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# Memorable tourism experience: A review and research agenda

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## Abstract

A decade of research has produced substantial results but the theorization of memorable tourism experience, often drawing on positive and environmental psychology, remains fuzzy and fragmented. Adopting state-of-the-art practices, this study systematically reviews, synthesizes, and integrates the extant body of knowledge across multiple literature streams on memorable tourism experience. Our review indicates that research in this field has a geographical bias, largely neglects negative experiences, and mainly employs quantitative methods. We identify several gaps in the literature and propose the following seven recommendations for future research: (1) caution when using the memorable tourism experience scale; (2) the need for cross-cultural studies; (3) positive and negative dimensions in conceptualizing memorable tourism experience; (4) overcoming the limitations of self-report measures; (5) engaging in mixed methods research; (6) integrating suppliers' perspectives; and (7) combining theories, concepts, and disciplines. This study serves as a foundation for researchers and provides a holistic understanding of memorable tourism experience.

## KEYWORDS

antecedents, memorable tourism experience, outcomes, positive psychology, systematic review

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Experience is a central element of life for today's consumer (Caru & Cova, 2003) and has been recognized as a megatrend (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). The term "experience" has been described in many ways (Volo, 2009). Scholars have referred to experiences as daily encounters (Caru & Cova, 2003) and as liminal phenomena (Zhang & Xu, 2019). Pine and Gilmore (1998) emphasize the importance of experience in a postmodern society, describing it as the final stage of economic progression, evolved through the stages of commodities, goods and service economies. Attention has shifted from product or service to experience as a value-added element to gain a competitive advantage. Experiences represent the essence and central facet of the tourism industry (Kim & So, 2022; Tussyadiah, 2014; Williams, 2006). Tourism experiences have been

defined as enjoyable, memorable and engaging encounters (Oh et al., 2007) and as transitory phenomena (Volo, 2009). Tourists seek authentic, rewarding, meaningful, multisensory and transformative experiences when visiting places (Buzova et al., 2020; Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022; Kirillova et al., 2017; Spielmann et al., 2018).

Researchers in the 1990s began to develop a better understanding of the tourism experience. Ritchie and Hudson (2009) track this evolution from the early conceptualization offered by Csikszentmihalyi (1975) and the service quality model (Parasuraman et al., 1988) towards satisfactory experiences (Ryan, 1995), quality experiences (Jennings & Nickerson, 2006) and memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). A decade ago, Kim et al. (2012) introduced the concept of memorable tourism experience, defined as a "tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" (p. 13). Existing studies

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indicate the numerous benefits for tourism service providers of fostering memorable experiences (Stone et al., 2018). For example, tourists with a positive memorable experience are more likely to revisit the destination (Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017), develop an attachment towards the destination (Tsai, 2016; Vada et al., 2019a), and experience subjective well-being (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018; Sthapit et al., 2019). The study of memorable tourism experience is not just theoretically relevant but also beneficial for destination competitiveness (Stone et al., 2018).

However, as a multifaceted concept, there is little agreement on the theorizations and measurement of memorable tourism experience (Bigné et al., 2020). Existing scales fail to adequately capture what makes a tourism experience memorable (Tung & Ritchie, 2011) and unstructured techniques provide richer accounts of tourist experiences (e.g., Bosangit et al., 2015). There are also wide variations in terms of research settings (e.g., Sthapit et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2018) and sampling design (see, e.g., Chandralal, Rindfleisch, & Valenzuela, 2015; Sthapit et al., 2019). Although memorable tourism experience is an important and evolving research area, studies on the topic remain inconclusive and fragmented (Coelho et al., 2018; Sthapit & Barreto, 2018). In recent years, researchers have advanced knowledge by reviewing the conceptual and intellectual facets of customer experience (e.g., Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Kranzbühler et al., 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) and tourism experience (e.g., Godovykh & Tasci, 2020). However, a cohesive and timely synthesis of current scholarship on memorable tourism experience is still lacking.

Accordingly, this study presents a systematic review of the research on memorable tourism experience. A synthesis approach was chosen to summarize and integrate the current understanding of the subject across multiple theoretical and methodological perspectives. Such a process is particularly relevant when the topic of interest is fragmented, as it helps identify and highlight commonalities to build coherence (Cropanzano, 2009). Our review offers a well-grounded understanding of the concept, establishing themes and trends in memorable tourism experience research. The contribution of this review to the theoretical advancement of memorable tourism experience is threefold. First, similar to other systematic literature reviews (SLRs), this study refines and advances theory by mapping, consolidating findings, and facilitating subsequent scholarly work (Shepherd & Suddaby, 2017; Snyder, 2019). Second, by adopting state-of-the-art guidelines to define the review scope and establishing article selection criteria, data extraction, and synthesis, this study provides a timely and useful review of the scientific progress on memorable tourism experience. Third, this up-to-date review proposes an organizing framework, identifying antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes of memorable tourism experience.

## 2 | EXPERIENCE, CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE, TOURISM EXPERIENCE, AND MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE

The term experience is a broad term used to describe people's feelings and encounters during everyday life (Caru & Cova, 2003). An all-embracing concept, experience is used in everyday conversation to

describe everything from work-related achievements to holiday experiences (Hosany & Witham, 2010). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) offer one of the earliest conceptualizations of experience, focussing on its hedonic nature and capturing the sensory, emotive, and fantasy aspects of consumption. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) further frame experience as "a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioral, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey" (p. 70). Experience represents encounters of a higher order, such as optimal or extraordinary events, typified by high levels of emotional intensity (Arnould & Price, 1993), which engage individuals in a personal way (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Both consumer psychologists and experiential marketing scholars acknowledge the importance of experiences in people's daily lives (Schmitt et al., 2015; Yang, Mao, & Peracchio, 2012). For Becker and Jaakkola (2020), customer experiences are "non-deliberate, spontaneous responses", and reactions to particular stimuli" (p. 637).

Tourism is about creating experiences, which are the core of travel (Cohen, 1979). Many definitions for and approaches to examining tourism experience, in both its nature and structure, exist (Volo, 2009). Tung and Ritchie (2011), for example, defined tourism experience as "an individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e., affective, cognitive, and behavioral) of events related to his/her tourist activities" (p. 1369) before, during, and after the trip. Tourism experiences are often considered as extraordinary—different from one's daily experience (Cohen, 1979). Influential studies across disciplines, such as psychology, marketing, and anthropology (e.g., Kahneman, 2000; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Tuan, 1977; Turner & Bruner, 1986), have substantially contributed to research on tourism experiences.

