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Brand Experience Research in Hospitality and Tourism – Review and Future Directions

Abstract

This article aims to present a critical review of brand experience (BE) research in hospitality and tourism brand management literature based on a systematic literature and content analysis of 40 articles published in 25 peer-reviewed journals. The concept of BE is discussed by identifying leading journals, research methodologies, research contexts, country of research distribution, dimensionality approaches, and theoretical perspectives. Quantitative research was applied in most reviewed papers, and structural equation modeling (SEM), together with factor analysis (FA) emerged as preferred data analysis techniques. A steady increase in research papers exploring the construct of BE in an online context has been observed. The study suggests that BE is a critical and substantial ingredient of successful hotel, place, destination, restaurant, coffeehouse, cruise, and casino brand management. Additionally, key insights from previous empirical research were discussed from the perspective of antecedents and consequences of BE to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework. Drawing on the findings, potential themes for future research within six important areas of BE in hospitality and tourism were identified.

Keywords: brand experience, hospitality, tourism, content analysis, literature review

1. Introduction

Consumers are increasingly evaluating brands for how good they are at delivering memorable and unique experiences (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This has led to a shift in academic focus from functional features and benefits marketing towards experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999), resulting in what is now a substantial body of literature built around the notion that customers demand products, communication, and marketing campaigns that "…dazzle their senses, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds. Products that they can relate to and that they can incorporate into their lifestyles" (Schmitt et al., 2014, p. 728).

Research aimed at understanding how customers experience brands gained substantial attention after the pioneering work of Gilmore and Pine (1998) - "Welcome to the Experience Economy", and the introduction of experiences as a new form of economic offering. Although the research settings differ, previous studies show that brand experience represents a critical and substantial ingredient of successful brand management. The concept of brand experience (BE) was defined by Brakus et al. (2009) as "sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (p. 53). By testing and further developing the framework to better suite various research contexts and sectors, previous studies were able to introduce additional constructs such as retail brand experience (Rodrigues & Brandão, 2021), destination brand experience (Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2018), hotel brand experience (Khan & Rahman, 2017) as well as online brand experience (Morgan-Thomas & Veloutsou, 2013).

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Following the growing popularity of BE in literature, prior reviews have analyzed past empirical and conceptual studies across different industries (Khan & Rahman, 2015), making it possible for a concept that is still in its infancy stage to become fully established in a field (Schmitt, 2009). Moreover, reassessments of previous research provide a roadmap for future research undertakings (Zha et al., 2020). However, to our knowledge, a systematic review of past BE research focusing on hospitality and tourism brands has not yet been performed. We believe this is an important yet overlooked context as providing unique and memorable experiences represents an essential strategy among marketers (Schmitt, 1999; Gilmore & Pine, 1998) and is recognized as particularly valuable for hospitality and tourism brand managers (Gilmore & Pine, 2002; Scott et al., 2009; Ting, 2016; Kham & Rahman, 2017; Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017). Hospitality brands possess a natural predisposition to provide high levels of emotional and symbolic value through experiences (Manthiou et al., 2016), and experiences have been described as fundamental drivers in tourism brand building due to their link with nurturing psychological well-being and personal development of tourists (Castañeda García et al., 2018).

Accordingly, the aim of this paper is threefold – first, to discuss the current state of BE research in the fields of hospitality and tourism. Second, to summarize key insights from previous empirical research by presenting a comprehensive conceptual framework. Third, to identify important areas for further research that could enable a better understanding of the phenomenon of BE and its influence on customer purchase behavior in hospitality and tourism. To achieve this, we address the following research questions:

(1) What is the present state of BE research in hospitality and tourism in terms of journal distribution, research methods, research context, country of research distribution, dimensionality approaches, and theoretical perspectives?

(2) What are the key findings from previous empirical research on BE in hospitality and tourism regarding antecedents and consequences of BE?

(3) Which areas are important and should be addressed in future studies?

We reviewed and systematically analyzed 40 articles written in English and published in relevant, peer-reviewed journals on brand experience research in hospitality and tourism. The present study builds on previous research to provide a more detailed picture of BE research in the fields of hospitality and tourism. The paper is structured as follows: following the Introduction, we first describe the research method and the parameters on which the literature has been searched and selected. Then, we present the current state of BE research in hospitality and tourism literature. After that, the aim, objectives, and findings from the analyzed papers are summarized, underlining what is currently known about BE antecedents and consequences. The paper ends with the conclusion and future directions section, where we reveal conclusions drawn from the findings of the review, propose areas for future research and discuss research limitations.

