Influencing Factors of Memorable Tourism Experiences: A Study of Self-Guided Chinese Tourists in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

With the significant increase in destination competition, attention has been paid to the importance of providing tourists with memorable tourism experiences (MTEs). Although the existing literature has achieved certain results in the exploration of MTEs and influencing factors, there are still gaps in the research on the influencing factors of MTEs. The purpose of this research is to identify an effective and reliable MTEs influencing factor scale in the context of Thailand. Therefore, this study uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods, using Chinese self-guided tourists to Thailand as a sample, and obtaining 7 influencing factors of MTEs (ie, Infrastructure, Hospitality & Service, Physiography, Culture & Architecture, Activities & Events, Knowledge & Emotion and Social interaction). Research has shown that individual factors of tourists and the contributing factors of the destination affected MTEs. . The MTE influencing factor scale was verified, and the theoretical, practical significance of the research, limitations and recommendations for future research was discussed. Making a careful and adequate plan for every tourism destination is the basis for sustainable tourism development.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, with the significant increase in destination competition, creating and providing memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) have become an important part of tourism management [1]. In current tourism research and practice, the importance of providing MTEs for tourists has been a matter of concern [2-5].

Kim was one of the pioneers to put forward this concept, who defined MTE as "a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred" [2]. MTEs are the experiences that are selectively constructed from tourism experiences. It formed a memory that can be remembered after the trip. Therefore, the MTE is more important than the tourist experience, because only the experience in memory can influence the future decision-making of tourists.

Current research on MTEs focuses on exploring the nature and composition of experience [2]-[3]. However, not many studies were focused on the influencing factors of MTEs. There are still research gaps as follows:

(1) A consensus about the influencing factors of MTEs has not yet been reached. Scholars who study in this field have considered the following aspects as the influencing factors that affect MTEs (Table 1): destination attributes [6-8], tourists' perception [2]-[9-11] and personal factors of tourists [12-15]，but the distinction between tourists' perception and personal factors of tourists was not clearly defined. According to previous literature, the antecedent of MTEs is still a very complex multidimensional phenomenon. It can be said that researches on the influencing factors of MTEs not only covers the macro environment, policies, tourism resources, etc., but also covers the micro scenes, personal interaction and other factors. Although the existing literature has made some achievements in exploring the influencing factors of MTEs, those influencing factors that affect the tourism experience varies in different types of tourism. Therefore, it is still necessary to verify these repeated factors in exsiting literature.

(2) Most of the previous studies on MTEs took samples from students and tourists, and those researches were mainly focused on students and ordinary tourists. On the contrary, this study took self-guided tourists as the research target and verify the influencing factors of MTEs. According to the published data of the Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA) on February 20, 2020, China is the largest tourists source country of Thailand. The " Annual report of China outbound tourism development 2020" shows that more and more Chinese outbound tourists tend to choose a self-guided tour. The number of travelers who participated in a self-

guided tour is almost evenly matched against the number who participated in a group tour.

The purpose of this study is to verify and establish an effective and reliable MTEs influencing factor scale in the context of Thailand. This scale is expected to broaden the relevant theoretical knowledge of MTEs and to provide a reference guide for the tourism practitioners in planning and developing tourism experience practices.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Memorable tourism experiences

Wirtz et al. discussed the formation of traveling memory and how it relates to the travel experience [16]. The leisure experience was divided into five stages: anticipation, travel to, on-site, travel back and recollection [2]. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, memory is divided into short-term memory and long-term memory. Because of on-site experiences are momentary and may provide transitory feeling, thus not all tourism experiences can necessarily be translated into MTEs [2]-[17]. Only those parts that are actively remembered can be translated into MTEs. Therefore, the experience stored in personal memory is more valuable [2].

In previous MTEs research, some researchers have discussed the nature and composition of MTEs through qualitative and quantitative research methods. Qualitative research mainly focuses on the dimensions of MTEs [3]-[18]-[19], and quantitative research hasts verified multiple dimensions [17]-[20]. There is currently no consensus on the dimensions of MTEs. Kim's seven dimension MTEs scale (i.e., hedonism, involvement, novelty, local culture, refreshment, knowledge, meaningfulness) is mostly used [2]. However, previous studies rarely discussed definitely how to obtain MTEs from a practical perspective [6].