The link between memory and experiences is not new (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) and can be traced back to early works in environmental psychology (Fridgen, 1984). In the context of tourism, from a dynamic perspective, memory plays a pivotal role in understanding individuals' recall of tourism experiences of personal relevance (Kim et al., 2021). Although on-site tourism experiences are momentary and provide transitory feelings (Kim, 2009), experiences stored in the human memory are momentous as travelers often reflect on their trip/holiday or visit to an attraction (Neal et al., 1999). The memory of a trip is critical as it "holds a certain attraction and intrinsic reward that materialize in the moments of storytelling" (Neumann, 1999, pp. 179–180). When recalling events, tourists draw on episodic memory that allows them to receive and store information about temporal–spatial relations, including the emotions they felt, the people they were with and the environments at the time (Tulving, 2002). Expanding on episodic memory, Jorgenson et al. (2019) developed a tourism autobiographical memory scale to understand the effect of tourists' travel experiences on their lives.

As an overarching concept in the tourism literature in recent years, memorable tourism experience represents a consumer-centric reflective view, capturing tourists' emotional and subjective responses (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015). According to Kim et al. (2012), a memorable tourism experience consists of critical moments of what tourists did, how they felt and what they thought at a destination. However, not all experiences will be memorable as tourists selectively

construct their most relevant and critical experiences. Novel events or features are most likely to be remembered (Skavronskaya et al., 2020; Stone et al., 2018). A recalled experience suggests its distinctiveness and evocativeness (Larsen, 2007). Moreover, memorable tourism experiences do not necessarily mean positive experiences (Kim et al., 2021) and the degree of remembering varies depending on the individual's previous encounters, even with the same tourism service providers (Kim, 2018). Despite recent progress on the topic, Jorgenson et al. (2019) noted that our understanding of the nexus of memory and tourism remains in its infancy.

### 3 | METHOD

To ensure rigor, a SLR method was employed to synthesize research on memorable tourism experience across the fields of tourism, hospitality, service, and leisure. Such a review maps what is known and identifies knowledge gaps on the topic (Pickering et al., 2015). State-of-the-art guidelines (e.g., Booth et al., 2012; Snyder, 2019) were followed to search, extract, and analyze extant literature on memorable tourism experience. Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Le et al., 2019), a five-step process was adopted that resembles the 15-stage approach developed by Pickering and Byrne (2014), and Pickering et al. (2015). The five steps are as follows: (1) framing the review aims and questions; (2) identifying search terms, databases, and selection criteria; (3) searching databases, screening search outcomes, and finetuning the exclusion and inclusion criteria; (4) summarizing evidence; and (5) interpreting findings.

First, we establish the aims of this review as follows: (1) to map the intellectual structure and research trajectory of memorable tourism experience from 2012 to 2020; (2) to identify research gaps; and (3) to provide an agenda for future research. Second, based on a preliminary scanning of the literature, the following three keywords were identified for the search: "memorable experience," "memorable tourism experience," and "memorable travel experience." Additional context-specific terms and related expressions, such as "memorable food experience," "memories of local food experience," and "memorable souvenir-shopping experience," were considered and integrated into the search. To ensure comprehensiveness, and consistent with previous review articles on tourism and hospitality (e.g., Le et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2017), five academic databases were identified for the literature search as follows: Science Direct (Elsevier), Emerald, Taylor & Francis, Sage, and Wiley Online Library.

To enable effective synthesis and to be consistent with systematic literature guidelines, we applied the following selection criteria: (1) articles must be written in English-language peer-reviewed journals focussing on hospitality, tourism, service, and leisure; (2) articles must be academic in nature; (3) articles must have at least one citation; (4) research articles must be related to our core topic; and (5) articles must have been published in 2012–2020. Additional filters were used for certain databases to limit the search within the social science discipline. We did not include conference papers, research notes, editorial notes, book chapters, book reviews,

or nonpublished studies. The exclusion of nonjournal publications is common in systematic reviews (see Kim & Cuskelly, 2017). For the third step, to identify relevant papers for this review, we drew on the preferred reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) protocol (Moher et al., 2009, 2015), originally developed for the health care context but is widely used in other fields, such as business and marketing (e.g., Rehman et al., 2020). This rigorous protocol provides a benchmark for the transparent reporting of systematic reviews and consists of four phases (see Figure 1): identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion.

An initial search of the five databases resulted in 162 records. After removing 11 duplicate references, the remaining 151 records were screened using the selection criteria. As a result, 55 nonfull-text records and five research notes were excluded. The screening process left 89 peer-reviewed articles. The full texts for these records were assessed for eligibility. At this stage, a further 35 studies were discarded, as they did not focus on memorable tourism experience explicitly and were outside the context of tourism or travel. Our final sample consisted of 56 peer-reviewed articles.

