

## Experiencing culture in attractions, events and tour settings

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### Abstract

This paper develops a measurement scale for cultural experiences across different contexts, including attractions, events and tours, in Hong Kong. Four dimensions of experience (cognitive, conative, affective and novelty) are identified through structural equation modelling. The scale is applied to compare visitor- and context-related influences on the experience and on subsequent behavioural intentions. We find that the conative dimension of experience elicits the highest experience scores from visitors, but affective experiences are more significant in distinguishing between different experience contexts and visitor groups. The strongest experiences were attributed to event contexts, followed by tours, and finally permanent attractions. The experience is also enhanced when various sites are combined by visitors to provide a 'destination journey'.

**Keywords: Visitor experience, Attractions, Events, Tours, Cultural tourism, Hong Kong**

## 1 Introduction

Cultural experiences are one of the most important elements of tourism production and consumption, as shown by the UNWTO's (2018) estimation that cultural tourists account for almost 40% of all international arrivals worldwide. The growth of cultural tourism has been closely associated with the rise of the 'experience economy' and cultural experiences are viewed increasingly as the 'essence' of tourism (Ritchie, Tung, & Ritchie, 2011). Scholars now commonly accept that experiences drive the production, consumption and co-creation of tourism (Chang, 2018; Kirillova, Lehto & Cai, 2017), leading to the emergence of entire 'experiencescapes' (Chen, Suntikul, & King, 2019). This has prompted a growing literature on the tourism experience (e.g. Ryan, 2010; Kim, 2014), with increasing attention for concepts such as memorable or peak experiences (Quan & Wang, 2004; Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Zhang, Wu & Buhalis, 2018). But as Wang, Chen, Su and Morrison (2019) note, the dynamic and complex nature of tourism experiences means that their measurement remains a challenge for researchers. Therefore, recent studies have focused on identifying the main dimensions related to a particular experience, or the factors influencing the consequences of experience, such as memorability.

Ritchie et al. (2011) have noted the relative absence of research on experience-related measurements and methodologies, perhaps because the quantification of experience is so complex. Ideally, experiences should be measured at the time of their occurrence or delivery (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018). Though many researchers have charted the increasing centrality of experiences in the production and consumption of tourism (Tung & Ritchie, 2011), Ritchie et al's (2011) analysis of leading tourism journals identified no aggregate increase in research on the tourism experience. There also seems to be a relative lack of research that compares visitor experiences across different contexts, or that empirically validates the multidimensional nature of experiences (Lee, Hwang & Shim, 2017:3).

The absence of effective multidimensional measurement tools has made it difficult to compare the experiences of different individuals, visitor groups and/or contexts, despite the important place that such phenomena occupy at the core of tourism. This paper builds on recent attempts to develop relevant measurement instruments, including de Geus, Richards and Toepoel's (2016) quantitatively-based Event Experience Scale (EES) and Packer and Ballantyne's (2016) qualitative work on visitor attractions. De Geus et al. (2016) developed a scale for the survey-based measurement of event experiences, drawing upon an extensive literature review to provide theoretical validity and empirical testing through a panel study.

Packer and Ballantyne (2016) undertook a literature review and developed a conceptual 'multifaceted model' of visitor experience, arguing that the experience depends on both the attraction context (opportunity) and on the visitors (personal and subjective responses). If the context plays a key role in producing experiences, then it is also important to measure and compare experiences in various contexts. The aim of the current study is to develop a scale that can be used to measure visitor experiences across different tourist contexts, including attractions, events and tours. The study is based on extensive visitor surveys at a range of sites in Hong Kong SAR, China. The aim of the paper is to develop and validate a Multiple Context Experience Scale (MCES). We then examine the utility of this scale in distinguishing between the visitor experience in different contexts and in tracing the relationship between visitor experiences and behavioural outcomes.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 reviews the literature relating to visitor experiences and experience contexts (specifically experiences of permanent attractions, events and tours). The different experience dimensions identified in previous research are discussed in Section 3, and Section 4 presents the research methods. The results of the scale development and the Structural Equation Model are presented in Section 5, and the remaining sections of the paper discuss the findings and present conclusions and suggestions for further research.

## **2 Visitor experiences and experience contexts**

A central proposition of Pine and Gilmore (1999)'s 'experience economy' is the increasing consumer tendency to seek out experiences. Experience has become a defining preoccupation of tourism researchers since what tourists primarily seek and consume at destinations is "engaging experiences accompanied by the goods and/or service components of the destinations." (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). The trend has prompted entire destinations to position themselves as an embodiment of life-affirming experiences (Richards, 2001). This movement signals a re-conceptualisation of places as 'experiential escapes' (O'Dell & Billing, 2005; Chen et al., 2019), where suppliers and consumers produce or co-create experiences (Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2018). The growing production and consumption of experiences has also stimulated an evolution in tourist experience research from the analysis of satisfactory experience, to quality experience, extraordinary experience, and more recently memorable experience (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). Scott and Le (2017) in their review of tourism experiences also noted a development in approaches, from trips being considered as

homogenous experiences to more nuanced and dynamic views, incorporating insights from psychology, marketing and other fields.

Much early work on tourist experiences was based on Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four dimensions of experience; entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetics. These dimensions were replicated in different contexts, including hotels (Oh et al., 2007), cruise ships (Hosany & Witham, 2010) wine tourism experiences (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011) and events (Yazıcı, Koçak and Altunsöz, 2017).

More recent studies of the tourism experience have shifted from experience dimensions to the outcomes of experiences, such as memorability, satisfaction and behaviour. For example, Kim (2014) developed a Memorable Tourism Experience Scale (MTES) to analyse the experiences of respondents at a large range of tourism sites in Taiwan and found five dimensions (hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, and involvement) that significantly affected behavioural intentions. Although the results of this study were compared with a previous analysis of American students (Kim, Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012) to provide cross-cultural experience comparisons, no analysis of different experience contexts was made.

Some recent work has highlighted the effect of destination context on visitor experiences. Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018) used Kim and Ritchie's (2014) scale in a "real tourism" context of visitors to Rovaniemi in Finland, and found that hedonism and meaningfulness had a positive and significant impact on subjective well-being. Ali, Ryu and Hussain (2016) developed a structural equation model of the 'creative-tourist experience' in a resort hotel context. They found five experience dimensions; escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning. They found creative tourists' experience to be a good predictor of their memories, satisfaction, and behavioural intentions. Truong, Lenglet and Mothe (2018) analysed the relationship between destination experience, distinctiveness and satisfaction for tourists in Vietnam, concluding that distinctiveness is strongly related to the emotional dimension of experience. In Lijiang, China, Zhang and Xu (2019) found that physical and social 'toursapes' have positive effects on liminal experiences. Toursapes were conceptualised as "the general atmosphere experienced by tourists" (p. 85), which included physical, social, symbolic and natural elements. This suggests that the experience setting influences the nature of the visitor experience, but the concept of the tourscape is based on unique destination attributes, and is therefore not comparable across different destinations or settings. Park and Santos (2017) conducted qualitative research on Korean tourists visiting Paris and London and concluded that the destination context, for example in terms of

encounters with other tourists, had an effect on their experience. Zatori et al. (2018) attempted a more holistic assessment of 'in situ' experiences during tours, and specifically considered the role of producers in influencing the visitor experience. They found that interactive service elements and customization had a significant effect on tourist experience, although non-interactive elements such as the physical environment and comfort did not. Recent research therefore seems to suggest that more attention is developing for the context of experiences.

