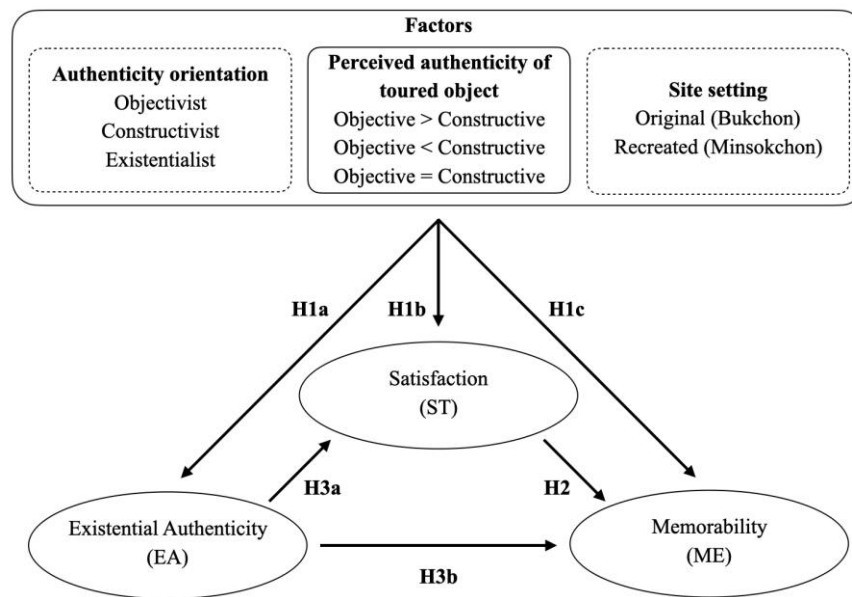


Figure 1. Proposed research model

Literature Review

Authenticity of the tourism experience

Exploration of authenticity in tourism goes back to Boorstin's pseudo-event and MacCannell's staged authenticity (Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1973). Both concepts are associated with the objective authenticity of the toured object (Wang, 1999). Scholars have further attempted to refine the concept of authenticity into three stances; objectivist and constructivist standpoint on authenticity regarding object-related authenticity and existentialist approach associated with tourism activities (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006; Wang, 1999). These types of authenticity were

empirically examined by a number of studies (Chhabra, 2008; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021; Yi et al., 2017). However, it seems that the recent focus was on examining constructive and existential authenticity. (Bryce et al., 2015; Domínguez-Quintero et al., 2020; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010). Surprisingly, the study on all three aspects of authenticity (objective, constructive, and existential) seems extremely lacking. Hence, this paper aims to re-illuminate the concept of objective authenticity while not neglecting constructive and existential authenticity. The study will examine how authenticity perceptions affect various aspects of the tourist experience, namely existential authenticity, satisfaction, and memorability.

Memorable tourism experience

The present used memorability as an index of favorable experience. In particular, the study took a prospective stance on operationalizing memorability. That is, participants were asked about their anticipation of remembering the tourist experience, rather than asking what they had remembered from the experience. Accordingly, the authors defined *memorable* (or memorability) as anticipation or expectation of remembering the experience. This is similar to Oh et al. (2007)'s perspective on memorability and different from Kim et al. (2012)'s retrospective measurement scale of Memorable Tourism Experience (MTE).

Several studies on MTE have been conducted and suggested a model in which MTE positively affects tourist satisfaction (Kim, 2018; Stavrianea & Kamenidou, 2021; Zhong et al., 2017). However, a review of the literature leads us to the following question: Is a satisfactory tourism experience the result of a memorable tourism experience or is a memorable tourism experience the result of a satisfactory tourism experience? This study hypothesizes that satisfaction is the antecedent of memorability. The following section outlines details of the formulated hypothesis.

Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Existential authenticity, satisfaction, and memorability depend primarily on perceived authenticity, rather than the setting of the site or the orientation toward authenticity.

Hypothesis 1a: When the perceived objective authenticity score of a tourism site is higher than the perceived constructive authenticity score, the existential authenticity score will be higher.

Hypothesis 1b: When the perceived objective authenticity score of a tourism site is higher than the perceived constructive authenticity score, the satisfaction score will be higher.

Hypothesis 1c: When the perceived objective authenticity score of a tourism site is higher than the perceived constructive authenticity score, the memorability score will be higher.

