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The mediating role of experience quality on authenticity and satisfaction in the context of cultural-heritage tourism

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the mediating role of experience quality between the dimensions of authenticity and satisfaction in the context of cultural-heritage tourism. This paper investigates the direct influences of these variables on satisfaction and the indirect influences of two dimensions of authenticity on satisfaction through quality of experience. This study is a pioneer in analysing the influence of each of the two dimensions of authenticity on satisfaction via quality of experience in a cultural-heritage context. A questionnaire survey administered to 205 visitors in the City of York, United Kingdom, was analysed using the structural equation modelling technique. The findings confirmed the direct and indirect influence of the variable authenticity in its double perspective (objective and existential authenticity) on satisfaction. The findings also identified the mediating role of

quality of experience on authenticity and satisfaction. It is therefore recommended that cultural tourism attractions should be offered that provide visitors with a high quality authentic and personal experience in order to enhance visitor satisfaction.

Key Words

cultural tourism, satisfaction, authenticity, experience quality, structural equation model.

Introduction

The tourism industry has experienced significant growth which is predicted to be sustained. According to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) (2015), the contribution of tourism to the world GDP was 9.5% in 2014 and is expected to exceed 10.5% by 2024. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) (2016), the arrival of international tourists is expected to grow by 3.3% per year between 2010 and 2030, to reach 1.8 billion by 2030. In 2016, there were 37.6 million inbound visits to the UK, an increase of 4.1% compared with 2015. These figures underscore the importance of tourism activity within the international economy. Public and private agents involved in the management of tourist destinations are showing a growing interest in the study of variables that can improve the satisfaction and fidelity of tourists. More specifically, heritage tourism has become popular with an increasing number of tourists seeking a meaningful experience and a relationship with the past (Watson & Waterton, 2011). In addition, increasing academic interest in heritage tourism has resulted in heritage being described as a ‘contemporary epidemic’ (Urry, 2002, p. 5).

The concept of authenticity is a relevant explanatory variable in the formation of tourist satisfaction and loyalty, in general, and with cultural motivation, in particular (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Shen, Guo and Wu, 2012, Casteran and Roeder, 2013; Hede, Garma, Josiassen, and Thyne, 2014, Lee, Phau, Hughes, Li and Quintal, 2016). Some of these studies consider the variable authenticity as a onedimensional construct, while others consider it in its dual dimension: objective and existential (Kolar & Zabakar, 2010; Shen et al., 2012). This research considers authenticity in its double dimension as this results in a more informed understanding of the influence of authenticity and satisfaction.

A number of authors have found that the quality of experience variable is important in influencing tourist satisfaction and loyalty (Chen & Chen, 2010; Jin, Lee, & Lee, 2015; Kim, Ritchie, & Tung, 2010; Tian Cole & Scott, 2004, 2013). Otto and Ritchie (1995) define the quality of the experience as the affective component of the experience lived by a tourist in the visited destination. The cognitive–affective approach to satisfaction, mostly adopted in more recent research, has favoured the study and use of this variable. Thereby, Kao, Huang, and Wu (2008) examined the mediating role of experience quality in a model of tourist experiences between performance quality and satisfaction. Altunel and Erkut (2015) analyse the mediation effect of experience quality and satisfaction on the relationship between involvement and recommendation intention. This paper explores the possible mediating role of the quality of experience on the relationship that unites the variables authenticity and satisfaction.

Regarding the authenticity variable, Li, Shen, and Wen (2016) analysed the relationship between this variable and the quality of experience in the context of cultural tourism. This study considered the authenticity variable as a one-dimensional construct. There is, however, limited empirical research which has analysed the possible influence or relationship of authenticity in its double dimension on the variable experience quality in the context of cultural-heritage tourism. In accordance with this, the following question is proposed: Do each of the two dimensions of the authenticity variable exert a certain direct influence on the variables of experience quality? In addition, this paper will explore if the data confirms the results obtained in previous research and verify if the quality of experience exerts a positive or direct influence on satisfaction. In this regard, the paper seeks to understand if experience quality exerts a mediating effect on the influence that each of the two dimensions of authenticity can have on satisfaction.

Theoretical Foundations, Research Model and Hypotheses

Authenticity and Satisfaction

Recent studies have identified the importance of authenticity in the formation of the satisfaction of cultural tourists (Apostolokis, 2003, Zhou, Zhang and Edelheim, 2013; Hede, Garma, Josiassen, and Thyne, 2014; Lee, Phau, Hughes, Li and Quintal, 2016).

