

Broadening tourism experience and destination image: A cross-cultural approach between international and domestic tourists

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Abstract

Although previous studies deal with tourism experience, destination image and related outcomes, this study innovates by elaborating on a more comprehensive view of the tourism experience and destination image. Guided by suggestions for more research in the relevant literature, this study examines the correlation between tourism experience, experiential destination image, tourism memory, satisfaction and loyalty and explores domestic and international tourists. The data were collected from tourists visiting the Algarve, Portugal, in 2021. A multi-group analysis determined the main differences between domestic and international tourists. The results show that the tourist experience has five dimensions: active learning, emotional engagement, passive entertainment, immersive escape, and aesthetic appeal. Furthermore, tourism experiences of both domestic and international tourists positively affect the cognitive image of the Algarve. There is a significant difference among domestic and international tourists regarding the impact of tourism memory on tourists' loyalty. Theoretical and managerial implications, limitations, and potential directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Tourist experience, experiential destination image, tourism memory, tourist's satisfaction, tourist's loyalty.

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1. Introduction

It has been established within consumer behaviour studies that individuals make purchasing decisions rationally to resolve specific problems (e.g., Suomala, 2020). However, this approach fails to acknowledge the crucial elements of consumption, particularly in leisure activities, sensory pleasures, daydreams, aesthetic enjoyment, and emotional responses (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). This is an advancement toward an "experiential view" of consumption, which is defined as "a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132). Thus, consumption is viewed as a primarily subjective state of consciousness with a variety of symbolic meanings, hedonic responses, and aesthetic criteria.

The quest for novelty when travelling informs the experiential nature of tourism, especially considering that tourists are "hedonic vacationers" (Li, He, Li, Huang and Liu, 2023). The tourism experience is a constructive and subjective conception of what individuals experience in a destination (Lu, Lai, Liu and Wang, 2022). Although scholars acknowledge that the tourism experience is inherently multifaceted, they cannot agree upon an aligned conceptualisation or on which particular components best illustrate the concept of the tourism experience (Godovykh and Tasci, 2020). In the tourism literature, tourism experience has been extensively conceptualised and empirically tested (e.g., Oh, Fiore and Jeoung, 2007) using different perspectives like the experience economy paradigm with '4Es': education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics (e.g., Oh *et al.*, 2007); the brand experience approach including five dimensions: sense, feel, think, act, and relate (e.g. Rather, 2020; Tsaor, Chiu and Wang, 2007), among others. Oh, *et al.*'s measurement (2007) reveals the experience economy via the entertaining, aesthetic, educational, and escapist aspects of travel, while Rather's (2020) scale reveals the experiential approach to the tourism experience by exploring the sense, feel, think, act, and relate dimensions. Considering the challenge of capturing all the elements visitors encounter while being physically on-site (Zatori, Smith and Puczko, 2018) with limited scope in a concise measurement scale (Oh *et al.*, 2007), this study overcomes this constraint by employing two well-established scales of tourism experience (Oh *et al.*, 2007; Rather, 2020) to present a more comprehensive view on the phenomenon.

What makes the tourists' on-site experience a crucial concept for destination marketing and management is its impact on their perceptions and emotions toward a destination (Iordanova and Stydilis, 2019; Lalicic, Marine-Roig, Ferrer-Rosell and Martín-Fuentes, 2021) and their future behavioural intentions, i.e., recommendation and revisit intentions (e.g., Zhang, Wu and Buhalis, 2018; Sharma and Nayak, 2019). From a psychological perspective, the image refers to mental properties - namely, the events, states, and processes - that occur in the mind when something is experienced, and tourism destination image (DI) is recognised as context-specific (Ragb, Mahrous and Ghoneim, 2020; Liang, Choi, Dupej and Zolfaghari, 2023). This experiential view of consumption means that the experiential destination image consists of a tourist's mental impressions, perceptions, senses, feelings and knowledge resulting primarily from personal, firsthand experience, rather than from external (induced or organic) influences or impressions. In light of this approach, the visit to the destination shapes a modified, more complex, and authentic image (Sharma and Nayak, 2019; Li, Liu and Soutar, 2021), expanding the experiential destination image concept. In fact, despite the acknowledgement of tourism experiences' impact on DI, it has yet to be adequately explored in the existing literature (Lee, Lee and Lee, 2014; Li *et al.*, 2021; Choi and Cai, 2022). To the best of the authors' knowledge, little research has been devoted to understanding the experiential nature of DI. Instead, previous studies are mostly devoted to studying DI after the visit and mainly to the direct correlation between traveller experiences and DI (e.g., Li, Liu, and Soutar, 2021). Furthermore, Skotis and Livas (2024, p.1) recognised that more knowledge about the "connections and variations of experience concepts and their influence on customer satisfaction" is needed.

The tourism experience and DI can determine other mental events of tourists, including their memories of the destination (Tung and Ritchie, 2011; Stavrianea and Kamenidou, 2020; Kim, Ribeiro and LI, 2022). Psychological literature, including the preferences-as-memory framework (Pommeranz, Broekens, Wiggers, Brinkman and Jonker, 2012), supports the impact of memorising and recalling perceptions on people's future decision-making (Levine, Lench and Safer, 2009). Also, despite recognising the relevance of memory in the tourism experience (Kim, Ribeiro and LI, 2022), to the best of the authors' knowledge, there is a dearth of studies on the relationship between the DI and tourists' memory.

Currently, in globally popular tourist destinations, it is common to welcome tourists from different parts of the world, including different regions of the country. Tourists can, therefore, be classified as domestic visitors, those who travel within their country's borders, and international visitors, those who travel outside their country's borders (World Tourism Organization, 2017). Several studies have explored the behaviour of domestic and international tourists in terms of attitudinal and behavioural dimensions such as destination image, satisfaction, quality of experience, and loyalty, among others (e.g., Iordanova and Styliadis, 2019; Ponsignon, Lunardo and Michrafy, 2021). Differences mainly were found between these two segments, supporting that they can play a significant role in how individuals perceive, interpret, and form opinions about places. Thus, more knowledge about the role of tourists' nationality in the relationships between tourist experience, experiential destination image and related cognitive, affective and behavioural outcomes, namely memory, satisfaction, and loyalty, will better inform decision-makers regarding designing more effective marketing strategies (Ponsignon, Lunardo and Michrafy, 2021).

Therefore, to address these research gaps, by introducing a more comprehensive view of the tourism experience and destination image this study aims to examine the correlation between tourism experience, experiential destination, image, tourism memory, tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. If understood as a crucial part of tourism memory formation, tourism experiences and the experiential destination image would be useful in predicting tourists' satisfaction and future behaviours. This study will explore tourism experience dimensions, which are the commencement point to develop the subsequent relationships and concepts of the conceptual model - experiential destination image, tourist memory, satisfaction and loyalty. A multi-group analysis will also be conducted to identify the primary differences between domestic and international tourists. As any mature sun and beach popular tourism destination, the Algarve region, located in Portugal, needs loyal and repeat visitation by tourists to keep its performance and be successful in a competitive scenario. Therefore, the comparison of the differences in the performance of the study's variables will provide a valuable understanding of the impact of cultural background on the consequences of the tourism experience for destination managers and marketers.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourist Experience

Experiences involve "a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132). To be more precise, Pine and Gilmore (1998, p. 98) define experience as when "a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event". In this view, customer experience refers to an individual's physical, spiritual, or emotional engagement with their experiences in a subjective and personal way. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four realms of the experience, i.e., education, escapism, aesthetic, and entertainment, sought to understand how to construct a memorable experience (Oh, Fiore and Jeong, 2007). In fact, most tourists are willing to engage in staged experiences (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2020), and the Experience Economy four realms model appears as a managerial approach for designing the stages where tourists live their experiences once at the destination (Chirakranont and Sakdiyakorn, 2022). For example,

Sotiriadis (2017) found such an approach valuable and valid in studying wildlife experiences in South Africa and Oh *et al.* (2007) in studying bed and breakfast experiences. To some scholars, customer experiences, including in touristic contexts, should be broadly investigated since they determine a psychological state of fulfilment and well-being (Filep, 2014). To others, it should also embrace the mission of being meaningful to tourists (Kirillova Lehto and Kai, 2017). It also advocated the involvement of tourists in co-designing their own experiences (Kirillova, Lehto and Kai, 2017), thus expanding the experience Economy theory.

