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Making Memories: A Consumer-Based Model of Authenticity Applied to Living History Sites

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Underpinned by the consumer-based model of authenticity (CBA), this study investigated whether leisure involvement, object-based and existential authenticity, host sincerity, and engagement stimulate positive memorable visitor experiences in a distinctive commercial hospitality setting: a living history site.

Methodology: Quantitative data were gathered from living history site visitors (n=1004), with partial least squares structural equation modelling used to test the hypothesized relationships.

Findings: The results confirm the inclusion of the hypothesized relationships between leisure involvement, sincerity, and authenticity, relative to engagement and subsequent memorability. The findings suggest that engagement can be a predictor of positive memorable experience, contingent on CBA constructs (sincerity; object-based authenticity; existential authenticity). The significant association between object-based authenticity and memorable experience identified herein differs from some published studies, while other results are broadly consistent with extant research. Results also reveal significant differences for visitors who purchased souvenirs when compared to those who did not.

Implications: Our research extends the CBA by positing sincere hospitality as a relationship-based encounter between host and guest that influences social interaction, engagement, and memorability within the novel living history site context. Further, the ability to differentiate visitors based on their purchases at the site is illustrated.

Originality: Given the ubiquity of engagement and authenticity as precursors to memorable experiences within contemporary commercial hospitality and heritage discourses, the findings apply to hospitality experiences beyond the living history site context examined herein.

Keywords

Authenticity, sincerity, engagement, memorable experiences, cultural consumption, commercial hospitality, souvenir purchasing

1. Introduction

Authenticity and sincerity are significant to hospitality and tourism in at least two major respects. First, contemporary consumers increasingly seek sincere and authentic experiences, underpinned by trust and tailored to their expectations (Kim and Bonn, 2016; Prince, 2017; Steffen *et al.*, 2021; Taheri *et al.*, 2019). Second, hospitality and tourism organizations are cognizant of the imperative roles authenticity and sincerity play in enriching the quality of their experiential offerings (Gannon *et al.*, 2019; Lee, 2015; Penrose, 2018). Prior research thus demonstrates an enduring association between authenticity and tourist experiences (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Wang, 1999). Yet, more recently, the role of sincerity in host-guest encounters has received increasing attention across a number of distinct commercial hospitality settings (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). However, while research suggests host sincerity can shape visitor experiences, it provides little in the way of empirical evidence for this relationship. This study therefore seeks to address this gap and, in doing so, integrate the impact of authenticity and host sincerity on visitor experiences in one such commercial hospitality setting: a living history site.

Understandably, the enjoyment of hospitality and tourism consumption derives from both the in-situ experience itself and the reflective value of one's post-visit memories of the experience (Bastiaansen *et al.*, 2019; Liu *et al.*, 2016; Wood and Kinnunen, 2020). Therefore, organizations in the hospitality domain must ensure antecedents predicating memorable experiences are choreographed effectively to stimulate favorable post-visit reflections (Taheri *et al.*, 2014). These efforts range from expectation management (pre-visit) to enhanced interactivity (in-situ), and continued post-visit engagement. Further, extant research notes that memorability does not solely depend on what organizations 'do' (e.g., post-visit engagement) but is also influenced by visitor characteristics such as leisure involvement, familiarity, and on-site engagement level among others (e.g., memorability) (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017).

This study adopts the well-established consumer-based model of authenticity (CBA) and seeks to extend it by including sincerity and leisure involvement alongside authenticity. Drawing from visitor data collected in a living history site, this research examines whether leisure involvement shapes perceptions of experience authenticity and host sincerity (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017; Prince, 2017; Wang, 1999). Our setting for the study, a living history site, was deliberate. While leisure involvement attracts scholarly attention within commercial hospitality contexts (Zatori *et al.*, 2018), the consumption of such experiences within the living history site context is especially salient as extensive human interactions are required. Genuine displays of hospitality from host to guest are perceived as core to sincere service provision in this context (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). Further, living history site visitors are simultaneously consumers *and* co-creators of experiences with the staff (Taheri *et al.*, 2021; Thyne and Hede, 2016).

To this end, we draw from studies investigating leisure experience, enduring involvement, performance, performativity, and roles (Penrose, 2018). These studies consistently reaffirm the notion of experience as a performative act, requiring enduring involvement, active visitor behaviors (e.g., souvenirs, food purchases), experiential engagement (e.g., physical, social, cultural encounters), and hospitable interactions with museum staff (Antón *et al.*, 2018). Such sustained visitor engagement, referred to as immersion, has become a central component of consumer experience in commercial spaces with interpretive environments (e.g., museums, heritage sites) (Lukas, 2013). Thus, this study, simultaneously examines the effects of leisure involvement on perceptions of

authenticity and host sincerity, and also investigates the effects of these constructs on visitors' levels of engagement and the memorability of experiences at living history sites.

While few studies empirically investigate the influence of host sincerity on post-consumption outcomes, we acknowledge that transactional behaviors contribute and shape experience evaluations in commercial hospitality (Antón *et al.*, 2018). Further, we examine the role of souvenir purchases onsite to understand its relationship with visitor involvement, engagement, and experience perceptions and evaluations. Our investigation therefore contributes to the growing area of souvenir and/or shopping research by exploring associations between visitors' behavioral actions and experiential preferences and perceptions (involvement; authenticity; host sincerity; memorable experience). By extending the application of the CBA (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010) to a currently overlooked setting (living history sites), this research also enriches the study of the immersive and interactive aspects of experiential consumption and provides insight into how visitors' perceptions of hospitality within such contexts are distinct from those experienced in non-immersive/interactive settings. In summary, the questions driving this research are:

RQ1: What effect do leisure involvement (attraction; centrality; self-expression), authenticity (object-based; existential), and host sincerity (sincere social interaction; sincere emotional response) have on visitors' level of engagement and positive memorable experiences (MEE) within the living history site context?

RQ2: Does souvenir purchasing influence leisure involvement (attraction; centrality; self-expression), authenticity (object-based; existential), host sincerity (sincere social interaction; sincere emotional response), levels of engagement, and positive MEE within the living history site context?

2. Conceptual framework and research hypotheses

The concepts of authenticity and sincerity consistently emerge in studies of consumption experiences in hospitality and tourism. Empirical evidence emphasizes the role of authenticity as an important factor critical to cultural tourism: authenticity is shown to shape consumers' interactions with, interpretations of, and evaluations of consumption in various hospitality and tourism settings (Domínguez-Quintero *et al.*, 2020; Kim and Bonn, 2016; Park *et al.*, 2019; Rodríguez-López *et al.*, 2020). Lehman *et al.*'s (2018) review of literature notes that there are three related perspectives in authenticity research, namely, consistency, conformity, and connection. Our conceptualization of authenticity is based on connection-driven authenticity. Connection-driven authenticity is closely related to provenance and symbolism which, in turn, are critical to experience. In this study, we examine authenticity as the *connection* between an entity (i.e., living history site), and a person (i.e., visitors), place (i.e., western New York, USA), and time (i.e., portrayal of specific historical periods). In contrast to the robust literature surrounding authenticity, little empirical evidence exists regarding the role of sincerity on experience. For this, we look to Lugosi (2008) who sees connections between hospitality and hospitableness as an emotional and sincere form of host engagement with consumers as an integral part of the experience. Lugosi (2008) also uses hospitality or hospitableness and sincerity interchangeably to mean genuine, warm, kind hosting behavior. The following section provides a brief overview of the nexus between commercial hospitality and living history sites before describing the conceptual framework (CBA model) and research hypotheses in greater detail.