According to Trilling (1972), the original use of this concept emerged in museum studies, where experts were interested in differentiating authentic works of art from those

that looked to be unauthentic, especially with regards to economic valuation. This use of the term was extended to tourism, particularly cultural tourism, and the valuation of objects related to this activity. There is no consensus regarding the definition of the term authenticity. According to MacCannell, the authenticity of a destination can be defined as a global assessment of 'genuineness of a tourist destination' (1973, p. 590). Wang (1999) and Reisinger and Steiner (2005) conducted a comprehensive review of the different approaches and interpretations of the concept and identified that most research (Kolar & Zabakar, 2010; Lee et al., 2016; Shen et al., 2012) identified two dimensions within this variable: the object-based and the existential. Objective authenticity is an inherent feature of objects and can be interpreted as the authenticity of objects that are original or as the authenticity projected onto objects by tourists (Reisinger & Steiner, 2005; Wang, 1999). Existential authenticity refers to a potential state of personal connection with destiny driven by participation in activities (Reisinger & Steiner, 2005; Steiner & Reisinger, 2005; Wang, 1999).

The variable satisfaction has been widely studied in the field of marketing in general and tourism in particular. There is no single definition of this concept unanimously accepted. However, a number of elements common to most of the contributions can be identified. First, satisfaction is a cognitive or emotional response; second, the response is related to an aspect or specific subject (expectations, product, consumer experience) and generally involves the comparison of a perception with a previously established standard; and third, satisfaction is the response at a time or during a certain time (after consumption, after a choice, during or after an experience…). Oliver (1997, p. 13) defined satisfaction as 'the consumers' fulfilment response. It is a judgment on the product or service feature, or the product or the service itself, concerning the provision of a pleasurable level of consumption-related fulfilment, including levels of under- or over-fulfilment'. In the field of tourism, the most recent definitions consider satisfaction as an evaluation judgment in which cognitive and affective aspects are combined (Bigné, Andreu, & Gnoth, 2005; Chen & Chen, 2010; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Lee et al., 2016; Del Bosque & San Martín, 2008; Yüksel, Yüksel, & Bilim, 2010). According to Del Bosque and San Martín (2008), satisfaction is an individual's cognitive–affective state derived from a tourist experience. It is this definition that is adopted in this study.

The causal relationship between perception of authenticity and satisfaction has been examined by a number of authors (Lee et al., 2016; Lu, Chi, & Liu, 2015; Nguyen & Cheung, 2016). Lu et al. (2015) and Nguyen and Cheung (2016) analyse the direct influence of

authenticity as a single variable on the satisfaction of cultural tourists, whilst Lee et al. (2016) consider the two dimensions of the authenticity variable, objective-and-existential, and analyse the influence of each on satisfaction. The first and the third of these papers found that the relationship between authenticity and satisfaction was not significant. However, Nguyen and Cheung (2016) identified that a high perception of authenticity also implies a high level of satisfaction in heritage tourism. It is suggested, therefore, that the consideration of the double dimension of authenticity is more enriching and can provide further clarity and information on the characteristics of the relationships explored in this study. This research, therefore, considers the two dimensions of the authenticity variable, objective-and-existential, and analyses the influence of each on the satisfaction of cultural tourists. To verify if our data confirms the results obtained by the research mentioned above, and to deepen the knowledge of these relationships, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: *The higher the objective authenticity that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of satisfaction they have. (a>0)*

H2: *The higher the existencial authenticity that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of satisfaction they have. (b>0)*

Kolar and Zabakar (2010) and Shen et al. (2012) found that the objective dimension of authenticity positively influences its existential dimension. In the context of cultural tourism, it is reasonable to suggest that a high perception of objective authenticity, a positive evaluation of architecture, materials, presentation of resources, activities, all positively influences the perception of the existential authenticity, and it can favour the feeling of connection and the immersion of the tourists in the local culture. To verify this, and to explore if the findings of this research corroborate with the results obtained by Kolar and Zabakar (2010) and Shen et al. (2012), the contrast hypothesis of the model is as follows:

H3: *The higher the objective authenticity that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of existencial authenticity they experience. (c>0)*

Authenticity and Experience Quality

In the early 1980s, within the field of consumer satisfaction studies, the experimental approach focused on the individual's affective response following the act of consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Within this approach, Otto and Ritchie (1995; 1996) introduced the concept of quality of experience and applied this concept to leisure and tourism services. Otto stated that: "*The affective component of the service experience has been shown to comprise the subjective, emotional and highly personal responses to various aspects of service delivery which lead to satisfaction with the service overall*" (1996, p.169). Chang and Horng (2010, p.2403) defined the quality of experience as: "*a representation how customers emotionally evaluate their experiences as they participate in consumption activities, others customers, cuostomers' companions, and other elements*".