2. Literature review method

The overall objective of the paper is to build upon previous research into BE in a hospitality and tourism setting through a systematic analysis of empirical and conceptual studies published in peer-reviewed journals. As explained by Khan and Rahman (2015), a systematic review of the literature "…is arguably the most efficient, reliable and high-quality method for examining extensive bases of literature" (p. 2). Furthermore, Chen et al. (2021) explain that a hybrid form of review can be developed by integrating the tenets of both bibliometric and structured reviews. Accordingly, the present study applied systematic bibliometric analysis as a replicable method of selection and evaluation to provide an overview of research progress. Secondly, a classification of articles was performed through content analysis. Content analysis is a "technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics

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of messages" (Holsti, 1969, p. 14). Content analysis was adopted to yield descriptive information on the content of previous research and was conducted following the seven classic steps: (1) formulation of research questions, (2) selection of the sample, (3) definition of categories, (4) planning of the coding process, (5) implementation of the coding process, (6) determination of trustworthiness, and (7) analysis of the results of the coding process (Šerić, 2018). The required information was coded and entered in an MS Excel worksheet.

2.1. Search strategy

Three steps were performed to collect data. To avoid selection bias, data were extracted from the following databases: Science Direct, Emerald Insight, EBSCOhost, and Google Scholar. According to Chen et al. (2021), Science Direct and EBSCOhost are among the most authoritative and comprehensive online databases for hospitality and tourism research journals due to the high degree of search functionality and coverage over a specified timeframe. Emerald Insight was added to increase variety when it comes to brand experience-related articles in general (Khan and Rahman, 2015). as well as those specifically related to the fields of tourism and hospitality (e.g., *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*). Furthermore, the search engine Google scholar was researched because of its specific features, specifically because "…similar keyword searches in the search engine will return the most comprehensive results over other databases since common word variations are automatically searched within its parameters" (Chen et al., 2021, p. 3). The presented databases should enable the coverage of a comprehensive range of relevant papers suited for literature review studies in hospitality and tourism, as Google Scholar complements the search results from Science Direct, EBSCOhost, and Emerald Insight. Only studies that were published in peer-reviewed journals were considered as they represent the highest quality of research (Khan & Rahman, 2015).

We used the following keywords: *"Brand experience"* together with *"tourism"* and *"hospitality"* as well as, *"Destination brand experience"*, *"Hotel brand experience"* and *"Experiential marketing"* in the title and full text of the paper to search for the most relevant studies. A total of 146 articles were extracted and selected for screening. We used Microsoft Excel to record all entries and eliminate duplicates.

2.2. Construct conceptualization and article selection criteria

To increase reliability, we adopted the criteria for including papers from Khan and Rahman's (2015) literature review on brand experience research by which only articles that discussed the brand experience concept as per the definition of Brakus et al. (2009) were considered as relevant. Additionally, one study (Yoon & Lee, 2017) applied Schmitt's (1999) Strategic Experiential Modules to measure experiences. According to Schmitt (1999) - The experiential modules to be managed in experiential marketing include sensory experiences (SENSE), affective experiences (FEEL), creative cognitive experiences (THINK), physical experiences, behaviors, and lifestyles (ACT), and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture (RELATE). However, by comparing the two conceptualizations, it is possible to observe that the SENSE – FEEL – ACT – THINK Strategic Experiential Modules somewhat correspond to the four dimensions of brand experience described by Brakus et al. (2009) as sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences evoked by brand-related stimuli. Thereby, the study was included for further analysis.

A total of 40 papers (see Appendix for the full list of papers) met the criteria and were analyzed in terms of the year, keywords, main objectives, research methodology and tools, key findings, sector, and, where applicable, country of origin and theoretical perspective. Data were coded in Microsoft Excel. The search process and article selection criteria are depicted in Table 1.

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Table 1
Article search process and selection criteria

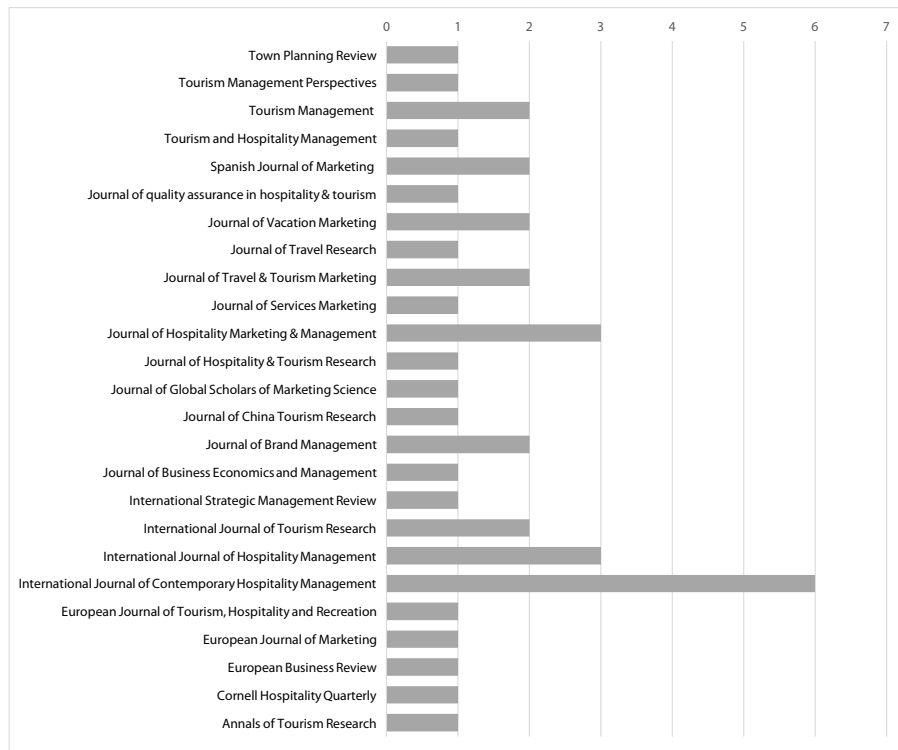|	Step 1		Step 2	Step 3
	Inclusion	Exclusion		
	Published academic journal articles	Books, conference proceedings, editorials, viewpoints, newspaper articles, working papers	Keywords: "Brand experience" together with "tourism" and "hospitality" as well as, "Destination brand experience", "Hotel brand experience" and "Experiential marketing"	The details of each article were assessed using Khan and Rahman (2015) BE literature review criteria. Articles that discussed the BE concept as per definition provided by Brakus et al. (2009) and Schmitt (1999) were included
			Results were recorded in a single Microsoft Excel sheet and replicated papers were removed	
	English articles	Non-English articles		
	Full text available	Full text not available		
Total			146	40