2.1. Commercial hospitality in living history sites

Living history sites, situated within the broader museum classification, are core components of destination tourism portfolios (Kesgin *et al.*, 2019). Museums, as part of the cultural tourism sector, comprise over 35,000 institutions across the United States and attract approximately 850 million annual visitors (AAM, 2020). The popularity of these spaces is reflective of increased visitor yearning for experiential and engaging consumption; a desire potentially satiated by the living history context (Park *et al.*, 2019)). Consistent with the literature, this study views the living history site as a commercial hospitality space as it: 1) provides opportunities for host-visitor interactions; 2) attracts visitors to destinations; and 3) serves as a source of revenue (Sweeney and Lynch, 2007). Such sites provide opportunities for learning about heritage and the past through their innate cultural value. Thus, they serve to satisfy visitors' expectations of cultural, authentic, communal moments, providing memorable destination-specific experiences (Lugosi, 2008).

Traditionally, commercial hospitality is represented by the lodging and tourism industry (O'Connor, 2005). However, commercial hospitality is increasingly used to refer to the attitude and behavior of hosts: e.g., "hospitableness" and "hospitable hosting behaviors" (Steffen *et al.*, 2021, p.44). This emphasizes the experience, rather than focusing primarily on the commerce component (Taheri *et al.*, 2017). As such, living history sites are distinctive commercial hospitality spaces to study the role and effects of hospitable hosting behavior while maintaining the commercial elements. Such sites offer a presentation of the past as part of an immersive experience: the site proffers active visitor behaviors (e.g., souvenirs, food purchases), experiential engagement (e.g., physical, social, cultural encounters), and interactions with museum staff, some of whom are costumed interpreters who offer visitors "the simulation of life in another time" (Anderson, 1982,p.5).

Given their interactive nature, predicated on an exchange between interpreters and visitors, living history sites operationalize and design historical interpretation as an onsite-based co-creative experiential offering. The social environment of the living history site resembles the commercial hospitality setting where visitor interactions and relationships with interpreters are central to experiential offerings. Similar to service employees in the lodging and tourism industries, interpreters are part of the value creation process. This anticipated 'meta-hospitality' stimulates emotional responses that feel extraordinary; representing an extension of, or differing significantly from, everyday life (Grit, 2013). This study therefore aims to develop greater understanding of how the application of hospitality activities can enrich consumer experiences within commercial spaces, building upon Sweeney and Lynch's (2007) established call to focus on the study of 'hospitality in context'. Accordingly, orchestrating the customer experience with hospitality or hospitableness as an end in-and-of itself has become a pillar of effective customer experience design (Lugosi, 2008).

2.2. Consumer-based authenticity (CBA) in living history sites

The CBA was developed and validated by Kolar and Zabkar (2010) using cultural motivation as a central antecedent to both object-based and existential authenticity, with authenticity also serving to mediate the relationship between cultural motivation and consumer loyalty. Confirming these proposed relationships, Bryce *et al.*(2015) extended the CBA by introducing the behavioral measures of leisure, self-related constructs, and engagement as primary mediators. In identifying the importance of authenticity for hosts and

local community, Zhou *et al.* (2015) showed that support for tourism derives from object-based and existential authenticity. Further extensions of CBA have been examined by Ram *et al.* (2016), Taheri, Farrington, *et al.* (2018) Park *et al.* (2019), and Taheri *et al.* (2019). Overall these studies indicate that cultural motivations (Bryce *et al.*, 2015), serious leisure, self-connection (Bryce *et al.*, 2015), and trust (Taheri *et al.*, 2019) are important antecedents of authenticity, with object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, and host sincerity serving as facilitating constructs (Zhou *et al.*, 2015). These studies also highlight the beneficial effect of engagement and involvement (Bryce *et al.*, 2015) as mediating constructs, on loyalty (Mohamed *et al.*, 2020; Park *et al.*, 2019), word-of-mouth (WoM) (Curran *et al.*, 2018; Gannon *et al.*, 2017), commitment (Taheri, Farrington, *et al.*, 2018) , and memorability (Taheri *et al.*, 2019). Extant research therefore recognizes the nuanced and critical role CBA plays in shaping consumer encounters with physical, social, and cultural environments (Table 1).

Drawing upon previous CBA research, a conceptual model including leisure involvement, host sincerity, object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, engagement, and memorable experience was developed. Figure 1 provides graphic representation of the conceptual framework and proposed relationships.

[Figure1]

This study extends Taheri *et al.* (2019) and Taheri, Gannon, *et al.* (2018) by considering both perceived authenticity and sincerity in shaping positive memorable experiences. Our research departs from previous efforts which prioritize visitor perceptions of authenticity over that of sincerity. This approach improves current understanding of the combined roles of authenticity and sincerity on desired consumption outcomes. In the following section, we present conceptual definitions of these constructs, alongside research hypotheses aimed at answering RQ1.

2.3. Leisure involvement

Capable of shaping consumer actions, the concept of involvement is prevalent across various modes of consumer behavior (Lu *et al.*, 2015) . Involvement establishes or restricts particular actions; mediates the boundaries of preferences, behaviors, and engagement across consumption stages (Chang and Gibson, 2011); and serves as a motivational construct in the pre-experience phase. However, in the on-site stage, higher involvement leads to more attentive and engaged visitor journeys and, consequently, more informed evaluations of the experience (Curran *et al.*, 2018). This can stimulate higher satisfaction levels, underpinned by positive emotions and memorable experiences (Zatori *et al.*, 2018). Involvement therefore informs perceived relevance and interest level in experiential consumption arenas (Chang and Gibson, 2011) . Overall, extant research indicates a link between leisure and preferred cultural tourism activities (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, we conceptualize leisure involvement as a second-order multidimensional construct comprised of three factors: attraction, centrality and self-expression (Chang and Gibson, 2011). This contends that visitors who prioritize visiting cultural heritage as important and central to their leisure time and self-expression are likely to exhibit more pronounced cognitive and affective responses in their behavior and experience of heritage site consumption.

2.4. Authenticity and sincerity

Object-based and existential authenticity influence tourist experiences and behaviors (Taheri *et al.*, 2019). Originating from the legitimacy and provenance of ‘things’, such as relics and artifacts, we view object-based authenticity as the “desire to visit and see original sites/artifacts, purchase souvenirs” and “experience, knowledge and enjoyment in genuine objects, arts and crafts” as defined by Kolar and Zabkar (2010, p.655). In contrast to object-based authenticity, existential authenticity is understood via the tourist’s perspective; we similarly adopt Kolar and Zabkar’s (2010, p. 655) existential authenticity definition referring to “interest in escaping everyday life and mass tourism, getting in touch with true self, self-actualization” underpinned by a “sense of enjoyment and escape, experience of true self in the context of a foreign place, time and culture”. What is apposite about the deployment of these definitions is that each is precise and well-suited to the context of the present study. While object-based authenticity characterizes tourists as collectors of touristic attractions (e.g., places, souvenirs), existential authenticity is concerned with the engaging and fulfilling experiences tourists undertake at locations in which they are exposed to experiences fundamentally different from their daily norms or meaningful experiences which serve as part of their extended everyday lives (Grit, 2013).

Consistent with both modernist and postmodernist perspectives, we view authenticity as an important component of experiential quality (Taheri, Farrington, *et al.*, 2018; Wang, 1999). Such experiences involve intra-personal and inter-personal authenticity that simultaneously positions “self-making” and engagement with touristic *communitas* (communities) as underlying motivations for tourism (Wang, 1999). Previous research has identified that perceptions of object-based and existential authenticities are shaped by both pre-visit factors such as motivation and involvement (Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Dedeoglu *et al.*, 2020) and in-situ factors such as engagement (Chen and Rahman, 2018). Bryce *et al.* (2015) illustrate that cultural involvement can stimulate the pursuit of object-based authenticity, leading to existential authenticity. Object-based authenticity thus can influence existential authenticity.