Different scales have been proposed to measure the quality of the experience. Otto and Ritchie's scale (1996) is composed of four dimensions: hedonic, peace of mind, involvement and recognition. Kao, Huang and Wu's scale (2008) also identified four dimensions which consist of immersion, surprise, participation and fun. Chang and Horng (2010) consider a scale with five dimensions, including physical surroundings, service providers, other customer, customer's companions and customers themselves.

The relationship between authenticity and the quality of experience variables has thus far not been fully explored. Hang's (2010) study identified the existence of a positive linear correlation between both variables but does not raise the contrast of the hypothesis concerning the existence of such a relationship. Li et al. (2016) analyse the aforementioned relationship in the context of cultural tourism. This research considerd authenticity as a one-dimensional construct and their results indicated the existence of a positive influence of authenticity on the quality of the experience. This work considers the two dimensions of authenticity and it is suggested that each of these two dimensions, objective and existential, can influence the perception of the quality of the experience by tourists in the context of cultural tourism. Consequently, hypotheses four and five are identified as follows:

H4: *The higher the objective authenticity that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of experience quality they have. (d>0)*

H5: *The higher the existencial authenticity that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of experience quality they have. (e>0)*

Experience Quality and Satisfaction

The influence of experience quality on the satisfaction of cultural-heritage tourists has been extensively researched (Chen and Chen, 2010, Li, Shen and Wen, 2016, Nguyen and Cheung, Lee et al., 2016). In all of these studies, it has been shown that the quality of the experience exerts a positive or direct influence on the satisfaction of tourists. To verify if the data from this study supports the results obtained in these previous studies, the following hypothesis six is proposed:

H6: *The higher the experience quality that the heritage tourists perceive, the higher the level of satisfaction they have. (f>0)*

The proposed model is shown in Figure 1.

[Insert figure 1]

Mediating efects

A deeper study of the relationships raised in the model leads to a consideration of the significance of the indirect effects that may arise. This research will, therefore, seek to understand if each of the two dimensions of authenticity have an influence on satisfaction through the quality of experience. To answer these questions, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H7: *Via experience quality, the objective authenticity positively influences satisfaction (g=d*f>0*)

H8: *Via existential authenticity and via experience quality, the objective authenticity positively influences satisfaction (h=c*e*f>0)*

H9: *Via experience quality, the existential authenticity positively influences satisfaction (i=e*f>0)*

Method

Sample and Data Collection

The research population of this study is visitors aged eighteen years or older who visited the city of York. Data collection was conducted in November 2016 in the Visit York Visitor Information Centre (VIC) and in the surroundings of York Minster and the York Castle Museum, where 218 completed questionnaires were obtained. After excluding 13 cases due to excessive missing data and when a response pattern was observed (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2014), 205 questionnaires (94.04%) were retained as valid for the empirical analysis. According to Green (1991, p. 503), for an 80% confidence level and a 5% error level for a maximum of three predictors (which in our model feature the satisfaction variable), the minimum sample size required for the measurement of the medium-sized effects between the variables would be 76 surveys. Table 1 shows the profile of the respondents.

Measures

The questionnaire's design-base is a literature review of cultural tourism. The questionnaire was translated into Spanish, English, French, German and Mandarin in order to include tourists of many different nationalities. The first part included questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, place of origin, level of studies). The second section asked respondents for information regarding their visit, such as the duration of their stay, cultural events or attractions visited, and the fundamental objective of the trip. The third part of the questionnaire included the measurement of the constructs. These were measured using question statements adapted from academic studies related to this topic.

A first version of the questionnaire was presented to experts from the VIC in York (Visit York) who made suggestions for the adaptation of certain items or for improvement in the writing therein. In addition, a pilot survey was conducted to ensure the validity of the content.