Another strand of literature introduces customer experience as "a customer's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial, and social responses to a firm's offerings during the customer's entire purchase journey" (Lemon and Verhoef, 2016, p. 70). It refers to "non-deliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to particular stimuli" (Becker and Jaakkola, 2020, 637). Rather (2020) examined the experience from different perspectives, firstly, at the destination level, not limiting it to a specific experiential event, and secondly, using Schmitt's (1999) five strategic experiential modules (SEM), namely sense, feel, think, act and related, previously applied in touristic setting (e.g., Tsaur, Chiu and Wang, 2007).

Validating the tourism experience framework in a destination context, Rather (2020) calls for future researchers to investigate the role of tourism experience dimensions on tourists' behavioural intentions in different contexts. Therefore, this study will better merge the measurement frameworks of the tourism experience developed by Rather (2020) and Oh *et al.* (2007) to understand tourists' experiences in the current research context. The first framework emphasises the applications of what consumers (tourists) experience for the experiential marketing of the destinations. From this perspective, Li *et al.* (2021) also explain that since tourists should be viewed as rational *and* emotional consumers, destination marketers must provide them with different sensory (engaging their five senses), emotional (such as excitement), thinking (intellectual engagement), acting (physical activities), and relating (relationship with other people) experiences. However, the second framework, built on Pine and Gilmore's conceptualisation (1998), is primarily concerned with the different individuals' needs and values of educational, entertainment, aesthetic, and escapism experiences for tourists across travel. Educational experiences help individuals learn a new activity or increase knowledge or skills through active participation and absorption (Mehmetoglu and Engen, 2011). In contrast, in the esthetic experience, a tourist has a great feeling of immersion into the environmental characteristics through low-intensity, silent activities such as museum visiting (Lee, Hwang and Shim, 2019). An entertainment experience can be generated through passive participation, stimulating enjoyment and absorption in a specific context or event (Chang, Moyle, Dupre, Filep and Vada, 2022; Elomba, 2022). When individuals escape a routine life through active participation and great immersion in what they do (Lee, Hwang and Shim, 2019), they experience escapism.

Also, due to some similarities and links between the two frameworks (such as thinking and education), integrating them can provide an all-inclusive, more integrated structure of the tourism experience, which is also suggested by Jurowski (2009). In this context, the extant theoretical frameworks suggest that the experience of individuals influences their perceptions of places (Iordanova and Stydilis, 2019) and that experience accumulated in situ influences the image formation (e.g., Shi, Gursoy and Chen, 2019), tourist's satisfaction (Chi and Qu, 2008), memory (Anaya and Lehto, 2023) and loyalty (Prayag and Ryan, 2012; Ragb *et al.*, 2020). Thus, we argue:

H1: Tourist experience positively affects the cognitive experiential image of the destination.

H2: Tourist experience positively affects the affective experiential image of the destination.

2.2. Destination Image

According to Afshardoost and Eshaghi (2020), most studies conceptualise DI as a higher-order construct comprising multiple sub-dimensions (cognitive and affective). The cognitive dimension refers to the beliefs about the destination's attributes, while the affective represents tourists' emotions and feelings towards the place (Tasci, Gartner and Cavusgil, 2007; Yang, Isa and Yao and Liu, 2022). In other words, a cognitive image represents a tourist's perception and understanding of a destination's tangible elements, including social environment, infrastructure, natural resources, quality of experiences, and attractions (Wang, Ch'ng, Xu, Wang and Zhang, 2023). Nonetheless, the affective evaluations of these attributes remain abstract and nebulous, rendering them less effective for the strategic design of marketing initiatives (Woosnam, Stylidis, and Ivkov, 2020), despite their significant role in shaping the overall image of a destination. Nanggong and Mohammad (2024) believe that memorable tourism experiences are highly valuable as they create a deeper personal connection for the individual.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the concept of the destination image is crucial because it influences every stage of the tourists' decision-making process (Lalicic, Marine-Roig, Ferrer-Rosell and Martín-Fuentes, 2021; Trang, Yoo, Joo and Lee, 2023, among others). Thus, before the experience, the destination image is important to tourists because they feed from the visual cues, imagery, and expectations they develop based on the beliefs and mental impressions perceived of the destination through organic or induced sources (e.g., Tasci *et al.*, 2007). During the experience in situ, tourists engage in various events that may shape and reform the pre-existing beliefs and images about the destination (Kim, 2018; Stylidis, Woosnam and Tasci, 2022). In line with this, Lalicic, Marine-Roig, Ferrer-Rosell and Martín-Fuentes (2021, p.10) advocate that "the destination image design should be intrinsically related to tourists' experiences and based on experiential data". There is widespread recognition that visitation, interactions, and experiences with the destination and its inhabitants, along with the feelings evoked, mould DI and loyalty (Tasci *et al.*, 2007; Stylidis, Woosnam and Tasci, 2022). The experiential approach to the destination image is imbued in Lai and Li's (2016, p. 1074) definition of tourism destination image as "a voluntary, multisensory, primarily picture-like, qualia-arousing, conscious, and quasi-perceptual mental (i.e., private, nonspatial, and intentional) experience held by tourists about a destination". In fact, it is acknowledged that on-site experience shapes the experiential destination image, but the literature still needs to fully explore this link (e.g., Lee *et al.*, 2014; Li *et al.*, 2021; Choi and Cai, 2022; Trand *et al.*, 2023). The experiential destination image promotes a comprehensive tourist image shaped by the overall experience of the visitor (Choi and Cai, 2022). Research on branding and advertising suggests that non-experiential images respond more to advertising influence, whereas experiential images are shaped by product experiences during the actual visitation to the place (Singh, Ariza-Montes and Han, 2023). Therefore, the experiential image of a destination integrates both the cognitive aspects, such as the knowledge and information visitors gain, and the affective aspects, including the emotional responses and feelings elicited during their visit. This combination of cognitive and affective components results in a comprehensive, real and holistic perception of the destination, influencing future attitudes and behaviours towards it.

Tourists recollect their experiences through memory and identify and attach meanings and symbolism to specific events they lived or to the destination brand (Ekinci, Sirakaya-Turk and Preciado, 2013; Anaya and Lehto, 2023), which influence tourists' loyalty (Zhang, Fu, Cai and Lu, 2014). Therefore, DI impacts on memory are crucial. White (2004, p. 313) noted that memory images "are those deriving from previous personal experience". Moreover, as Li and Zhao (2021) found, destination image and memory are related, and emotions play an essential part in this relationship. Thus, we posit:

H3: Cognitive experiential image positively affects tourism memory.