2.2 Influencing factors of mtes

2.2.1 Destination attributes

Destination have multiple attributes, such as beautiful scenery, shopping opportunities, cultural exchanges, infrastructure, safety, and various activities [6].Destination attributes include core attributes and additional attributes. The core attributes are the congenital features, such as natural resources, climate, culture ecology, ancient architecture, etc.; the secondary attributes are the facilities and events developed specifically for visitors, such as ceremonies, activities, entertainment, restaurants and transportation[36]. Individuals visit destinations mainly to enjoy the core attributes [21]. The competitiveness of destinations stems from pleasant and memorable experiences [8]. Therefore, the good destination image will greatly affect the individual's choice of destination [6]-[22]-[23].

At present, researchers have not reach a consensus on the composition of destination attributes. Ryan's research on the

impact of destination-based factors is relatively influential. He believes that the influencing factors include the nature of the destination, accessibility, accommodation quality, the ethnic nature of the destination, the number of attractions, and the content of activities [40]. The quality of service provided by the staff in the tourism industry contribute to the quality of tourism experiences, along with the factors of the travel destination. [24].

Since various factors could affect destination attributes, researchers developed a destination competitiveness model to value the importance of each factor[25-28]. Researchers proposed the destination competitiveness model, they believe that tourist experience comes from the six factors: Core resources and attractors, Supporting factors and resources, Destination policy, planning and development, Destination management, Qualifying and amplifying determinants[6]-[44]. And their model has been widely cited and considered as a comprehensive, effective and authoritative model [8].

For example (Table 1), researchers found that 10 destination attributes (i.e., local culture, variety of activities, hospitality, infrastructure, environment management, accessibility, quality of service, physiography, place attachment, and superstructure) affect the individual's MTE [6]-[7].

In addition, some researchers summarized different influencing factors according to the characteristics of the research objects (Table 1). For example, Sthapit has done research on unforgettable experiences with the theme of food and hotels [29-33], and proposes a conceptual framework. When exploring the memorable brand experience for golf game audiences, four prerequisites were discovered: affection to player, hospitality and service management, the game of golf, and course setting [34].

Researchers proposed that to hold advantageous position in the competition of travel destination, it is important to focus on the destination attributes. And the determinants of tourism experience are yet to be improved.[35]. The core attributes of the destination play a major role in pulling the individual to leave their place of residence and visit the destination, but the additional attributes are also important in enhancing the attractiveness of the destination [36].

2.2.2 Personal factors of tourists

Researchers believed that personal factors of tourists also affect the quality of their tourism experience. The personal factors have a pulling effect on the travel destination. If the travel destination meets the individual's internal needs, the individual will give a more positive evaluation of the core attributes [21].

According to literature, individuals with extensive travel experience are more capable of processing destination information than individuals with insufficient tourism experience [21]. Travelers may receive a better service and have greater travel experience if they were familiar with the

destination [21]. Travelers with high familiarity are more likely to leave comments about the destination's products and services [37]. In general, when tourists decide to travel somewhere, and start searching for a destination, they may first recall their past travel experiences. Personal's travel experience can enhance the travel satisfaction and intention to return to the destination [13]-[38].

Table 1 Influencing factors of MTEs

Classification	Factor	Relevant literature
Destination attributes	Infrastructure	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019
	Local culture and history	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013b; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017
	Physiography	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019
	Activities and events	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019
	Destination Management	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019
		Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017
	Quality of service	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019
	Hospitality	Kim,2014; Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013b; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Sthapit, 2017a; Hwang & Lee, 2018; Singh & Singh, 2019
	Superstructure	Kim,2014; Singh & Singh, 2019 ; Crouch ,2011
Personal factors of tourists /perception	Emotional Intelligence	Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013b; Coudounaris & Sthapit, 2017; Chandralal& Valenzuela, 2015; Wei et al., 2019; Servidio & Ruffolo, 2016
	Social interaction	Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013b; Mahdzar, 2018; Sthapit, 2017a; Wei et al., 2019

Source: elaboration by author.

Some researchers also found the influence of emotion on travel experience [9]-[10]. Servidio & Ruffolo explored the relationship between emotional involvement and the recall of MTE.The results indicate emotions (i.e., Fear, Happiness, Disgust, Anger, Surprise, Sadness) are the most relevant influence factors of the tourism industry and the holiday experience [39].