In spite of this growing attention, most previous work has concentrated on a single experience context. The analysis of experiences has also mainly centred on the experience of the visitors themselves, with fewer studies measuring the effect of experience context or the role of the experience producer (with notable exceptions, such as Zatori et al., 2018). Some challenges therefore remain in the analysis of visitor experiences, including understanding the contribution of the different dimensions of experience to the overall visitor experience, and the relative role of the visitor and the context in experience creation. This paper seeks to increase our understanding of how different factors come together to shape the visitor experience, taking account of both visitor-related and contextual factors. Packer and Ballantyne (2016) argued that researchers should give greater attention to the interactions between producers and consumers, and between consumers and experience contexts, through the course of the visitor experience. With reference to attractions, they characterized the experience as combining the visitor's knowledge, skills and interpretation with the producer's design and interpretation. We have taken this to imply that experiences depend on the characteristics and backgrounds of visitors, on the design intentions of the producer and on interactions between the visitor and the attraction. The evident complexity of these relationships suggests a need for experience measurement tools which consider the characteristics of visitor, the context of the visit and interactions between the visitor and the experience contexts they visit.

The next section considers the generic elements of experience that might facilitate the measurement of experiences across different contexts, providing a basis for hypothesis development.

### **3 The dimensions of the tourism experience**

It is challenging to describe and evaluate the tourism experience concept in the absence of a universally accepted definition (Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). Tourism experiences have been commonly viewed as detached from everyday life (Walls et al., 2011), as unique and

special (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987), or as extraordinary (Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010). From the visitor perspective, tourism occurs outside the everyday environment, and the experience constitutes a core activity focus (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

Experiences also encompass more than the core activity, because they also imply involvement or engagement on the part of the visitor (Zatori et al., 2018). This also mirrors de Geus et al.'s argument that generic event experiences, or those related to the individual's state of mind and particular circumstances rather than the event theme, program or setting can be defined as an 'interaction', between the individual, and the event environment. The visitor not only experiences a core activity, but also responds to and is engaged by the context in which it occurs, which Zatori et al. (2018) conceptualise as experience-involvement.

Most previous investigations (Jensen, Lindberg & Østergaard, 2015), have relied on basic dimensions of the experience. According to Getz and Page (2016), experience involves three inter-related dimensions: behaviours, or what people do (the 'conative' dimension); emotions, moods or attitudes (the 'affective' dimension); and awareness, perceptions and understandings (the 'cognitive' dimension). These dimensions have been identified in many other experience studies (e.g. Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; Schmitt, 1999; Walls et al., 2011; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Ballantyne, Packer & Sutherland 2011; de Geus et al., 2016), suggesting that the affective, conative and cognitive dimensions of experience have some general validity. Pike and Ryan (2004) noted that these dimensions play a significant role in the positioning of destinations in the minds of consumers, and Oliver (1997) argued that they are fundamental contributors to consumer satisfaction.

Of these three dimensions, the affective dimension of experience has attracted particular attention in recent years, with more research on memorable, peak and novel experiences. Bastiaansen, Lub, Mitas, Jung, Ascensão, Han, Moilanen, Smit, and Strijbosch (2019) even argue that affective experiences are the most important 'building block' of experience, because emotional reactions to an experience to a large extent determine their memorability, which in turn affects all other dimensions of tourist experience (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Tussyadiah (2014) also suggests that emotional experience is central to the experience structure, and in their recent review of tourism experiences, Scott and Le (2017) argue that more experience research should focus on the affective dimension. The centrality of emotion may also be related to the concept of 'peak experiences' (which can be positive or negative emotional responses), which also tend to be sharply delineated from everyday experience (Quan & Wang, 2004). This delineation, which Getz and Page (2016) see as central to the

nature of special event experiences, also increases experience evaluation and memorability (Bastiaansen et al., 2019), destination loyalty (Kim, 2018), place attachment (Rajaobelina, Dusseault, & Ricard, 2019) and distinctiveness (Truong et al., 2018).

The conative dimension of experience relates to how tourists act based on their formation of cognitive and affective images. More studies were made of conative experience as issues of visitor involvement and co-creation emerged (Boswijk, Thijssen & Peelen, 2007). Tourists have been increasingly perceived as performing a role in tourist settings, and their interactions with other visitors and experience providers can have an important influence on their experience (Ek, Larsen, Hornskov & Mansfeldt, 2008). Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha (2007) argue that satisfying or memorable experiences depend on active participation or involvement, or the 'doing' implied by conative experience. Conative responses to experiences were also recently highlighted by Zatori et al. (2018) in the concept of 'experience involvement'. They underline the co-creation role of tourists also through the 'social experience-involvement' created through social contacts on a tour. With co-creation and involvement increasingly being emphasised as means of improving visitor experiences (e.g. Sørensen & Jensen, 2015; Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott, 2018), the conative dimension should also become more important in a range of tourism settings.

The cognitive dimension of experience includes thinking (Addis & Holbrook, 2001), reflectivity (Ballantyne, Packer, & Falk, 2011), understanding, or sense-making (Mannell & Kleiber, 1997) knowledge acquisition (Gupta & Vajic, 1999), and learning (Volo, 2010). In the context of cultural experiences, where learning is a main tourist motivation (Stylianou-Lambert, 2011), common to different types of cultural visitors (Rajaobelina et al., 2019), the cognitive dimension of experience should be particularly important. In a study of visitor satisfaction in heritage and cultural expositions, de Rojas and Camarero (2008) found the cognitive dimension of perceived quality to be an important determinant of satisfaction. Also in a heritage setting, Park, Choi, & Lee (2019) argued that while affect is stronger than cognition in terms of loyalty, cognitive loyalty directly influences affective loyalty; which in turn significantly influences conative loyalty. Zhang & Xu (2019) in an examination of 'toursapes' in a historic town, also argue that tourists are touched by what they see and perceive, and that these cognitive cues stimulate an emotional response. Cognitive aspects have been argued to be important to all tourist experiences, as they all involve experiential learning (Cutler and Carmichael, 2010).