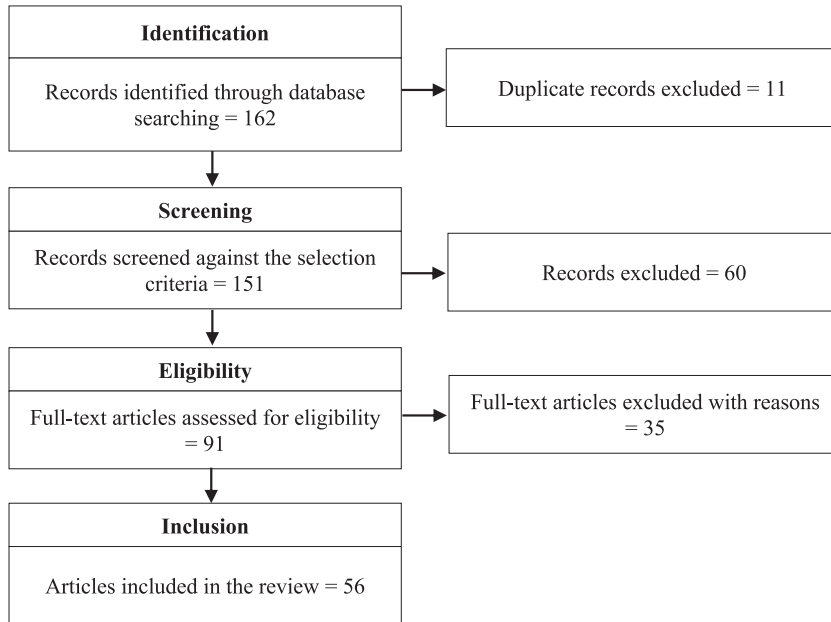
In the next step, we analyzed the 56 journal articles to assess the current state of knowledge about memorable tourism experience. We manually recorded details from each paper in a codebook (Littell et al., 2008) and included information such as standard bibliometric details, method used (conceptual, quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods), study context/settings, and theories employed. The final stage involved conducting a deductive content analysis of the articles following Seuring and Gold's (2012) methodological recommendations. Themes were generated using preexisting theory and frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Coding activity was conducted independently by the research team and any disagreements were resolved through discursive alignment of interpretations among the researchers (Durach et al., 2017; Seuring & Gold, 2012). Intercoder reliability was deemed acceptable and exceeded the conventional benchmark of 80% (Belur et al., 2021). Our inductive analysis identified three core themes grouped under antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes of memorable tourism experience. We drew on these core themes to conduct a meta-level synthesis in an organized framework and to formulate future research directions (Snyder, 2019).

## 4 | FINDINGS

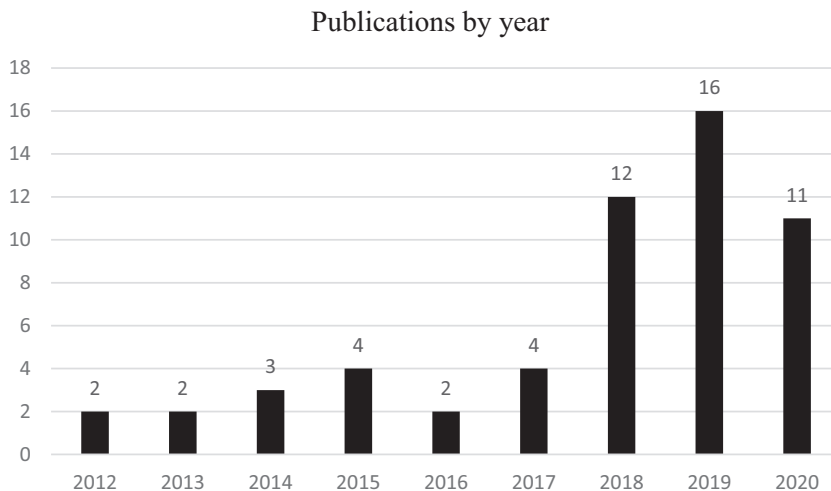
### 4.1 | Progression of research

The studies in our review were published between 2012 and 2020. The number of articles on memorable tourism experience has increased considerably since the first publication on the topic in 2012 (see Figure 2). From 2012 to 2017, research on memorable tourism experience remained in its infancy, with a notable growth in publications (39 articles) between 2018 and 2020.

The 56 peer-reviewed articles cover 30 journals spanning two major disciplinary backgrounds: tourism and hospitality (see Appendix 1). Research on memorable tourism experience remains



**FIGURE 1** Selection of articles based on PRISMA



**FIGURE 2** Publications on memorable tourism experience by year from 2012 to 2020

interdisciplinary, with articles appearing in marketing, management, leisure, and services journals. The articles were published predominantly in three journals: *Anatolia*, *Journal of Travel Research*, and *Tourism Management Perspectives*.

#### 4.2 | Methods used and time lapse in recalling a memorable tourism experience

Table 1 provides a summary of the methods used in memorable tourism experience research. Studies predominantly rely on quantitative methods ( $N = 35$ ), utilize surveys to collect data, and apply rigorous analytical techniques to analyze the data. Qualitative studies ( $N = 15$ ) mainly draw on interviews, netnography, and open-ended questionnaires. The application of mixed methods remains limited ( $N = 4$ ).

The studies were mainly cross-sectional ( $N = 54$ ), conducted at the postvisit stage ( $N = 35$ ) or on-site ( $N = 19$ ). Postvisit stage studies asked

respondents to recall their experience 5 years, 3 years, 2 years, 1 year, 6 months, or 3 months after the event. For studies involving on-site data collection, respondents were asked to complete a survey or were interviewed during their visit, after the trip or event, on the last day of the trip or while waiting to board their flight home. In some studies, participants were asked to recall their memorable tourism experience without a specific time reference. However, Sthapit et al. (2019) argue that a long-time lapse might impact the quality of responses and lead to the possible creation of false memories by respondents.

#### 4.3 | Study context

Empirical studies on memorable tourism experience extend to different settings (Table 2) and can be separated into four subcategories. In the first subcategory (30%), research was conducted in a general tourism context in which respondents were asked to recall their (recent)

**TABLE 1** Methods used

	Research methods	Number of publications	Percentage
1.	Quantitative		62
	Surveys (close-ended)	35	
2.	Qualitative		27
	Interviews	6	
	Netnography	3	
	Open-ended questionnaires	2	
	Narrative analysis	2	
	Content analysis	1	
	Ethnographic observation	1	
3	Mixed methods	4	7
4	Conceptual papers	2	4

**TABLE 2** Study context

	Settings	Subsettings	Number of studies
1	Tourism	General tourism	17
		Ethnic-minority tourism	2
		Heritage tourism	2
		Cultural tourism	2
		Nature-based tourism	1
		Smart tourism	1
		Educational holidays	1
		Coffee estate tourism	1
		Festival tourism	1
		Sports tourism	1
2	Hospitality	Food/culinary/gastronomy	13
		Wine tourism	1
		Hotels	5
		Airbnb	2
3	Other	Souvenirs	2
		Social enterprise	1
		Baby boomer travel market	1
		Exchange program experience	1
		Boat show experience	1
	Total		56

memorable tourism experience and respond to questions in a survey or during an interview. These studies were structured around specific tourism destinations. In the second subcategory (25%), the focus is on food and wine tourism. In the third subcategory (21%), articles centered on non-generic tourism contexts, such as ethnic minority, heritage, cultural tourism, nature-based, smart tourism, educational holidays, coffee estates, festivals, and sports tourism. Finally, in the fourth subcategory (12.5%), the studies concentrated on hotels and Airbnb.

