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The Photography-Immersion-Value Nexus: A Quantitative Model for Enhancing Tourist Experiences

Abstract

Nowadays, photography is an inseparable part of every travel and tourists spend a lot of energy and time taking photographs during their visits. On the other hand, it is crucial for tourism planners and stakeholders to recognise the various aspects of tourists' experiences throughout their journey, consequently providing them with a better experience and value perception. This research aims to explore the impacts of tourism photography on tourists' value perception and to determine how it can provide tourist immersion and contribute to their overall experience. This study created and tested a conceptual model through a quantitative method. An online questionnaire was used to evaluate the variables. The gathered data analysed by using analysis through structural equational modelling. The majority of the hypotheses grounded on the literature review were supported, and the achieved results showed that tourism photography contributes to tourists' immersion and such occurrence impacts their involvement, memorability, and authenticity of their visiting experience. Moreover, each of the experience components enhance the value perception dimensions, which are functional, emotional, memorial, and social values. This study elaborates on the impact of photography on visitors. It suggests destination managers encourage providing tourists with photography opportunities by preserving the natural essence and authentic feature of the attractions.

Keywords: Tourism Photography, Tourist Immersion, Tourism Experience, Value Perception

1.Introduction

Photography and tourism, as modern twins, quickly blended after 1840 (Larsen, 2006). With the emergence of Kodak cameras, till now, by smartphones which are accessible and used by different generations, photographing has continuously become easier than ever, and has been considered an inseparable part of every travel. The existing literature regarding tourism photography, have discussed about the early invention of photography and its relationship with tourism and the correlations of photography and contemporary mass tourism on each other, as well as the importance of tourist gaze and its pivotal role in shaping photographing rituals in every travel (Larsen, 2006; Urry & Larsen, 2011; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016). Other existing literature is regarding the interactions and the confrontations between the tourists and visitors, and what is being captured by them through their cameras, or in other words, what they choose to focus and take pictures from, and how is their position perceived in their gaze on the objects and indigenous people (Sontag, 1977; Garlick, 2002; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Hockert et al., 2018).

The above-mentioned existing studies are more or less dedicated to the tourism photography from the point of view of subjects or what has been observed by the tourists. This study aims to explore tourism photography by focusing on the tourists' side, to study their immersion and the dimensions of their experience, in order to understand if their photographing activity affects their value perception. There is a lack in the recent tourism value perception literature in case of the impact of photography on value perceptions (Huang et al., 2019; Deng et al., 2020), and the current study aims to apply photography to the existing value perception studies.

The main question of this research is that "Is tourism photography contributing to the value perception of the tourists?" and followed by that to know if tourism photography provides immersion, and such immersion can affect the involvement, memorability, and authenticity of their experience. To achieve this, the current study will review the existing literature on tourism photography, tourist immersion and experience, and value perception. Then, based on the suggested hypotheses, a conceptual model is created. After that, in the next chapter, the model will be examined through a quantitative research method, and the related analysis and results of the research will be presented. Then, in the next chapter, by referring to each group of prepositions, the main findings and their relevance to the existing literature will be discussed.

Finally, in the conclusion part, the theoretical and practical contributions, as well as the limitations and suggestions for future research, will be addressed. In the current study a structural equational modelling has been used to analyse the data which gathered through an internet-based questionnaire, completed by respondents from 56 different countries, and from different educational, and travelling habits' backgrounds. After evaluating the validity and reliability of the conceptual model, based on the findings of the research, the statistical analysis elaborated that out of 16 hypotheses suggested in the model, 14 of them are supported and 2 of them needed extra future research. This study applied tourism photography to tourist immersion, experience related and value perception variables and tried to make the process of value creation through tourism photography wider and clearer. It also showed that photography can lay out a more intense experience for visitors which ends in creating a higher value perception for them, so practically tourism planners are suggested to consider the importance of authentic photography opportunities for their tourists.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism Photography, The History and Discussions

It is generally believed that photography was invented by Louis Daguerre in 1839. A few years later, Thomas Cook rented a train to organise a short recreation excursion, which in fact it has been regarded as the birth of mass tourism (Garlick, 2002). The year 1840 is one of those unique periods in which the world seems to change and modern social structures are formed. Therefore, tourism and photography were essentially combined around 1840, and till now, they interplay in a critical double helix that cannot be altered. Starting from 1840, travelling photographers with portable cameras mobilised and displayed far-off regions; They produced stunning displays that introduced the art of observing the world with tourism enthusiasm (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Photography has come to be intertwined with travel since its early invention (Larsen, 2006; Urry & Larsen, 2011). Photography quickly developed into a ritualistic aspect of travel, and photographic items travelled the world, inspiring a wave of concepts, items, destinations, civilizations, and people. Images and photographic performances contribute to and detract from modern travel's cultural, social, and material construction (Larsen, 2006).

It is now practically unimaginable to go on vacation without packing a camera, sending postcards, and bringing back many snapshot memories. The art of photography has been viewed as pleasurable, and the holiday pictures that tourists take to celebrate their achievements, personal connections, and from world-famous sites are all considered as their treasures (Larsen, 2006). As two distinct modern pursuits, both tourism and photography were taking part in the Enlightenment idea of modernity (Garlick, 2002). As an element of contemporary technology, the camera can be considered a tool for framing particular slices of life and, even more, contributing to the framing of the world (Garlick, 2002). Like Garlick's point of view, Larsen (2006), in his book chapter, sees tourist photography rather than pre-set or preformed as something which is performed and believes that tourist photographers are both framing and being framed (Larsen, 2006). The photographer of the twenty-first century is captivated by anywhere and anyone, including objects, situations, and people. Meanwhile, the photographer is also being observed and taking pictures at the same moment (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Urry and Larsen (2011) explain the pivotal role of Kodak cameras in the emergence of tourism photography and in creating photographs more effortless than ever, which influenced the experience and engagement of the tourists. They mention that the earliest cases of tourist photography date back to the late 1880s, when Kodak introduced their user-friendly, compact, and affordable Brownie cameras. Before that, photography was something that was more consumed rather than created. Similar to how Thomas Cook saw the need for institutionalised expertise in tourism, Kodak saw the need for expert organisation in photography. The new middle-class family was the company's target audience, as well as tourism since the individuals and settings where the power-knowledge interactions involved in

"Kodaking" could result in "Kodak moments". Kodak practically developed tourist photography by creating a new system and establishing a brand-new set of material and social connections. Kodak made photography and cameras "mundane", thus contributing to the emergence of the "tourist habitus". Kodak stated that the new simplicity of photography made it simple and enjoyable. No matter how similar their photos seem to other tourists, Kodak assured families that their photos would be distinctively different and aura-filled since they capture the world and their beloved ones through their eyes (Urry & Larsen, 2011).