In addition to cognitive, affective and conative elements of experience, novelty has also been identified as being central to the appeal of visitor attractions (Lee and Crompton, 1992; Jeong and Park, 1997). For example, theme park operators seek to satisfy customer demands for novelty by introducing new rides (Chang, Shu & King 2013). Kolar (2017) also sees novelty as a basic tourism motivation, fed by the development of new experience settings, such as escape rooms. Mitas & Bastiaansen (2018:99) state that “novelty is somehow fundamental to the experience of tourism”, finding that novelty accounted for between one-third and half of the effect of tourism experience on positive emotions and interest. Novelty also emerged as a fourth experience dimension alongside the cognitive, conative and affective experience dimensions in a study of event experiences (de Geus et al., 2016).

In developing a scale to measure the holistic nature of experiences, we therefore sought to incorporate the four experience dimensions outlined above, and to understand how these vary between visitor groups and experience contexts.

### **3.1 Hypothesis development**

Drawing on the above theoretical review, we would expect to find affective, conative, cognitive and novelty dimensions of experience, which should all contribute positively to a holistic visitor experience. We further expect that these dimensions will be identifiable across different experience contexts (attractions, events and tours), although as previous research has demonstrated, we would expect these contexts to generate different experiences for visitors. In the light of recent research we also expect to find a relationship between visitor characteristics and experiences, reflecting levels of involvement and co-creation (Zatori et al., 2018). This leads a number of research hypotheses (Table 1), which are based on relationships suggested by previous research. We expect that generic dimensions of experience will be found at attractions, events and tours (H1), and that the emotional dimension will be important (H2a) particularly for local residents (H2b). We also expect cognitive experiences to be positively correlated with overall experience at cultural attractions because of the importance of learning (H3), while the conative experience dimension should be particularly important in settings that allow for more visitor activity, for example at events and tours rather than permanent attractions (H4a and H4b). We also hypothesise that novelty will significantly affect visitor experience (H5a), and should be particularly important in event settings (H5b) (as suggested by de Geus et al., 2016) and that levels of novelty will be higher for first time visitors (H5c) (Larsen, Wolff, Doran & Øgaard, 2019). Finally, recent research highlighting the importance of experience context (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016) leads to the



hypothesis that the strength of different experience dimensions will vary by experience context (H6).

Table 1: Research hypotheses relating to experiences at attractions, events and tours

Hypothesis number	Hypothesis	Source
H1	Four common dimensions of experience (cognitive, affective, conative and novelty) will be present in different experience contexts.	Getz and Page, 2016, de Geus et al., 2016
H2a	The affective experience dimension will be the most strongly correlated with overall experience	Prayag & Ryan, 2012, Zatori et al., 2018
H2b	Local residents will have a significantly stronger affective experience with local cultural sites and events than tourists.	Getz and Page, 2016
H3	The cognitive experience dimension will be significantly positively correlated with overall experience.	Bastiaansen et al., 2019
H4a	The conative experience dimension will be positively correlated with overall experience.	Chen & Chen, 2010
H4b	The conative dimension of experience will be higher at sites offering more opportunities for active visitor involvement.	Zatori et al., 2018
H5a	Novelty will be positively correlated with overall experience.	de Geus et al., 2016

H5b	First time visitors will have a stronger experience of novelty than repeat visitors.	Larsen, Wolff, Doran and Øgaard, 2019
H5c	The novelty dimension of experience will be stronger at events than at attractions or tours.	Larsen, Wolff, Doran and Øgaard, 2019
H6	Significant differences in the strength of different experience dimensions will exist between different types of experience context.	Packer and Ballantyne, 2016

A challenge is that most of the previous scales developed to measure experiences tend to emphasise a particular dimension of experience (e.g. emotional, memorable, novelty, etc.) or a specific experience setting (e.g. events, attractions or tours), producing only a partial view of visitor experience. The current study therefore adopts a more holistic approach by analysing dimensions of the visitor experience in different contexts (attractions, events and tours). We then analyse how visitor characteristics and the context within which the encounter occurs contribute to the overall experience. Hong Kong was chosen as the study setting because it offers a diversity of urban and non-urban cultural attractions, events and tours, catering to visitors with different cultural backgrounds, coming from source markets as diverse as China, Asia, North America and Europe. The variety of attractions, events and tours as well as visitor characteristics potentially offers enhanced insights into the respective roles of visitor- and of context-related characteristics in shaping experience.

#### **4 Methods**

We surveyed visitors (including local residents and tourists) at attractions, events and tours across Hong Kong to measure the different dimensions of experience. In order to facilitate the measurement of experiences across different experience contexts, the researchers sought to develop an appropriate scale. For this, we drew on previous work on developing an experience scale for events (de Geus et al., 2016) and Packer and Ballantyne's (2016) work on attractions. Both of these studies offer useful insights into the dimensions of the visitor experience, although neither was originally validated in real life settings. Recent work using tools based on the EES offers some testing of the scale in event settings. Lee and Coetzee (2017) implemented the EES at a sporting event, and replicated de Geus et al's (2016) four experience dimensions. Coetzee, Lee, and Faisal (2019) also found these four dimensions were related to

behavioural outcomes, including revisit intention and recommendation. Richards (2017) used the EES to compare the experience dimensions of events in different countries, concluding that event context and content produced significant differences. These studies indicate that the EES can be a useful tool for measuring and comparing event experiences. Zatori et al. (2018) also recently developed an 'experience-involvement scale' in their study of sightseeing tours. Their concept of experience-involvement emphasises the involvement and emotional engagement that are consequences of an experience, which links to de Geus et al's idea that experiences require consumer interaction. Although these studies indicate an increased incidence of scale development for measuring experiences, such research is still usually restricted to a single site or experience context.

In the current study, the EES was initially field-tested to develop a more generic and practical instrument that would be suitable for understanding the visitor experience (Richards, 2017). Online surveys were administered to visitors at five events in different countries, yielding a total of 1,089 completed questionnaires. The Cronbach's coefficient alpha was first calculated for the full 18-item scale (0.830) and further analysis was undertaken to identify any items that could be removed without impairing reliability. An 11 item scale was generated with an acceptable Cronbach's alpha of 0.793. This compact scale facilitated the application of the survey instrument to many respondents across multiple events, because a short scale is an effective means of minimizing response problems stemming from boredom or fatigue (e.g. Schmitt and Stults, 1985). We also conducted a literature review to identify potential attraction-related items that might be missing from the original events-based EES scale. Given the diversity of Hong Kong attractions, for example, the researchers added three items included in the Packer and Ballantyne (2016) visitor experience model: spirituality, fun and nostalgia. Spirituality is particularly relevant to cultural tourism experiences, as religious sites attract large numbers of spiritually motivated visitors (Sharpley, 2009; Willson, McIntosh, & Zahra, 2013). Similarly, nostalgia is an important driver for cultural and heritage tourism, as people travel to discover their cultural roots or re-live past experiences (Shaw, 1992; Dann, 1995; Chhabra, Healy, & Sills, 2003). McKercher and Du Cros (2003) also emphasised the importance of fun in the cultural tourism experience in their survey of visitors to Hong Kong, and fun is a central element of the hedonic dimension of experiences. As Tasci & Ko (2016) note, fun is important to many different consumption contexts, ranging from macro-level destination consumption to special event and sport event consumption and hotel stays, flights or meal consumption.