In living history sites, object-based authenticity is tied to museum collections, as well as the historic structures relocated to construct an environment for visitors to realize the simulation (Anderson, 1982) presented to them and, in turn, to enter and suspend belief in order to encounter this constructed past. The buildings themselves, the artifacts within them, and the staff who inhabit them for the purposes of engaging visitors contribute to object-based authenticity. Thus, object-based and existential authenticity are tethered as they attempt to recreate a construct of the past by presenting a version of a lived reality that can be accessed through embodied presence at the living history site through co-creative engagement with objects and spaces (e.g., historic structures) and the costumed interpreters who interact with visitors. Co-creatively, staff and visitors interact and frame an understanding of the past and a lived experience of the space and materiality of objects therein. Therefore, visitor interactions with hosts are also critical not only in influencing existential authenticity (Penrose, 2018) but also perceived sincerity. When such interactions are perceived as genuine and hospitable, visitors evaluate their experiences more positively (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018).

Thus, we consider sincerity as critical to hospitable hosting behavior. The context of the living history site offers a unique opportunity to study the sub-dimensions of sincerity: sincere social interactions and emotional response (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). Visitors’ perceptions of interpreters’ sincere, honest or genuine hospitality can stimulate engagement

and provide a positive spillover effect on memorable experience. Sincere social interactions and emotional responses derive from host-visitor encounters, while the interpreters represent the social and cultural environment of the time period in a truthful and passionate manner and are happy to involve visitors in the lives they are portraying at the living history site. To this end, leisure involvement has similar effects on both authenticity and sincerity (Taylor, 2001); with visitor perceptions likely to be shaped by interactions and involvement with local hosts; resulting in more memorable experiences (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017; Zatori *et al.*, 2018). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1.** Leisure involvement has a positive effect on sincerity.
- H2.** Leisure involvement has a positive effect on object-based authenticity.
- H3.** Leisure involvement has a positive effect on existential authenticity.
- H4.** Object-based authenticity has a positive effect on existential authenticity.

2.5. Visitor engagement

In the context of living history sites, engagement can be defined as meaningful interaction that prompts visitors to be involved in more than a superficial way. Visitor onsite interactions, particularly through exhibits or interpretive programs may be used to measure the levels of visitor engagement and, ultimately, how meaningful and intense the experience is perceived as being (Falk and Dierking, 2013). Although engagement can be investigated across customer journey phases (Kesgin and Murthy, 2019) and differs conceptually from involvement (Bryce *et al.*, 2015), on-site engagement is closely related to levels of enduring or situated involvement. The stronger visitor involvement is, the greater their engagement. Research demonstrates that pre-visit exposure to marketing materials influences visitor engagement (Chen and Rahman, 2018), and on-site marketing actions, interactions and settings, and their perceived positive characteristics have reciprocated relationships with perceived sincerity and authenticity (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Penrose, 2018). In turn, favorable perceptions of experiences (i.e., as being authentic and sincere) can shape visitor behavior and enhance engagement (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Chen and Rahman, 2018; Penrose, 2018). While research stresses the efficacy of sincerity in encouraging engagement (Taylor, 2001), Taheri *et al.* (2014) demonstrate that engagement and its antecedents can lead to positive memorable visitor experiences. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

- H5.** Sincerity has a positive effect on engagement.
- H6.** Object-based authenticity has a positive effect on engagement.
- H7.** Existential authenticity has a positive effect on engagement.
- H8.** Leisure involvement has a positive effect on engagement.

2.6. Memorable experiences

Destinations create and deliver memorable experiences to visitors to increase competitiveness. Kim *et al.* (2012, p.13) define memorable visitor experiences as those which are “positively remembered and recalled”. Using positive memorable experiences as the desired outcome and predictor of post-experience behavior, studies explore the memorability of experiential consumption with focus on guest interactions, sensory impressions, and engagement (Kesgin and Murthy, 2019). Understanding the antecedents and consequences of memorable experiences is core to managing and improving consumer experiences and

engagement (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). For the purposes of this study, and in line with the literature, we use the phrase memorable experiences to refer to positive memorable experiences.

Experiential consumption is anchored by *involvement*, often serving as a goal-driven act (Yalinay *et al.*, 2018). This enduring involvement encourages visitors to utilize their social and cultural capital to achieve desirable outcomes, including memorable experiences. Zatori *et al.* (2018) reaffirm the relationships among involvement, authenticity, and memorability and stress the vital role of emotional, mental, and social flow on memorable experiences. Involvement incites satisfaction and contributes to memorability (Kim *et al.*, 2012). Experiences underpinned by authentic objects and sincere interactions lead to positive experiences and more memorable outcomes in the long-term (Domínguez-Quintero *et al.*, 2020). Chen and Rahman (2018) suggest that visitor engagement positively influences memorable experiences which can further be improved through enhanced on-site interactions. Attractions that are sensory, social, and interactive create opportunities for more engaged and memorable experiences (Falk and Dierking, 2013). These studies thus demonstrate the positive effect of involvement, sincerity, engagement, existential authenticity, and object-based authenticity on memorable experiences. Therefore, we hypothesize that:

- H9.** Sincerity has a positive effect on stimulating memorable experiences.
- H10.** Engagement has a positive effect on stimulating memorable experiences.
- H11.** Existential authenticity has a positive effect on stimulating memorable experiences.
- H12.** Leisure involvement has a positive effect on stimulating memorable experiences.
- H13.** Object-based authenticity has a positive effect on stimulating memorable experiences.

2.7. Souvenir Purchasing

This section provides justification for **RQ2** and underlying hypotheses. For many consumers, souvenir purchasing is a meaningful activity capable of providing evidence of place visitation; facilitating long-lasting memories in turn (Jin *et al.*, 2017). Souvenirs thus serve as mementos of the experience or as a means to remember social encounters, echoing both object-based and existential authenticity (Wilkins, 2011). Souvenir purchasing shapes visitor behavior as a “pervasive” and “pivotal” activity (Jin *et al.*, 2017, p.120). Hu and Yu (2007) document the influence of leisure involvement on purchase behaviors, while Sthapit *et al.* (2018) demonstrate the relationships between perceptions of souvenir authenticity and behavioral intentions.

Moreover, souvenirs are essential components of the setting, service, and produce within the living history museum context (Penrose, 2018). Authenticity and sincerity may thus also be related to the experience and evaluation of souvenir purchasing within such settings (Jin *et al.*, 2017). The notion of authenticity and sincerity at living history sites relates to the content and context of the information shared by museum staff, often a costumed interpreter, and the opportunity to take a piece of that experience home with the visitor. More simply, the purchasing of souvenirs is predicated on the nature of the materials, the authenticity of the crafters, and the relevance it holds to events and rituals therein (Kelleher, 2019). Therefore, souvenirs can reflect ‘what’ the visitor witnessed and

experienced onsite at the living history museum and may serve to solidify their memory of the experience.