Other studies are following the other aspect of tourism photography, which is the relation between tourists and what is being photographed by the, and consequently, the interaction and interrelations between them (Sontag, 1977; Hockert, 2018; Garlick, 2002). Regarding the subject and the objects playing role in tourism photography, Höckert, Lüthje, Ilola and Stewart (2018) mention that many of the encounters and experiences that travellers have, are heavily shaped by their cameras. Many tourists begin their trips to capture and remember the spectacular in themselves and others. The essence of tourism is giving people opportunities to experience things that are new to them. As a result, camera lenses are frequently attracted to the "otherness" of locations and individuals other (Höckert, Lüthje, Ilola & Stewart, 2018).

Tourists photograph subjects that reflect the sense of otherness, such as individuals, sceneries, plants, objects, and anything that may seem glamorous, romantic, or scenic. Tourists observe all this behind a transparent screen that makes everything accessible to them, and the lens is the most transparent and most visible barrier that separates the observer from the other (Höckert, Lüthje, Ilola & Stewart, 2018). Yet, cultural critic Susan Sontag's book "On Photography" (1977) was the first work directly discussing the interaction between tourists and photography. She argued that photography fundamentally altered how people perceived the world by transforming it into a "society of spectacles" in which circulating pictures dominate reality. In her perception, reality turns into a touristic concept that is visually consumed (Sontag, 1977; Larsen, 2006).

In Sontag's arguments on photography (1977), tourism-related photography is regarded as a tricky concept. To her, photographing is to take possession of the item being photographed, so as a result, tourists take control over the location by means of their cameras and gain possession of the sites that they observe, and this alleviates their concerns about visiting and existing in a new and unfamiliar setting. In fact, the tourist's experience is formed by the camera, which mediates reality for them. According to her, having a camera converts an individual into something active, "a voyeur" (Garlick, 2002; Sontag, 1977).

In other words, Sontag believes that photography transforms the world into a “museum without any walls” and the indigenous people into objects that can be metaphorically dominated (Garlick, 2002; Sontag, 1977). On this basis, she does not consider any interaction between tourists and the locals. However, Garlick himself has an opposite point of view as he suggests that despite its possible flaws, tourism photography should not be viewed as an adverse activity or an “objectifying” power. He argues it is definitely desirable to have a deeper understanding of the power imbalances in photography, especially regarding photographing the indigenous people and suggests recovering and maintaining a balance between them through raising awareness of tourists (Sontag, 1997; Garlick, 2002).

Each element of photography, the tourist gaze, and tourism, complements and enriches the others as a whole (Larsen, 2006). In his famous book, the tourist gaze (2011), Urry examines key moments in tourism photography. It demonstrates how images improve, frame, and replace actual travel in complicated and contingent ways, particularly when photography is bodily essential to the tourist's contact with the other. Dinhopl and Gretzel (2016) also mention that in tourism, observation or gazing is considered as consumption, and travellers visit touristic sites to gather photographs, and they consume the sites by their gazes and through choosing, framing, and portraying the scenes the visual contents and photographs they generate (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

According to Urry and Larsen (2011), photographs are "frames of space-time" with impacts beyond the subjects they portray, whether they be people, places, or events. They also believe that photographs taken in travels are sensual, dynamic, aging, and affective instead of being bodyless, eternal, fixed, or passive. Travel photography was commonly used to preserve "vanishing" authentic cultures, indigenous people, and old rituals. By freezing time and making a moment permanent, photographs also satisfy this nostalgic need to stop time and conserve artifacts. In other words, tourists try to preserve momentary gazes with pictures (Urry & Larsen, 2011). The tourist gaze and photography are both socially created viewing methods that allow tourists to experience a place simultaneously (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

Much travel and staring take shape thanks to photography. In fact, it is what motivates tourists to stop, take a photograph, and then continue. People believe they must not miss seeing specific scenes or "Kodak moments" because if they do, they will miss the photography opportunities and may forget those moments (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Tourism photography, an activity with such specific dimensions and personal aims, makes tourists use their senses, especially their vision. Moreover, Urry argues that in the tourism experience, vision is vital (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Regarding the importance of human senses in the tourism experience and its relevance with photographs, Dias, Correia and Cascais (2017), in their study, aimed to ask tourists visiting Algarve to express their senses that are involved while visiting the destination, through images, by a semiotic approach. In other words, they used photographs as a tool to describe and transfer their sensory feelings. Such photos displayed sensations through

humans' five senses. Their study showed how emotions could manifest the sense of attachment to the place and contribute to the memorability of the experience. These emotions are also seen in images that verify them and are completely consistent with what they represent, which proves that "a photo can be more invaluable than thousands of words" (Dias, Correia & Cascais, 2017).

2.2. Hypotheses Development

2.2.1. Tourism Photography and Immersion

Carù and Cova (2007), in their book chapter, have elaborated and discussed the concept of immersion from a consumer-oriented point of view. According to them, in post-modern consumption and marketing studies, the concept of immersion has been borrowed from various fields, such as psychology, pedagogy, and even religion. Nowadays, this term has been applied to vast areas and activities, primarily to the arts, and then to activities such as tourism, leisure, and sport. In marketing studies, the immersion construct is deeply intertwined with experience, and it is mentioned that immersion is a tool in order to obtain a consumption experience. Immersion generates experience, and contemporary societies pursue immersion or a process in which they get immersed in a vast array of experiences. An immersive experience immerses consumers mentally and physically in their pursuit or in the place and surroundings and captivates their senses regarding the sight, scents, and sounds. Another distinctive feature of the immersive experience is the erasure of the distance between the subject, or consumer, and the object, which is the setting (Carù & Cova, 2007; Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2019).