#### 4.4 | Theories used to understand memorable tourism experience

Nineteen studies in our review linked memorable tourism experience with other theories (Table 3). Some papers examined memorable tourism experience through a positive psychology lens, drawing on various theories, such as savoring, theory of planned behavior, script theory, and place attachment from environmental psychology. Other studies considered memorable tourism experience through a sociological lens, using, for example, interaction, ritual theory, and affect control theory, including organizational management (stakeholder theory) and psychosocial perspectives, such as continuity theory. Still other studies drew on customer satisfaction theory, theory of tourism consumption system, means-end chain theory, and theory of multiple intelligence, including expectancy-disconfirmation theory. Finally, three articles mentioned top-down and bottom-up theories of well-being, and one study used multiple theories to understand memorable tourism experience (see for, e.g., Sthapit et al., 2021).

#### 4.5 | Conceptualization of memorable tourism experience

Most studies ( $N = 35$ ) conceptualized memorable experience by drawing on Kim et al.'s (2012) definition as discussed earlier. Other studies (see Table 4) adopt definitions by Otto and Ritchie (1996), Pine and Gilmore (1999), Tung and Ritchie (2011), and Kruger et al. (2017). Researchers tend to conceptualize memorable tourism experience mainly as a positive phenomenon and negative experiences remain largely unexplored, with only Sthapit et al. (2021) including both positive and negative experiences.

### 5 | AN ORGANIZING FRAMEWORK FOR MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE

According to Palmatier et al. (2018), a review paper must search for an effective way to group and present the body of knowledge "to guide the reader toward a better understanding of the focal phenomenon" (p. 4). Integrating extant knowledge into a broad and multilevel model offers a rich framework for identifying banovel research opportunities (Elsbach & van Knippenberg, 2020). Following Hulland and Houston (2020), we propose an organizing framework to

**TABLE 3** Underlying theories used to understand memorable tourism experience

Area of study	Underlying theories	Examples	No. of studies
1 Positive psychology	Savoring	Sthapit et al. (2019)	1
	Self-determination theory	Chen and Rahman (2018)	1
	Top-down and bottom-up theories of well-being	Sthapit et al. (2019; 2021), Vada et al. (2019b)	3
	Theory of planned behavior	Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017)	1
	Script theory	Bigné et al. (2020)	1
2 Environmental psychology	Place attachment	Vada et al. (2019a)	1
3 Sociology	Interaction ritual theory	Sterchele (2020)	1
	Affect control theory	Tsaur and Lo (2020)	1
4 Organization management	Stakeholder theory	Williams et al. (2019)	1
5 Consumer behavior	Means-end chain theory	Zhang et al. (2018)	1
	Expectancy-disconfirmation theory	Azis et al. (2020)	1
	Customer satisfaction theory	Adongo et al. (2015)	1
	Theory of tourism consumption system	Kim (2018)	1
	Theory of multiple intelligence	Bharwani and Jauhari (2013)	1
	Social identity theory	Fu et al. (2002)	1
	Extrinsic theory of motivation	Wong et al. (2020)	1
	Consumer culture theory	Zare (2019)	1

**TABLE 4** Conceptualization of memorable (tourism) experiences

Definition of memorable (tourism) experience	Articles in our review referencing these definitions
1 Otto and Ritchie (1996) One that is constructed from selective experiences based on tourists' assessments of their trips.	1
2 Pine and Gilmore (1999) One that incorporates educational, esthetic, escapist, and entertainment experiences	6
3 Tung and Ritchie (2011) One that occurs when individuals feel there is some emotional, intellectual, physical, and/or spiritual stimulation that absorbs them so they become closer and more attracted to the atmosphere or setting, such as a resort or hotel.	1
4 Kruger et al. (2017) One that visitors not only remember but also treasure long after the trip is over; an experience that has certain mental, spiritual, and physiological outcomes.	2
5 Kim et al. (2012) A tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred. Experiences derived from those activities involved hedonism, refreshment, social interaction, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty.	35
6 Sthapit et al. (2021) A recollection of an on-site experience that is both positive and negative.	1



guide the integration of themes (antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes) identified deductively.

### 5.1 | Antecedents of memorable tourism experience

Table 5 provides a summary of the antecedents of memorable tourism experience. Drawing on Kim and Jang (2016), these antecedents can be grouped into internal and external factors that influence tourists' retrieval of memorable tourism experiences. According to Ryan (2002), internal factors include tourists' motives, past experience, knowledge of the destination, and individual personalities, whereas external factors comprise the induced marketing images relating to the destination, travel activities, patterns of change at the place, and the people with whom the destination is shared.

### 5.2 | Dimensions of memorable tourism experience

Some studies ( $N=8$ ) applied Kim et al.'s (2012) scale dimensions to understand tourism memorable experiences in a variety of settings, such as local cuisine (Adongo et al., 2015), reuse heritage sites (Lee, 2015), and coffee estates (Wang et al., 2019). Our review further identifies studies that have developed new scales to capture, for example, memorable dining experiences (Cao et al., 2019), destination attributes associated with memorable experiences (Kim, 2014), and memorable dining experiences in fine dining restaurants (Tsaor and Lo, 2020).

Recent studies have highlighted the need to identify other relevant context-specific dimensions that constitute memorable tourism experiences (e.g., Sthapit et al., 2019; Stone et al., 2019). The original seven factors as per Kim et al. (2012) are mainly relevant in the generic tourism context (see Table 6) and fail to be replicated in other settings, such as food travel experiences. Novelty, characterized as new and unfamiliar experiences (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015), was identified as an important dimension in 13 studies. Overall, the findings show that a memorable tourism experience comprises a mix of generic and contextual dimensions (see Figure 4).

### 5.3 | Attributes facilitating the formation of memorable tourism experience

From our review, no consensus exists in terms of the attributes contributing to the formation of memorable tourism experiences (see Table 7). For example, Kim (2014) identified 10 destination attributes that facilitate the formation of memorable tourism experiences: local culture, variety of activities, hospitality, infrastructure, environment management, accessibility, quality of service, physiography, place attachment, and superstructure. Other studies uncovered a wide range of attributes (e.g., service behavior, atmosphere) across a variety of settings (e.g., hotels, restaurants), which make a tourism experience memorable. However, Stone et al. (2018) show that multiple attributes (such as food or drink consumed, location/setting, companions, occasion, and touristic elements) combine to create memorable tourism experience.