Critical to both experiential and behavioral elements of commercial hospitality consumption, souvenir purchasing may therefore function as an integral component of the living history site visitor experience. Broadly, studies demonstrate that individual visitor characteristics (e.g., demographics, motivations), heritage site-conditions (e.g. site-touring information), visit conditions (first-timer, repeat, individual, group) and souvenir attributes (Padrón-Ávila and Hernández-Martín, 2019) also influence visitor engagement and souvenir purchase behaviors. Such souvenir purchases, in turn, can influence on-site visitor experience, post-visit memorability, and revisit intentions (Sthapit *et al.*, 2018). Thus, this study hypothesizes:

- H14a.** Leisure involvement is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs.
- H14b.** Sincerity is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs.
- H14c.** Object-based authenticity is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs.
- H14d.** Existential authenticity is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs.
- H14e.** Engagement is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs.
- H14f.** Memorable experience is higher among visitors purchasing souvenirs

3. Methodology

Founded in 1966 with the goal of preserving the western New York's architecture, Genesee Country Village and Museum (GCV&M) aims to engage audiences of all ages "through immersive experiences" by "enrich[ing] life today by connecting people with history, art, and nature" (GCV&M, 2019). GCV&M is the third largest living history museum in the US. The site is a constructed environment comprised of authentic buildings from the late 18th to the early 20th centuries. Museum literature encourages visitors to *explore* while also interacting sensorially with nature, domestic scenery, and costumed interpreters (Kelleher, 2019). Accordingly, GCV&M affords opportunities "where knowledgeable, costumed interpreters keep hearth fires burning, heirloom gardens flourishing, and livestock tended" (GCV&M, 2019). Within the context of visitor interactions at a *living history* experience, interpreters at GCV&M engage visitors by speaking directly to them, usually while demonstrating a skill or trade relevant to the time period presented. Therefore, GCV&M represents a distinct commercial hospitality space with the potential to proffer greater insight into the interplay between involvement, authenticity, sincerity, engagement, and memorability. The museum staffing model features 13 administrative staff, 100 costumed interpreters, 250-300 seasonal staff, and ad-hoc volunteers. It is operational from May-October, with special weekend events throughout the off-season; its annual visitor numbers total around 94,000 (GCV&M, 2019).

3.1. Data collection and sampling procedure

Using convenience sampling, data were collected between August and October 2018. Approximately 60,000 people were estimated to have visited GCV&M during this period. A paper-based survey was developed using the measures described below. Participation was sought from adult visitors (those visibly appearing 18+) as they were leaving the museum via the main exit, adjacent to the souvenir shop. Seating areas ensured visitors could comfortably complete the survey. Surveys were handed to visitors who agreed to participate; each could

spend as little/much as they needed to complete the survey. For groups of visitors and family units, only one person was asked to complete the survey. Surveys were self-administrated, preceded by an explanatory overview of the study's purpose. Overall, 1,032 surveys were returned. After removing those with missing data; 1004 valid surveys were analyzed. Prior to the data collection taking place, 50 visitors were selected to pilot the survey, where the meaning and wording of questionnaire items were checked. These 50 informants did not take part in the final data collection process. Based on informant feedback collected at this stage, some survey items received minor alterations in order to avoid confusion or misinterpretation.

3.2. Measures

To ensure content validity, all constructs and their items were adapted from existing studies (**Appendix 1**). Leisure involvement (LEI) was adapted from Chang and Gibson, (2011) and Forgas-Coll *et al.* (2017). Modelled as a second-order reflective construct, LEI consists of three dimensions each measured by 3-items: attraction (ATT), centrality (CEN), and self-expression (SEE). Four-items comprising objective-based authenticity (OBA) and six-items comprising existential authenticity (EXA) were adapted from Kolar and Zabkar (2010) and Bryce *et al.* (2015). Conceptualized as a second-order reflective construct, sincerity (SIN) was adapted from Taheri, Gannon, *et al.* (2018) with two underlying five-item first-order dimensions: sincere social interaction (SSI) and sincere emotional response (SER). The eight-item formative engagement (ENG) construct was adapted from Taheri *et al.* (2014). Finally, four items characterizing memorable experience (MEE) were adapted from Kim *et al.* (2012) and Lee (2015). All statements were measured on a seven-point scale (1 'strongly disagree'; 4 'Neither agree nor disagree'; 7 'strongly agree'). Visitor characteristics (e.g., age; gender; education; marital status; income) were also measured.

4. Results

4.1. Sample

Over half of the respondents were female (56.1%). Many were 36+ (67.3%); most were married (61.5%); and a significant number held undergraduate or postgraduate degrees (75.4%). The majority of participants (60.9%) had an annual income <\$74,999; and 53% were employed. G*Power calculations indicated that the minimum sample needed for a power of 0.95 was 147 respondents Faul *et al.* (2009); our sample size (n=1004) is therefore appropriate to dependably detect effects. A comparison of early responses collected in August against late responses collected in October showed no significant differences in terms of non-response bias. To mitigate common method variance (CMV), predictor and outcome measures were positioned in different areas within the questionnaire. Per principal component analysis (PCA) Podsakoff *et al.* (2003), Harman's single-factor test identified 7 factors with the highest portion of variance explained by one single factor at 37.74%. Further, the unmeasured method factor approach was tested, with the average variance of indicators and method factor calculated. The average variance illustrated by indicators was 66%, whereas the average method-based variance was 1.6% (41:1). Hence, CMV was not a concern.

4.2. Analytical technique

PLS-SEM was employed for multiple reasons. First, it works in formative and reflective modes (Rasoolimanesh *et al.*, 2019), and is suitable for higher-order models as required in this study (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Soltani *et al.*, 2021). Second, “PLS-SEM’s statistical properties provide robust model estimations with data that have normal as well as extremely non-normal (i.e., skewness and/or kurtosis) distributional properties” (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Finally, Wetzels *et al.* (2009, p.190) argue “model complexity does not pose as severe a restriction to PLS path-modelling as covariance-based SEM, since PLS path-modelling at any moment only estimates a subset of parameters”. Both the measurement and structural model were tested within SmartPLS3.2.4. The non-parametric bootstrapping technique was tested with 1004 cases including 5000 subsamples (Hair *et al.*, 2017).

4.3. Measurement Model Assessment

Following Hair *et al.* (2017), construct reliability and validity were established (**Table 2-3**). Discriminant validity was first assessed using Fornell and Larcker’s (1981) criterion (**Table 3**). Subsequently, heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios (Henseler *et al.*, 2015) were applied to further test discriminant validity. All HTMT ratios (ranging 0.32-0.67) were below the 0.85 threshold, signifying good discriminant validity.

[Table2&3]

Adopting Becker *et al.*’s (2012) recommendation, leisure involvement and sincerity were established as second-order composite constructs. Per Henseler *et al.* (2016), first-order composites of LEI (ATT; CEN; SEE), SIN (SSI; SER) are uncorrelated. Each first-order composite captures a different aspect ratio; thus, first-order composites are not interchangeable. Composite higher-order constructs were confirmed via the weights of first-order composites, significance of weights, and multicollinearity (Hernández-Perlines, 2016). The weights of first-order composites (signifying higher-order composites) were all significant. Variance inflation factors (**Table 4**) reveal no collinearity issues (Hair *et al.*, 2017). Thus, LEI and SIN are higher-order composites characterized by their underlying first-order constructs.

A meta-analytic approach was employed to test external validity (Wanous *et al.*, 1997). Using non-parametric Spearman’s rank correlation test, the correlation between an ordinal global ‘sincerity’ item and other ordinal sincerity items (and similarly the global ‘leisure involvement’ item and other ordinal leisure involvement items) were assessed. One global item was used corresponding to host sincerity: ‘*In my opinion, sincere hospitality is when I feel that I am experiencing the real lives of local people when interacting with them,*’ and leisure involvement: ‘*In my opinion, leisure involvement is about enjoyment gained through cultural activities, and when the life is centered on the cultural activities, and also personal identity related to the cultural activities*’. The findings demonstrate significant positive correlations between each indicator and global items (**Table 4**).

[Table4]

The reliability and validity of the formative engagement construct was established. The VIF of each item was used to assess multicollinearity. Results indicate minimal collinearity among indicators. For external validation, each indicator was again examined to determine whether it could be significantly correlated with a ‘global item’ that captures the

spirit of the engagement scale. Thus, following Wanous *et al.* (1997), an additional statement was used: ‘*I have fully engaged with this cultural heritage site during my visit*’. Following this systematic approach, engagement was considered a formative measure.