In addition, tourism experiences also affected by the random events that traveler encountered during the trip. [40]. Social interaction was also found to be a reinforcing factor when evaluating travel experience [11]-[18].

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

This study used a mixed research methods approach when collecting and analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data. First, this study generated and purified the scale through in-depth interviews and summarization of relevant literature. Second, it refined and validated the scale through quantitative study.

3.1 The generation of the dimension

The formation process of the influencing factor dimension of MTEs is listed as follows:

3.1.1 literature review and analyze

Through the literature review, the influencing factors of MTEs can be divided into two categories: Destination attributes and Individual related factors (Table 2). The influencing factors of destination attributes are based on Crouch's competitiveness model. The reasons for choosing it are as follows**:** (1) The model contains more attributes, and it has been widely used in different environments (Geoffrey I. Crouch, 2010); (2) This model is a pioneer in the field of tourism study. It has been cited by many other researchers. (3) Many empirical studies have validated this model and provided strong support for destination attributes [6].

3.1.2 In-depth interviews

In order to make up for the lack of literature, this study adopt in-depth interviews to further determine the influencing factors of MTEs.

The In-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner. By using a convenience sampling method (Veal, 2017), this study interviewed 15 self-guided Chinese tourists (aged 30-42) who have been to Thailand at least once before the data was collected, two of them were professional tour guids and the others were ordinary tourists. Marshall suggested that researchers should be pragmatic and flexible in adopting sampling methods, with adequate sample sizes to address research issues [41]. The minimum number for an acceptable sample for qualitative research is 15 [42]. **Reasons for respondents selecting:** (1) Self-guided tours were preferred. A self-guided tour is more flexible than a group tour. Tourists could adjust their travel plans and schedules according to the real situation, especially when encountering various objective obstacles. Tourists who choose a self-guided tour have stronger subjective consciousness and stronger motivation for the travel destination. These people tend to have a deeper

exploration of the destination. (2) Self-guided tours are more favored by the group of people whose age was between 30 and 45. Tourists within this age range usually have stable jobs and better financial capabilities. It can be said that young people who chose self-guided tour could become the ideal interviewee for the research of MTEs. (3) Two guides were involved as research targets in this study. Because they are also senior self-guild traverllers and they have been to Thailand for several times. They do have rich experience in the tourism of Thailand.

Table 2 The formation process of dimensions

Process	Dimension
Document Analysis	**Destination attributes :** Infrastructure, Local culture and history, Physiography, Activities and events, Destination Management, Quality of service, Hospitality, Superstructure **Individual :** Emotional Intelligence and Social interaction
in-depth interviews	Safety, Hospitality, The quality of service, Activities and events, Superstructure, Physiography, Culture, Previous travel experience and Knowledge, Emotional intelligence
Document Analysis & in-depth interviews	culture and history 、 Hospitality 、 Superstructure、 Mix of activities and special events 、 The quality of service 、 Physiography 、 infrastructure 、 Destination Management 、 Safety/Security 、 Emotional Intelligence 、 Previous travel experience and knowledge 、 Social interaction
EFA	Infrastructure 、 Hospitality & Service 、 Physiography、 Culture & Architecture、 Activities & Events、 Social interaction、 Knowledge & Emotion

In order to provide a pleasant conversation atmosphere, the interviews start with some ice-breaking questions, such as: "Have you been to Thailand recently? Could you tell us which scenic spot impressed you the most in Thailand?" The interviewees were being asked questions according to the questionnaire after that. The questionnaire consists of two parts: Part-1 is the basic information of respondents and Part-2 includes information which relates to the influencing factors of MTEs. Relevant literature has been used as a reference for questionnaire designing [43]. The questions in Part 1 include travel time, destination, travel mode, travel preparations etc. The second part of the questionnaire is about the travelers' understanding of MTEs and the most impressive experience during the trip. For example: describe the most impressive (most unforgettable) experience during your trip in Thailand; try to recall the mood and feeling at

that moment. Which stuffs affected your feeling and emotions during the trip?