The work of Packer and Ballantyne (2016) also encouraged us to adopt a more sophisticated approach towards the study of experiences by isolating the experience from its antecedents and consequences. Consistent with their recommended approach, the current survey included questions about respondent backgrounds and previous visits to Hong Kong as key antecedents. We also posed questions to prospective respondents about the psychological, social, behavioural and economic consequences of their experiences.

Consistent with Knobloch, Robertson and Aitken's (2017) recommended approach, respondents were surveyed as they were exiting the relevant sites. This approach ensured that the measurement of experiences occurred as close as possible to the moment of consumption, leading to minimal memory-based bias. The questionnaire was made available in three written languages, namely English, Traditional Chinese and Simplified Chinese. Traditional Chinese is more familiar to respondents from Hong Kong and Taiwan, whereas Simplified Chinese is the norm amongst mainland Chinese. An initial pilot survey was conducted with 35 respondents, including 21 Hong Kong residents and 14 visitors from other parts of China and overseas. This revealed that the questions were easily understandable for respondents and that the translations into Chinese were functional.

The final survey administration undertaken between April and August 2017 elicited a total of 2,548 responses. Visitors were surveyed using Qualtrics online software loaded onto tablets as they exited each site, with the immediacy of interception allowing them to provide a holistic evaluation of their experience. The interviews were conducted by a team of 10 interviewers, supervised by an experienced research manager. No incentive was offered for survey completion, and recorded refusals were only 15.4% of those approached. Many refusals were from members of Asian tour groups, or individuals with a limited grasp of the English and/or Chinese languages. Similar issues have been noted in other Hong Kong studies (e.g. Tsang and Ap, 2007).

The site selection across Hong Kong, took account of geographic locations, attraction type (event, permanent attraction or tour) and style of consumption (e.g. a guided tour or more self-directed). In dividing the sites by type we followed Benckendorff's (2015) definition of attractions as "the places, people, events, and things that make up the objects of the tourist gaze and attract tourists to destinations." Our attraction sites were selected from cultural objects actively promoted to tourists by the Hong Kong Tourist Board, a number of which can be considered as 'iconic attractions' (Ram, Björk & Weidenfeld, 2016) because they are major attractions highlighted by destination managers and marketers as being especially worthy of

tourism consumption. These sites were identified by analysing the top attractions listed by the Hong Kong Tourist Board as well as TripAdvisor. We defined a tour as an itinerary taking in a number of distinct sites, which can be guided (either by a tour guide or a recorded commentary) or self-guided, using a guide book or app. We also followed Getz and Page (2016: 46) in defining an event as a temporary occurrence at a given place and time. The basic distinctions between these types of sites is that attractions are permanently operating in a single location, while events are temporary attractions in a single location and tours link different attractions through physical movement over a short space of time (usually a day or less).

The ultimate selection of interview sites (Table 2) was determined with a view to covering a range of cultural content (heritage, contemporary culture, and traditional Chinese culture) and to targeting both international visitors and local residents. The sites were also chosen to represent different locations on Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the outlying islands (Figure 1) to ensure coverage of diverse aspects of cultural consumption. It was anticipated that local and overseas respondents would engage differently across attractions and events in settings that have differing levels of familiarity and resonance.

Figure 1: Data Collection Locations in Hong Kong (for key to site numbers see Table 1)



Table 2: Survey sites in Hong Kong

Site	Attraction/ Event/Tour	Type/content	Location	Surveys conducted
1. Peak Tram (The Peak)	Attraction	Heritage transport, views and leisure area <a href="https://www.hk-victoria-peak.com/">https://www.hk-victoria-peak.com/</a>	Hong Kong Island	331
2. Hong Kong Museum of History	Attraction	Museum <a href="https://hk.history.museum/en_US/web/mh/index.html">https://hk.history.museum/en_US/web/mh/index.html</a>	Kowloon	217
3. Ngong Ping Village and Big Buddha	Attraction	Giant Buddha and purpose built Chinese themed village <a href="https://www.np360.com.hk/en/">https://www.np360.com.hk/en/</a>	Outlying Islands - Lantau	217
4. Mei Ho House	Attraction	Adaptive reuse hostel/museum <a href="https://www.yha.org.hk/en/hostel/yha-mei-ho-house-youth-hostel/">https://www.yha.org.hk/en/hostel/yha-mei-ho-house-youth-hostel/</a>	Kowloon	309
5. Police Married Quarters (PMQ)	Attraction	Adaptive reuse heritage attraction <a href="http://www.pmq.org.hk/">http://www.pmq.org.hk/</a>	Hong Kong Island	213
6. M + Pavillion, West Kowloon Cultural District	Attraction	Exhibition/contemporary art <a href="https://www.westkwoon.hk/en">https://www.westkwoon.hk/en</a>	Kowloon	211
7. Lantern Festival	Event	Traditional art and craft <a href="http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/events-festivals/chinese-festivals/spring-lantern-festival.jsp">http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/events-festivals/chinese-festivals/spring-lantern-festival.jsp</a>	Hong Kong Island	210
8. Cheung Chau Bun Festival	Event	Traditional festival <a href="http://www.cheungchau.org/">http://www.cheungchau.org/</a>	Outlying Islands - Cheung Chau	193
9. Hong Kong International Dragon Boat Races	Event	Traditional boat race/festival <a href="http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/events-festivals/highlight-events/dragon-boat-carnival.jsp">http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/events-festivals/highlight-events/dragon-boat-carnival.jsp</a>	Hong Kong Island	217

10. Sun Yat Sen Trail	Tour	Self-guided heritage trail <a href="http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/tours-walks/self-guided-walks/dr-sun-yat-sen-historical-trail.jsp">http://www.discoverhongkong.com/us/see-do/tours-walks/self-guided-walks/dr-sun-yat-sen-historical-trail.jsp</a>	Hong Kong Island	204
11. Grayline	Tour	Bus tour of major sites <a href="https://www.grayline.com/things-to-do/china/hong-kong/">https://www.grayline.com/things-to-do/china/hong-kong/</a>	Hong Kong Island	117
12. BigBus	Tour	Bus tour of major sites <a href="https://www.bigbustours.com/en/hong-kong/hong-kong-tour-tickets-and-passes/hong-kong-bus-tours/?qty[adult]=0&amp;qty[child]=0&amp;focus=top-filter-form/">https://www.bigbustours.com/en/hong-kong/hong-kong-tour-tickets-and-passes/hong-kong-bus-tours/?qty[adult]=0&amp;qty[child]=0&amp;focus=top-filter-form/</a>	Hong Kong Island	109
Total				2548

During the data collection process, the survey responses were regularly screened to ensure optimum coverage of experience contexts and visitor groups, and to check data quality. The collected data were checked for missing values, which were below 5% per variable, and therefore the series mean was used to replace the missing values in the analysis. Before undertaking the structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis we also tested for multivariate normality in AMOS 25.0, which yielded a Mardia's standardized coefficient of 82, indicating that the data were multivariate non-normal (Bentler, 2010). Therefore, a Restricted Likelihood Method was used to estimate the SEM (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) using the MLM estimator in the program Mplus. This produced results that are robust to non-normality (Byrne, 2012; Muthén & Muthén, 2017; Wang & Wang, 2012).