### 5.4 | Memorable tourism experience as a mediator, independent variable, and dependent variable

Memorable tourism experience was employed as a mediator in eight studies. For example, Huang et al. (2019) examined the association between perceived value, memorable tourism experience, and behavioral intentions. Perceived value influences behavioral intentions via the mediating effect of memorable tourism experience. In another eight studies, memorable tourism experience was modeled as an independent variable. In three studies, memorable tourism experience was used as a dependent variable (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013; Sipe & Testa, 2018; Taheri et al., 2020).

### 5.5 | Outcomes of memorable tourism experience

The studies in this review suggest a positive relationship between memorable tourism experience and various outcome variables such as behavioral intention, revisit intention, and place attachment (see Table 8).

**TABLE 5** Summary of the antecedents of memorable tourism experience studied

Internal	External
Personal emotion, knowledge learning (Lee, 2015)	Culinary attraction and culinary inheritance (Lee, 2015)
Emotions (fear, happiness, disgust, surprise, and sadness; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016)	Visitor engagement, cultural contrast (Chen & Rahman, 2018)
Personal development, learning (Sie et al., 2018)	Authenticity of souvenirs, cocreation of souvenir shopping experience (Sthapit, Coudounaris & Björk, 2018)
Souvenir shopping satisfaction (Sthapit, Coudounaris, & Björk, 2018)	Country image, destination image (Zhang et al., 2018)
Perceived value (Huang et al., 2019)	Servicescape, experience cocreation (Sthapit et al., 2019)
Novelty-seeking, experience intensification, and choice overload (Sthapit et al., 2019)	Object-based authenticity (Taheri et al., 2020)
Perceived trust, sincerity, and existential authenticity (Taheri et al., 2020)	Smart tourism technologies (Azis et al., 2020)
Hedonic goals, eudaimonic goals (Vada et al., 2019b)	Value proposition, value constellation, social and economic profit equation (Castellani et al., 2020)
Involvement (Di-Clemente et al., 2020)	



TABLE 6 Summary of memorable tourism experience dimensions studied

Selected studies	Setting	Original generic dimensions (Kim et al., 2012)										Context-specific dimensions
		H	N	LC	R	M	I	K				
1 Kim (2013)	Tourism experience in general	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
2 Kim and Ritchie (2014)	Tourism experience in general	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
3 Adongo et al. (2015)	Local food	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Adverse experiences
4 Lee (2015)	Restaurant heritage site	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
5 Saayman and van der Merwe (2015)	Wine tasting	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Attributes of the winery, themes and activities, education
6 Tsai (2016)	Culinary tourism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
7 Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017)	Tourism experience in general	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
8 Coelho et al. (2018)	Tourism experience in general	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Ambience, socialization, and emotion and reflection
9 Sie et al. (2018)	Educational tour packages	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Rejuvenation, excitement, novelty, and local culture
10 Buehring and O'Mahony (2019)	Hotels	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Services, atmosphere, culture, technology, and sensory
11 Cao et al. (2019)	Full-service restaurants	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Sensory, affect, behavioral, social, and intellectual
12 Kim and Chen (2019)	Tourism experience in general	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Social interaction, destination enthusiasm, and learning
13 Wang et al. (2019)	Coffee estate tourism	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	None
14 Wei et al. (2019)	Tourism experience in general	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	Social interaction, serendipity
15 Wong et al., (2019, 2020)	Ethnic minority tourism	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Scenery, ethnic interaction, ethnic entertainment
16 Bigné et al. (2020)	Tourism experience (memorable and ordinary)	✓	✓	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Serendipity
17 Castellani et al. (2020)	Tourism social enterprises	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Surprise, servicescape
18 Fu et al. (2021)	Boat show	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	Exhibition activity, exhibition management, quality of service and physiography

Abbreviations: H, hedonism; I, involvement; K, knowledge; LC, local culture; M, meaningfulness; N, novelty; R, refreshment.

**TABLE 7** Summary of attributes that facilitate memorable tourism experience formation

Selected studies	Setting	Attributes identified
1 Kim (2014)	Tourism experience in general	Infrastructure, accessibility, local culture/history, physiography, activities and events, destination management, quality of service, hospitality, place attachment, and superstructure
2 Obonyo et al. (2014)	Hotels	Food preparation process, food preparation benefit, and food preparation input
3 Chandralal, Rindfleish, and Valenzuela (2015)	Tourism experience in general	Local people, life and culture, personally significant experiences, shared experiences, perceived novelty, perceived serendipity, professional guides, tour operator services, and affective emotions
4 Sthapit (2017)	Local food	Local specialities and food attributes (taste), authenticity, novelty, togetherness and social interaction, hospitality and servicescape (including food souvenirs)
5 Sthapit (2018a, 2018b)	Hotels	Comfortable beds, hotel staff with friendly attitudes, quality breakfasts (with plenty of choices) and good restaurant service at the hotel
6 Stone et al. (2018)	Food tourism	Food or drink consumed, location/setting, companions, occasion, and touristic elements
7 Mgxekwa et al. (2019)	Cultural heritage tourism	Technology, service quality, amenities, accessibility, modern facilities, interpretation, and convenience
8 Sthapit and Björk (2019)	Souvenirs	Uniqueness, usability, and functionality
9 Williams et al. (2019)	Food tourism	Deliberate and incidental gastro-tourists, travel stages, foodie risk-taking, interdependent cocreated tourist-host relationships, authenticity, sociability, and emotions
10 Zare (2019)	Iranian culture and tourism experience in general	Togetherness, independence and control, spontaneity and flexibility, and distinctiveness
11 Seyfi et al. (2020)	Cultural tourism	Prior perceived significance of the experience, authenticity, engagement, cultural exchange, culinary attraction, and quality of service
12 Sthapit et al. (2021)	Airbnb	Poor room conditions, negative host behavior, and poor customer service
13 Tsaur and Lo (2020)	Restaurant	Excellent service behavior, high-quality cuisine, amazing physical environment and unique atmosphere, and high perceived value

## 6 | AGENDA FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, we systematically reviewed and synthesized existing research on memorable tourism experience. The analysis of 56 papers in our sample identified core themes and was summarized in an organizing framework (Figure 3). Our review reveals that research on memorable tourism experience is on the rise but remains fragmented and several gaps exist. In Table 9, we present a set of future research areas to advance knowledge.