These questions are helpful in clarifying the influencing factors of MTEs and contribute further exploration of MTEs. Each interview should be done within 30 minutes. Additional question and interaction were being conducted according to the answers from the interviewees. The entire interview process was recorded with the consent of the interviewee. To ensure the accuracy of the content, a collated interview record will be sent to the interviewee by email after the interview within 2 days, and it should be confirmed by the interviewee personally. The software Nvivo11 was adopted to analyze and organize the data collected during the interview. A total of 173 coding nodes and 223 coding reference points were generated in Nvivo11. According to the similarity principle, this study merged and classified the coding nodes. The 9 coding nodes are listed below: Safety, Hospitality, The quality of service, Activities and events, Superstructure, Physiography, Culture, Previous travel experience and Knowledge, Emotional intelligence.

Based on the result of in-depth interview and the literature review, the potential influencing factors of MTEs are summarized into 12 topics and 39 items. The 12 topics are: Culture and history, Hospitality, Superstructure, Mix of activities and special events, The quality of service, Physiography, Infrastructure, Destination management, Safety/Security, Emotional Intelligence, Previous travel experience and knowledge, Social interaction (Table 2).

Combining the result from document analysis and in-depth interviews, The influencing factor dimensions of MTEs were obtained as follows: Culture and history, Hospitality、 Superstructure, Mix of activities and special events, The quality of service, Physiography, infrastructure, Destination Management, Safety/Security, Emotional Intelligence, Previous travel experience and knowledge , Social interaction

3.2 The refinement of the scale

This study collected data from self-guided Chinese tourists (over 18 years old) who have been to Thailand at least once. There are two reasons for choosing this group of tourists as the research sample: (1) China's outbound tourism market is booming. Currently, China is the largest tourists source country of Thailand according to the published data of the Association of Thai Travel Agents (ATTA) on February 20, 2020. (2) The rise of China's outbound self-guided tours. The "Annual report of China outbound tourism development 2020 " shows that more and more Chinese outbound tourists tend to choose a self-guided tour. The number of travelers who participated in a self-guided tour is almost evenly matched against the number who participated in a group tour. Hence, Chinese tourists are an important and typical group of foreign tourists in Thailand.

This study adopts the convenience sampling method. Date from Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Thailand) shows

that in the January-November period, overall tourist arrivals totalled 35.87 million, up 4.44% from a year earlier. And tourism revenue reached 1.74 trillion baht, 3.67% up year on year.

According to data released by the Tourism Authority of Thailand, about 10.98 million Chinese tourists visited Thailand in 2019, rose 4.2 percent year on year. The estimated number of Chinese tourists was 11 million.

The required number of questionnaires was determined by the Yamane's formula.In this study, the desired level of precision was 5%. Hence, approximately 400 available participants will participate in the survey.

The survey was conducted in October-November 2019, and the questionnaires were dispatched in the following three sites: (1) Changshui International Airport (Kunming): Generally, Travel agencies keep information about their previous customers. The author asked her friends from Kunming Travel Agency to send out 250 questionnaires to their customers who have traveled to Thailand. (2) Suvarnabhumi Airport (Bangkok): The flow of people was large, and 100 questionnaires were distributed. The questionnaires were retrieved as soon as they were completed. (3) Don Muang Airport (Bangkok): 50 questionnaires were be distributed. All the questionnaires were collected right after they were completed.

There were 400 questionnaires distributed in the first survey, and 350 valid copies were recovered. The response rate is 87.5%. The questionnaire uses 5-point Likert-type scale. Every question in the questionnaire shall be rated on scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). To refine the scale, SPSS 24 was used for descriptive statistics and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used for scale purification.

The discrimination analysis method was adopted to analyze the items in the influencing factors of MTEs.. 7 items with discrimination degree lower than 0.3 (including "Destination Management" and "Safety/Security") were removed. 32 items were reserved in this process.