## 5 Analysis of results

To establish the predictive validity of the MCES, a structural equation model was developed. The data were analyzed through a two-step approach, first confirming the overall quality of measurement and then testing the structural model. The Cronbach's alpha for the whole MCES scale was 0.82, well above the threshold of 0.70, confirming internal reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Because Cronbach's alpha is not always sufficient to establish scale validity, Guttman's lambda was also checked for unidimensionality with positive results (lambda 2 = 0.936, lambda 3 = 0.934). Hotelling's T square test and Turkey's test for non-additivity also gave significant results. The scale for the MCES was shown to perform better than the 11 item EES scale, indicated by a higher Cronbach's alpha and higher factor loadings for most items. Jöreskog's rho was also calculated to be above 0.6 for each construct, demonstrating composite reliability (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Convergent validity of the different experience dimensions was confirmed by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) being above 0.5 for each construct (Table 3). The AVE values were also higher than the inter-construct correlations, indicating discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). However, the item 'I was aware of my own values' was found not to contribute significantly to the model and was therefore removed.

Table 3: Factor loadings, variance and correlations

Factors (Cronbach's Alphas)	Standardized factor loading	Average Variance Explained (AVE)	Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC)
<b>Cognitive (.914)</b>		.81	
I was thinking	.78		.768
I used my intellect	.82		.748
I got new ideas	.80		.943
I learnt something	.75		.810
I reflected on these ideas and discussed them with others	.80		.822
<b>Affective (.845)</b>		.69	
I experienced nostalgia	.76		.724
I experienced spirituality	.78		.551
I experienced intimacy	.77		.695
<b>Conative (.825)</b>		.78	
I thought this was unique	.80		.800
I had fun	.78		.751
I was active	.74		.793
<b>Novelty (.841)</b>		.80	
I was excited	.85		.824
I felt a sense of adventure	.93		.790

Covariance matrix

	cognitive	affective	conative
affective	0.640		
conative	0.623	0.562	
novelty	0.553	0.664	0.558

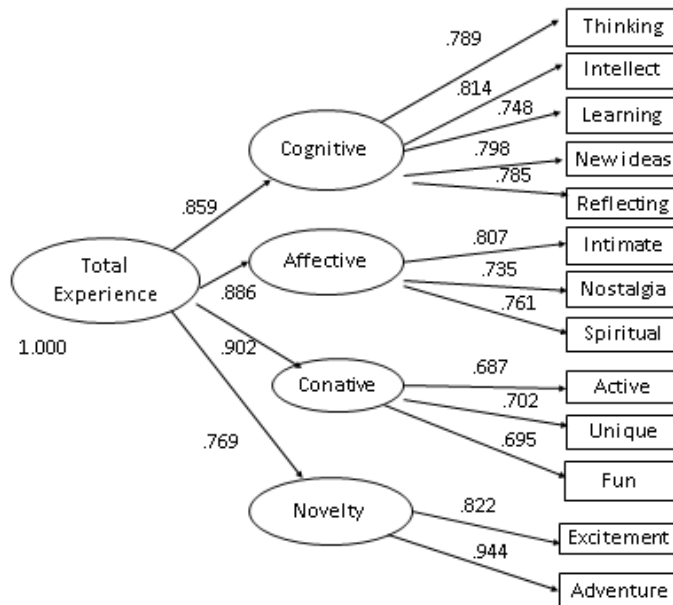


The measurement model fits the data with CFI = 0.971, NFI = 0.968, IFI = 0.971, RMSEA of 0.048 (confidence interval 0.044- 0.053), with  $\chi^2$  207.08 (df 38, p value 0.000). These statistics are indicative of a good model fit (Hu and Bentler, 1999), with the Chi-square as the only apparently unsatisfactory measure. However, Chi-square cannot be considered as a reliable measure of fit in this case, as it is always significant when  $n > 200$  (Hooper, Coughlan and Mullen, 2008).

The SEM (Figure 2) confirms that there is a relationship between the observed variables and their underlying latent construct(s). For the most part the model confirms de Geus et al.'s (2016) findings, with four very similar components of the visitor experience, namely cognitive, affective, conative and novelty. These dimensions were also identified consistently across different contexts, confirming hypothesis H1 (Table 9). The novelty and affective constructs differ slightly to those identified by de Geus et al. (2016) at events. In their research de Geus et al. related novelty to distinctiveness, unfamiliarity and uniqueness. In the current study, however, uniqueness was linked to the conative dimension of experience, and the novelty dimension was composed of the items excitement and adventure. Excitement and adventure (or thrill) can both be linked to the search for novelty, as underlined by Lee and Crompton (1992) and Andersson (2007). In their study of novelty in destination choice Lee and Crompton (1992) linked the search for novelty was related to seeking optimal arousal, or to experience something new and different. The affective dimension in the current study was linked to two new dimensions, spirituality and nostalgia, as well as the intimacy item used by de Geus et al. (2016). It might be surmised that the cultural sites explored in the current study were particularly likely to evoke spiritual or nostalgic feelings, particularly as many were related to local heritage and/or religion.

The model also confirms a differential contribution of the four experience dimensions to the overall experience (Figure 2). The strongest relationship is between overall experience and the conative experience dimension (0.902), followed by affective (0.886), cognitive (0.859) and finally novelty (0.769). These results suggest a link to Zatori et al.'s experience-involvement concept, since conative experiences should be stronger for more active contexts, which might have greater visitor involvement (Richards and Wilson, 2006). These relationships do not support hypothesis 2a on the strength of affective experiences (Table 9), although comparing the affective involvement scores by visitor origin confirms that Hong Kong residents score significantly higher in terms of affect. This is particularly related to feelings of nostalgia and intimacy, suggesting a strong personal connection to local cultural experiences and supporting hypothesis 2b.

Figure 2: Structural Equation Model of the components and items comprising the total visitor experience.