H4: Affective experiential image positively affects tourism memory.

2.3. *Tourism memory*

Memory is "an alliance of systems that work together, allowing us to learn from the past and predict the future" (Baddeley, 1999, p.1). For Wood (2020), memories are commodities valued and cherished by individuals. These systems or commodities are fundamental since tourists use the memories of past experiences in their decision-making process regarding their holiday planning and purchases (Kim, Ribeiro and Li, 2022). People retain the most memorable experiences (deMatos, Sá, and Duarte, 2021; deMatos, Duarte and Sá, 2023) or fleeting episodes (Anaya and Lehto, 2023). As Larson (2007) noted, tourism involves experiences, which are complex psychological processes in which memory is fundamental. In tourism activities, destination managers must be aware that the five senses responsible for receiving sensory information from external stimuli are crucial for tourists' perception and memory of an event or episode (Agapito, Pinto and Mendes, 2017). Such tourism memories will also include the meaning, feelings, activities and interactions experienced by tourists (Holland and Kensinger, 2010; Lee, 2023), which can be altered to enhance or even suppress a particular detail or event (Lee, 2023).

Tourism memories are this way fundamental in (re)shaping the experiences of tourists (i.e., what, how, when, why they remember and alter those memories), which can change their view, the memory of the experience, but also values, beliefs, and self-concept (Manthiou, Ayadi, Lee, Chiang and Tang, 2017; Pool, Khodadadi and Asadi, 2018). These are all critical parts of tourists' narratives. The preferences-as-memory approach highlights how people interrogate their memories and retrieve related knowledge to determine the best action and outcome (Finucane and Holup, 2006; Weber and Johnson, 2006). In effect, then, tourism memories influence and are influenced by the tourism experience (Ali, Ryu, and Hussain, 2016; Lee, 2023), which, under the halo effect, can influence destination image, tourist satisfaction, and loyalty (e.g., Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2013; Zhang *et al.*, 2018; Li and Zhao, 2021). Also, scholars and practitioners know the close relationship between client satisfaction and loyalty (Lee *et al.*, 2014; Martín-Santana, Beerli-Palacio, and Nazzareno, 2017). According to Hultman, Skarmeas, Oghazi and Beheshti (2015, p.2229), "satisfied tourists may speak favourably of a visited destination to their social circle upon return". Therefore, the following hypotheses are set:

H5: Tourism memory positively affects tourist satisfaction.

H6: Tourism memory positively affects tourist loyalty.

H7: Tourist satisfaction positively affects tourist loyalty.

2.4. *Domestic vs. international tourist perspectives*

Previous studies noted differences in consumer attitudes between domestic and international tourists regarding a destination (Stylidis, Shani and Belhassen, 2017; Tasci, Uslu, Stylidis and Woosnam, 2022). For example, according to Elomba and Yun (2018), tourist's nationality and familiarity with the local culture play a significant role in shaping their perceptions of the authenticity of a destination's souvenirs. Regarding destination image, Maizida (2021) argued that tourists' perceptions of tourism destinations may differ across cultures and demonstrated a distinction in cognitive evaluation (rather than affective evaluation) about Yogyakarta in Indonesia between foreign and domestic tourists. Motivations and reasons for visiting a destination may also differ between these two categories of tourists (see Mahadevan and Zhang, 2022). Comparing the "pre-travel" and "in situ" destination image, Iordanova and Stylidis (2019) also presented empirical findings indicating significant distinctions between domestic and international tourists in their perceptions of cities as tourist destinations, both in advance and during their actual visits. Interestingly, Stone and Nyaupane (2019) conducted a study on tourists' preferences and gaze, a factor highly influential in shaping destination images and revealed distinctions in the attractions that draw the attention of international and domestic tourists. Therefore, in the current study, we also intend to examine the impact of tourists' nationality on the relationships

between the study's variables. Informed by the above discussion, this study is conceptualised as shown in Figure 1.

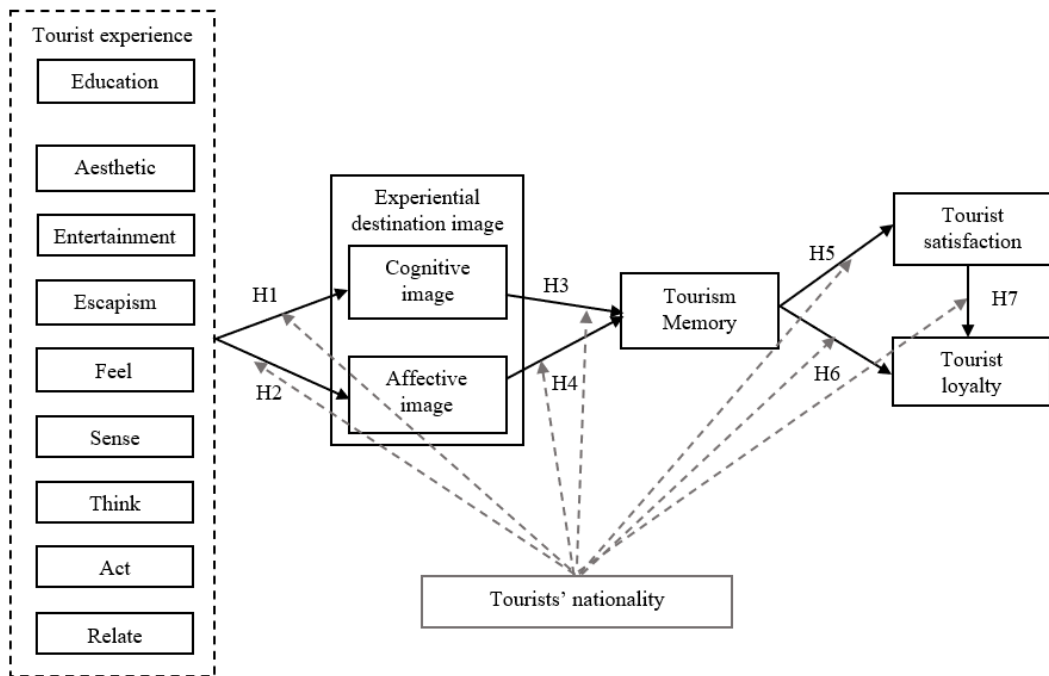


Figure 1. *Conceptual model*

3. Methods

3.1. Study context

Located in the southernmost region of Europe and at the southern end of Portugal along the Atlantic Ocean (Figure 2), the Algarve is a major Portuguese tourist destination due to its location, composed of extensive beaches, good weather conditions, golf resorts, and more (Visit Algarve, 2024). This popular sun and beach destination, with an area of approximately five thousand km², and half a million inhabitants, has been a very successful tourism destination since the 1970s (Nunes, Raposo & Gomes, 2020). For the past decades, Algarve has been an elected tourism destination for domestic tourists and other European tourists, mainly from United Kingdom, Netherlands, Germany, France, Spain to name a few (Visit Algarve, 2024). It has been rewarded several times with tourism related prizes, among which the The World Travel Awards as Europe's leading beach destination since 2015 (WTA, 2024). Over the decades, the tourism industry remains the cornerstone of the Algarve's economy, attracting mainly sun and sea domestic and international tourists from neighbourhoods. In 2023, the Algarve recorded 20.38 million overnight hotel stays, with the tourists from United Kingdom representing the main market with 5.8 million overnight hotel stays (INE, 2024).