Table 3 Demographics and trip characteristics

	Category	Frequency	Distribution
Gender	Male	171	42.33
	Female	233	57.67
Age	18-25years	83	20.50
	26-35years	169	41.80
	36-45years	121	30.00
	46-55years	23	5.70
	56-65years	7	1.70
	66-75years	1	0.20

Table 3 Demographics and trip characteristics (cont'd)

Education Level	High school and below	22	5.40
	Associate degree	62	15.30
	Bachelor's degree	165	40.80
	Master's degree	116	28.70
	Doctorate degree	39	9.70
Travel duration	4-7days	190	47.00
	8-15days	130	32.20
	16-30days	27	6.70
	31-60days	13	3.20
	60or above	44	10.90
Occupational	Government officer and Institution staff	154	38.10
	Employee of private enterprises	81	20.00
	Student	67	16.60
	Free lancer	64	15.80
	Retiree	6	1.50
	Others	32	7.90
Monthly	Below 2000CNY	47	11.63
	2001-5000 CNY	81	20.05
	5001-8000 CNY	112	27.72
	8001-10000 CNY	73	18.07
	10001-15000 CNY	56	13.86
	150001-20000 CNY	14	3.47
	20001or above CNY	21	5.20
Travel Companions	Family	114	28.22
	Lover	84	20.79
	Friends	148	36.63
	Alone	48	11.88
	Strangers	10	2.48
Purpose of travel	Rest and Relax	338	83.66
	Spending holiday	310	76.73
	Enrich knowledge and experience	232	57.43
	Fulfill curiosity, Seek adventure	142	35.15
	Religious pilgrimage	29	7.18
	Others	43	10.64

Bartlett's test of sphericity was 6416.864, indicating the factor analysis was appropriate. In addition, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy for the data set was 0.915.

Common factors were extracted by the varimax rotation method. There are 7 factors with an initial eigenvalue greater than 1, the cumulative variation explained was 66.672%, which reflected most of the information of the original variable, and proved that the 7 factors could fully explain all the variables. The load coefficients of each factor are above 0.5, indicating a strong correlation between each factor and internal measurement indicators.

"Hospitality" and "The quality of service", "culture and history" and "Superstructure","Positive emotions" and "Previous travel experience and knowledge" were merged into new factors.Each factor was labeled as follows: Knowledge & Emotion, Hospitality & Service, Infrastructure, Culture & Architecture, Activities & Events, Physiography, and Social interaction (Table 2).

3.3 The validation of the scale

The second survey was conducted online through a Chinese questionnaire survey website - Questionnaire Star (https://www.wjx.cn/) during December 2019-January 2020. To lower the possibility of receiving samples from same travelers. Certain limitation has been set for this online survey. Such as IP address restriction: questionnaires were only allowed to submit once under the same IP. Answering time limitation: if the answering time is too short, the questionnaire will be treated as invalid samples.

A total of 450 questionnaires were distributed in the second survey and 402 valid copies were returned (questionnaires from not self-guided were deleted), the response rate is 89.33%.

As shown in Table 3, Among all the respondents, females (57.67%）are slightly more than males（42.33%）. The age of respondents ranged from 18 to 80 years. The highest proportion of the respondents is in the 26-35 age group (41.80%), followed by 36-46 years (30.00%) and 18-25 years (20.50%). There are a few participants age above 55 years (1.9%).

Most respondents have Bachelor's degree (40.80%) and Master's degree (28.70%). The majority of travel duration was less than 7 days (47.00%). Occupational distribution from highest to lowest: Government officer and Institution staff (38.1%), employee of private enterprises (20.00%), student (16.6%), freelancer (15.80%), retiree (1. 0%), others (4.00%).

The respondents whose monthly income was between 5001-8000 Yuan (27.72%) were the largest proportion , and were followed by 2001-5000 Yuan (20.05%) and 8001-10000 Yuan (18.07%); The proportion of respondents who have very high monthly income(above 150,000 (5.67%)) and very low monthly income(below 2000 Yuan (11.63%)) are relatively small.

Most respondents travelled with their friends (36.63%), and some of them travelled with their family (28.22%) or their lover (20.79%). The people who traveled alone accounted for (11.88%).