Both cognitive and conative involvement were positively correlated with overall experience for all contexts, supporting hypothesis 4a. The strength of the overall experience involvement was higher for events (average score 5.54) than for tours (5.30) and attractions (4.69). These scores are in line with expectations, as events tend to offer a high degree of novelty and opportunities for visitor engagement and participation compared with set tours and especially permanent attractions. Tour experiences also scored higher for the self-guided Sun Yat Sen Trail than for tour buses with a set route and commentary. Providing room for interpretation by visitors seems to increase experience intensity, in line with theories about experience co-creation (Sørensen & Jensen, 2015), and supporting hypothesis 4b.

The novelty dimension of experience was positively correlated with overall experience, confirming hypothesis H5a. However, in contrast to several previous studies, the novelty dimension of experience did not differ significantly between first-time and repeat visitors, so hypothesis 5b was rejected. Items related to novelty were scored significantly higher by long-haul tourists (5.32) than by tourists from Mainland China (4.71), suggesting that greater familiarity with the context reduces the novelty of the experience. The results also suggest differential levels of novelty according to experience context, with novelty being stronger at events (5.57) than tours (5.32) or attractions (4.70) (Table 4), supporting hypothesis H5b.

Table 4: Experience dimension scores by experience context

Context	Experience dimension (Mean score)			
	cognitive	affective	conative	novelty
Attraction	5.22	4.83	5.60	4.70
Event	5.43	5.29	5.91	5.57
Tour	5.47	4.96	5.66	5.32
f	12.48	26.01	24.99	106.84
Sig.	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***	0.000***

\*\*\*  $P \leq 0.001$

An examination of the individual experience dimensions (Table 5) shows that the strength of the four dimensions of experience vary significantly in all contexts. In general, the experience scores are higher for events than tours, and tours score higher than attractions. The only exception is for cognitive experience, where tours score slightly higher than events. This seems to suggest that events are the experience contexts that provide the strongest impressions and engagement because of their unique or 'special' character (Getz and Page, 2016). We may also speculate that the experience of events and tours is more personal, possibly requiring greater inputs from the visitor. Attractions often make extended investments in interpretation, allowing visitors to absorb a range of inputs relatively effortlessly, and with a lower level of involvement. These results seem to support hypotheses H4b and H6.

Table 5: ANOVA for experience dimensions by site

	Attractions						Events			Tours			F-value	Sig.		
	History Museum	Mei Ho House	Peak Tram	M+ Pavilion	Ngong Ping	PMQ	Bun Festival	Dragon Boat Festival	Lantern Festival	Sun Yat Sen Trail	Grayline	Big Bus				
Experience score	n= 198	294	292	206	205	201	178	189	203	194	105	103	34.06	0.000***		
Experience score	5.38	5.57	4.77	5.21	4.84	5.61	4.77	5.30	6.13	5.70	5.34	5.19				
Experience score	n= 205	299	311	209	213	204	184	201	206	196	108	104			19.92	0.000***
Experience score	5.50	5.85	5.50	5.17	5.63	5.93	5.60	5.87	6.24	5.68	5.68	5.63				
Experience score	n= 188	292	300	193	209	209	183	199	205	203	100	92				
Experience score	4.92	5.19	4.51	4.07	4.57	5.65	4.58	5.16	6.05	5.52	4.10	4.66				
Experience score	n= 199	303	305	204	215	208	182	192	208	203	109	103	38.26	0.000***		
Experience score	4.57	4.68	4.80	3.93	4.82	5.33	5.02	5.70	5.95	5.21	5.50	5.35				
Experience score	5.32	5.41	4.80	5.02	4.93	5.58	5.10	5.43	6.09	5.56	5.17	5.16	17.18	0.000***		

\*\*\*  $P \leq 0.001$

Examining the experience scores for individual sites (Table 5), the Peak Tram, the most popular site in Hong Kong scored lower than all other survey locations on the overall experience scale. In terms of the individual experience dimensions, the Peak Tram also ranked low in terms of affective experience, with lower scores only for the M+ Pavilion in the West Kowloon Cultural District, which at the time of the surveys only presented a limited audio-visual display. The lower scores for the Peak may relate to its status as a Hong Kong “must-see” attraction for first-time visitors, offering more standardized leisure experiences (based on shopping and Victoria Harbour panoramas), that contain limited cognitive and emotive content. This result echoes Moyle, Scherrer, Weiler, Wilson, Caldicott and Nielsen’s (2017) finding that the experiential element may be weaker at iconic sites and may point to an experiential hierarchy of tourist sites in the destination.

PMQ, a renovated heritage precinct, scored highest of the various attractions on all dimensions, followed by Mei Ho House, a heritage housing project. These two smaller-scale heritage attractions had particularly high scores amongst overseas visitors. Major or ‘iconic’ sites such as the Peak Tram and Ngong Ping had lower scores for the affective and cognitive dimensions, but were somewhat higher on conative experience. The latter finding may reflect the wider range of activities that is available at these major sites. The Lantern Festival was the highest scoring event, perhaps because of its atmospheric nature and the depth of traditional

meaning and associations. The Bun Festival scored significantly lower than the other two events, particularly amongst overseas visitors. The latter group may have found it harder to form connections with this very busy local festival. Amongst the various tours, the self-guided itinerary known as the Sun Yat Sen Trail, scored significantly higher than the coach tours. These results indicate that the experience delivered by individual attractions also differs along with the significant influence of the type of context of the experience (namely attractions, events and tours) on the overall experience and on the dimensions of the experience. Another notable insight from the perspective of the destination experience was that visitors who participated in a larger number of activities in Hong Kong generally scored higher on the experience scale, indicating that comparing and contrasting a mix of sites strengthens the overall experience of the destination.

We also conducted t-tests in order to explore the relationship between visitor characteristics and experience. These revealed some significantly different patterns in the visitor and local resident experience (see Table 6). It was found that locals generally gave higher ratings to cognitive and emotional factors. This might be expected since residents are more embedded in the local cultural context. An ANOVA analysis of visitors from a variety of source markets also showed some significant differences (Table 7). Visitors from outside Hong Kong and Greater China scored highest on novelty, but lowest on the affective dimension. The novelty and affective dimensions also varied significantly by age, with the 36-45 age group scoring highest on affect (which may be related to a higher incidence of family groups with children in this age range).