Immersion is a process that causes the consumer to become disconnected from reality. This disconnection is either a quick dive or a moderate envelopment by the environment which is being experienced (Fornerino & Helme-Guizon, 2008). Immersion can also be a deep moment that the consumer experiences as a consequence of an incomplete or accomplished appropriation procedure. They also define immersion as a form of attention state in which the main focus is the activity, where the person's attention is completely centred on that. When an event or performance's environment is created in a way that motivates visitors to engage physically (examples: walking, smelling, and touching) or mentally (examples: thinking or observing), they are able to fully engross themselves in the experience and integrate themselves physically (or virtually) with it. They also mention that visitors who are fully immersed in an experience involve all of their senses. They are described as disconnected and intensely focused on the task at hand, and their activity will occupy the core of their emotions and thoughts (Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2019; Agarwal & Karahanna, 2000; Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Tourism experiences take the consumers out of their daily routines, and consequently, they can absorb their intense attention (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018). With the advent of the notion of the experience economy, the consumer experience has been defined as a fundament of tourism. Tourists are considered sensitive and active players seeking out immersive experiences while visiting tourism sites. Tourism consumers pursue the unique and unforgettable immersive experiences that tourism can offer. Tourism sites make tourists feel engaged and deeply immersed in the task at hand, which is why tourism has been recognised as potentially an incredibly immersive notion. Visitors, through their immersion, may consider the time to be shorter than the time they have actually spent (Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2019).

As explained, since tourism photography is an activity in which the visitors are attentive to the environment and fully utilise their senses while taking a photograph, and on the other hand, those visitors engage all their senses when they are fully immersed in an experience or activity, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H1: Tourism photography contributes to tourist immersion.

2.2.2. Tourist Immersion and Experience

One of the on-site experience constructs discussed in Zatori, Smith and Puczko's (2018) study is experience involvement. The idea of experience involvement has been developed and defined as a personal and real-time engagement in the consumption of a particular experience. Some experiences have the potential to be intensely involving and engross feelings. The consumer can have a more memorable and valuable experience due to an advanced level of experience involvement. Experience involvement has been primarily defined as a purchase intention point of view; however, it can be viewed as the consumption of a specific activity or experience. It also has a significant impact on how those experiences are formed and how value co-creation is generated (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018). Due to its well-known capability to explain and anticipate changes in customer behaviour and attitudes, involvement is a critical concept in marketing and consumer behaviour research. Involvement in the experience can be generated out of a pursuit, a concern, a product, an event, a choice, an advertisement, or a specific physical setting, like an art gallery or a museum (Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2017).

The tourist experience is an integrated one that is obtained by involvement and active participation in the specific context of tourist sites and through emotive and touching sensations (Park & Santos, 2016). Cultural memories, feelings, and moments experienced while travelling are provoked and recalled through photographs, items, and other countless sensations such as tasting, hearing, and touching (Park & Santos, 2016). Zatori, Smith and Puczko (2018) also explain the same characteristic of experience involvement by calling it “personal relevance”, which simply is involved with something that

individuals feel it is meaningful to them, whether it be an event, action, or object (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018).

In tourism studies, measuring experience involvement has been considered a practical tool to investigate tourists' engagement and their behaviours. Prebensen, Woo, Chen, and Uysal (2012) view involvement as a motivational construct that can influence the level of personal relevance in the individuals regarding their fundamental goals, values, and their ambitions. It also can be defined in terms of the degree of the interest and significance, effective, and appropriate response to that interest that the individual considers for an activity or an object. Involvement in the experience brings about some levels of pleasure and self-expression obtained during an activity (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012). They also mention that the more involved tourists with the experience, the more probable for them to be open and willing to gain more information regarding their activity or their destination (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012).

In fact, both attributes of attention and involvement are viewed as two intertwined terms that blend closely with the concept of tourism experience (Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2017). Experience consumers are capable of immersing themselves in the experience and get absorbed in it as if there is no gap between the experience and themselves, for example, when they directly enjoy a live concert by being present at the venue (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang & Reisinger, 2014). Based on the reviews on the attributes of tourist immersion and experience involvement, and the similarities in their characteristics such as attention, engagement, and provoking senses, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2a: Tourist Immersion has a positive effect on Experience Involvement

Another attribute of experience is the notion of memorability, that in Zatori, Smith and Puczko's (2018) point of view, it comes along with the authenticity of the experience, and both are derived from the involvement and engagement of the tourism experience. According to them, when an experience is over, it is the memory that will be all that is left for the experience consumer. Memorability can be viewed as a filtering process that connects the experience to a tourist activity's emotional and cognitive results (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007). The interpretation of memory permits experiences to alter, showing that they are not constant in nature and can evolve over time. By archiving (e.g., photography) and sharing (e.g., social websites), documented and demonstrated real-time experiences, they will be remembered. For instance, visitors during their on-site experience will choose a part of their experience to become a memorable one, and then it comes to the action, which is recording and documenting them (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018).

Memorable experiences are continuously retrieved and remembered through recollection by the tourist while addressing a specific travel experience (Park & Santos, 2016). Photos offer visitors prolonged moments and effectively allow people to recall and remember the past (Park & Santos, 2016). Digital media are increasingly facilitating these memory-making and remembering procedures due to the fast growth of digital technologies (Park & Santos, 2016). Tourism generates experiences, and memories are the essence of the experiences, and in fact, creating unforgettable and memorable experiences is the most fundamental part of the experience economy. Memorable experiences have been defined as exceptional, exciting, and spectacular, as well as having a standout quality, being easier to recall, and indeed to be unforgettable. A proficient short-term memorability of the experience, which is capable of being recollected successfully in the long-term memory, is influenced by the degree of the attention allocated. Also, the possibility of allocation of attention depends on intensive physical and mental participation (Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2017).

The degree to which tourists or visitors feel immersed in the experience is critical since, compared to regular experiences, immersive ones are usually more memorable. Moreover, immersion is fundamental in generating and consuming memorable experiences for tourists (Lunardo & Ponsignon, 2019). Consequently, the following hypothesis is suggested:

H2b: Tourism Immersion has a positive effect on Experience Memorability

Authenticity is regarded as an important component in tourism experience studies. This concept was initially applied to tourism research by MacCannell (1976), aiming to perceive the travel experiences of heritage site visitors. Referring to Zatori, Smith and Puczko's (2018) reviews, authenticity has been seen as a fundamental element in a meaningful experience, and the way it is perceived is a major consequence in terms of an invaluable and memorable experience. They also mention that there are distinctive features between the authenticity of the objects and the authenticity of the experiences (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018).