Table 4. Scale items and confirmatory factor analysis results

Factors (Cronbach's alphas)	Mean	CR	AVE	SFL	SMC
Infrastructure (0.866)	3.571	0.868	0.568		
Destination has excellent infrastructure.				0.759	0.576
Destination has good availability of tourism information.				0.802	0.643
Destination has high-quality infrastructure equipped with advanced technology.				0.748	0.559
Destination has good signage/directions.				0.747	0.557
The tourism facilities of the destination are well maintained.				0.711	0.505
Hospitality & Service (0.856)	4.042	0.858	0.502		
Local people in the destination were friendly.				0.744	0.553
Service staff were courteous and friendly.				0.673	0.453
Services provided are impressive.				0.736	0.541
Local people were willing to help me/us.				0.681	0.464
Local people were willing to share information about the destination.				0.759	0.576
Offered highly customized service.				0.653	0.426
Physiography (0.807)	4.087	0.808	0.584		
Destination has well-preserved region.				0.748	0.559
Destination has diverse ecosystem zones.				0.806	0.649
Destination has astonishing landscapes and climate.				0.737	0.543
Culture & Architecture (0.854)	4.058	0.857	0.545		
The local culture is memorable.				0.783	0.612
The local history is memorable.				0.698	0.488
The local way of life is memorable.				0.733	0.538
Attractive buildings in Destination are memorable.				0.786	0.618
Unique structural designs in Destination are memorable.				0.687	0.472
Activities & Events (0.802)	3.973	0.806	0.51		
Destination has interesting special events.				0.714	0.51
Destination has exciting special activities (e.g., sports, games, recreational activities and nightlife)				0.78	0.608
Activities that I cannot usually participate in mundane lives.				0.698	0.487
Destination has festivals and events that I have been interested in.				0.659	0.434
Knowledge & Emotion (0.868)	4.130	0.869	0.526		
I remember the sensations I had during the trip.				0.717	0.513
I had a lot of fun during the trip.				0.647	0.418
Rich past experience and knowledge can make individuals feel more attractive of destinations				0.759	0.576

					0.743	0.552
My previous travel experiences and knowledge helped me to pick the destination of this trip.						
I felt very well during the trip.					0.743	0.552
Social interaction （0.763）	3.481	0.778	0.541			
I have integrated into the group.					0.657	0.431
I made new friends in a strange place.					0.835	0.698
My relationship with my peers has progressed.					0.704	0.496

Note: CR=Composite Reliabilities; AVE = average variance extracted; SMC = squared multiple correlation; SFL=Standardized factor loading

The main purpose of travel was to rest and relax (83.66%), and another big reason was to spend their holidays (76.73%).

Respondents also seek to enrich their knowledge and experience (57.43%), to fulfill curiosity and seek adventure (35.15%).

AMOS 24.0 was used to test the validity of the 7 factors which were confirmed in the previous exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The results showed that the fit of the measurement model was satisfactory (χ^2/df=1.874, IFI=0.937, TLI=0.929, CFI=0.937, SRMR=0.045, RMSEA=0.047). It was found that the load coefficients of each item were all above 0.6. This result indicates the variables have a high representativeness corresponding to the subject.

In addition, the Cronbach's α of each factor is greater than 0.7, ranging from 0.763 to 0.866. It shows that the factors have good internal consistency, and the scale has good reliability.

The load factors are above 0.5, the combined reliability (CR) is above 0.7, and the average variance extracted (AVE) is above 0.5. Therefore, the convergent validity of the latent constructs was confirmed（Table 4）.

Table 5 Discriminant Validity

	Inf	HS	PH	CA	AE	KE	SI
Inf	**0.568**						
HS	0.2***	**0.502**					
PH	0.208***	0.266***	**0.584**				
CA	0.23***	0.309***	0.318***	**0.545**			
AE	0.191***	0.23***	0.244***	0.269***	**0.51**		
KE	0.137***	0.196***	0.202***	0.206***	0.175***	**0.526**	
SI	0.292***	0.178***	0.19***	0.21***	0.175***	0.069***	**0.541**
The square roots of AVE	0.754	0.709	0.7642	0.738	0.714	0.725	0.736

In terms of discriminative validity, each variable has a significant correlation (P<0.01), and the absolute value of the correlation coefficient is less than 0.5, and all the variables are less than the square root of the corresponding AVE. It shows these variables have certain correlation, and they also have certain discrimination between each other. Therefore, the discriminative validity of the scale data is ideal (Table 5).

4. DISCUSSION

This study developed a scale to measure the influencing factors of MTEs. The research result shows that seven factors (i.e., Infrastructure、Hospitality & Service、Physiography、Culture & Architecture、Activities & Events、Knowledge & Emotion、Social interaction）are important influencing factors of MTEs. The first five factors describe the attribute of destination, and the last two factors describe the personal factors of tourists.

This study used a mixed research method that integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods.The influencing factors of MTEs were discussed from different levels and perspectives, which complements the research.