Table 6. Comparison between Tourists and Local Residents– T-Test results on experience dimensions

Experience dimensions	Local residents			Tourists			Total			F	Sig.	Eta	Eta squared
	no.	mean	sd	no.	mean	sd	no.	mean	sd				
cognitive	1027	5.37	1.07	1341	5.28	1.11	2368	5.32	1.10	4.20	0.39*	0.042	0.002
affective	1029	5.10	1.30	1344	4.86	1.33	2373	4.96	1.32	19.29	0.00***	0.090	0.008
conative	1053	5.64	0.93	1387	5.73	0.89	2440	5.69	0.91	5.41	0.20*	0.047	0.002
novelty	1072	4.90	1.47	1418	5.10	1.31	2490	5.01	1.38	13.77	0.00***	0.074	0.006

sd = standard deviation  
 ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Cognitive processing and physical involvement differ little according to the characteristics of the visitors, whereas the affective and novelty dimensions of experience tend to distinguish

more between visitor groups. This may suggest that the context of the experience is more significant in influencing cognitive and conative experiences, perhaps because of the different information processing possibilities of attractions, events and tours. The affective and novelty dimensions seem more likely to be influenced by the previous experience and background of the visitor.

The visitor experience was also significantly related to behavioural outcomes (Table 7). Respondents expressed a high level of satisfaction and intention to recommend (both average 7.2 on a 10 point scale). Intention to revisit was not surprisingly lower for overseas visitors (6.6/10). All these outcomes were strongly correlated with the overall experience score, as well as with the individual experience dimensions. The conative dimension of experience was most strongly correlated with positive outcomes, followed by the novelty dimension (Table 8), again underlining the importance of active, engaging experiences. We did not find any significant relationship between experience dimension scores and expenditure.

Table 7. ANOVA – Experience item scores by visitor origin (n=2545)

	ANOVA (Residency)					F	Sig.
	China (n=341)	Hong Kong (n=1085)	Macau (n=34)	Taiwan (n=159)	Others (n=926)		
<b>Cognitive</b>							
I was thinking	5.23	5.30	5.27	5.28	5.19	0.886	0.471
I used my intellect	5.22	5.25	5.30	5.41	5.04	4.585	0.001***
I got new ideas	5.35	5.47	5.53	5.49	5.31	2.384	0.049*
I learnt something	5.41	5.59	5.58	5.56	5.51	1.521	0.193
I reflected on these ideas and discussed them with others	5.20	5.26	5.39	5.47	5.17	2.057	0.084
<b>Affective</b>							
I experienced nostalgia	5.15	5.24	5.03	5.18	4.74	14.193	0.000***
I experienced spirituality	5.04	5.00	4.84	5.07	4.78	3.588	0.006**
I experienced intimacy	4.90	5.03	4.63	4.80	4.77	4.157	0.002**
<b>Conative</b>							
I thought this was unique	5.84	5.66	5.74	5.84	5.71	2.574	0.036*
I had fun	5.84	5.70	5.74	5.93	5.83	3.122	0.014*
I was active	5.63	5.56	5.41	5.61	5.58	0.481	0.750
<b>Novelty</b>							
I was excited	4.77	4.98	4.81	4.86	5.53	29.315	0.000***
I felt a sense of adventure	4.66	4.81	4.52	4.70	5.11	8.790	0.000***
Revisit	7.20	6.92	7.18	6.99	6.58	7.671	0.000***
Recommend	7.51	7.11	7.12	7.22	7.19	3.175	0.013*
Satisfaction	7.63	7.13	7.00	7.29	7.24	5.601	0.000***

; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 8: Pearson correlations for experience scores and outcomes (n=2157)

	Cognitive	Affective	Conative	Novelty	Total experience score
How likely are you to visit this attraction/event again in the future?	.256***	.384***	.389***	.347***	.390***
How likely are you to recommend this attraction/event to family/friends?	.238***	.315***	.414***	.398***	.383***
On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with your visit to this attraction/event overall?	.245***	.330***	.411***	.391***	.386***

\*\*\* p<0.001

Overall experience scores were significantly higher for tourists visiting more sites around Hong Kong. Those travelling outside the central tourist areas of Hong Kong were likely to record higher overall experience scores. In terms of experience dimensions, the cognitive dimension was significantly higher for those visiting more tourist areas in Hong, and particularly those visiting 'new tourist areas' such as Sham Shui Po. In contrast, levels of novelty declined for those visiting more sites, most notably for first time visitors. This suggests that the visitor experience of novelty is influenced not just by repeat visitation to individual sites, or to the destination, but also by the accumulation of experiences offered by combining different sites throughout the destination visit.

## 6 Discussion of results

The evidence presented in this empirical investigation in Hong Kong suggests that visitor experience depends on individual needs and expectations, and also on the context within

which the experience occurs or is delivered. The quantitative results have indicated the merit of a Multiple Context Experience Scale (MCES) instrument that has been developed here for measuring and comparing the strength of visitor experience between different visitor groups, different types of experience context and individual sites.

It was found that in Hong Kong, events generated the most intense experiences, followed by guided tours and finally permanent attractions. In terms of total experience scores, event contexts generally had higher experience scores than tours, and attractions had the lowest scores. These differences were also significant when controlling for differences in visitor profile between sites. A comparison of the different experience dimension scores indicates that events score notably higher in terms of the affective and conative dimensions and tours and events both generated significantly stronger cognitive scores than attractions. One possible explanation is that visitors may have greater freedom to contribute their own interpretations and insights at events, whereas attractions and tours tend to supply far more structured information and interpretation. The events that were surveyed generated higher scores for intimacy and reflection than other sites.

This research has confirmed the importance of four experience dimensions; affective, conative cognitive and novelty, which vary in intensity across the different sites and visitor groupings surveyed. Though the conative experience dimension tends to score highest overall, the affective dimension seems to discriminate most clearly between visitor groups. Affective experience scores are significantly different in the case of visitor origin, previous visitation, age group and education level. Hong Kong residents have the highest affective reactions to the sites visited, perhaps reflective of their greater social and cultural embeddedness within the destination. Irrespective of the origin of the visitor, learning was the most important cognitive experience item. This confirms previous assertions that learning is a key component of the cultural tourism experience (Richards, 2007).

The research shows that individuals differ in their involvement levels and also that their experiences vary, depending on context- as well as visitor-related factors. This finding supports the important role of visitor choice in shaping experiences. In the case of events, visitors may have greater opportunities to relate to others, to form communities around experiences and to interpret things compared with visiting permanent attractions, where it is common to be presented with a finished story. Zatori et al. (2018) recently suggested that locals and tourists have similar experience-involvement. However, the present research has indicated that visitor origins and cultural backgrounds are responsible for significant experience-related differences



within the same context. It is worth noting that Zatori et al.'s examination focused on contributions by service providers to the experience context, rather than the visitor experience *per se*. One of their main findings was that experience-involvement is strongly influenced by the interactivity between service providers and visitors. The present research has indicated that Zatori et al.'s (2018) tour contexts could have provided visitors with greater interactivity, and therefore a stronger experience reaction. This underlines the ongoing need for scholars to study visitor experiences across multiple contexts and settings. The present study followed this approach by collecting surveys from a large visitor sample and using a scale with the capacity to measure experiences in multiple contexts.