To extend the traditional sun and beach tourism, the Portuguese authorities supported other complementary products like golf, culture, and traditions to add value and kept a competitive facet of the regional economy all year around (Soler, Gemar, Correia and Serra, 2019; Valle, Guerreiro Mendes and Silva, 2011). This strategic refocusing has bolstered the region's appeal, making it a favoured tourism destination for high purchasing power tourists looking for other tourism experiences other than sun and beach (Soler *et al.*, 2019).

As a result of the importance of tourism for the regional economy, the local authorities must pay attention to how tourists evaluate their experiences and how they shape their experiential destination image, memories, satisfaction and loyalty to maintain their competitiveness in the tourism sector.



Figure 2. *The Algarve region* (Source: Pinto *et al.*, 2023)

3.2. Measurement

Validated scales were adopted from literature to measure key constructs: tourists' memory (Ali, Ryu and Hussain, 2016), tourists' satisfaction (Lee *et al.*, 2014), tourists' loyalty (Martín-Santana *et al.*, 2017), and tourists' experience (Oh *et al.*, 2007; Rather, 2020). Due to the context-driven experiential destination image, the initial list of attributes identified through the literature review underwent modification and double-validation. Two panels were involved in this process: (1) professionals from public and private companies in the tourism sector and (2) academics with expertise in marketing and tourism. A panel comprising six representatives from public (e.g., Municipality) and private (e.g., independent and Hotel chain Group) entities was invited to add new items or dimensions to the literature-derived list that they believed were missing to capture the uniqueness of the tourism destination. The elicited attributes were then integrated into the initial list, which included: "Tolls are very expensive," "There are no language barriers at the destination," "Interesting artisanal crafts," "Good value for money," "Safe place to travel," and "The destination can be easily reached". To enhance content validity, the participants in panel 1 were also invited to independently analyse the integrated list of attributes to identify redundant and non-relevant items to the study context. Generally, industry stakeholders suggested only cognitive items. Subsequently, a second expert panel (panel 2), consisting of seven academics in the Tourism and Marketing fields with extensive knowledge of the region as a tourism destination, reviewed the resulting list of attributes. They identified and eliminated redundancies. This process resulted in a final list of 55 attributes, including 18 affective and 37 functional ones.

A final list of 55 attributes, including cognitive and affective ones, was employed to measure the experiential image of the tourism destination. Therefore, seven and four reflective constructs, respectively, were used in this study. In Table 3, the list of constructs and items are introduced. All research items were evaluated on Likert-type scales, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". The English questionnaire was translated into Portuguese, French, German, and Spanish using a back-to-back translation method (Dedeoglu, Bilgihan, Ye, Buonincontri and Okumus, 2018). Finally, a pre-test with 12 tourists from different nationalities verified the validity and flow of the questionnaire.

After minor wording changes, the questionnaire was considered suitable for application in a live setting to collect meaningful data.

Table 1. *Respondents' profile*

Characteristic		Nationality							
		Portuguese	UK	Germany	Spain	France	Netherlands	Ireland	Other
Gender	Female	452	372	129	121	124	88	88	200
	Male	278	283	94	88	87	66	69	1103
	other	2	3	1	0	1	1	0	9
Age	18-24	145	103	60	51	66	40	44	101
	25-64	538	487	151	154	134	103	98	223
	+65	40	59	7	5	11	11	14	14
Education	Less than high school	88	20	14	4	12	12	10	32
	Completed high school	208	166	69	37	45	22	29	67
	University	389	392	127	157	88	97	156	216
Marital status	Single	295	231	116	133	95	59	66	149
	Married/civil partnership	373	389	101	71	108	91	84	165
	Divorced/separated	45	25	3	5	7	4	3	19
	Widowed	10	6	1	1	1	0	1	3
Occupation	Employed	482	414	127	132	115	86	88	1645
	Self-employed	76	67	27	22	20	17	21	290
	Retired	39	95	10	8	12	14	15	212
	Domestic	6	4	3	0	0	0	3	19
	Unemployed	12	6	0	9	6	2	2	40
	Student	103	57	48	35	53	34	23	420
other	0	1	2	0	0	0	1	4	
Trip duration (day)	1-7	356	311	87	156	52	79	97	162
	8-14	218	246	102	34	76	57	65	124
	15-21	90	50	17	7	17	10	33	34
	22-28	5	12	4	0	4	3	0	3
	+ 29	14	15	4	2	3	0	4	6

3.3. Sampling and Data Collection

The sample unit of the current research was a tourist who travelled to the Algarve in 2021 during low or high seasons. To gain a cross-cultural perspective, this study's statistical population include national and international visitors. It allowed the researchers to investigate the relationship between individuals' cultural backgrounds and the developed hypotheses. A proportional stratified sample by season and the most representative issuing markets was implemented. According to Statistics Portugal, the central statistical authority in Portugal, in 2018, a total of 4,732,165 guests were accommodated in diverse official tourist accommodations (i.e., Hotels, Local Accommodation, Rural Tourism and Residential Tourism) in the Algarve region (INE, 2020). Next, the most representative issuing markets based on their contribution (in the high and low tourism seasons) to the total number of guests were identified: Portuguese, British, French, German, Spanish, Irish, Dutch and others. Using data from guests staying at the official accommodations, by issuing markets and seasons of the year (INE, 2020) a provisional sample of 2401 respondents was determined. Nevertheless, in the end of the data collection, 2709 questionnaires were collected and validated, 1909 in the high season (between July and September) and 800 in the low season (between October and June), thus assuring a margin of error lower or equal to 2% with a 95% confidence level. After briefly introducing the study's purpose, the data collection

instrument was distributed among all potential respondents attending the Faro International Airport's departure area. Table 1 summarises the respondents' demographic information.

3.4. Data analysis

SPSS and WarpPLS 8.0 software were adopted to examine the data. First, because the 28 tourism experience items were drawn from several previously proposed and potentially overlapping scales, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was utilised to identify the underlying components in the items. The constructs' reliability and validity were assessed in the next phase, and the conceptual model was estimated using a PLS-SEM approach. This method was chosen because of its benefits for prediction and because it is helpful when data are non-normal (Hair, Hult, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2016). Also, the approach to dealing with the missing data was mean imputation, one of the most common methods used (Batista and Monard, 2003). Finally, the multi-group analysis tested the moderating effect of tourists' nationality.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Exploratory factor analysis of tourist experience

As mentioned earlier, EFA was applied to prevent overlap between the items of the tourist experience. The cut-off values were adopted as follows (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2019): Eigenvalues and commonalities above 0.50, factor loadings greater than 0.50, and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value greater than 0.60. After removing seven items with commonalities lower than 0.5 and performing two rounds of EFA, the result of KMO and Bartlett's tests confirmed the sample adequacy to perform EFA (KMO = 0.918; $\chi^2 = 31442.964$; $df = 210$; $p < 0.000$). Thus, according to the mentioned criteria, five factors (21 items) were extracted and explained 69.418 % of tourist experience was constructed according to the scree plot and total variance. Table 2 shows the simple structure of 21 items using a Varimax rotation method.

As such, factor 1, labelled "Emotional engagement", was related to individuals' emotional connections with the destination and the subsequent actions, such as "sharing the experience with others" and "creative thinking". The second factor also explained the knowledge gained through tourism experiences, so it was referred to as "Active learning". The third factor, "Passive entertainment", refers to watching others' activities as entertainment. The next factor was called "Immersive scape" reflecting a feeling of drowning and being different throughout the experience. Finally, factor 5, "Aesthetic appeal", reflects the individual's enjoyment of the destination environments.