### 6.1 | Caution when using the memorable tourism experience scale

Our review shows the multifaceted nature of memorable tourism experience and how study settings dictate construct measurement. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, many articles uncovered new contextual dimensions, such as quality of service, serendipity, and ambience. A few studies have employed the memorable tourism experience scale dimensions as proposed by

Kim et al. (2012) in cross-cultural settings. However, the original seven dimensions (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, and knowledge) were not generalizable as researchers were unable to replicate the scale. Therefore, future studies should be cautious when applying Kim et al.'s (2012) measurement. Method applied informs thinking, theory development, and theory testing (Gigerenzer, 1991; Sutton & Staw, 1995). Correct measures have important implications for understanding memorable tourism experiences. Additional research is needed to refine the psychometric properties of the memorable tourism experience scale using, for example, item response theory (see Liu et al. [2022] for an application of item response theory to validate an existing scale).

### 6.2 | A need for cross-cultural studies

Research on memorable tourism experience has a geographical bias. Many studies in this review focus on the experiences of non-Western tourists, particularly Chinese. Research on developing and emerging nations that have experienced an increase in international tourism

**TABLE 8** Summary of the outcomes of memorable tourism experience

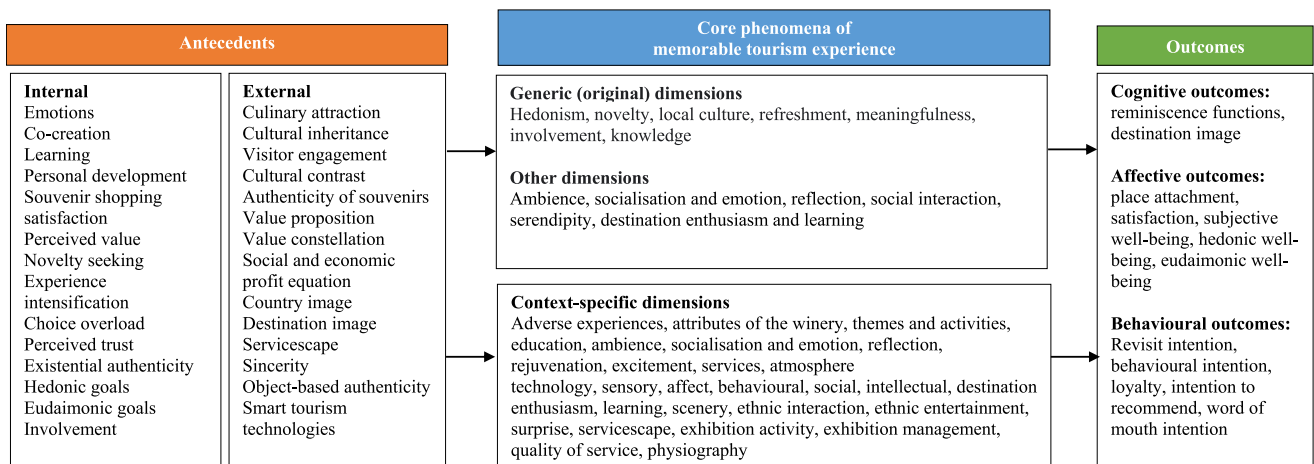
Outcomes	Selected studies
1 Behavioral intention	Kim and Ritchie (2014); Tsai (2016); Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017); Sthapit et al. (2017); Anton et al. (2019); Sthapit et al. (2019); Vada et al. (2019b); Di-Clemente et al. (2020)
2 Revisit intention	Chen and Rahman (2018); Kim (2018); Zhang et al. (2018); Wong et al. (2019); Cho et al. (2020)
3 Place attachment	Sthapit, Coudounaris & Björk (2017, 2018); Tsai (2016); Vada et al. (2019a)
4 Satisfaction	Sie et al. (2018); Azis et al. (2020); Cho et al. (2020)
5 Hedonic well-being	Sthapit et al. (2019); Vada et al. (2019a, 2019b)
6 Loyalty	Azis et al. (2020); Fu et al. (2021)
7 Intention to recommend	Adongo et al. (2015); Chen and Rahman (2018)
8 Eudaimonic well-being	Vada et al. (2019a, 2019b)
9 Subjective well-being	Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018)
10 Word-of-mouth	Wong et al. (2019)
11 Destination image	Kim (2018)
12 Word-of-mouth intention	Kim (2018)
13 Reminiscence functions	Kim and Chen (2019)

**Context**

**Tourism:** general tourism, ethnic-minority tourism, heritage tourism, cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, smart tourism, educational holidays, coffee estate, festival and sports tourism

**Hospitality:** food/culinary/gastronomy, wine tourism, hotels, Airbnb

**Other:** souvenirs, social enterprise, baby boomer travel market, exchange programme experience, boat show

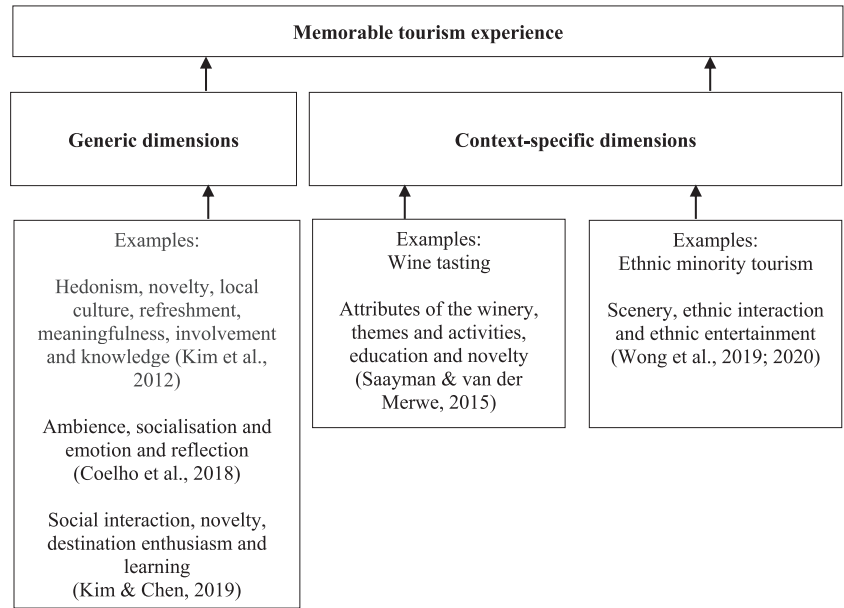


**FIGURE 3** An organizing framework for memorable tourism experience

remains scant. Cross-cultural research on tourist memory formation and sharing processes would enhance knowledge and identify relevant contextual factors. Existing research has also failed to compare memorable tourism experience across regions/countries. Using the memorable tourism experiences scale, Kim (2013) provided a comparative study of American and Taiwanese college students but