Authenticity is typically classified into three types, “constructive, objective, and existential,” (Wang, 1999), and each display a different aspect of this concept. Objectivists argue that authenticity is a real feature or attribute that can be judged using objective standards. However, constructivists claim that authenticity is dynamic and is influenced by interpretation. Existentialists, on the other hand, believe that authenticity depends on individuals and their “self-creation and self-discovery” during their activities and social encounters and relations. Obviously, existential authenticity is based on personal experiences and is shaped and viewed based on that. Some components of constructive and existential authenticity include interaction with so-called culture brokers (e.g., tour guides), locals, and even other visitors (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018).

Much of the authenticity is determined by what the destination has to offer, or how it is being offered and perceived by tourists. Indeed, most of the tourists are not tourism specialists, so their perception of authenticity is based on their information and facts. Regardless of the features of authenticity, certain indicators should be provided to tourists when analysing authenticity (Deng, Lu, Lin & Chen, 2020). Therefore, the following hypothesis is formed:

H2c: Tourism Immersion has a positive effect on Experience Authenticity

2.2.3. Experience and Value Perception

Formerly, perceived value was interpreted using a single-item scale, which was cost-effectiveness or "value for money". However, measuring it based on only a one-item scale cannot cover the entire spectrum of perceived value (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012). Perceived value is a subjective term which is varied among cultures, customers, and even at different time periods. It was basically known as a concept consisting of two segments and derived from the outcome of the interrelation of two distinctive parts. One segment is the social, relationship, and economic advantages and benefits that customer obtains, and the other is the costs and sacrifices they make, which can be time, currency, convenience, effort, and risk (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez & Moliner, 2006). For scholars, the trade-off or balance between perceived quality and sacrifice was generally described as perceived value, and in this regard, Zeithaml (1988) defines perceived value as the consumer's overall evaluation of a product's value based on their perception regarding what is received and what is offered (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang & Reisinger, 2014; Zeithaml, 1988).

New approaches in explaining perceived value enable specialists to address some of the limitations of its classic paradigm, which particularly had an overemphasis on economic value through referring to the contribution of emotions in purchasing and consuming behaviours. Since value perception is a dynamic construct that can be perceived after the consumption process, it is essential to consider the consumer's subjective or emotional responses. (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez & Moliner, 2006). Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, and Reisinger (2014) indicate that a multi-item scale should be used to evaluate value perception, and in their study, in order to cover the broad spectrum of perceived value concepts, they have used two of its dimensions, which are functional and emotional value (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang & Reisinger, 2014). Other scholars, such as Deng et al. (2020) in their study have adopted and used other extra dimensions to these two, such as memorial and social value, all of them are derived from Sheth et al. (1991) consumption value. According to the theory of 'consumption value,' the multidimensional consumer choice, which includes purchase decision, preferring one type of service or product over the other, or choosing a specific brand over the others, involves a broad range of values.

Sheth et al. (1991), categorised these wide varieties of values into five segments such as epistemic, emotional, functional, social, and conditional. Notably, Deng et al. (2020) have added a memorial dimension to this theory.

Functional value has always been regarded as the fundamental motivator of consumer choice. An alternative's functional value is defined as the perceived utility derived from an alternative's capability to perform functionally, utilitarianly, or physically. An alternative develops functional value by having significant functional, utilitarian, or physical characteristics. Functional value is based on a set of selectable attributes. In addition, the emotional value is explained as the perceived usefulness derived from an alternative's ability to provoke emotions or mental responses. When an alternative is associated with specific sentiments, or when it induces or fosters those feelings, it develops emotional value. Emotional value is assessed based on a profile of emotions connected to that alternative (Sheth, Newman & Gross, 1991)

An alternative's social value is described as the perceived utility gained by associating an alternative with one or more particular social groups. Such alternative gains social value by its linkage with "stereotyped demographic, socioeconomic, and cultural-ethnic" groupings. Social value is evaluated based on "a profile of choice" motifs. Those choices of goods which can be displayed and shown prominently, such as clothes or pieces of jewellery, or those products or services which can be shared with other people, such as gifts or entertaining and leisure products, are typically influenced by their social value. As an instance, a specific model of the social image may be selected and purchased because of the social image it provides for its consumer rather than its functionality aspect. Sheth et al. (1991) also point out the important role of social value in the purchase decision, which is a consequence of human interactions and the transmission of information (Sheth, Newman & Gross, 1991).

Tourism and other leisure-related industries must refer to fantasies, emotions, and sensations to explain consumer behaviour. Beyond tangible characteristics, perceived quality, or price, many products (or services) have symbolic meanings (Sánchez, Callarisa, Rodríguez & Moliner, 2006). Prebensen et al., (2012) have defined the concept of value perception in tourism concerning the destination experience. According to them, tourism value perception is the process through which a tourist receives, selects, arranges, and analyses information depending on their various travel experiences to build a meaningful image regarding the value of their destination experience. In addition, they mention that there are four distinct dimensions to evaluate on-site tourism value perception, including emotional, social, performance and quality (functional aspect), and price and value for money (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012).

Some connections regarding the values and perceiving them and experience constructs are reported in a number of studies. Prebensen et al.'s (2012) study mention that tourist involvement is believed to influence their experience value of the destination. Consequently, the tourism businesses need to promote involvement to attract tourists, and eventually, they can create valuable experiences for destination visitors (Prebensen, Woo, Chen & Uysal, 2012). Followed by that, Song et al. (2014) state that value perception is influenced by experience, and it is more probable for consumers to tend to recognise the high value of the products if such products can generate valuable experiences for them. In fact, a destination experience can be perceived as "the origin of value" and its assessment of that destination (Song, Lee, Park, Hwang & Reisinger, 2014). Zatori et al. (2018), also mention that some kinds of experiences can be very engaging and evoke emotions, and the more involvement into the experience, the more meaningful and memorable experience will be created for the consumers. Additionally, tourists' value perception of their experience can be influenced by experience involvement (Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018). Therefore, the H3 hypotheses are suggested:

H3a: Experience involvement contributes to functional perceived value.
H3b: Experience involvement contributes to emotional perceived value.
H3c: Experience involvement contributes to memorial perceived value.
H3d: Experience involvement contributes to social perceived value.