4.4. Assessment of structural model and key findings

Predictive relevance (Q^2), effect sizes (f^2), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) were calculated before testing the structural model. Applying the PLS-SEM blindfolding procedure (Hair *et al.*, 2017) and using the cross-validated redundancy procedure, all Q^2 values surpassed zero. Q^2 values are as follows: LEI (0.12), OBA (0.14), EXA (0.19), SIN (0.23) and MEE (0.41). Following Khalilzadeh and Tasci (2017), Cohen’s effect sizes (f^2) signifies 0.01 for small, 0.06 for medium, and 0.14 for large effects within SEM. Results indicate that f^2 values (0.08-0.17) for the significant paths exceed the recommended value. The SRMR value for the PLS-SEM model was 0.064; lower than the recommended value (0.08) (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The NFI value for the PLS-SEM model was acceptable (0.92) ($NFI > 0.90$) (Henseler *et al.*, 2016).

In response to **RQ1**, results indicate that leisure involvement positively influences sincerity (**H1**: $\beta=0.42, t=7.82; p<0.001$) and existential authenticity (**H3**: $\beta=0.33, t=11.29; p<0.001$). However, leisure involvement does not significantly influence object-based authenticity (**H2**: $\beta=0.09, t=1.17; n.s.$). Object-based authenticity positively impacts on existential authenticity (**H4**: $\beta=0.29, t=7.11; p<0.001$). Each of sincerity (**H5**: $\beta=0.52, t=10.20; p<0.001$), object-based authenticity (**H6**: $\beta=0.61, t=23.09; p<0.001$), existential authenticity (**H7**: $\beta=0.37, t=11.11; p<0.001$) and leisure involvement (**H8**: $\beta=0.42, t=18.21; p<0.001$) positively influence engagement. Sincerity (**H9**: $\beta=0.24, t=13.67; p<0.001$), engagement (**H10**: $\beta=0.52, t=20.39; p<0.001$), existential authenticity (**H11**: $\beta=0.52, t=17.39; p<0.001$), leisure involvement (**H12**: $\beta=0.58, t=13.28; p<0.001$), and object-based authenticity (**H13**: $\beta=0.46, t=23.65; p<0.001$) positively and significantly influence MEE.

Following Yalinay *et al.* (2018), the correlation between the three underlying first-order dimensions of leisure involvement and related predicted variables (i.e., object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, engagement, sincerity, and memorable experience) were further tested (**Table 5**). Similarly, the correlation between the two underlying dimensions of sincerity and related predicted variables (i.e., sincerity and engagement) were also tested (**Table 5**). The results identify significant relationships between the majority of underlying dimensions and their dependent variables. As with the PLS-SEM results for **H2**, there are no significant differences between the three dimensions of leisure involvement and object-based authenticity. Finally, the PLS-SEM model explained 27.8% of sincerity, 43.3% of object-based authenticity, 38% of existential authenticity, 28% of engagement, and 43.6% of memorable experience.

[Table5]

4.5. Post-hoc analysis: Indirect effects

The PLS-SEM results suggest potential mediating relationships. Per Zhao *et al.* (2010), mediation analysis with the bootstrapping method was conducted using a 95% confidence interval ($CI_{0.95}$) of parameter estimates based on 5,000 resamples. The findings demonstrate that object-based authenticity indirectly impacts on MEE through engagement

[Indirect path= 0.32, $t=7.23$; $CI_{0.95}=0.20, 0.37$]. As the direct influence was significant, the results indicate that engagement mediates the influence of object-based authenticity on MEE. Moreover, sincerity indirectly influences MEE through engagement [Indirect path=0.28, $t=9.28$; $CI_{0.95}=0.22, 0.32$]. As the direct influence was again significant, the findings indicate that engagement mediates the influence of sincerity on MEE. Finally, existential authenticity indirectly impacts MEE through engagement [Indirect path=0.35, $t=10.08$; $CI_{0.95}=0.26, 0.41$]. As the direct influence was significant, the findings indicate that engagement mediates the influence of existential authenticity on MEE.

4.6. Group differences between visitors who did and did not purchase souvenirs

In response to **RQ2**, this study hypothesized and compared the level of leisure involvement, object-based authenticity, existential authenticity, sincerity, engagement, and MEE between (i) visitors who purchased souvenirs, and (ii) those that did not. Nearly half of respondents purchased souvenirs (47.4%). **Table 6** demonstrates that results for all reflective constructs are acceptable, with reliability and convergent validity established for both groups. Analysis of loadings between these two visitor groups for all items under their underlying constructs indicated that the differences between the factorial loads of both groups are not significant ($p>0.05$). Per **Table 7**, the results identify high levels of OBA, LEI, EXA, SIN, ENG, and MEE in both groups. There are also significant differences between levels of OBA, LEI, EXA, SIN, ENG, and MEE between each group; supporting **H14a**, **H14b**, **H14c**, **H14d**, **H14e**, and **H14f**.

5. Discussion and Implications

5.1 Conclusions

This study examined the effect of leisure involvement, authenticity, and sincerity on levels of engagement and the memorability of visitor experiences (**RQ1**). Our results indicated positive relationships between leisure involvement and host-sincerity (**H1**) and existential authenticity (**H3**). Surprisingly, the influence of leisure involvement was found not significant on object-based authenticity (**H2**). Consistent with literature (Taheri *et al.*, 2019; Taheri, Farrington, *et al.*, 2018), results confirmed that object-based authenticity is associated with existential authenticity (**H4**), and that engagement is influenced by sincerity (**H5**), object-based authenticity (**H6**), existential authenticity (**H7**) and leisure involvement (**H8**). Further, the findings indicate that memorable experiences are stimulated by sincerity (**H9**), engagement (**H10**), existential authenticity (**H11**), leisure involvement (**H12**) and object-based authenticity (**H13**). These results affirm relationships suggested in earlier studies (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Taheri *et al.*, 2019; Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). However, unlike prior studies (e. g. Taheri *et al.*, 2019), the association between object-based authenticity and memorable experience in this study was significant. Thus, this study provides a renewed understanding of the CBA, extending it through the inclusion of the relationship between sincerity and engagement. Additionally, to further investigate the conceptual model, we applied post-hoc analysis of indirect effects. Accordingly, engagement can be a predictor of MEE contingent on consumer authentic experience constructs (e.g., sincerity; object-based authenticity; existential authenticity).

Second, the study investigated the effects of souvenir purchase on these hypothesized relationships (**RQ2**), indicating significant differences between visitors who purchased souvenirs and those who did not across each hypothesized relationship, including those pertaining to leisure involvement (**H14a**), sincerity (**H14b**), object-based authenticity (**H14c**), existential authenticity (**H14d**), engagement (**H14e**), and memorable experience (**H14f**). To our knowledge this has not previously been tested in relation to these constructs. Our results therefore demonstrate support for arguments suggested, but not tested, across prior research (Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017; Padrón-Ávila and Hernández-Martín, 2019). Accordingly, the following theoretical and managerial implications can be drawn from the study.

5.2. Theoretical implications

This study makes several contributions to mainstream hospitality literature. Specifically, studies investigating consumption within a living history site and, more broadly, focused on commercial hospitality settings may benefit from the implications of our study. The study identified the critical role sincere interactions (hospitableness), leisure involvement, and authenticity play in shaping consumer engagement with, and the memorability of, interactive hospitality experiences. The insights gained from this study help to develop extant understanding of the associations between leisure involvement, sincerity, authenticity (object-based and existential), engagement, and memorable experience (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010; Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018). Findings herein stem from the first comprehensive assessment of the influence of leisure involvement, sincerity and engagement in relation to object-based and existential authenticity and memorable experience, enabling us to extend the consumer-based model of authenticity (CBA) model to include sincerity and leisure involvement. It also develops understanding of the critical influence of experiential authenticity and host-guest interactions from the consumer perspective. Yet, our study shows that the extent to which host-sincerity contributes to memorable consumer experiences is not yet fully understood. Post-hoc analyses of indirect effects revealed that engagement can be used as an evaluative verdict of authenticity dependent upon visitors' interpretations of their experience. It thus further extends the CBA by positing sincere hospitality as a relationship-based encounter between host and guest that can influence social interaction, engagement, and memorability within the novel living history site context. Moreover, this study provides the first comprehensive assessment of souvenir purchase effect using the CBA.