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction is an antecedent of the memorability of the tourism experience.

Hypothesis 2a: When controlled for satisfaction, there will be no significant difference in the memorability score between settings, authenticity orientations, and authenticity perception types.

Hypothesis 2b: Satisfaction will positively influence the memorability of the tourism experience.

Hypothesis 3: Existential authenticity is an antecedent of satisfaction and memorability. More specifically:

Hypotheses 3a: Existential authenticity will positively influence satisfaction.

Hypotheses 3b: Existential authenticity will positively influence the memorability of the tourism experience.

Methods

The authors conducted surveys on visitors from September to October 2018. The respondents were chosen by the convenience sampling method. At the original site and the recreated site, a total of 230 responses were collected at the original site and 401 at the recreated site. The researchers filtered out invalid or inattentive responses based on missing values and standard deviations. The final sample sizes for the original and recreated site were 202 and 345, respectively.

Results

Table 1. Confirmatory factor analysis results

Constructs and Items	Standardized Loadings	AVE	CR
Perceived Objective Authenticity ($\alpha=.808/.840$)		0.62	0.83
<i>The site largely contains original objects of the past.</i>	0.74		
<i>The site has originals, not copies.</i>	0.80		
<i>The site is a true historic and cultural site with genuine objects.</i>	0.81		
Perceived Constructive Authenticity ($\alpha=.778/.677$)		0.64	0.77
<i>The site is copy or replica, not original.</i>	0.98		
<i>The site is made of techniques and materials that are not originals.</i>	0.58		
Existential Authenticity ($\alpha=.720/.798$)		0.55	0.78
<i>This visit gave me a deeper insight into Korean history and culture.</i>	0.79		
<i>During the visit, I felt the related history and culture of Korea, events, legends, and historical personalities.</i>	0.75		
<i>I felt connected with human history and civilization.</i>	0.67		
Satisfaction ($\alpha=.932/.884$)		0.82	0.90
<i>In general, I'm satisfied with my decision to visit the site.</i>	0.91		
<i>Overall, the visit to the site was satisfactory.</i>	0.90		
Memorability ($\alpha=.891/.910$)		0.77	0.91
<i>This trip will be very memorable.</i>	0.91		
<i>I will not forget this trip.</i>	0.89		
<i>I will remember this trip very positively.</i>	0.82		

Note: AVE = average variance extracted; CR = composite reliability; CMIN/DF = 3.94; comparative fit index = 0.96; root mean square residual = 0.04; root mean square error of approximation = 0.07

Table 2. Constructs correlation matrix

	OA	CA	EA	ST	ME
Objective Authenticity (OA)	0.786 ^a				
Constructive Authenticity (CA)	-0.144*	0.803 ^a			
Existential Authenticity (EA)	0.624***	-0.037	0.739 ^a		
Satisfaction (ST)	0.325***	-0.009	0.475***	0.905 ^a	
Memorability (ME)	0.376***	-0.072	0.619***	0.780***	0.875 ^a

Note: * p < .05, *** p < .001, ^a square root of AVE

The present study implemented survey items used in previous studies (Castéran & Roederer, 2013; Kolar & Zabkar, 2010; Stepchenkova & Belyaeva, 2021). The confirmatory factor analysis result is shown in Table 1. The result suggests that the convergent validity of all constructs was established, with factor loadings greater than 0.6 and AVE values greater than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2009). The bivariate correlations of the constructs are given in Table 2. The square root of AVE is greater than correlations of constructs, which confirms the discriminant validity of the scale (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha values for each construct in both settings are greater than 0.6 (Table 1). Therefore, internal consistency indicates the reliability of the scale (Litwin, 1995).

Table 3. Number of respondents per perceived authenticity types

Setting	Authenticity Orientation	Perception Type		
		OA>CA	OA<CA	OA=CA
Original	Objectivist	20 (40.2%)	43 (24.1%)	7 (34.7%)
	Constructivist	32 (41.1%)	44 (55.2%)	16 (45.5%)
	Postmodernist	14 (18.7%)	20 (20.7%)	6 (19.8%)
Recreated	Objectivist	32 (29.9%)	55 (29.5%)	13 (29.0%)
	Constructivist	63 (46.7%)	86 (38.6%)	17 (48.1%)
	Postmodernist	22 (23.4%)	43 (31.8%)	14 (22.9%)
Total	Objectivist	52 (33.7%)	98 (27.4%)	20 (31.1%)
	Constructivist	95 (44.7%)	130 (45.2%)	33 (47.2%)
	Postmodernist	36 (21.6%)	63 (27.4%)	20 (21.8%)

Note: Numbers inside parentheses represent the percentage of each type within the same setting and column. May not add to 100% due to rounding.