4.2. Measurement model

To evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs, the authors used WarpPLS 8.0 and considered the criteria suggested by Hair *et al.* (2019). As such, loading values should be at least 0.60 for each item to provide acceptable reliability. Except for two items of experiential destination image (*Interesting artisanal crafts*; *Algarve is a quiet destination*), which were removed due to the loading being lower than 0.60, all the other items had acceptable loading values and were linked well to their constructions. Moreover, the Composite Reliability (CR), which confirms each latent variable's internal consistency, should be above 0.70 to be considered acceptable. As shown in the sixth column of Table 3, all the study's latent variables had appropriate CR values, confirming the reliability of the constructs. Also, for a construct to be considered convergent, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) metric must have a minimum value of 0.5, indicating that it explains 50 per cent or more of the variance of its components. The AVE scores, ranging from 0.504 (infrastructure) to 0.847 (tourism memory), indicate convergent validity for all constructs.

Table 2. Factor loadings for the tourist experience scale

Constructs and items	Factor loading	Variance explained (%)	Eigenvalue	Alpha Cronbach
<i>Emotional engagement</i>				
1. The Algarve is a destination that makes me respond in an emotional manner	0.733	17.291	8.163	0.855
2. The Algarve is a destination that tries to put me in a certain mood	0.732			
3. The Algarve is a destination that tries to appeal to my creative thinking	0.716			
4. The Algarve is a destination that tries to engage my senses	0.694			
5. The Algarve is a destination that tries to intrigue me	0.622			
6. I would like to share what I experienced in the Algarve	0.604			
7. The Algarve is a destination perceptually interesting	0.586			
<i>Active learning</i>				
8. I learned a lot	0.858	15.478	2.020	0.918
9. The experience has made me more knowledgeable	0.828			
10. It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	0.805			
11. It was a real learning experience	0.795			
<i>Passive entertainment</i>				
12. I really enjoyed watching what others were doing	0.856	15.413	1.669	0.920
13. The activities of others were fun to watch	0.841			
14. Watching others participating in the activities was captivating	0.829			
15. The activities of others were amusing to watch	0.800			
<i>Immersive escape</i>				
16. The experience here let me imagine being someone else	0.788	13.014	1.578	0.844
17. I felt like a different person here	0.783			
18. I felt like I was living in a different time or place	0.764			
19. I completely escaped from reality	0.688			
<i>Aesthetic appeal</i>				
20. Being here was very pleasant	0.818	8.222	1.147	0.648
21. The setting was very attractive	0.752			

Additionally, a common method bias assessment was carried out using a full collinearity test (Kock, 2014). The variance inflation factor (VIF) for all constructs was below 3.3, signifying the absence of both vertical and lateral collinearity in the data.

Table 3. Measurement model assessment

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	Loading	CR	AVE	VIF
Emotional engagement (EE)	The Algarve is a destination that makes me respond in an emotional manner	3.827	0.768	0.763	0.888	0.533	2.054
	The Algarve is a destination that tries to put me in a certain mood	3.482	0.868	0.746			
	The Algarve is a destination that tries to appeal to my creative thinking	3.701	0.782	0.731			

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	Loading	CR	AVE	VIF
	The Algarve is a destination that tries to engage my senses	3.405	0.903	0.692			
	The Algarve is a destination that tries to intrigue me	3.430	0.888	0.789			
	I would like to share what I experienced in the Algarve	3.966	0.728	0.686			
	The Algarve is a destination perceptually interesting	4.051	0.670	0.697			
Active learning (AL)	I learned a lot	3.339	0.853	0.931	0.941	0.800	1.704
	The experience has made me more knowledgeable	3.474	0.862	0.872			
	It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	3.455	0.879	0.888			
	It was a real learning experience	3.305	0.886	0.885			
Passive entertainment (PE)	I really enjoyed watching what others were doing	3.326	0.860	0.918	0.940	0.798	1.648
	The activities of others were fun to watch	3.323	0.859	0.903			
	Watching others participating in the activities was captivating	3.411	0.822	0.895			
	The activities of others were amusing to watch	3.521	0.810	0.856			
Immersive escape (IE)	The experience here let me imagine being someone else	2.897	1.076	0.884	0.897	0.686	1.676
	I felt like a different person here	3.081	1.016	0.869			
	I felt like I was living in a different time or place	3.171	1.027	0.851			
	I completely escaped from reality	3.481	1.097	0.694			
Aesthetic appeal (AA)	Being here was very pleasant	4.157	0.733	0.858	0.848	0.737	1.576
	The setting was very attractive	4.043	0.755	0.858			
Infrastructures (I)	Algarve offers good access to telecommunication services	3.633	0.850	0.750	0.835	0.504	1.645
	Algarve offers a good road system	3.692	0.952	0.711			
	Algarve offers good local transport	3.418	0.958	0.722			
	Algarve offers good medical care and facilities	3.425	0.833	0.747			
	Algarve offers good value for money	3.797	0.961	0.609			
Local culture (LC)	Tourists can enjoy local events	3.796	0.795	0.731	0.825	0.541	1.893
	Interesting local tours/excursions	3.767	0.778	0.757			
	The cultural heritage is unique	3.710	0.820	0.710			
	There are touristic information centres at the destination	3.739	0.818	0.742			
Leisure activities (LA)	Algarve offers good Golf facilities	3.700	0.817	0.824	0.837	0.633	1.645
	Algarve offers good sporting facilities	3.757	0.772	0.850			
	Algarve offers good water parks and/or thematic parks	3.803	0.803	0.705			
Environmentally oriented (EO)	No air and noise pollution	3.459	0.920	0.776	0.824	0.610	1.333
	Unpolluted/unspoiled environment	3.508	0.941	0.791			

Construct	Item	Mean	SD	Loading	CR	AVE	VIF
Entertainment (E)	Cleanliness and hygiene standards at the destination are high	3.724	0.895	0.776	0.803	0.576	1.559
	Water sports are available	4.027	0.816	0.802			
	There are outdoor activities	4.025	0.820	0.779			
Local gastronomy (LG)	Appealing/good nightlife	3.741	0.849	0.693	0.839	0.635	1.641
	Algarve offers good gastronomy	4.237	0.770	0.856			
	Local food (Cuisine) is appealing	4.137	0.829	0.805			
Landscape (L)	Algarve offers good shopping facilities	3.922	0.835	0.724	0.853	0.743	1.332
	The natural landscape is attractive	4.339	0.755	0.862			
Joyful (J)	The scenery is beautiful	4.342	0.746	0.862	0.899	0.599	3.159
	Algarve is a fun destination	4.124	0.697	0.804			
	Algarve is an entertaining and exciting place	4.013	0.807	0.757			
	Algarve is a stimulating place to visit	4.057	0.728	0.814			
	Algarve is a happy destination	4.254	0.643	0.830			
	Algarve is a pretty destination	4.363	0.626	0.770			
	Algarve is an interesting place to visit	4.201	0.724	0.655			
Calm (C)	Algarve is a restful destination	4.241	0.709	0.895	0.913	0.778	2.595
	Algarve is a relaxing destination	4.284	0.668	0.890			
	Algarve is a pleasant and friendly place	4.342	0.611	0.861			
Family-safe (FS)	Algarve is a safe place to travel	4.445	0.638	0.848	0.844	0.643	1.544
	Algarve is a family-oriented place	4.270	0.742	0.786			
	Algarve is a sunny place to visit	4.616	0.598	0.770			
Glamorous (G)	Algarve is a luxurious place	3.521	0.944	0.847	0.811	0.593	1.311
	Algarve is a fashionable place	3.589	0.931	0.827			
	Algarve is an expensive place to visit	3.170	1.125	0.614			
Tourism memories (TM)	I have wonderful memories of my visit to the Algarve	4.224	0.710	0.924	0.943	0.847	2.800
	I won't forget my experience of visiting the Algarve	4.208	0.719	0.913			
	I will remember many positive things about the Algarve	4.275	0.663	0.925			
Tourist satisfaction (TS)	I have really enjoyed	4.312	0.635	0.906	0.932	0.821	3.192
	My choice was a wise one	4.217	0.699	0.913			
	It is exactly what I needed	4.232	0.733	0.900			
Tourist loyalty (TL)	I will encourage my friends and/or family to visit the Algarve sometime	4.223	0.686	0.920	0.924	0.801	2.512
	I will discuss positive things about this holiday with my family and/or friends	4.285	0.635	0.910			
	Assuming my current circumstances remain the same, I will choose to come again to the Algarve	4.220	0.764	0.855			