There is a lack of studies regarding the memorability of value perception and its relationship with experience. However, in a related study that Huang, Zhang and Quan (2019) have done, the results have shown that perceived value influences memorable tourism experiences, and those tourists who have had a more memorable tourism experience are more likely to decide about revisits and recommend that tourism experience. Therefore, they mention that tourism experiences with a deeper memorability also mediate the impact of tourism value perception on behaviour intention, so as a result, the higher value being perceived can end to deeper memorial experiences and more influence on behaviour intention (Huang, Zhang & Quan, 2019). To see if this idea works in an opposite direction, meaning if the experience memorability can contribute to perceived value, the following hypotheses have been created:

H4a: Experience memorability affects functional perceived value.
H4b: Experience memorability affects emotional perceived value.
H4c: Experience memorability affects memorial perceived value.
H4d: Experience memorability affects social perceived value.

Regarding the authenticity of the experience and value perception, Deng et al. (2020), in their study, elaborate that the perception of tourists will be influenced by the events, spaces, and local surroundings, and the value perceived by them will be affected by the authenticity of the destination. In other words,

the more authentic a product is, the more valuable it will be for the consumers. The authenticity of tourism products is considered to be a criterion for tourists to evaluate the value of those products. In fact, perceived authenticity could perhaps, enhance perceived value. More specifically, they mention it has been shown that objective and existential authenticity have a positive effect on perceived value (Deng, Lu, Lin & Chen, 2020). So based on these views, H5 hypotheses have been formed:

H5a: Experience authenticity influences functional perceived value.
H5b: Experience authenticity influences emotional perceived value.
H5c: Experience authenticity influences memorial perceived value.
H5d: Experience authenticity influences social perceived value.

2.2.4. Conceptual Model

Based on the literature review and the research hypotheses suggested, the following conceptual model of tourism photography, tourist immersion, experience constructs, and value perception has been created, which is shown in figure 1. This model will enable us to explore tourists' experiences while doing photography and determine if photographing can immerse them, affect their experience, and contribute to value perception.

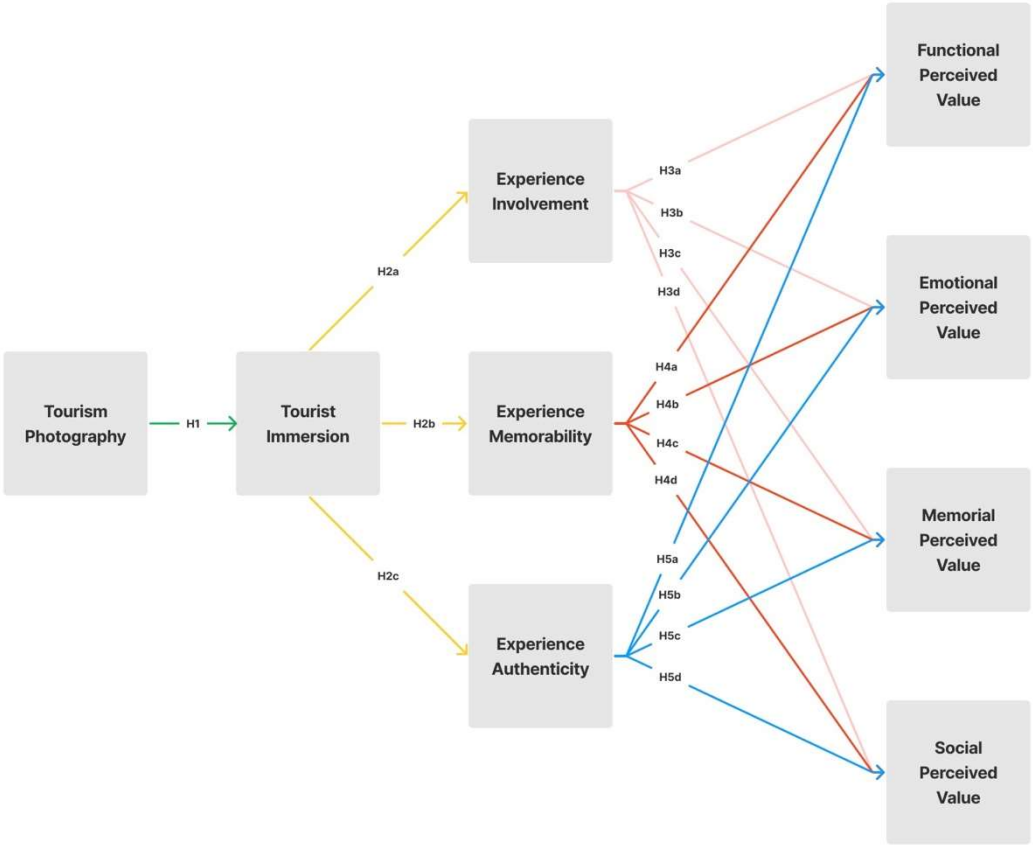

Figure 1 Conceptual Model and Hypotheses

3.Methodology

3.1. Data collection and sample

In order to validate the hypotheses based on the conceptual model proposed accomplished through using a quantitative research method. Data collection started from 5th till 30th of May 2022, by using an

internet-based questionnaire which developed via Google forms. We reached to the respondents through social media platforms (in Facebook and WhatsApp travellers' groups, as well as Instagram, and LinkedIn). The total number of completed questionnaires received during this period were 221.

Regarding the demographic profile of the research participants, in case of gender, 76.9% of them were women, while 20.8% of respondents were men. Moreover, 2.3% of the participants preferred not to specify their gender. Regarding their age ranges, majority of the respondents were between 18 to 24 years old (50.7%). After that, 36.7% were between 25 to 34, 8.6% were between 35 to 44, 2.3% were under 18, 1.4% were between 45 to 54, and finally 0.5% were 55 or above 55 years old.