Initially, the researchers planned to classify the respondents into two types based on perceived objective and constructive authenticity scores: a group with a higher objective authenticity score (hereafter *OA > CA type*, N=183) and a group with a higher constructive authenticity score (hereafter *OA < CA type*, N=291). However, approximately 13 percent of the respondents rated the site objectively and constructively authentic; this group was marked as the third type (hereafter *OA = CA type*, N=73). Table 3 displays the number of respondents for each type, divided by settings and authenticity orientations. The results of the chi-square test suggested that there is no association between the orientation to authenticity and the type of perception (poriginal =.470, precreated =.372, ptotal =.390).

Table 4. Analysis of variance between groups

Groups	F	p	η^2p
Existential Authenticity			
Perception Type	27.132	< .001	0.091
Setting	17.436	< .001	0.031
Orientation	0.465	0.629	0.002
Satisfaction			
Perception Type	15.137	< .001	0.053
Setting	0.55	0.459	0.001
Orientation	0.475	0.622	0.002
Memorability			
Perception Type	14.652	< .001	0.051
Setting	0.371	0.543	0.001
Orientation	0.293	0.746	0.001

The authors performed ANOVA to check the mean differences in existential authenticity, satisfaction, and memorability between the groups (Table 4). In general, there was no significant difference between site settings or tourist authenticity orientations. The exception was the difference in existential authenticity between settings. The existential authenticity score between the original settings was higher at the original site than at the recreated site (mean difference=-.383). There were differences in all three scores between perceived authenticity types.

Table 5. Post hoc analysis result and group mean differences

Variables	Mean			Difference found between groups	Mean difference
	OA > CA (I)	OA < CA (II)	OA = CA (III)		
Existential Authenticity	4.62	3.89	4.27	I and II*** II and III*	0.716 -0.379
Satisfaction	5.3	4.73	4.6	I and II*** I and III***	0.564 0.701

Memorability	5.05	4.48	4.49	I and II*** I and III**	0.568 0.556
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Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$ (Scheffe test)

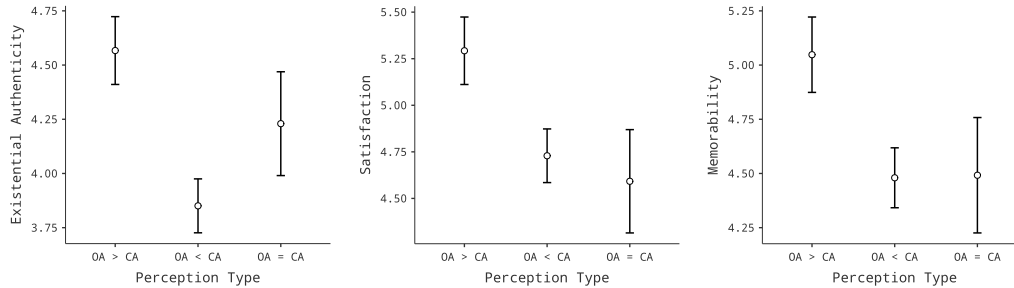


Figure 2. Mean difference between perceived authenticity types

To further specify the difference between perception types, a post hoc analysis was performed. The results are shown in Table 5 and Figure 2. Satisfaction and Memorability scores of OA > CA type were noticeably higher than the other two types. There were no statistically significant differences between OA < CA type and OA = CA type in terms of satisfaction and memorability. On the other hand, existential authenticity scores of OA > CA type and OA = CA type showed little difference, while OA < CA type showed a significantly lower mean score. Therefore, hypotheses 1a and 1c were partially supported and hypotheses 1b and 1c were fully supported. In general, the result indicates that when tourists perceived the tourism site as more objectively authentic than constructively authentic, they had more authentic, satisfactory and memorable experiences.