did not account for measurement invariance, that is, testing whether the scale functions in the same way across multiple contexts and groups. The lack of attention to measurement invariance may lead to misleading conclusions (Brush & Soutar, 2022; Salzberger et al., 2014). To aid theory development, future studies should study invariance across groups (e.g., tourists from various countries) in

**FIGURE 4** Memorable tourism experience: Generic and context-specific dimensions



terms of their levels and intensity of memorable experiences (for recent guidelines on and application of measurement invariance, see Brush & Soutar, 2022; Muthén & Asparouhov, 2018).

### 6.3 | Positive and negative dimensions in conceptualizing memorable tourism experience

The extant literature mainly draws heavily on the conceptualization by Kim et al. (2012), with a preoccupation with positive memorable tourism experiences (Adongo et al., 2015). In our review, except for Sthapit et al. (2021), researchers fail to consider negative tourism experiences. However, both positive and negative events can be remembered in rich detail (Kensinger & Schacter, 2006). Memory researchers have argued that negative valence, compared with positive valence, can lead to the creation of a stronger memory—a phenomenon known as negativity bias (Baumeister et al., 2001; Ito et al., 1998). Recognizing the lack of research and a valid measurement, Kim (2022) recently developed a six-dimensional scale to capture destination attributes associated with negative memorable tourism experiences. Drawing on existing conceptualizations and measurements, future studies should explore both positive and negative facets of memorable tourism experiences to provide a holistic understanding of the construct. Researchers can, for example, try to combine the scales of Kim (2014) and Kim (2022) to capture destination attributes linked to positive and negative memorable tourism experiences.

### 6.4 | Overcoming the limitations of self-report measures

Memorable tourism experience research has been highly positivist. Existing studies overwhelmingly use self-report surveys to measure

tourists' memorable tourism experiences. Self-report measurement is simple and inexpensive but relies on retrospective evaluation. Many studies in our review were cross-sectional, conducted at the postvisit stage. A major limitation of these studies is that retrospective reports are vulnerable to memory reconstruction and subject to recall bias (Chang et al., 2014) as recall ability declines over time (Weaver & Schwarz, 2008). Delays between experiencing and reporting can produce random and systematic retrospective biases (Tulving & Craik, 2000). Personal or autobiographical memory—the reconstruction of one's own past—is inherently selective and influenced by multiple factors, including situational demands, personal or social motivations, and the audience with whom we share memories (Freeman, 2010; Sutton et al., 2010). Future studies should design surveys to facilitate tourists' accurate recall of their experiences by providing retrieval cues (e.g., asking questions such as “Who was with you at that time?” and “What was the main purpose of your travel/trip?”). In addition, to mitigate problems associated with retrospective recall, researchers should aim to collect data in situ throughout the tourist journey using techniques such as experience the sampling method, day reconstruction method, and diary method (see Hosany et al., 2021).

### 6.5 | Engaging in mixed methods research

Hypothetico-deductive approaches dominate memorable tourism experience research. There are calls for more integrative, nonlinear, and qualitative approaches to address the multifaceted and idiosyncratic aspects of tourism (e.g., Stumpf et al., 2016). In general, a relatively small proportion of empirical studies in tourism and hospitality adopt mixed methods (Truong et al., 2020). One of the most reliable functions of mixed methods is the notion that the approach can answer a broader range of research questions by ensuring insights and understanding that would otherwise be missed

TABLE 9 Future research areas

	Thematic areas	Research gaps	Research questions
1	Caution when using the memorable tourism experience scale	Many researchers have been unable to replicate the original memorable tourism experience scale in other contexts.	<p>What memorable tourism experience dimensions are generic and can be considered universal?</p> <p>How can the psychometric properties of the memorable tourism experience scale be refined?</p>
2	Need for cross-cultural studies	Research into memorable tourism experiences has a geographical bias and limited studies exist on Western tourists.	<p>Does culture contribute to the formation of memorable tourism experiences? Are there differences between, for example, Western versus non-Western tourists?</p> <p>What are the cognitive evaluative processes that tourists of different nationalities experience when they differentiate, select, and remember only one experience as the most memorable among a potential wealth of experiences? In what ways are the processes similar or different between nationalities?</p>
3	Positive and negative dimensions in conceptualizing memorable tourism experience	Most existing studies are heavily reliant on the conceptualization of Kim et al. (2012) and fail to integrate both positive and negative dimensions of memorable tourism experiences.	<p>What role do negative experiences play in developing a memorable tourism experience?</p> <p>Is there a propensity to recollect positive versus negative memorable tourism experiences? Is the intensity of one stronger than the other?</p> <p>Are positive experiences more memorable than negative ones?</p> <p>How does a negative memorable tourism experience add to the phenomenon of memory?</p> <p>What are the antecedents and outcomes of a negative memorable tourism experience?</p> <p>How should a memorable tourism experience be defined?</p> <p>How do positive and negative on-site experiences influence one another in the formation of a memorable tourism experience?</p>
4	Overcoming limitations of self-report measures	Self-report surveys are overwhelmingly used to measure tourists' recollection on memorable experiences.	<p>How can memorable tourism experiences be measured more effectively?</p> <p>Can in situ studies help to avoid false memory recollection among tourists?</p> <p>How can the incongruence between remembered and on-site experiences be addressed?</p>
5	Engaging in mixed-methods research	Predominance of the use of quantitative methods in memorable tourism experience studies	<p>When gathering posttrip recollections of tourism experiences, does the use of mixed methods with specific reference periods help better capture such experiences?</p> <p>Which quantitative and qualitative methods help in gathering more accurate accounts of memorable tourism experiences?</p> <p>What other research methods can help to better understand memorable tourism experience formation?</p> <p>How can multiple methods be combined to understand memorable tourism experience?</p> <p>Do new scale developments in other tourism settings help establish a better understanding of memorable tourism experience formation?</p>