We also found that mixing different experience contexts in the destination affected the experience scores for tourists, and in general more adventurous tourists who ventured beyond the most popular sites reported stronger experiences. There is a marked increase in cognitive, conative and affective experience as visitors extend their exploration of the city from a single area. In the case of tourism, the experience context evidently extends beyond the immediate physical environment or on-site stimuli provided by an attraction or event, to the wider context of the destination resource mix and to the personal 'visitor journey' when navigating the destination.

There is a strong relationship between experiences and outcomes based on intention to return or to recommend and on levels of satisfaction. The correlations between site experience and outcomes were highest for the conative dimension of experience, and lowest for the cognitive. This may relate to the notably strong relationship between the item 'I had fun' in the conative dimension and intending to recommend (correlation  $r=0.426$ ) and satisfaction ( $r=0.421$ ). Experience context was also significantly related to outcomes, with events generating stronger intentions to return, intentions to recommend and higher satisfaction. Conative experience has a stronger relationship with behavioural outcomes (recommendation and repeat visitation) than affective or cognitive experience, though the affective dimension is better at distinguishing between visitors in terms of their experience.

In terms of the research hypotheses, several of the proposed hypotheses were confirmed (Table 9). The hypothesis that there are four experience dimensions (H1) can be supported. The SEM also indicated that these dimensions were positively correlated with the strength of overall experience (supporting hypotheses H3, H4a and H5a). The conative dimension of experience was also found to be significantly stronger at sites offering more visitor involvement, notably events and tours, supporting hypothesis H4b. The affective dimension

was also clearly identified in the SEM, although this was not the strongest experience dimension as proposed in H2a, which is therefore rejected. However, residents had stronger affective experiences related to cultural sites and events than tourists, supporting hypothesis H2b. The experience of novelty was not found to be significantly different for first time and repeat visitors, and hypothesis 5b is rejected. However, novelty was significantly stronger at events, meaning that hypothesis 5c could be accepted. Finally, significant differences in the strength of different experience dimensions were found between different types of experience context, confirming hypothesis H6.

Table 9. Outcomes of hypothesis testing

Hypothesis number	Hypothesis	result
H1	Four common dimensions of experience (cognitive, affective, conative and novelty) will be present in different experience contexts.	Accepted
H2a	The affective experience dimension will be the most strongly correlated with overall experience	Rejected
H2b	Local residents will have a significantly stronger affective experience with local cultural sites and events than tourists.	Accepted
H3	The cognitive experience dimension will be significantly positively correlated with overall experience.	Accepted
H4a	The conative experience dimension will be positively correlated with overall experience.	Accepted
H4b	The conative dimension of experience will be higher at sites offering more opportunities for active visitor involvement.	Accepted
H5a	Novelty will be positively correlated with overall experience.	Accepted
H5b	First time visitors will have a stronger experience of novelty than repeat visitors.	Rejected
H5c	The novelty dimension of experience will be stronger at events than at attractions or tours.	Accepted
H6	Significant differences in the strength of different experience dimensions will exist between different types of experience context.	Accepted

The overall results of the analysis broadly support the research model in identifying generic dimensions of visitor experience between different contexts and visitor groups.

## **7 Conclusions and Opportunities for Further Research**

This paper has developed an effective measurement tool to compare the personal experiences of visitors across different types of site, including attractions, events and tours, and validated this at cultural sites in Hong Kong. SEM identified four dimensions of the visitor experience: affective, cognitive and conative and novelty. The results point to important and differential effects of visitor- and context-related factors in determining visitor experience. Controlling for site-related context explains significantly more of the variance in visitor experience than the use of visitor characteristics alone. By measuring visitor experiences across attractions, events and tours using a single and comparable instrument, this research has extended research on visitor experiences into direct comparison of different experience contexts.

The research shows that the relative strength of experience varies between the events, tours and attractions studied, with events evoking stronger reactions than tours, and with tours generally yielding higher experience scores than attractions. This indicates that the different sites visited in the destination, and the resulting mix of experiential elements, will influence the overall destination experience.

Visitors display a consistent ordering of experience dimensions across different sites, with conative experiences generally scoring higher than cognitive and finally affective experiences. This seems to underline the importance of visitor activity and engagement with culture, which may lead to more informal and fun ways of learning. Cognitive experiences, which reflect more formal and abstract types of learning, continue to be prominent for museums, but learning-related items scored higher for other sites, such as the Lantern Festival and the self-guided Sun Yat Sen Trail (Table 5). These findings underline the importance of informal learning settings in generating positive cultural experiences.

These findings enrich our understanding of visitor experiences by illustrating how visitor-related and context-related factors can interact to influence the individual experience. The ability of visitors to express themselves through active engagement with the experiences provided by the cultural attractions, events and tours they visit is an important determinant of

the reported experience and experience outcomes, most notably intention to recommend and satisfaction. Our results suggest that more locally-embedded sites may be more effective in offering room for individual expression than large-scale iconic sites, such as the Peak Tram. In terms of the visitor contribution to the experience it was found that the affective dimension is most effective in discriminating between different groups of visitors, and that cultural distance may be a factor in this relationship. This indicates that the experience provided by a cultural site will be interpreted based on the affective connection that individual visitors have.

The role of context in the visitor experience evidently has implications for site-based research. It may, for example, be inappropriate to generalise when it is evident that the site context influences the experience. This underlines the importance of measuring visitor experiences at different sites, and of considering whether results can be generalised across different settings.

The present study has various implications for practitioners. Our findings indicate that site managers can influence visitor experience by manipulating the setting. However, the overall visitor experience is determined by a combination of context-related and visitor related factors. This suggests that those who manage cultural experiences can opt to change the experience setting, and/or seek visitor segments who supplement the experience with their own experience and knowledge. This aligns with the concept of co-creating experiences, with visitors and producers playing active roles. It also seems that visitors are more aware of the cognitive and conative aspects of experience, and score these highest on the experience scale. However, the affective dimension of experience still produces significant differences between visitor groups and experience settings. This underlines the importance of considering the affective dimensions of experience.

The present study opens possibilities for future investigations. Since the current study only covers a limited range of sites in a single destination, more work will be needed to establish if the findings related to the relative strength of experiences in different contexts is observable elsewhere. We suggest that researchers may compare different types of attraction to identify the characteristics that most influence the visitor experience. Future studies could survey a greater range of visitor types in other destination settings. Given that experience context has been shown to involve several interrelated though distinct dimensions, it would be worth establishing the relative influence of physical context (the site itself), the context provided by other visitors and the destination context provided by other attractions and experiences. The role of the visitor in building their own 'destination journey' and how this influences how individual elements of the destination are experienced would also offer useful insights for

destination managers. By following visitors on their destination journey, possibly using interactive technologies, it would be possible to test the effects of destination elements on different visitor groupings. It would also be interesting to understand how the visitor mix influences attraction related experiences, since other visitors contribute to the site-related context of the experience.

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