The measurement of the authenticity variable in its double perspective – objective authenticity and existential authenticity – is based on the work by Kolar and Zabakar (2010) and employs five items for the objective dimension and six items for the existential dimension. This double perspective of authenticity provides a richer version of this variable than that gathered by other authors. Quality of the experience is measured using an adaptation

of the scale proposed by Otto and Ritchie (1996) which employs five items for measurement. The measurement of the satisfaction variable is an adaption of the multi-dimensional scale provided by Oliver (1997). The authors have included two items that refer to the affective and cognitive evaluation of satisfaction and a third item for a global evaluation of satisfaction. A seven-point Likert scale was used for the measurement of all the variables, whereby the score 1 refers to strongly disagree, and 7 refers to strongly agree.

Data Analysis

The research model outlined in Figure 1 was tested using Partial Least Squares (PLS) – a variance based structural equation modelling technique. The following reasons justify the choice of PLS (Roldán & Sánchez-Franco, 2012): (1) the complexity of the research model, not only concerning the type of variables included in the model (reflective, formative, first and higher order constructs), but also the relationships established between the variables (direct mediating and moderating relations); (2) to explore and/or predict the behaviour of the dependent variables; (3) the non-normality of the research model's variables; and (4) to allow robust estimations when the number of observations is small (Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009). In order to conduct the analysis, SmartPLS 3.4 software was used.

For the assessment of the research model in York, a two-stage procedure was conducted (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2018). First, the measurement model was evaluated (outer model) by evaluating the reliability and validity of composite Mode A constructs. Second, the structural model was evaluated (inner model) by assessing the path coefficients, explanatory power (R2), and the values of the Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) as an approximate model fit for PLS-SEM (Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016).

Results

A PLS model must be analysed and interpreted in two stages (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarsted, 2014). First, the measurement model is evaluated. The measurement model allows evaluating if the theoretical concepts or constructs are measured correctly through the items observed. The evaluation is different according to the construct being formative or reflective. Second, the structural model is evaluated. The magnitude and significance of the causal relationships between the different variables is assessed from this model.

Measurement Model

In the first stage of the analysis, the assessment of the measurement model allows 19 items to be observed. The assessment of the measurement model for Composite Mode A entails an evaluation of validity and reliability (Hair et al., 2014). Table 2 shows that the indicators of Composite Mode A variables meet reliability requirements since, in general, they are higher than 0.7. In addition, there are some items with a loading of 0.4–0.7. These items should be considered for removal if they increase the Composite Reliability (CR) and AVE to a level above the threshold. However, the decision was taken to retain them in order to support the content validity of the scale. Table 2 shows that the CR is greater than 0.7 and the AVE of the constructs is higher than 0.5 and therefore convergent validity is acceptable (Hair et al., 2014). The fact that CR and AVE surpass the 0.5 threshold confirms that the removal of indicators in the two groups with loadings 0.4–0.7 was unnecessary. Table 3 shows that all variables achieve discriminant validity following both the Fornell-Larcker and the HTMT criteria. This result suggests that each construct is distinct from other constructs (Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016).

[Insert Table 2]

[Insert Table 3]

Structural Model

In the second stage of analysis, the structural model was assessed. Table 4 shows the path coefficients and the hypothesis testing by using 5,000 bootstrap resamples and the confidence intervals at 95%. From Table 4 and Figure 2, it can be observed that objective and existential authenticity exerts a positive and significant influence on satisfaction (a = 0.317 and b = 0.322). Hence, hypotheses H1 and H2 are confirmed. Similarly, it can be observed that objective authenticity exerts a positive and significant influence on existential authenticity (c = 0.680). Therefore, hypothesis H3 is confirmed. Likewise, hypotheses H4 and H5 are also supported since a positive and significant effect of objective and existential authenticity are observed on experience quality (d = 0.351 and e = 0.410). Hypothesis H6 is confirmed by observing a positive influence of the quality of the experience on satisfaction (f = 0.171). Table 4 also reports the mediating relationships in the model as the product of the coefficients

of each of the causal relationships in the mediating chain (Hayes, Preacher, & Myers, 2011). Based on the one-tailed t-test, the indirect effect of objective authenticity through experience quality on satisfaction is significant (g = d*f = 0.060). The indirect effect of objective authenticity through experience quality and existential authenticity on satisfaction is also significant (h = c*e*f = 0.048). This supports hypothesis H7 and hypothesis H8. The indirect effect of the existential authenticity through experience quality on satisfaction (i = e*f = 0.070) is significant. The importance of these indirect effects on satisfaction has been tested using 5000 bootstrap resamples (Chin, Kim, & Lee, 2013). The model has predictive validity for the three endogenous variables since the coefficient Q2 is positive in all three cases. The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) as an approximate fit of the composite factor model (Henseler, Hubona, et al., 2016) is also computed. The results revealed that the SRMR model fits values of 0.081. Since these values are lower than 0.10, they can be considered as acceptable for PLS-SEM.