We managed to reach to research 221 participants from 56 countries around the world. 57.5% of them had completed their postgraduate or higher degrees, 35.7% of them had undergraduate degree, and 6.8% of them were high schoolers. Additionally, regarding their employment status, the abundance of the respondents were students (71.9%). Regarding the rest of the participants, 9.5% of them were private sector employees, 5.9% of them were public sector employees, 6.3% were self-employed, 6.3% unemployed, and none of them were retired. Regarding the frequency of travels of the participants per year 44.8% used to travel 2 to 3 times a year. After that, 22.6% used to travel 4 to 5 times, 16.7% of them 0 to 1 time, and 15.8% of them over 6 times per year.

3.2. Variables

To measure the variables, we applied the scales which were already existed, except for one variable, tourism photography, which measured by five created items, based on the objectives and questions that supporting relevant literature brought about. Experience involvement, experience memorability and experience authenticity were adopted from Zatori et al. (2018). Perceived value was adopted from Deng et al. (2020) with three to four items measuring each of the different aspects of it, such as functional, emotional, memorial, and social. Tourist immersion was derived from Lunardo and Ponsignon (2019), with three items. All of the items were asked on a five-point Likert-type scale in which one equals strongly disagree, to five which is strongly agree.

4.Results and discussion

In order to assess the conceptual model, structural equation modelling (SEM) was used. More precisely, partial least squares (PLS) applied, which is a variance-based structural equation modelling technique, by means of SmartPLS 3 software (Ringle et al., 2015). We followed two steps to analyse and interpret

the research results. The first stage was to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement model and after that, it was assessing the structural model.

To evaluate the quality of our measurement model, we tested respective indicators of reliability, convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2017). The results revealed that all items had the standardized factor loadings above 0.6 (with a minimum value of 0.68) and in addition, all items were significant at $p < 0.001$, which proved the individual indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was also validated since each of the compounds of Cronbach alphas and composite reliability (CR) values were above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2017).

Based on three main reasons, convergent validity was approved as well. The first reason is, as mentioned above, each of the compounds weighted firmly and importantly on their respective constructs. Second reason deals with CR values as all items were above 0.70 in this criterion. The third reason is, according to what figure 3 indicates, the average variance excerpted (AVE) for every compound was beyond the limit of 0.50" (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). By applying two approaches, the discriminant validity was also examined. The first approach was to use the Fornell and Larcker criterion which demands that a construct's square root of AVE (shown on the diagonal with bold values in Table 1) to be higher than its largest correlation with any construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Figure 3 proves that this criterion is contented for all constructs. In the second approach, we applied the heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015). According to what figure 3 indicates, all HTMT ratios are lower than the outset value of 0.85" (Hair et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015) and prove another evidence regarding discriminant validity.

Latent Variables	Chronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
(1) Experience Authenticity	0.827	0.874	0.537	**0.733**	0.725	0.760	0.698	0.739	0.735	0.624	0.634	0.633
(2) Experience Memorability	0.863	0.907	0.709	0.617	**0.842**	0.671	0.728	0.757	0.831	0.374	0.480	0.540
(3) Experience Involvement	0.921	0.933	0.537	0.668	0.603	**0.733**	0.734	0.801	0.705	0.572	0.679	0.666
(4) Emotional Perceived Value	0.802	0.883	0.716	0.570	0.607	0.634	**0.846**	1.006	0.863	0.577	0.688	0.501
(5) Functional Perceived Value	0.801	0.870	0.628	0.610	0.637	0.694	0.810	**0.792**	0.886	0.639	0.676	0.556
(6) Memorial Perceived Value	0.824	0.884	0.656	0.612	0.702	0.621	0.704	0.732	**0.810**	0.458	0.526	0.544
(7) Social Perceived Value	0.867	0.918	0.789	0.540	0.332	0.520	0.488	0.523	0.392	**0.888**	0.787	0.366
(8) Tourism Photography	0.794	0.866	0.618	0.525	0.412	0.593	0.565	0.550	0.440	0.644	**0.786**	0.576
(9) Tourist Immersion	0.728	0.844	0.645	0.508	0.442	0.561	0.400	0.442	0.439	0.293	0.446	**0.803**

Figure 2 Composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations, and discriminant validity checks

Note: AVE -Average variance extracted. Bolded numbers are the square roots of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the constructs. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT ratios.

After measuring the reliability and validity of the model, we examined the structural model, by applying the sign, consequence, and connotation of the structural path coefficients; the consequence of R2 value for every primitive variable as a sign of the model's predictive accuracy; and the Stone-Geisser's Q2 values as a symbol of the model's predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2017). Although, before assessing the structural model, we investigated collinearity (Hair et al., 2017). The VIF values scaled from 1.00 to 2.07 which was lesser than the significant critical value of 5 (Hair et al., 2017). Such values did not show any collinearity. The coefficient of the determination R2 for the variables are including 19.9% for

tourist immersion, 31.4% for experience involvement, 19.5% for experience memorability, 25.8% for experience authenticity, 56.7% for functional perceived value, 49.2% for emotional perceived value, 56.9% for memorial perceived value, and 34.3% for social perceived value. All of these mentioned values are higher than the limit value of 10% (Falk & Miller, 1992). The Q2 values for all endogenous variables (0.123, 0.164, 0.137, 0.133, 0.349, 0.340, 0.364, and 0.256 respectively) were higher than zero which proves the predictive relevance of the model.

The results of the figure 4 indicates that tourism photography has a significantly positive impact on tourist immersion ($\beta = 0.446$, $p < 0.001$), which means that hypothesis H1 is supported. In addition, tourist immersion has a noticeable positive effect on experience involvement ($\beta = 0.561$, $p < 0.001$), experience memorability ($\beta = 0.442$, $p < 0.001$), and experience authenticity ($\beta = 0.508$, $p < 0.001$), which supports hypothesis H2a, H2b, and H2c respectively. Experience involvement has a significant relation with functional perceived value ($\beta = 0.416$, $p < 0.001$), emotional perceived value ($\beta = 0.351$, $p < 0.001$), memorial perceived value ($\beta = 0.226$, $p < 0.05$), and on social perceived value ($\beta = 0.322$, $p < 0.001$). This means that all the hypothesis H3a, H3b, H3c, and H3d are supported respectively. Experience memorability has a positive impact on functional perceived value ($\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$), emotional perceived value ($\beta = 0.304$, $p < 0.001$), and also on memorial perceived value ($\beta = 0.454$, $p < 0.001$), which supports hypothesis H4a, H4b, and H4c respectively. Experience authenticity has a positive effect on functional perceived value ($\beta = 0.041$, $p < 0.05$), as well as on memorial perceived value ($\beta = 0.390$, $p < 0.05$), and on social perceived value ($\beta = 0.387$, $p < 0.001$). This supports hypothesis H5a, H5c, and H5d respectively.