The results of this research supported previous studies on destination competitiveness and researche on destination attributes. Another finding in the previous research suggests that tourists' personal attributes are also factors that influence MTEs [6]-[44].

However, among the seven factors, the proportion of destination attributes is more than that of personal attributes, indicating that destination attributes are vital in the MTEs, and these attributes can provide some important references for tourism practitioners.

This study has shown the Physiography elements, such as ecological diversity, beautiful natural scenery, the unique climate and well-preserved monuments are important experiences in tourism. Destination with natural scenery has advantages in enhancing tourist satisfaction and experience. Researchers point out that a manager of destinations with few natural attractions can create, develop and provide a particularly memorable tourism experience for visitors by utilizing the entertainment attributes[6].

In addition, the history and culture of destination, the distinct architectural styles will also give visitors a deep impression. Previous studies also pointed out that cultural experience has a significant effect on MTEs. For many tourists, the purpose of travel is not only to visit the attractions, but also to experience the local culture.

Promoting the interactive development and deep integration of culture and tourism, enrich the cultural connotation of tourism products, strengthening the tourists' experience of the culture of destination. Developing a sense of aesthetics and a cultural complex for tourists should be a direction for every tourism practitioner to make efforts. In order to provide a unique tourism experience, managers must first identify the most important aspects of history, culture and the local life styles of destinations, thereby distinguishing them from other tourist areas in the world [6].

This study also shows that the friendliness and

enthusiasm of local residents along with the service quality in tourism contribute to the formation of MTEs. Other researchers have reached similar conclusions: the hospitality and friendliness of local residents creates long-term memories for tourists [6]-[10]. From the perspective of tourism motivation, seeking for relaxation, pleasure and leisure accounted for a higher proportion (Table 3). Which means that spiritual enjoyment is the main reason for the respondents, traveling in Thailand making them feel relaxed and helping them stay in a good mood.

The acquisition of these experiences is also related to the friendliness and service quality of the locals, and the experiences contributed to the formation of good memories. Therefore, how to improve the service standard is also a very important factor in the development of tourism.

In addition, the variety of activities and wonderful events make deep impressions to tourists throughout the tourism process. The destination manager can develop a variety of highly personalized memorable experiences to attract different types of tourists, thereby enhancing the memory of tourists. At the same time, the infrastructure of destination also affects the formation of MTEs. It is essential to improve the infrastructure for tourism development. The local government should further increase the investment in infrastructure, so the development of local tourism will not be limited. For example, the improvement of traffic provides convenience for tourists to enter the destination. The improvement to living conditions, such as accommodation facilities helps to reduce the negative memories of tourists. Each destination should also have their personalized experience design. Tourism practitioners should develop featured travel plan and cultural travel products based on the natrual resources of the travel destination. For example, introducing rock climbing, camping, farming and other activities that suits for the mountain area. Selling customized souvenirs or handcrafts that represent the local culture to fulfill the tourists' psychological needs.

Another finding in this reseach was that tourists' personal factors also affect the formation of MTEs. Tourists' past travel experience, their background knowledge and their mood during the trip also affect the formation of MTEs. Among all the influencing factors, Knowledge & Emotion has the highest mean value (Table 4). Previous studies have confirmed that individuals who travelled a lot have stronger ability to process the information from destination than individuals who have less tourism experience [45]. Tourists' tourism experience can enhance the tourism satisfaction and increase their intention to visit the destination again [13]-[38].

In addition, social interaction is also a personal factor which affects MTEs. Tourism service cannot be separated from social relations. Increasing participation is an important way to deepen the experience of tourists. Tourism practitioners can mobilize the enthusiasm of tourists through various activities, which enrich the tourism experience.

Through the interaction in activities, tourists can not only experience the scenery at the destination, but also get a deep understanding of the culture and history of the destination, and receive more affection and psychological satisfaction.

Therefore, a memorable tourism experience is a very complex phenomenon, associated with multiple explanations [19]-[46]. The influencing factors of MTEs are also related to many factors and these factors permeate each other into the environment, culture, social relations, various activities, personal experience, background knowledge and emotions of the tourists.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Theoretical implications

The main contribution of this study is to increase the literature on the influencing factors of MTEs and broaden the theoretical knowledge of MTEs. Similar to previous studies [46], individual emotions, background knowledge and past experiences of tourists can affect the experience of tourists.