[Insert Figure 2]

[Insert Table 4]

Three multigroup analyses have also been conducted to support the research model and the analysis detailed above. First, given the high percentage of modern tourists (aged 18–34), a multigroup analysis with two groups ‘modern’ versus ‘non-modern’ tourists was conducted. Second, differences on the model relationships might be observed regarding the groups ‘domestic’ versus ‘nondomestic’ tourists and therefore encouraging another multigroup analysis. Lastly, the analysis of possible differences between “strictly cultural” versus “others” tourists appears to be appropriate in the cultural context of the study. The findings reveal no significant differences between the path coefficients in the three multigroup analyses supporting the specification of the research model proposed.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study tests a structural model integrating constructs of objective and existential authenticity, quality of experience and satisfaction in the context of cultural-heritage tourism. Focusing on the research model relationships, the influences of objective and existential

authenticity on satisfaction were found to be significant. The findings suggest that tourists with positively perceived authenticity are better satisfied with the cultural site. These results are different to those obtained by Lu et al. (2015) and Lee et al. (2016) who found that this relationship was not significant. However, the results from this research coincide with those obtained by Nguyen and Cheung (2016) and have identified that objective authenticity can be considered as a determinant of existential authenticity. This has also been observed by Kolar and Zabakar (2010). These results mean that objective authenticity induces the tourist to experience subjective perceptions attached to the objects' authenticity.

The model also highlights a relationship not previously studied in tourism and therefore contributes to our understanding of the factors leading to cultural consumption. The positive influence of authenticity (objective and existential) on the experience quality has been confirmed.

The study also shows the significant influence of the experience quality on satisfaction. This is consistent with other research in this area (Altunel & Erkut, 2015; Chen & Chen, 2010; Hang, 2010; Kao et al., 2008; Tian Cole & Scott, 2004).

The influences of objective and existential authenticity on satisfaction is even greater if the mediating effects that appear in the model are considered. These results reveal that the greatest influence of objective authenticity is on satisfaction via existential authenticity and via experience quality and the greatest influence of existential authenticity is on satisfaction via experience quality. There is limited research that has examined this mediating relationship.

This study was motivated by the need to strengthen the understanding of the role of objective authenticity, existential authenticity, and experience quality on satisfaction. In this paper, not only are the direct influences of these variables on satisfaction analysed but the indirect influences of the predictor variables on the endogenous variables of the model were also studied. Testing these relationships leads to a better understanding of how these variables interact in a cultural-heritage tourist destination. This study is a pioneer in analysing the influence of each of the two dimensions of authenticity on satisfaction via quality of experience in a cultural-heritage context. The findings confirmed the importance of the variable authenticity in its double perspective (objective and existential authenticity) and quality of experience in cultural tourism consumption. Cultural tourist attractions in a

destination should be offered to provide visitors an authentic experience and a high quality of personal experience that in turn would favour the satisfaction of consumption.

Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Regarding the notion of authenticity, the findings of this study reveal that cultural offerings were perceived not only as tangible tourism attractions but also as existential experiences derived from the different feelings attached to the tourism products (i.e. sense of enjoyment and escape). The results clearly show that visitors interpret authenticity in its double dimension (objective and existential authenticity) and that the concept of authenticity may have different meanings depending on the characteristics of a destination. The consideration of the notion of authenticity constitutes a key element in the present study since there is limited research in the generic and cultural-heritage tourism literature that has considered the influence of perceived authenticity on either satisfaction or behavioural intentions (Ramkissoon & Uysal, 2011; Sedmak & Mihalic, 2008). The findings collaborate with Kolar and Zabakar (2010) and Ramkissoon and Uysal (2011) who also noted that perceived authenticity in its double perspective influences successful consumption of cultural attractions. The theoretical contribution of this research aims to enrich understandings of the complexity of authenticity as a multi-dimensional construct and to provide relevant information for tourism managers, planners and policy-makers to offer authentic experiences at heritage sites.