The results also show that experience authenticity does not have a significant effect on emotional perceived value ($\beta = 0.147$, n.s.), as same as experience memorability which does not have a positive effect on social perceived value (($\beta = -0.101$, n.s.). So, the hypothesis H5b and H4d are not supported.

Path	Path Coefficient	Standard Errors	T statistics	P values
Experience Authenticity →Perceived Value, Emotional	0.147	0.082	1.801	0.072
Experience Authenticity →Perceived Value, Functional	0.151	0.074	2.045	0.041
Experience Authenticity →Perceived Value, Memory	0.181	0.073	2.467	0.014
Experience Authenticity →Perceived Value, Social	0.387	0.087	4.452	0.000
Experience Memorability →Perceived Value, Emotional	0.304	0.078	3.915	0.000
Experience Memorability →Perceived Value, Functional	0.293	0.063	4.667	0.000
Experience Memorability →Perceived Value, Memory	0.454	0.068	6.630	0.000
Experience Memorability →Perceived Value, Social	-0.101	0.075	1.341	0.180
Experience Involvement → Perceived Value, Emotional	0.351	0.098	3.601	0.000
Experience Involvement → Perceived Value, Functional	0.416	0.067	6.190	0.000
Experience Involvement → Perceived Value, Memory	0.226	0.087	2.593	0.010
Experience Involvement → Perceived Value, Social	0.322	0.091	3.525	0.000
Tourism Photography → Tourist Immersion	0.446	0.057	7.871	0.000
Tourist Immersion → Experience Authenticity	0.508	0.057	8.880	0.000
Tourist Immersion → Experience Memorability	0.442	0.060	7.360	0.000
Tourist Immersion → Experience Involvement	0.561	0.053	10.647	0.000

Figure 3 Structural model assessment

The present study aimed to explore the impacts of tourism photography on tourists by assessing if photographing can make tourists feel immersed in their activity and the environment, and explore how this fact can impact their experience, and know if the value perceived by them has been influenced by the various dimensions of their experiences, including their involvement, memorability, and authenticity. Such values are viewed as functional, emotional, memorial, and social. Therefore, the majority of the hypotheses were supported, while two of them were not supported.

Based on the previous studies, the intrinsic nature of tourism is to provide opportunities for tourists to experience what is new, divergent, and out of their ordinary phenomena. Tourism activities absorb their most profound attention and attract them to the "otherness" of the place or object, or the environment being visited (Hockert et al., 2018; Zatori et al., 2018). Since they do not intend to lose any moment, they continuously gaze, observe, and capture and frame any scene that reflects the essence of otherness and arouses their feelings. In fact, they are consuming the tourism assets by their gazes and creating photographs, aiming to preserve and make a vanishing moment and its feeling permanent and keep their gazes and senses recorded (Hockert et al., 2018' Urry & Larsen, 2011; Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016).

Lunardo and Ponsignon (2019), Urry and Larsen (2011), Carù and Cova (2007), and Dias, Correia and Cascais (2017) mentioned that tourists seek immersive experiences in which they do not feel the time is passing, they are physically and mentally engaged in that activity, and all their senses are occupied in that experience. Meanwhile, tourists are capturing and recording their moments by using their senses. To reflect on this situation, in an example, where a tourist is visiting a specific waterfall scenery, he is physically there, mentally occupied with the scenery in front of his eyes, observing (or gazing) through his sight, hearing the sounds of the environment (the waterfall or maybe the birds around), smelling, feeling and touching there (the weather, and the water, and the aura) all at the same moment and simultaneously. This can be a moment when the tourist is captivated by the scenery by their senses and sees no space or barrier between him and that experience except the transparent lens of the camera, which allows him to frame and preserve the immersion, and meanwhile, he may not feel the time passing by. The quantitative research results showed that tourism photography contributes to tourist immersion, which means that hypothesis H1 is supported. This approves the previous point of view of scholars, as tourists, while taking photographs, are using their senses spending profound moments, and thus, immersion brings the same situation.

The other hypotheses were the H2 group, which all of them supported. According to the conceptual model, while tourists take photographs and get immersed in that scene and space, they are consuming an experience that can have different dimensions. Firstly, they are involved in that experience since, based on the previous studies, experience involvement brings about a personal and real-time engagement in a specific pursuit, and in tourism, both attention and involvement are closely bonded with each other (Zatori et al., 2018; Campos 2017). Based on Park and Santos (2016), studies, involvement of the experiences can be derived from different pursuits. Thus, in the case of tourism photography, it can be from an activity (which can be the act of gazing, observing, and capturing), a choice (choosing to frame a distinctive object or scene over the others, and not responding to other distractions), an event (as an instance a concert where the audience is closely and directly involved and records the moments), or a specific scene or object (like framing a special item or antique piece being exhibited).

The involvement of the experience generates a level of "personal relevance", making them see those experiences as meaningful to them, and recall them through photos (Zatori et al., 2018; Park & Santos, 2016). Photography has a close blend of personal relevance and also with "self-expression", the aspect that Prebenson, Woo, Chen and Uysal (2012) mentioned as an outcome of involvement. Photography is a tool for tourists to express how they see, feel, and perceive what is in front of their eyes, and this is similar to the reason why Kodak was assuring individuals to capture their moments, as not everyone can gaze and record those observations as same as the others (Urry & Larsen, 2011). Consequently, based on these studies, it is clear that immersion comes with fully engrossed senses, and involvement happens when it is active participation or through emotive and touching sensations.