Table 6. Analysis of covariance between groups

Factors	F	p	η^2p
Satisfaction			
Memorability (covariate)	530.64	< .001	0.496
Perception Type	3.322	0.037	0.012
Setting	0.193	0.661	0
Orientation	0.3	0.741	0.001
Memorability			
Satisfaction (covariate)	530.63	< .001	0.496
Perception Type	2.8578	0.058	0.01
Setting	0.0151	0.902	0
Orientation	0.1174	0.889	0

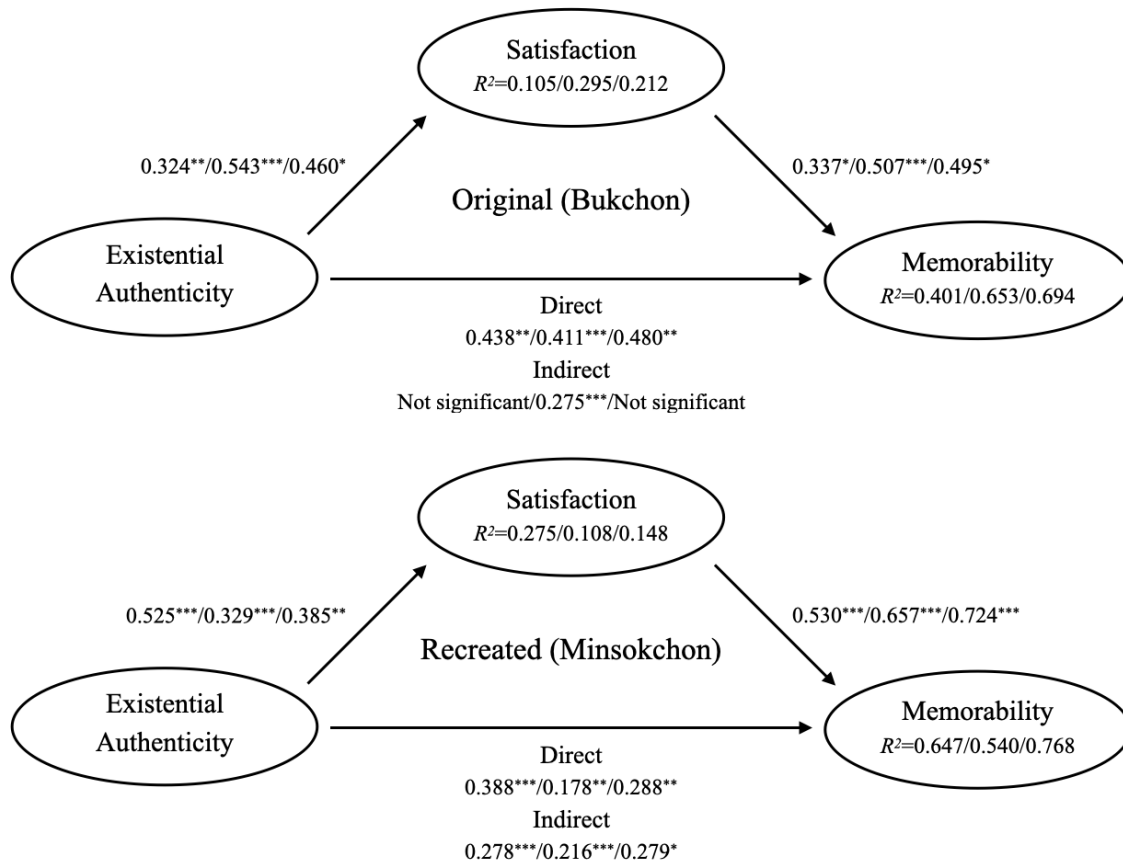
Hypothesis 2 was tested by conducting ANCOVA to control the effect of the covariate when examining mean differences (Table 6). When satisfaction was controlled for memorability, mean

differences were still observed between the types of perceived authenticity ($p = 0.337$). However, when memorability was controlled for satisfaction, there were no significant differences between perception types, settings and authenticity orientation ($p > .05$ in all cases). Hence, hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 7. Structural model results