Another theoretical implication and contribution derived from the research model is the significant influence of perceived authenticity on quality of experience and the significant and positive mediating effect of quality of experience between both dimensions of authenticity and satisfaction. Cultural offerings seek to provide visitors with authentic experiences that influence the quality of the tourist experience. This study also contributes to the generic and cultural-heritage literature by examining those relationships that thus far have not been analysed.

In addition to the theoretical implications of this study, managerial implications have also be identified. According to the relationships found in the research model, tourist destination managers, planners and policy-makers should pay attention to the objective and existential dimensions of authenticity to improve the quality of the tourist experience. Both dimensions should be considered as key factors in achieving differentiation and the

competitive positioning of a destination in relation to other cultural-heritage destinations. Policy-makers should consider these variables and identify destination scenarios where tourists are able to create their own authentic experiences. In order to provide a positive cultural experience, it is necessary to meet the expectations of visitors. In this sense, there must be a correspondence between tourism advertisements and the offered experience. The marketing messages should be appropriately designed to ensure tourists receive the experience presented to them.

Managers of cultural tourist destinations should pay attention to architecture, a faithful restoration of buildings, harmony of the buildings within the context of the destination, and provide attractive and complete heritage information. Tourist destination managers should seek to manage tourist flows to ensure tourists are able to enjoy the environment without significant crowds of people. The cultural experience improves if heritage managers design strategies to meet expectations regarding the components of peace of mind, cultural engagement, and involvement in the traditions and customs with the local population. The environment should allow tourists to connect with the history of the place and its inhabitants and facilitate the lived emotions that make the experience authentic and memorable. In this sense, it is crucial that cultural tourism authorities present cultural heritage within a setting that allows tourists to immerse themselves in different historical periods with accurate and detailed information. The symbolic and simulated elements must be carefully presented to facilitate the imagination and enjoyment for tourists. There should be an adequate balance between genuine and simulated objects in what is described here as the performance space. While simulated objects can facilitate the imagination and recreation of an earlier period of history, their excessive use may seem frivolous. It would be advisable, therefore, that a mixture of genuine and simulated objects be used in order to stimulate the imagination and the enjoyment of tourists.

Tourist perceptions of authenticity, objective and existential, are important because both dimensions are the means by which individuals connect the materiality of visited space to the significance of their lived experiences (Bryce, Curran, O'Gorman, & Taheri, 2015; Rickly & McCabe, 2017). This increases the likelihood of the experience been memorable and unique to each person and the likelihood that tourists are satisfied with their visit.

Limitations and Future Research

There are a number of limitations that should be highlighted and avenues that merit further investigation. First, no minimum period of stay by the respondent was stipulated. Therefore, it would be interesting to interview people who stayed at the destination for several days so that the involvement of tourists in the place visited and with its residents could be observed. The active participation of tourists in the cultural life of the destination would, therefore, be encouraged, which would enhance the experience quality and consequently lead to greater satisfaction and a better recommendation of the visit.

The analysis of the causal relationships has hitherto been restricted to the city of York and therefore limits generalization of the study's finding. It would, therefore, be interesting to contrast the relationships explored in this research model with those of another cultural destinations. A cross-cultural study (multigroup analysis) could be employed that would not only allow the validity of the measurement model to be analysed in various cultural contexts, but would also enable the detection of any significant differences in certain causal relationships between the tourist destinations involved. Furthermore, the study sample size is another limitation that should be acknowledged. Although the sample size used met the sample size requirements for Partial Least estimation, the fairly small sample size limits the degree of generalization and validation of the model.

Table 1. Respondent Demographics

	Percentage
Gender	
Male	41.5%
Female	58.5%
Age	
18-24	39.0%
25-34	21.0%
35-44	13.8%
45-54	11.8%
55-64	10.3%
Over 65	4.1%
Level of studies	
Primary	0.0%
Secondary	22.1%
A-levels/Professional training	47.9%
University studies	30.0%
Origin	
United Kingdom	62.2%
European Union (except U.K.)	11.9%
Rest of the world	25.9%
Main aim of the visit	
Visit friends or family	13.7%
Cultural tourism	40.6%
Congress/Business	0.0%
Studies	14.1%
Shopping	11.2%
Other	20.4%