Another dimension of the experience would be its memorability. Based on previous studies (Zatori et al., 2018; Park & Santos, 2016; Campos, Mendes, Valle & Scott, 2017), memory is the nature and essence of an experience, and when that experience is over, memory will be what is left for the experience consumer. Because of its intrinsic connection to time, photography has a strong contribution to memory, and what happened in the past can be connected to the present by the photographs (Garlick, 2002). Such memories are captured and archived by tourists in order to let them preserve their deep moments, remember them, and be able to recall them later. Pictures are dynamic assets that can still evoke the sensations once felt by individuals. Lunardo & Ponsignon (2019) also mentioned that immersive experiences are more memorable, so, looking back to the conceptual model, it can be perceived that photography comes with immersion, and such immersion makes the experiences more memorable.

The last dimension, experience authenticity, deals with how tourists perceive if the destination is offering an authentic experience and if it is meaningful for them to capture it. By means of photographs, the sense of authenticity can be transferred, and the real sight of the experience can be framed (Dinhopl & Gretzel, 2016; Deng et al., 2020). This is relatable when the tourists are fully immersed in an experience and perceive that scene or object as a true and authentic one, which they want to preserve and express through their images. Based on the existing literature, H2 hypotheses confirm the previous studies.

The rest of the hypotheses, H3, H4, and H5 groups, pointed to the contribution of experience to perceived value dimensions, and all of them except two (H4d and H5b) confirm the existing studies. Perceived value derives from the interrelation of the time and the energy the tourists spend in a destination capturing photographs and the benefits or values they obtain in return. Such advantages can be viewed from different angles.

Functional perceived value is related to the physical characteristics of that experience and is based on a selectable attribute (Sheth et al., 1991), so regarding tourism photography, for tourists, it may provide more and deeper attention to the details of a tourism attraction. Moreover, through photographing, although they try to capture the moments that are passing, they are making a collection and a memento of that visiting experience, which stays for long, and are regarded as useful assets that are both worth returning to and sharing with others.

Emotional perceived value deals with mental responses and aggravation of emotions (Sheth et al., 1991), so the image collections made will bring about pleasant feelings to their owners and urge them to refer to those images occasionally. Moreover, it can provide them a sense of the place and place attachment for tourists regarding that destination. As a unique record that evokes their memories, photographs of tourists can bring about memorial perceived value. It makes the experiences unforgettable through the pictures, which act as a tool to conserve the moments and scenes of the previously visited destination.

Lastly, what is bringing social image by making linkage with specific or stereotyped groups (Sheth et al., 1991), will be considered as social value. In this case, tourists' photographs can make them stand out from the others who have not been at that destination, give them the opportunity to prove that "I have been there" (Urry & Larsen, 2011), and provide them a sense of recognition. By sharing them through online platforms, they seek to gain social recognition and make an impression on others.

Contrary to previous studies, H4d and H5b are not supported as it means experience memorability cannot have impact on social perceived value, and experience authenticity does not affect emotional perceived value. Regarding the first hypothesis, it may be perceived as since the memorability dimension of the experience is intrinsically a personal aspect, it may not be related to or bring about social recognition. The second hypothesis not supported, authenticity can be seen as an interpretation (constructivist), or measured and fixed (objectivist), or a personal point of view and self-discovery (existentialist) (Zatori, et al., 2018), which all of them may be naturally generated by the logics of the viewer, so it may not deal with any emotional asset or values perceived by tourist. However, both rejected hypotheses need more research in order to figure out the main reasons.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The current research aimed to explore the journey which tourists who take photographs during their visits will make. It delivers theoretical contributions to existing tourism experience and value perception

studies, by adding a layer and focusing on tourism photography. It proved that photography is able to make tourists immersed in their visiting activity, and impress their experience by making it an involving, memorable, and authentic one, and consequently, have a further impact on their value perception, in case of functional, emotional, memorial, and social values they obtain. The existing literature on tourism photography have distinctively discussed the different dimensions of on-site experiences, and various aspects of value perception. The current study tried to imply tourism photography to them and make a link between these variables in order to better comprehension of the process of value creation through tourism photography.

5.2. Practical Contributions

The main practical point of this study would be lined as "photography is not necessarily and always considered as a bad activity." Based on the previous studies, it may make visitors feel like they are being gazed at or possessed by tourists (Sontag, 1977), so it is necessary to educate tourists about the possible and maladaptive impacts of photographing indigenous (Garlick, 2002). However, the current study shows that photography can provide a more profound experience for visitors. It has always been crucial for tourism stakeholders to recognise and reinforce the elements which increase or impact the level of value perception of the tourists. As a result, this study suggests that destination management organisations (DMOs), tourism boards, and related stakeholders lay the ground and provide tourists with photography opportunities by trying to preserve the natural essence and authentic feature of the attractions, as tourists will comprehend, and will choose what is real and worth to be framed. Such Photography opportunities will provide a deeper moment experience and encourage tourists to record and keep those moments as photographs. Photographs are merit for both tourists as they enhance the value perceived by visitors and also for the destinations because sharing their photographs with others may increase the urge for visits and to have the same experience.

5.3. Limitations

Certain limitations are considered in this research, first, regarding the sample size and the number of participants completing the questionnaire. Reaching out to more participants could enhance the quality and the strength of the results. However, the current sample size had already reached the minimum number required for structural modelling. Second, it would be regarding the time allocated for gathering responses. It was conducted in less than one month (May 2022), and more time would provide more participants to get involved and enhance the quality of the results. Third, although we tried to reach out to different people and various backgrounds to participate in the research, focusing more on younger generations and millennials and observing their behaviour regarding photography, especially on their photo online sharing activities, could bring about valuable results. Lastly, there was a lack of sources

related to the impacts of photography, especially and more specifically regarding previous studies on memorial perceived value.

5.4. Future Research

Future qualitative and quantitative research is required to explore the relationship and impacts of photography on tourism experience and value perception in a more detailed approach. In addition to photography, the influences of videography on the tourism experience can also be studied as a tool for preserving moment experiences. It can be very interesting to study this aspect, especially in events, since recording moments with the aim of not losing them can turn to experience the real moment through lenses and mobile phone screens, and it may have possible influences on tourist immersion and the quality of their experience. In addition, the model proposed can be analysed and tested using other types and attributes of tourism replaced with photography, such as gastronomy, religion, adventure, etc., to determine if they can provide immersion, affect the experience, and enhance the overall value perception of the tourists.

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