A key strength of the study is the context; emphasis was placed on gaining an understanding of both the experiences of visitors (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016) and the triangulation among host, guest, and the nature of their interactions within the constructed living history museum environment which serves as the arena wherein authentic experiences occur. A distinct type of cultural heritage, living history sites are tourist attractions characterized by both traditional notions of hospitality *and* the immersion and escapism underpinning contemporary experiential consumption. The context of a living history museum therefore offers an otherwise overlooked opportunity to study hospitality across both social and commercial domains. Even as sincerity is enacted within the living history museum context - the entire premise of living history is framed around authenticity (of object, of experience by visitor, of museum staff) - we nonetheless contend that these findings will be of broad interest to research communities across hospitality management and will inform practices across diverse commercial hospitality settings beyond heritage sites and museums. Developing living history literature, this study adds to the expanding field of

authenticity within commercial hospitality contexts by emphasizing the importance of host sincerity to our understanding of consumer-based authenticity.

5.3. Practical implications

From a managerial perspective, our research highlights important associations between leisure involvement, authenticity, and sincerity relative to their effect on stimulating consumers' on-site engagement and experience memorability. As such, we introduce a framework through which managers may better understand how visitors, including two distinct souvenir purchasing-based segments, may be approached from involvement to memorability through engagement. In terms of practical application, the findings indicate that the development of involvement strategies for visitor groups is essential within commercial hospitality (MacKenzie and Gannon, 2019). Specifically, ensuring the enduring involvement of visitors with high levels of interest from the early stages of the visitor journey (pre-visit) and throughout the on-site visit and post-visit phases may enhance engagement behaviors and yield positive memorable experiences. For some, visiting cultural heritage sites is not only an important leisure pursuit but also central to their life as a form of self-expression. Digital marketing strategies can be used specially to target highly-involved consumers to elevate their engagement prior to their on-site visit for upselling opportunities through merchandise purchase and improving social currency through word-of-mouth marketing (Kesgin and Murthy, 2019). High situational involvement should be promoted to assure desired interactions during actual visitation to engage visitors with low levels of prior interest.

Further, the findings suggest that tailored, unique experiences facilitated by staff-visitor interactions foster authentic and memorable experiences. Ensuring appropriate systems, services, and support for visitors encountering costumed interpreters who inhabit historical houses and perform period-reflective roles (social hospitality activities) in parallel with site staff who work in food venues and gift-shops (commercial hospitality activities) should be a priority. Third, the physical, social, and informational aspects of visitor journey touchpoints are influential, and continued efforts are needed to make social and interactive spaces more accessible to visitors; encouraging interactive exchanges and engaged encounters. Heritage managers may benefit from participatory and interactive design approaches detailed in prior studies such as "structured experiences" (Ellis *et al.*, 2019, p.112), "participatory engagement" (Simon, 2010, p.350), "co-productive experiences" (Thyne and Hede, 2016, p.1489), and "personal meaning-making" (Packer and Ballantyne, 2016, p.137) while avoiding negative experiences such as "the feeling of satiation" (Antón *et al.*, 2018, p.59). Service strategies aimed at amplifying co-production and co-creation as part of a CBA approach to living history should encourage site managers to implement strategies for costumed heritage staff to manage, motivate, and guide visitors and through the process of co-production tied to the nature of authenticity and sincerity (cf. Prayag *et al.*, 2021). We acknowledge that prior studies have suggested these efforts to enhance interactivity but our findings explain the mechanism through which these efforts result in experience memorability.

Cues likely to trigger visitor engagement can be designed into multiple elements of the visitor experience with benefits sought in mind. Escapism, playful interactions, and learning are facilitated through staff, historical buildings, and customized interactions with visitors. The provision of informal learning opportunities is essential to consumer engagement and experience co-creation (Thyne and Hede, 2016). A key priority should be to extend the parameters of hospitality environments to improve their interpretative function;

delivering ideas about the past to consumers through informal education and leisure activities on-site. A reasonable approach might position object-based and site-based storytelling and narrativization (rather than rote presentation of facts) to build authentic experiences that enable visitors to understand the past more meaningfully (Taheri *et al.*, 2014; Tilden, 2007). Management could involve interpretive strategies that communicate important cultural and/or historical information to guests through the exposition of a “message” or narrative threads that engender educational and consumer activities to enhance immersive experiences (Lukas, 2013, p.142). A variety of technology mediated pre-visit and post visit communications should support this co-creation. Continued efforts should ensure visitors act as “tourists of history” to enhance their navigation through consumerism, reenactment, and souvenirs as forms of the mediated experience (Wilkins, 2011). Finally, attention should be paid to staff recruitment processes as articulated by O’Connor, (2005) inquiry into the meaning of hospitality and its role in driving the industry. The staff should manifest the expectation on the part of living history sites to deliver tailored hospitality experiences that are memorable and sincere.

5.4 Limitations and future research

While this study provides insight into authenticity, sincerity, engagement, involvement, and memorability within the living history site context, some limitations exist. First, although generalizable to the visitor experience context, the findings are cross-sectional by design and collected in late 2018. Scholars may address this by assessing long-term trends with a longitudinal design involving the same visitors on an annual basis, with participants responding to the same survey questions to identify response variations over time. Similarly, further work may establish whether staff understanding and presentation of ‘authenticity’ changes over time within the living history context, with emphasis placed on how such changes shape the delivery of content by interpreters and the interactions between staff and visitors which, in turn, impact visitor experiences. Related, further research could parse the differences in how staff understand and enact authenticity and sincerity, based upon their role at the museum, whether or not they directly engage with visitors and, if so, in what capacity (interpretative, admission, sales, or otherwise).

Third, while the study addresses the positive implications of WoM, further consideration should be given to the importance of post-tourist consumption behaviors and possible risk reduction. Fourth, future focus on staff may enable the identification and articulation of patterns of authenticity that emerge within the performance of particular roles, with this shaped by the delivery of content to, and interactions with, site visitors. Staff focus is an important area of study within the museum context and across the commercial hospitality sector more generally. Fifth, future studies could test our conceptual framework and the mediating effect of engagement in other hospitality contexts. Finally, while our sample size is significant, the sampling method used in this study is limited and future research should attempt to use a probability sampling technique (e.g., stratified sampling) for greater generalizability.