Ultimately, two criteria were assessed to confirm the discriminant validity, which evaluates the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs. To meet the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criteria, AVEs for each construct must be higher than the correlation with any other construct met in this study (the main diagonal and numbers below it in Table 4). Also, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratios must be less than 0.85 or 0.9 (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015), as numbers above the main diagonal shown in table 4. The discriminant validity of the factor-based PLS algorithms was further demonstrated by all full collinearity variance inflation factor (VIF) scores being below 5.

4.3. Structural model

The structural model of the research was also estimated using WarpPLS, which assessed the significance of path coefficients and the R^2 and Q^2 coefficients for endogenous constructs, indicating the model's explanatory power and predictive accuracy, respectively. Hair, Ringle and Sarstedt (2011) suggested that R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 are categorised as high, moderate, and low, and positive Q^2 values indicate that the model for that construct is predictively accurate. In this study, the endogenous constructs of the cognitive experiential image, affective experiential image, tourist memory, tourist satisfaction and tourist loyalty have the R^2 values of 0.369, 0.349, 0.321, 0.599, and 0.548 and the Q^2 values of 0.358, 0.346, 0.320, 0.598, and 0.548 respectively. Therefore, the explanatory power and predictive accuracy of the constructs are acceptable. Additionally, all the quality indices confirm the goodness of fit of the conceptual model: average path coefficient (APC) = 0.246, $p < 0.001$; average R^2 (ARS) = 0.436, $p < 0.001$; average adjusted R^2 (AARS) = 0.435, $p < 0.001$; average block variance inflation factor (AVIF) = 1.787 (acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3); average full collinearity variance inflation factor (AFVIF) = 2.104 (acceptable if ≤ 5 , ideally ≤ 3.3); Tenenhaus GoF (GoF) = 0.554 (small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36), and standard root mean squared residual (SRMR) = 0.061, acceptable if ≤ 0.1 .

The findings of the hypothesis testing (table 5) show that except for "passive entertainment", other factors of tourist experience have a significant, positive impact on the cognitive experiential image. More precisely, the cognitive experiential dimension of the destination image is strongly influenced by "active learning, aesthetic appeal, and immersive escape", respectively. Despite the significance of the relationship, "emotional engagement" has minimal impact on the cognitive experiential image. The most substantial effect on the affective experiential image of a destination is felt through emotional engagement, followed closely by aesthetic appeal". On the other hand, the significance of the relationship between "active learning" and "immersive escape" and the affective experiential image was not confirmed. Furthermore, despite its importance, "passive entertainment" had little effect on the affective experiential image. Regarding the impact of cognitive and affective experiential images on tourism memory, it turned out that both cognitive and affective images strongly influence the independent variable, with affective experiential image taking the lead. However, it was discovered that tourism memory has a more significant effect on tourists' satisfaction than tourists' loyalty. On the other hand, the level of satisfaction of visitors can significantly affect their loyalty.

4.4 The moderating effect of tourist' nationality

Lastly, a multi-group analysis was employed to test the research hypotheses for two groups of respondents, domestic and international tourists. Table 6 details the developed hypotheses for the two groups. "In multi-group analysis, normally path coefficients are compared" (Kock, 2022, p. 30). Significant path coefficients (β) above 0.02, 0.15, or 0.35 show a small, medium, or large effect size, respectively (Bagheri, Gurreiro, Pinto, & Ghaderi 2024). Before analysing the path coefficients, it should be mentioned that the VIF scores for each construct are below the threshold value of 3.3 in both subsamples, indicating that collinearity is not an issue (Diamantopoulos & Sigauw, 2006).

Table 4. Discriminant validity analysis (Fornell and Larcker; HTMT ratio)

	TE-EE	TE-AL	TE-PE	TE-IE	TE-AA	EDI-I	EDI-IC	EDI-LA	EDI-EO	EDI-E	EDI-LIG	EDI-L	EDI-J	EDI-C	TE-FS	TE-G	TM	TS	TL
TE-EE	0.730	0.585	0.499	0.576	0.502	0.406	0.558	0.353	0.307	0.38	0.461	0.377	0.612	0.47	0.338	0.38	0.532	0.566	0.6
TE-AL	0.57	0.894	0.499	0.542	0.429	0.353	0.519	0.234	0.285	0.243	0.36	0.242	0.409	0.289	0.149	0.261	0.356	0.335	0.358
TE-PE	0.441	0.457	0.893	0.58	0.389	0.369	0.481	0.37	0.24	0.359	0.318	0.169	0.374	0.217	0.15	0.279	0.31	0.324	0.37
TE-IE	0.488	0.480	0.513	0.828	0.271	0.325	0.401	0.325	0.261	0.187	0.267	0.126	0.315	0.214	0.153	0.34	0.287	0.329	0.343
TE-AA	0.369	0.329	0.297	0.197	0.858	0.436	0.469	0.331	0.389	0.46	0.49	0.519	0.615	0.591	0.441	0.286	0.626	0.654	0.659
EDI-I	0.322	0.290	0.305	0.265	0.299	0.710	0.613	0.642	0.572	0.487	0.575	0.287	0.516	0.49	0.385	0.402	0.437	0.458	0.46
EDI-IC	0.435	0.420	0.389	0.311	0.318	0.449	0.735	0.575	0.458	0.706	0.65	0.462	0.669	0.517	0.397	0.399	0.441	0.438	0.451
EDI-LA	0.273	0.190	0.297	0.250	0.224	0.469	0.407	0.796	0.385	0.599	0.578	0.181	0.485	0.392	0.432	0.524	0.323	0.359	0.416
EDI-EO	0.233	0.225	0.189	0.204	0.257	0.495	0.319	0.271	0.781	0.359	0.393	0.39	0.386	0.459	0.336	0.291	0.382	0.402	0.407
EDI-E	0.276	0.184	0.270	0.131	0.294	0.332	0.476	0.395	0.236	0.759	0.613	0.455	0.609	0.44	0.471	0.311	0.426	0.431	0.441
EDI-LIG	0.355	0.286	0.251	0.201	0.331	0.407	0.459	0.402	0.272	0.407	0.797	0.459	0.636	0.561	0.555	0.392	0.47	0.483	0.53
EDI-L	0.28	0.187	0.130	0.091	0.337	0.197	0.316	0.123	0.26	0.296	0.314	0.862	0.532	0.484	0.376	0.212	0.428	0.416	0.414
EDI-J	0.523	0.361	0.332	0.266	0.459	0.415	0.526	0.381	0.298	0.451	0.495	0.396	0.774	0.852	0.633	0.453	0.587	0.597	0.596
EDI-C	0.400	0.256	0.191	0.180	0.438	0.388	0.404	0.307	0.351	0.326	0.436	0.362	0.734	0.882	0.665	0.358	0.566	0.592	0.58
TE-FS	0.264	0.122	0.122	0.107	0.300	0.282	0.286	0.308	0.238	0.318	0.398	0.358	0.498	0.533	0.802	0.295	0.414	0.463	0.499
TE-G	0.295	0.200	0.226	0.250	0.111	0.206	0.284	0.368	0.162	0.159	0.255	0.106	0.354	0.236	0.189	0.770	0.263	0.308	0.328
TM	0.465	0.325	0.282	0.251	0.479	0.356	0.356	0.260	0.300	0.324	0.377	0.331	0.522	0.500	0.335	0.122	0.921	0.857	0.745
TS	0.491	0.303	0.292	0.283	0.495	0.369	0.349	0.286	0.313	0.324	0.383	0.317	0.526	0.518	0.371	0.161	0.772	0.906	0.813
TL	0.516	0.321	0.283	0.291	0.48	0.369	0.357	0.328	0.315	0.328	0.415	0.314	0.52	0.593	0.397	0.179	0.666	0.719	0.895