This paper takes samples from the self-guided tourists who travel to Thailand, and conducts research on the influencing factors of MTEs. The research expands and subdivides the scope of the sample, and enriches the connotation of tourism experience research. To find out the characteristics and the pattern of MTEs, tourism research should center on the experience of tourists.

With the vigorous development of outbound tourism in China, the tourist groups involved in this study can provide empirical scientific conclusions and constructive suggestions to improve the tourism experience of Chinese outbound tourists.

5.2 Management implications

In terms of practical significance, the influencing factors of MTEs found in this study will be helpful for tourism practitioners to improve their creativity, and have a comprehensive understanding of the influencing factors of MTEs, and thus propose new ideas to optimize the MTEs they provided for tourists, which is the significance of this study.

First, the finding of this study can enhance the management of tourism resources. At the national level, having an attractive tourist destination means the government should strive for its distinctiveness. Tourism experience should be boosted in a highly innovative and distinctive way. Interviewees in this study also expressed their feeling about the warm climate, rich natural resources, unique and charming culture in Thailand. These elements are attractive to tourists.

The interviewees affirmed the advantages of Thailand's abundant natural resources, and also believed that Thailand's environmental governance capacity needs to be improved. Many respondents said they were impressed with polluted

rivers, noisy traffic, and the misuse of plastics.

The interviewees agreed on the advantages of Thailand's rich natural resources, and also suggested that the environmental governance capacity of Thailand needs to be enhanced. Many interviewees expressed their worry about water pollution, traffic noise and plastic misuse in Thailand.

Researches have pointed out that the government of Thailand should pay more attention on the public health and the long term sustainability of natural resources. [47]. Therefore, the government of Thailand can also learn from the research results to improve their tourism resources, and practice sustainable tourism.

Second, this research helps tourism-related enterprises to improve their customer service, optimize product portfolios and improve tourists'experience quality. Make these enterprises adapt to the new situation and changes in the tourism market.

Third, the study suggests tourism practitioners pay more attention on the experience of tourists. The research is conducive to the quality control system in tourism. Tourism practitioners should put a high premium on the experience oriented quality control system. Different types of scenic spots should be organized into different categories. Different service packages should be provided to different tourists. The essential of tourism is the experience. The improvement of tourism experience can not only be achieved by raising the quality of products, services and marketing, but also by acquiring a deep understanding of a traveler's feelings and needs. For the tourism practitioners who wish to optimize the tourism experience management, each should understand the pattern of tourism experience. A successfully managed tourist attractions cannot be separated from the scope of experience and the distinctively tourism experience is always the core of it.

6. CONCLUSION

This research identifies an effective and reliable MTEs influencing factor scale in the context of Thailand. Research shows that memorable tourism experiences are not only affected by the factors of destinations, but are also affected by the personal factors of tourists. Therefore, the study of tourism experience should not only focus on destination construction, but also pay attention to humanistic care. Tourism practitioners should also pay attention to the perception, needs and emotions of tourists.

The study still has certain limitations. First of all, the study has limitation on samples. The interviewees selected for this study are Chinese self-guided tourists, which to a certain extent limits the author's ability to summarize the results. At present, most of the research samples on MTEs are Asians. Therefore, in order to have a better understanding of the similarities and differences of the influencing factors of MTEs, the research should expand the range of sampling to different groups of people (for

example, people from different countries, or tourists who chose a group tour, etc.) in the future.

Secondly, the study has limitations on the destination. This research is only aimed at the tourism market in Thailand, and the research conclusions have certain limitations in its applicability to other destinations. Thirdly, this study did not consider the lasting times of MTE. The most memorable one will be selected for evaluation in future studies.

At present, researches has been conducted on explorations of the connotation, essence, types and influencing factors in tourism experience. However, due to the complexity of tourism experience, it has become difficult to summarize the role of MTEs. Therefore, in order to better explore the influencing factors of MTEs, future studies should add more attributes into the account which were not covered in this study and expand the sampling group to larger populations. In addition, further empirical research should be conducted on the relationship among MTEs influencing factors and MTEs and behavioral intentions. A good image of tourism destination lasts very long in the mind of tourists. Making a careful and adequate plan for every tourism destination is the basis for sustainable tourism development.

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