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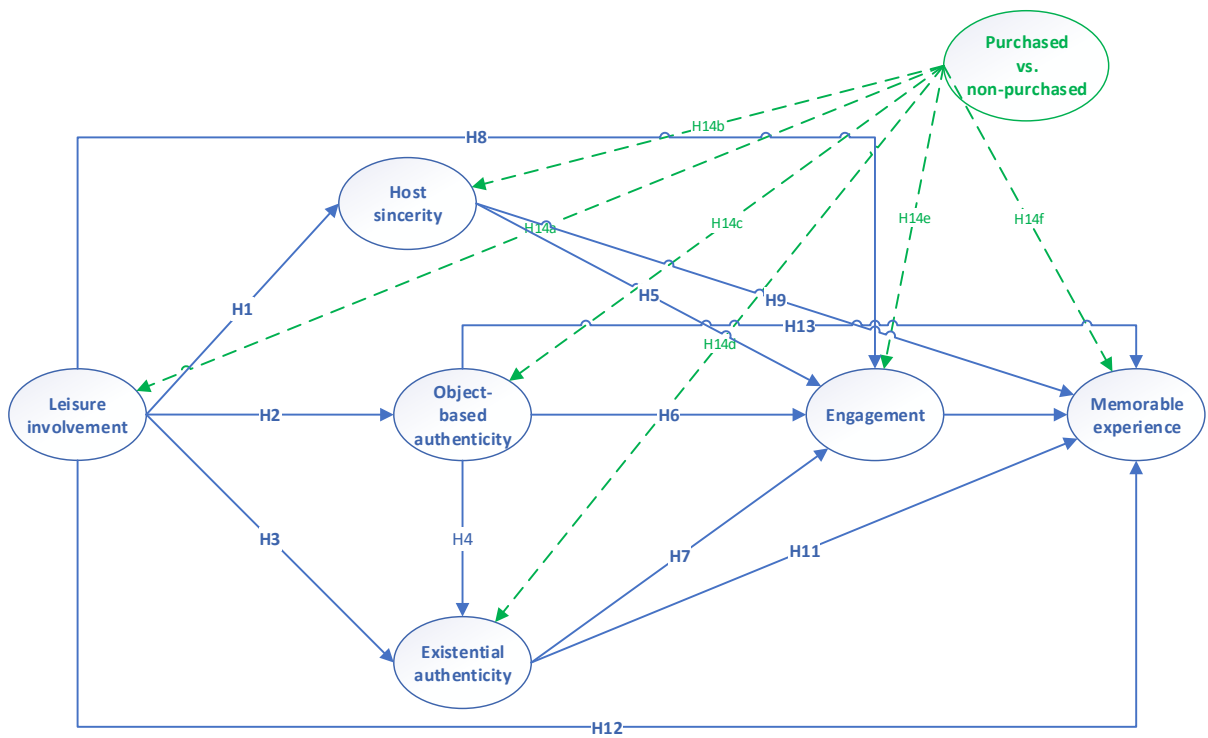


Figure1.Conceptual framework

Table 1. Summary of Research: Authenticity and Sincerity

Authors	Sample and Measures
Kolar and Zabkar (2010)	Survey data (N=1147) from four EU countries using quota-based sampling covering cultural motivation; object-based authenticity; existential authenticity; loyalty.
(Bryce <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Survey data (N=768) using convenience sampling on heritage sites in Japan covering cultural motivation; self-connection; authenticity; loyalty.
Zhou <i>et al.</i> (2015)	Survey data (N=218) with residents in multiple sites in China covering personal economic and emotional benefits; authenticity; attitudes.
Ram <i>et al.</i> (2016)	Survey data using a convenience sample from Finland (N=176) and Israel (N=197) at major attractions covering place attachment; heritage value; iconicity; authenticity.
Taheri, Farrington, <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Survey data (N=768) using convenience samples from Japan covering brand heritage; cultural motivation; authenticity; commitment.
Curran <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Survey data from Iran (N=615) using convenience sample covering measures of leisure; authenticity; WoM.
Taheri, Gannon, <i>et al.</i> (2018)	Surveys from UNESCO sites in Iran (N=518) and Turkey (N=627). Scale development of sincerity scale using Delphi method.
Park <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Survey data (N=535) from South Korea covering measures of authenticity; satisfaction; conative, cognitive, and affective loyalty.
Taheri <i>et al.</i> (2019)	Survey data (N=320) from Iran covering measures of trust; sincerity of social interactions; authenticity; memorable travel experiences.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, validity, reliability of constructs

Constructs/Items	Loadings*	Weights*	AVE	CR	α	VIF
Leisure involvement(LEI)-Second-order						
Attraction(ATT)-First-order		0.43	0.61	0.80	0.82	2.33
ATT1.	0.78					
ATT2.	0.77					
ATT3.	0.81					
Centrality(CEN)-First-order		0.43	0.58	0.77	0.78	2.12
CEN1.	0.77					
CEN2.	0.71					
CEN3.	0.73					
Self-expression(SEE)-First-order		0.50	0.63	0.80	0.83	2.43
SEE1.	0.81					
SEE2.	0.83					
SEE3.	0.79					
Object-based authenticity(OBA)-Reflective			0.61	0.82	0.80	
OBA1.	0.73					
OBA2.	0.78					
OBA3.	0.82					
OBA4.	0.81					
Existential authenticity(EXA)-Reflective			0.63	0.82	0.80	
EXA1.	0.82					
EXA2.	0.82					
EXA3.	0.78					
EXA4.	0.77					
EXA5.	0.77					
EXA6.	0.78					
Sincerity(SIN)-Second-order						
Sincere social interaction(SSI)-First-order		0.40	0.57	0.80	0.82	2.01
SSI1	0.81					
SSI2.	0.78					
SSI3.	0.79					
SSI4.	0.78					
SSI5.	0.80					
Sincere emotional response(SER)-First-order		0.47	0.58	0.80	0.81	2.21
SER1.	0.81					
SER2.	0.79					
SER3.	0.80					
SER4.	0.78					
SER5.	0.81					
Engagement(ENG)-Formative						
ENG1.		0.33				2.11
ENG2.		0.23				1.67
ENG3.		0.34				2.21
ENG4.		0.60				1.66
ENG5.		0.26				1.87
ENG6.		0.29				2.03
ENG7.		0.38				2.10
ENG8.		0.29				1.83
Memorable experience(MEE)-Reflective			0.60	0.78	0.80	
EEM1.	0.78					
EEM2.	0.77					
EEM3.	0.80					
EEM4.	0.82					

Note: *t*-values for item loadings to two-tailed test: $t > 3.29$ at $***p < 0.001$.

Table3.Correlation matrix

Constructs	LEI	ATT	CEN	SEE	OBA	EXA	ENG	SIN	SSI	SER
LEI	n/a									
ATT	0.57	0.78								
CEN	0.09	0.14	0.76							
SEE	0.35	0.17	0.56	0.79						
OBA	0.52	0.53	0.04	0.11	0.78					
EXA	0.46	0.34	0.06	0.01	0.44	0.74				
ENG	0.14	0.35	0.58	0.51	0.09	0.04	n/a			
SIN	0.23	0.20	0.11	0.03	0.21	0.50	0.23	n/a		
SSI	0.23	0.22	0.42	0.46	0.10	0.05	0.40	0.25	0.75	
SER	-0.39	-0.32	0.07	0.00	-0.34	-0.20	0.24	-0.11	0.35	0.76

Note: Off-diagonal figures represent the constructs' squared correlations; AVE value for the formative engagement construct is absent as the concepts of reliability and construct validity are meaningless when formative models are specified; AVE value for LEI and SIN constructs are absent as LEI and SIN were specified as higher-order models, with AVEs only relevant to higher-order model dimensions.

Table 4. External validity tests: Second-order and formative constructs

Items	Spearman's rank correlation coefficient		
	Sincerity***	Leisure involvement***	Engagement***
SSI1	0.22		
SSI2	0.17		
SSI3	0.21		
SSI4	0.34		
SSI5	0.31		
SER1	0.20		
SER2	0.23		
SER3	0.37		
SER4	0.22		
SER5	0.45		
ATT1		0.23	
ATT2		0.43	
ATT3		0.25	
CEN1		0.33	
CEN2		0.27	
CEN3		0.41	
SEE1		0.36	
SEE2		0.45	
SEE3		0.23	
ENG1			0.17
ENG2			0.24
ENG3			0.43
ENG4			0.52
ENG5			0.32
ENG6			0.28
ENG7			0.20
ENG8			0.31

Note:*** $p < 0.001$.