TABLE 9 (Continued)

	Thematic areas	Research gaps	Research questions
6	Integrating suppliers' perspectives	Little focus and scholarly attention exist on how service providers facilitate memorable tourism experience.	<p>How can service providers and tourists cocreate memorable experience? What are the dimensions of a memorable tourism experience from service providers' perspectives?</p> <p>How can service providers help overcome negative tourism memorable experience formation?</p> <p>What are the gaps between tourist perceptions and service providers' notions of memorable tourism experience?</p>
7	Combining theories, concepts, and disciplines	Existing studies lack solid theoretical underpinnings.	<p>What theories from other literature/disciplines can be used to better explain memorable tourism experience?</p> <p>Do approaches to tourist experiences in social anthropology provide a better understanding of memorable tourism experience formation?</p>

when a single method is used (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Researchers have successfully employed mixed methods to understand consumers' brand memories (e.g., Herz & Brunk, 2017). Similarly, future studies can employ mixed method designs to enhance the strength and persuasiveness of results on memorable tourism experience. Tourism researchers can, for example, combine common posttravel surveys with qualitative approaches, such as grounded theory. A sound application of grounded theory methodology, aligned with a well-executed research design, could offer novel theoretical insights (Stumpf et al., 2016).

## 6.6 | Integrating suppliers' perspectives

Our review reveals that interest in exploring memorable tourism experience remains predominantly tourist centric. A tourist-dominated perspective neglects an understanding of the role of tourism providers (Chirakranont & Sakdiyakorn, 2022). From a supply perspective, tourism providers are facilitators of memorable experiences (Ross et al., 2017), as well as important stakeholders who play a crucial role in the development and success of a destination. Therefore, investigations into service providers role in creating memorable tourism experiences will provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. Future research should identify gaps between tourist perceptions and providers' notions of memorable tourism experience. Such knowledge is vital as it will allow tourism providers to offer special, cherished and truly memorable experiences for tourists. In addition, as destinations seek to offer unique and memorable experiences, co-creation between tourists and suppliers is key to improving competitive performance (Buonincontri et al., 2017; Giuseppe et al., 2022). Previous research shows that co-created experiences positively influence tourists' perceived value, willingness to spend more money, happiness, and satisfaction (e.g., Buonincontri et al., 2017; Prebensen & Xie, 2017). Additional research should, therefore, examine the role of service providers in cocreating memorable tourism experience.

## 6.7 | Combining theories, concepts, and disciplines

A lack of conceptual engagement was observed across the studies in our review. Our analysis identified only 19 articles linking memorable tourism experience with theories from disciplines such as positive psychology, environmental psychology, and social psychology. An exception to this trend is Sthapit et al. (2021), who used multiple theories to explain memorable tourism experience. Management research (e.g., Okhuysen & Bonardi, 2011) has called for combining multiple theoretical lenses to develop new explanations of a phenomenon. In the context of memorable tourism experiences, this gap can be addressed, for example, by merging existing frameworks to better understand the antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes. Models derived by combining theories have greater explanatory power in explaining the outcome variables (Kim et al., 2018). In



addition, most tourism studies fail to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines (for an example of combining theories, concepts and disciplines, see Hosany et al., 2020). To advance knowledge, future works would benefit from linking memorable tourism experience with other areas of research, such as the anthropology of food and memory (e.g., Holtzman, 2006; Sutton, 2001).

## 7 | CONCLUSION

This study mapped the current scholarship on memorable tourism experience and synthesized 56 peer-reviewed articles through a SLR. Our findings indicate that research into memorable tourism experience has a geographical bias, remains heavily reliant upon the conceptualization of Kim et al. (2012), neglects negative experiences, mainly employs quantitative methods with an overwhelming preference for self-report surveys and adopts a tourist-centric approach while failing to integrate suppliers' perspectives. Overall, this study contributes to a better understanding of the antecedents, dimensions, and outcomes of memorable tourism experience.

### DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data sharing is not applicable to this article (systematic literature review), as no data sets were generated or analyzed during the current study.

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## APPENDIX A

See Table A1.

**TABLE A** Publications by journal from 2012 to 2020

Journal	No. of articles	Frequency (%)
Tourism	31	55.4
1 <i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	5	
2 <i>Journal of Travel Research</i>	5	
3 <i>Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism</i>	3	
4 <i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	2	
5 <i>Tourism Review</i>	2	
6 <i>Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research</i>	2	
7 <i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>	2	
8 <i>Journal of China Tourism Research</i>	2	
9 <i>Journal of Heritage Tourism</i>	2	
10 <i>Tourism Management</i>	1	
11 <i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	1	
12 <i>Journal of Travel &amp; Tourism Marketing</i>	1	
13 <i>International Journal of Tourism Sciences</i>	1	
14 <i>Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change</i>	1	
15 <i>Journal of Sport &amp; Tourism</i>	1	
Hospitality	6	11
1 <i>Journal of Hospitality Marketing &amp; Management</i>	4	
2 <i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	1	
3 <i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	1	
Tourism and hospitality	12	21
1 <i>Anatolia</i>	5	
2 <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology</i>	2	
3 <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	2	
4 <i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights</i>	1	
5 <i>International Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Administration</i>	1	
6 <i>Journal of Hospitality &amp; Tourism Research</i>	1	
Marketing and management	3	5.4
1 <i>Journal of Destination Marketing &amp; Management</i>	1	

**TABLE A** (Continued)

Journal	No. of articles	Frequency (%)
2 <i>The TQM Journal</i>	1	
3 <i>Psychology &amp; Marketing</i>	1	
Leisure	1	1.8
1 <i>Leisure Studies</i>	1	
Services	3	5.4
1 <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i>	2	
2 <i>The Service Industries Journal</i>	1	
Total	56	100

**APPENDIX B: LIST OF PAPERS INCLUDED IN THIS REVIEW**

- Adongo, C. A., Anuga, S. W., & Dayour, F. (2015). Will they tell others to taste? International tourists' experience of Ghanaian cuisines. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 15 (July), 57–64.
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