Table 5. *Hypotheses test*

Path	Path coefficient	f^2	p-value
H1: Tourist experience → Cognitive image			
H1a: Emotional engagement → Cognitive image	0.075	0.032	< 0.001
H1b: Active learning → Cognitive image	0.274	0.130	< 0.001
H1c: Passive entertainment → Cognitive image	0.026	0.010	0.087
H1d: Immersive escape → Cognitive image	0.179	0.079	< 0.001
H1e: Aesthetic appeal → Cognitive image	0.231	0.112	< 0.001
H2: Tourist experience → Affective image			
H2a: Emotional engagement → Affective image	0.342	0.169	< 0.001
H2b: Active learning → Affective image	0.002	0.001	0.450
H2c: Passive entertainment → Affective image	0.046	0.015	0.009
H2d: Immersive escape → Affective image	0.003	0.001	0.439
H2e: Aesthetic appeal → Affective image	0.338	0.165	< 0.001
H3: Cognitive image → Tourism memory	0.273	0.137	< 0.001
H4: Affective image → Tourism memory	0.349	0.184	< 0.001
H4: Tourism memory → Tourist satisfaction	0.774	0.599	< 0.001
H5: Tourism memory → Tourist loyalty	0.275	0.184	< 0.001
H6: Tourist satisfaction → Tourist loyalty	0.506	0.364	< 0.001

The multi-group comparison revealed that the path coefficient for H1, the relationship established between tourist experience and cognitive experiential image, is slightly over for international tourists. However, this difference is statistically insignificant ($p = 0.202 > 0.05$). Additionally, regarding the relationship between the tourist experience and affective experiential destination image, H2, figured out that what has been experienced in the destination has a stronger impact on the affective experiential image of the destination for international tourists than domestic visitors, and the difference is significant ($p = 0.002 < 0.05$). Also, the path relationships between the cognitive and affective experiential images and tourism memory (H3 and H4) are confirmed for the two groups. However, the multi-group analysis shows a significant difference between the two sub-samples regarding the cognitive experiential image's effect on tourism memory ($p = 0.026 < 0.05$), which is stronger in the domestic sample. Furthermore, despite the lack of difference between the two sub-sample for the relationship between affective experiential image and tourism memory ($p = 0.443 > 0.05$), surprisingly, the path coefficient is greater than H3 for both groups, particularly international visitors. Moreover, although the p-value level ($p = 0.370 > 0.05$) does not confirm the effectiveness of tourists' nationality on the relationship between tourism memory and tourist satisfaction (H5), the path is found to be the strongest defined one in this research for both groups. Finally, both tourism memory and tourist satisfaction have different effects on tourists' loyalty (H6 and H7), both of which are not only confirmed but also differ for domestic and international tourists ($p = 0.002$ and $0.005 < 0.05$).

Table 6. *Path estimates: multi-group analysis and the moderating effect of tourists' nationality*

Path	Path coefficient		p-value*
	Domestic (n = 735)	International (n = 1974)	
H1: Tourist experience → Cognitive image	0.515	0.560	0.202
H2: Tourist experience → Affective image	0.395	0.517	0.002
H3: Cognitive image → Tourism memory	0.271	0.179	0.026
H4: Affective image → Tourism memory	0.311	0.430	0.443
H5: Tourism memory → Tourist satisfaction	0.723	0.775	0.370
H6: Tourism memory → Tourist loyalty	0.212	0.292	0.002
H7: Tourist satisfaction → Tourist loyalty	0.523	0.503	0.005

4.5 Discussion

The results support that the tourism experiences of both domestic and international tourists (from the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, and other countries) positively affect the cognitive image of the Algarve. Iordanova and Stydilis (2019) and Shi, Gursoy and Chen (2019) reported similar findings. More precisely, one of the most important findings was that experiences with potential for active learning, such as creative tourism products (Ali, Ryu, and Hussain, 2016; Booyens and Rogerson, 2015) or even cultural heritage tourism (Lee, 2023; Tigre Moura, Gnoth, and Deans, 2015), can have significant influence on cognitive image formation. This is an important contribution of the study because, experiences can help people to have a better knowledgeable evaluation of the culture, environment, gastronomy (e.g., local cuisine), among other aspects of the destination (Booyens and Rogerson, 2015; Tigre Moura, Gnoth, and Deans, 2015, Kaur & Kaur, 2024). Also, aesthetic appeal, which focuses on the physical attractiveness of the destination, significantly impacts both the intellectual and emotional attitude of tourists toward the destination. However, not surprisingly, the emotional engagement factor is the most important factor in affective image formation. This finding corroborates the ideas of Ro, Lee and Mattila (2013, p.202) who suggested that "emotional appeals and affective positioning are particularly recommended for the services context due to the services' intangible nature". Generally speaking, as Iordanova and Stydilis (2019) confirmed, diversified experiences meet different people's needs, resulting in a more positive experiential evaluation of the destination from cognitive and affective perspectives. However, the affective impact of events and experiences at the Algarve destination on its image formation is stronger for international than domestic tourists. It seems possible that tourists from other countries may have perceived the destination differently due to the novelty and unexpectedness of attractions and experiences that make them emotionally engaged with the destination and feed their curiosity (Ponsignon, Lunardo, and Michrafy, 2021). In this vein, Broschervik, Prebensen, Campos and Pinto (2021) argued that novel experiences can provide strong emotions, enhancing the experience's memorability. Nevertheless, this contradicts Maizida's (2021) findings, which affirmed a similar affective evaluation between domestic and international visitors in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. In general, as Lee, Lee and Lee (2014) discussed, the image of a destination is dynamic and influenced by various factors.

This paper has also argued that cognitive and affective assessments of destinations impact tourism memory. Based on means-end theory, Stavrianea and Kamenidou (2020) claimed that a place is more likely to stick in travellers' minds if they have a favourable impression (image) toward it and believe it can satisfy their needs through a variety of experiences. It appears, however, that tourism memory, a relatively less-studied area in tourism literature, is more influenced by affective image than cognitive image for both domestic and international tourists. Brosch, Scherer, Grandjean and Sander (2013) discuss how emotions can organise memories, how emotionally relevant information is prioritised, and how emotional experiences are more vivid and persistent than non-emotional ones.