Settings and Hypotheses	β	t	β	t	β	t
	OA > CA SRMR=0.098 $R^2_{ST}=0.105/R^2_{ME}=0.401$		OA < CA SRMR=0.092 $R^2_{ST}=0.295/R^2_{ME}=0.653$		OA = CA SRMR=0.073 $R^2_{ST}=0.212/R^2_{ME}=0.694$	
Original						
H2b: ST→ME	0.337*	2.330	0.507***	7.755	0.495*	2.497
H3a: EA→ST	0.324**	2.785	0.543***	7.500	0.460*	2.340
EA→ME						
H3b: Direct	0.438**	3.155	0.411***	5.764	0.480**	2.955
H4: Indirect	0.109	1.428	0.275***	4.947	0.228	1.492
Total	0.547***	5.657	0.686***	12.458	0.708***	7.038
Recreated						
	OA > CA SRMR=0.089 $R^2_{ST}=0.275/R^2_{ME}=0.647$		OA < CA SRMR=0.071 $R^2_{ST}=0.108/R^2_{ME}=0.540$		OA = CA SRMR=0.071 $R^2_{ST}=0.148/R^2_{ME}=0.768$	
H2b: ST→ME	0.530***	8.094	0.657***	12.025	0.724***	8.579
H3a: EA→ST	0.525***	8.060	0.329***	4.353	0.385**	2.577
EA→ME						
H3b: Direct	0.388***	5.694	0.178**	2.730	0.288**	2.750
H4: Indirect	0.278***	5.514	0.216***	3.971	0.279*	2.451
Total	0.666***	13.226	0.394***	5.828	0.567***	5.073

Note: * $p < .05$, *** $p < .01$, **** $p < .001$, SRMR = standardized root mean squared residual, EA = Existential Authenticity, ST = Satisfaction, ME = Memorability.



Note: Path coefficients and R² values are shown in the order of OA>CA, OA<CA, and OA=CA types. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Figure 2. Diagram of resulted structural model

To see how the relationship between variables changes depending on authenticity perception types, structural model analysis was used. The model was constructed using Partial Least Scale Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) algorithm with 5,000 bootstrap samples. The result is shown in Table 7 and Figure 2. Standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) values were less than 0.10 in all six models, which shows sufficient model fits (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

All direct relationships between the variables showed significant path coefficients. Hence, hypotheses 2b, 3a, and 3b were fully supported. However, the indirect effect of existential authenticity was only significant for OA<CA type in the original setting, while the effect was significant for all perception types in the recreated setting. In other words, satisfaction did not mediate the relationship between existential authenticity and memorability for OA>CA type and OA=CA type in the original setting. Furthermore, the direct effect of existential authenticity on memorability was stronger than the indirect effect except for OA<CA type in the recreated setting. There were also some noticeable differences in path coefficients and R-squared values between settings. First, the relationship from existential authenticity to satisfaction was strongest for OA<CA type in the original setting, whereas the equivalent was strongest for OA<CA type in the recreated setting. Second, all path coefficient from satisfaction to memorability was larger in the recreated setting than in the original setting. Furthermore, the path coefficient was largest for

OA<CA type in the original setting, with a small difference from the OA=CA type. On the contrary, the equivalent effect was strongest for the OA=CA type in the recreated setting. Lastly, in the recreated setting, the direct relationship between existential authenticity and memorability was strongest for the OA=CA and OA>CA types in the recreated setting.

Conclusion and Discussion

The current study attempted to provide a different perspective on the relationship between authenticity and tourist experiences. Although previous research mainly focused on the effect of the setting or the authenticity orientation of tourists, the findings of this article suggest that tourists' perception of site authenticity might be a more influential factor. Specifically, being perceived as a more objectively authentic tourist site positively affects existential authenticity, satisfaction, and memorability. However, the authors could not discover why some tourists, even though they were in the same setting and had the same authenticity orientation as others, felt that the site is more objectively authentic. More research is needed on reasons that result in greater perceived objective authenticity.

The study also refined the concept of memorability. The point is that memorability can be used as a complementary index to survey how positive the tourists' experience was. The findings showed that satisfaction is the antecedent of memorability and not only satisfaction, but also existential authenticity should be considered to present a memorable experience. More attention and exploration is needed on the concept of memorability. For instance, how do tourists define and differentiate satisfaction and memorability?

In a sense, this empirical study supports the assertion of MacCannell, since tourists do indeed seek authenticity when traveling, particularly the objective authenticity of the toured object. But the results also support the constructivist view that authenticity should be seen as a perception. Attempting to replicate the findings of this study in different settings would be helpful to better understand the authenticity seeking behavior of tourists.

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