Constructs/ items	*Weights*	*Loading*	*CR*	*AVE*
Experience Quality			0.829	0.500
EQ1: I've had fun	0.245***(5.616)	0.756		
EQ2: I've felt at ease and relaxed during the visit	0.265***(5.361)	0.684		
EQ3: I believe that visiting a cultural heritage site has been a good learning experience and instructive	0.346***(8.550)	0.731		
EQ4: I have escaped from the daily routine and done something really new in my visit	0.257***(6.113)	0.614		
EQ5: I believe that my belongings and myself have been safe during the visit	0.310***(6.817)	0.717		
Objective Authenticity			0.913	0.679
AUT1: The overall architecture and impression of the buildings inspired	0.252***(16.628)	0.851		
AUT2: Restoring historic buildings respects the same style (architecture, furniture, utensils, etc…)	0.239***(14.903)	0.844		
AUT3: I liked the peculiarities about the interior design and furnishings	0.254***(13.669)	0.845		
AUT4: I liked the way the site blends with the attractive landscape, scenery, historical ensemble, the town	0.238***(17.341)	0.828		
AUT5: I liked the information about the site and I found it interesting	0.230***(14.398)	0.748		
Existential Authenticity			0.885	0.563
AUT6: I liked special arrangements, events, concerts, celebrations connected to the site	0.192***(10.658)	0.687		
AUT7: The visit provided a thorough insight into different historical periods of the city	0.246***(12.723)	0.766		
AUT8: During the visit I felt the related history, legends and historical personalities	0.201***(13.055)	0.764		
AUT9: I enjoyed a unique experience that allowed me to contact with the local people, their traditions and customs	0.202***(12.613)	0.782		
AUT10: I liked the calm and peaceful atmosphere during the visit	0.240***(12.611)	0.745		
AUT11: I felt connected with human history and civilization	0.248***(11.949)	0.754		
Satisfaction			0.903	0.746
SAT1: This is one of the best destinations I could have visited	0.341***(12.444)	0.810		
SAT2: Overall, I am pleased with my decision to visit the cultural heritage in Seville / York	0.423***(17.008)	0.896		
SAT3: My overall satisfaction towards visiting York´s cultural heritage	0.390***(17.301)	0.884		

Table 2: Measurement model for Mode A composites: loadings, construct reliability and convergent validity

Note:*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001

Table 3: Discriminant validity

	Fornell-Larcker Criterion				Heterotrait–monotrait ratio Criterion			
Constructs	**OA**	**EA**	**EQ**	**SA**	**OA**	**EA**	**EQ**	**SA**
OA	**0.824**							
EA	0.680	**0.750**			0.784			
EQ	0.630	0.649	**0.702**		0.758	0.797		
SA	0.644	0.649	0.580	**0.864**	0.748	0.766	0.721	

Notes: EA: Existential Authenticity; OA: Objective Authenticity; E Q: Experience Quality; SA: Satisfaction; Fornell-Larcker Criterion: Diagonal elements (bold) are the square root of the variance shared between the constructs and their measures (AVE: average variance extracted). Off-diagonal are the correlations among constructs. For the discriminant validity, diagonal elements should be larger than off-diagonal elements.

Table 4: Structural Model results

Relationships	R^2_{SAT} = 0.512 / Q^2= 0.366 R^2_{EA}=0.463 / Q^2= 0.242 R^2_{EQ}= 0.487 / Q^2= 0.219
H1:OA->SAT (a > 0)	a= 0.317 [0.122;0.522]
H2:EA->SAT (b > 0)	b= 0.322 [0.150;0.456]
H3:OA->EA (c > 0)	c= 0.680 [0.524;0.770]
H4: OA->EQ (d > 0)	d= 0.351 [0.111;0.413]
H5: EA->EQ (e > 0)	e= 0.410 [0.271;0.566]
H6: EQ>SA (f>0)	f= 0.171 [0.089;0.356]
H7: OA*EQ->SAT (g=d*f > 0)	g= 0.060 [0.017;0.131]
H8: OA*EA*EQ>SAT (h=c*e*f>0)	h= 0.048 [0.024;0.109]
H9: EA*EQ->SAT (i=e*f > 0)	i=0.070 [0.038;0.159]

Notes: QE: Quality Experience; OA: Objective Authenticity; EA: Existential Authenticity; SAT: Satisfaction.

Bootstrapping 95% confidence intervals bias corrected in square brackets (based on n = 5000 subsamples).

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