Additionally, the results proved that tourism memory highly affects tourists' satisfaction and loyalty with Portuguese and international visitors. This is also echoed by Kim *et al.* (2022) and Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2013), who describe tourism memory as a seminal factor in predicting customer satisfaction and future behaviour. Therefore, tourism businesses can offer *memories* as the most valuable product, according to Wood (2020) and also, involve tourists as co-creator of their own experiences (Seyfi, Rasoolimanesh, Sthapit and Hall, 2024). The results also suggest that the tourist experience scale with the five dimensions (active learning, active learning, emotional engagement, passive entertainment, immersive escape, and aesthetic appeal) is useful and reliable to identify significant differences among domestic and international tourists regarding the impact of tourism memory on tourists' loyalty. Such differences, are most likely due to the Algarve's characteristics, climate, and tourist attractions, which appear to be the most popular with visitors from other nations. Also, in recent years, second-home

tourism, "as one of the strategic products in the national tourism plan" (Gomes, Pinto and Almeida, 2017, p. 197), has been paid attention in Portugal, especially in the Algarve to attract foreign tourists. Thus, to continue the evaluation of this strategic product, this study's scale, can be used as an effective, robust scale to evaluate tourists' experiences over time and their effects on memory. Kim (2018) also affirmed that memorable experiences result in revisiting intention and word-of-mouth among international visitors. However, the magnitude of the impact of tourists' satisfaction on their loyalty is relatively stronger when compared with that of tourism memory's impact. In contrast, Kim's (2018) study found that memorable experiences had a stronger influence on travellers' behavioural intentions rather than satisfaction's impact.

5. Conclusion

To effectively and successfully position and maintain their place in the tourism market, destinations must deeply understand what tourist's experience during their trip and related outcomes.

Based on the data gathered from the Algarve, Portugal, this study examined the tourism experience-experiential destination image-memory-satisfaction-loyalty framework. The purpose was to investigate how tourists' personal experience in a destination leads to their satisfaction and loyalty through influencing the experiential destination image and tourism memories. To do so, first, using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and the experience frameworks of Oh *et al.* (2007) and Rather (2020), five factors of tourist experiences were investigated. Then, the relationships between the variables were evaluated using PLS-SEM. Finally, a multi-group analysis was conducted to determine the main differences between domestic and international tourists.

The findings clarify that the travel experiences of both domestic and foreign visitors positively impact the cognitive perception of the Algarve. Experiences with the potential for active learning significantly impact the cognitive image because they offer an opportunity to learn about the environment, local culture, and cuisine, among other things. Travellers' intellectual and emotional attitudes towards the location are greatly influenced by the destination's physical attractiveness and aesthetic appeal.

In affective image formation, the emotional engagement factor was the most effective. Compared to domestic tourists, the experiences of foreign tourists have a more significant influence on the affective dimension of destination image formation. It appears likely that visitors from other nations may have had a different impression of the location because of the unique and surprising experiences and attractions that sparked their imaginations and made them feel emotionally engaged in the place.

While the affective and cognitive dimensions of destination image influence tourists' memories of their trip, the affective dimension is more predictive of both domestic and foreign travellers. The findings also demonstrated that their trip memories significantly influence tourists' loyalty and satisfaction with Portuguese and foreign visitors. Yet, there is a notable distinction between domestic and foreign travellers regarding how tourism memory affects travellers' loyalty.

5.1. Theoretical implications

In general, the current findings add several key theoretical implications. First, this study contributes to the growing body of tourism literature by developing and advancing the multifaceted concept of tourist experience as a five-dimensional construct. It integrates and incorporates a variety of newly identified factors relevant for both the demand and supply sides of the tourism industry. This means that the five-dimensions (active learning, emotional engagement, passive entertainment, immersive escape, and aesthetic appeal) allow for a more comprehensive assessment of how distinct, engaging, appealing, fun and immersive tourism experiences shape tourists' experiential image, memory, satisfaction and loyalty. Thus, this study makes it possible to assess how these essential tourism variables relate to each other,

within an awarded mature tourism destination context. Moreover, the study five-dimension scale answers to previous appeals to identify further drivers (Kim *et al.*, 2023; Shapit, Ji, Dayour and Badu-Baiden, 2024), and antecedents of tourists' memorable experiences, both crucial to understand and explain tourists' behaviour. In addition, this enables insights for more effective strategic and operational marketing actions, that may contribute to higher levels of tourist's retention and potential destination repetitors.

The second theoretical implication of the research lies in clarifying the impacts of different dimensions of tourist experiences on two dimensions of experiential destination image, i.e., cognitive and affective images. Based on our knowledge, this is the first study to examine how different aspects of the tourist experience can lead to distinct types of images of the destination. Thirdly, in this study, considering the context-driven nature of this construct, the attributes of the experiential destination image were identified through a literature review and academic and professional panels validation process, resulting in a comprehensive set of attributes for the destination image. Fourthly, it is one of the only studies to apply Weber and Johnson's (2006) preferences-as-memory approach and expand our knowledge on the role of tourism memory in tourists' satisfaction and their future behaviours. Lastly, this study showed domestic and international tourists are different in terms of affective image, tourism memory, and destination loyalty. Contrary to previous studies, this study emphasizes the importance and necessity of distinguishing between the two types of tourists to understand, creating and implement better tourism experiences.

5.2. *Managerial implications*

In addition to its theoretical contribution, this study offers tourism organisations and businesses valuable knowledge about the various experiences that domestic and international visitors gain in the destination and their influence on destination image dimensions. Each factor of experiences, i.e., active learning, emotional engagement, passive entertainment, immersive escape, and aesthetic appeal, can potentially contribute to creating an experiential destination image. On the other hand, emotions and impressions of visitors are widely perceived as important factors for destination competitiveness that can affect their assessments, memories, and future intentions (Zhang *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, destination authorities must design and implement creative, memorable programs and activities that enrich tourists' experiences and support both dimensions of destination experiential image (cognitive and affective). Due to the more significant impact of experience on the affective experiential image among international tourists, tourism businesses ought to focus on creating experiences that are emotionally engaging and aesthetic. The current study also provides evidence of the role of tourism memory in tourists' satisfaction and loyalty. As a result, destination management organisations (DMOs) should also attempt to get tourists to recall the destination favourably. Also, according to the importance of loyalty, tourism practitioners must recognise that tourism memory, resulting from a destination's image, can affect both Portuguese and foreign tourists' loyalty to that destination. Despite the Algarve region's distinctive topography and natural attractions, which can enhance the overall tourist experience and draw visitors from across the continent, tourism loyalty programs are necessary to distinguish it from its competitors as it enters its mature phase.

5.3. *Limitations and directions for future research*

Several limitations in this study provide opportunities for additional investigation. First, since the study focuses on only one type of destination, the results may not apply to other destinations with different cultural contexts, attractions, and tourism products. Future studies could examine the experience-experiential destination image-memory-satisfaction-loyalty framework in multiple destinations and compare the results. Still, it does not consider other factors influencing the predicted paths, such as demographics, trip characteristics, or personal preferences. Future studies could include a broader

range of variables to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Additionally, the study is cross-sectional, and the data are collected simultaneously. Longitudinal data could provide more in-depth knowledge of how destination image, tourism memory, tourists' satisfaction and loyalty change over time in response to the tourism experiences. Regarding the relevance of aesthetic appeal in both cognitive and affective dimensions of the experiential image, future studies should shed more light on this link.

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