Table 5.Correlations:First-order constructs and predicted constructs

Dimensions	Correlations	Lower-bound CI	Higher-bound CI
Attraction<->Sincerity	0.42*	0.36	0.49
Attraction<->Object-based authenticity	0.11n.s.	0.08	0.13
Attraction<->Existential authenticity	0.41*	0.35	0.48
Attraction<->Engagement	0.33*	0.27	0.38
Attraction<->Memorable experience	0.30*	0.23	0.36
Centrality<->Sincerity	0.40*	0.33	0.44
Centrality<->Object-based authenticity	0.08n.s.	0.02	0.10
Centrality<->Existential authenticity	0.46*	0.40	0.54
Centrality<->Engagement	0.38*	0.33	0.43
Centrality<->Memorable experience	0.44*	0.38	0.49
Self-expression<->Sincerity	0.32*	0.26	0.36
Self-expression<->Object-based authenticity	0.09n.s.	0.03	0.11
Self-expression<->Existential authenticity	0.30*	0.26	0.34
Self-expression<->Engagement	0.43*	0.36	0.49
Self-expression<->Memorable experience	0.37*	0.30	0.43
Sincere social interaction<->Engagement	0.31*	0.26	0.36
Sincere social interaction<->Memorable experience	0.33*	0.26	0.38
Sincere emotional response<->Engagement	0.42*	0.34	0.45
Sincere emotional response<->Memorable experience	0.38*	0.32	0.43

Note:*Correlation significant at 0.01(2-tailed);Non-significant(n.s.).

Table6.Measurement model assessment results (purchased souvenirs vs. did not purchase souvenirs)

Construct/ Items	Loading/Weight***		CR		AVE		α		VIF	
	Purchased	not purchased (NP)	Purchased	NP	Purchased	NP	Purchased	NP	Purchased	NP
OBA			0.78	0.75	0.53	0.51	0.81	0.83	1.87	2.43
OBA1	0.72	0.74								
OBA2	0.81	0.78								
OBA3	0.77	0.78								
OBA4	0.82	0.74								
EXA			0.76	0.77	0.54	0.52	0.83	0.79	1.77	2.01
EXA1	0.74	0.74								
EXA2	0.77	0.74								
EXA3	0.71	0.70								
EXA4	0.72	0.73								
EXA5	0.81	0.78								
EXA6	0.75	0.74								
MEE			0.82	0.76	0.54	0.53	0.80	0.78	1.86	1.69
MEE1	0.77	0.82								
MEE2	0.73	0.77								
MEE3	0.74	0.71								
MEE4	0.75	0.77								
ATT	0.45	0.40	0.77	0.72	0.53	0.50	0.78	0.81	2.43	2.60
CEN	0.29	0.43	0.78	0.78	0.52	0.61	0.77	0.77	1.67	2.09
SEE	0.49	0.54	0.75	0.77	0.53	0.54	0.71	0.75	2.54	2.20
SSI	0.56	0.32	0.81	0.84	0.56	0.66	0.78	0.79	1.89	1.94
SER	0.49	0.56	0.79	0.77	0.53	0.51	0.82	0.84	1.80	2.45
ENG										
ENG1	0.25	0.32							2.30	1.77
ENG2	0.32	0.38							2.22	2.20
ENG3	0.28	0.27							2.45	2.07
ENG4	0.51	0.50							2.30	1.76

ENG5	0.38	0.23							2.47	1.92
ENG6	0.42	0.19							2.11	1.23
ENG7	0.52	0.38							2.56	1.78
ENG8	0.48	0.41							2.27	2.34

Note: Purchased souvenirs (Purchased); did not purchase souvenirs (not purchased/NP); *** $t > 3.29$ ($p < 0.001$); **Table 2** (full list of constructs/items).

Table 7. Results of hypothesis testing (*t*-test results for constructs)

Hypothesis	Constructs	Mean value-Purchased	Mean value-Not purchased	Mean value differences	<i>t</i> -value	Result
H14a	Leisure involvement	5.78	4.70	1.08	4.23	Supported
H14b	Sincerity	6.12	5.03	1.09	7.12	Supported
H14c	Object-based authenticity	5.72	5.03	0.69	3.89	Supported
H14d	Existential authenticity	6.23	5.20	1.03	6.20	Supported
H14e	Engagement	6.11	5.02	1.09	7.76	Supported
H14f	Memorable experience	6.18	5.23	0.95	5.47	Supported

Note: Purchased souvenirs (Purchased); did not purchase souvenirs (not purchased);
*** $t > 3.29$ ($p < 0.001$); ** $t > 2.58$ ($p < 0.01$); * $t > 1.96$ ($p < 0.05$).

Appendix1:Indicators

Leisure involvement(LEI)(Chang and Gibson, 2011; Forgas-Coll *et al.*, 2017)

Attraction(ATT)

- ATT1.Visiting CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES (CHS) is important to me.
- ATT2.Visiting CHS is one of the things that I enjoy doing.
- ATT3.Visiting CHS allows me to relax from my daily activities.

Centrality(CEN)

- CEN1.Visiting CHS occupies an important part of my leisure time.
- CEN2.I enjoy talking about CHS with my acquaintances.
- CEN3.Many of my acquaintances like visiting CHS.

Self-expression(SEE)

- SEE1.My CHS-related activities explain who I am.
- SEE2.When I visit CHS, I can really be myself.
- SEE3.I can tell a lot about a person by seeing those visiting CHS.

Object-based authenticity(OBA) (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010)

- OBA1.The overall setting of SITE inspired me.
- OBA2.I liked the peculiarities of the houses and decorations in SITE.
- OBA3.I liked the way SITE blends with the attractive landscape/scenery, which offers other interesting opportunities for sightseeing.
- OBA4.I liked gaining information about the time period SITE is portraying.

Existential authenticity(EXA) (Bryce *et al.*, 2015; Kolar and Zabkar, 2010)

- EXA1.I liked the special arrangements, events, celebrations connected to SITE.
- EXA.2This visit provided a thorough insight into a specific historical era.
- EXA3.During my visit, I could connect with the related history, legends, and historical personalities presented at SITE.
- EXA4.I enjoyed this unique experience.
- EXA5.I found the atmosphere of SITE calm and peaceful during my visit.
- EXA6.I felt connected with the time period portrayed in SITE during my visit.

Sincerity (SIN) (Taheri, Gannon, *et al.*, 2018)

Sincere social interaction(SSI)

- SSI2.SITE staff/actors were eager to educate me with regard to the time period they were portraying
- SSI3.I talked and interacted with interpreters about the time period they were portraying
- SSI4.Interpreters were happy to involve me in the lives they were portraying
- SSI5.Interpreters were comfortable showing me their portrayed culture.

Sincere emotional response(SER)

- SER1.It was important that I saw the replicated lives of historical people.

- SER2. When I saw interpreters acting as historical people, I was conscious of their role within SITE.
- SER3. Interpreters representing historical people presented themselves to visitors accurately and honestly.
- SER4. There were similarities between what I experienced and my expectations of the actors portraying historical people within SITE.
- SER5. Interpreters represented historical people truthfully and passionately to visitors.

Engagement(ENG) (Taheri *et al.*, 2014)

- ENG1. Using (interactive) panels
- ENG2. Using a guided tour led by a person
- ENG3. Using videos and audio while on site
- ENG4. Using social interaction spaces
- ENG5. Using my own guidebook and printed literature
- ENG6. Seeking help from staff
- ENG7. Playing with hands-on materials (e.g., toys, jigsaw puzzles, quizzes...)
- ENG8. Using on-site online facilities and internet

Memorable experience(MEE) (Kim *et al.*, 2012; Lee, 2015)

- EEM1. I enjoyed this experience and feel excited.
 - EEM2. I experienced the culture and history of SITE.
 - EEM3. I enjoyed a sense of freedom while visiting SITE.
 - EEM4. I did something meaningful while visiting SITE.
-