Source: Authors' research.

3. Results

3.1. Current state of BE research in hospitality and tourism literature

The 40 selected papers were published in 25 academic journals. Among them, the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* has published the most articles (6 studies) on BE in hospitality and tourism, followed by the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (3 studies) and the J*ournal of Hospitality Marketing and Management* (3 studies). The complete list of journals is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Distribution by journal

Source: Authors' research.

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3.1.1. Research methodology

The first analyzed paper was published in 2008, after which a continuous growth of academic research on BE in the context of hospitality and tourism can be observed. Table 2 shows most of the analyzed studies preferred quantitative over qualitative data (30 studies), while considerably fewer studies combined both quantitative and qualitative approaches (8 studies). Qualitative methodology was applied at the beginning of BE research in the fields of hospitality and tourism and conducted through interviews with industry experts, specifically marketing managers of hotel brands (Zhang et al., 2008) and place brands (Hanna & Rowley, 2013). Studies combining qualitative and quantitative research were mostly focused on identifying brand experience dimensions in certain contexts (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019; Ahn & Back, 2018) or developing their own measurement scales for hotel brand experience (Khan & Rahman, 2017). Based on the reviewed papers, it is possible to conclude that qualitative research remains underrepresented in hospitality and tourism brand experience research after its inception in 2008.

An experimental design was applied in three studies (Lee et al., 2018; Chan & Tang, 2019; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2020). The experimental approach enabled the researchers to focus on selected variables, thus minimizing the effect of other variables. This is particularly valuable since experience can sometimes be a complex concept to study from someone's memory, and certain dimensions can be difficult to recall (Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020).

As per research tools, self-administrated and online questionnaires were employed in the majority of (quantitative) studies, with participants mostly recruited from a population of previous customers, visitors, patrons, or tourists. These studies are valuable because they examined brand experiences from a customer perspective. However, their generalization is limited due to convenience sampling.

Participants selected from the student population were, in general, questioned as part of the (questionnaire) pre-testing phase (Wiedmann et al., 2017; Khan & Rahman, 2017; Lee et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2019) or as the main research sample type in one study (Huaman Ramirez & Merunka, 2019). Several studies used a sample selected from online panels (Lee & Jeong, 2014; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019; Jiménez-Barreto, Sthapit et al., 2019; Touni et al., 2020; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio, Campo Martínez et al., 2020).

Regarding data analysis techniques implemented in quantitative studies, structural equation modeling and factor analysis were the most widely used techniques (Lee & Jeong, 2014; Hussein et al., 2015; Wiedmann et al., 2017; Khan & Rahman, 2017; Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017; Nysveen et al., 2018; Castañeda García et al., 2018; Ahn & Back, 2018; Khan et al., 2019; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Touni et al., 2020, Khan et al., 2020; Lin & Wong, 2020).

- Factor analysis was used as the first step to evaluate the measurement model – asses its validity and reliability.

- Secondly, structural equation modeling was performed to test the hypotheses – examine construct relationships. In some studies, PLS (partial least squares), which is an approach to structural equation modeling, was used to analyze the data (Barnes et al., 2014; Khan et al., 2017; Moreira et al., 2017; Ong et al., 2018; Hussein, 2018; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019).

Another observed technique was the interpretive structural modeling (ISM) approach (Khan & Rahma, 2017a), used to identify the factors of hotel brand experience and determine the interrelationships among them through the development of a reliable and robust hierarchy-based model. Furthermore, multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with univariate follow-up tests was used in an experimental study (Lee et al., 2018).

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Table 2
Evolution of BE in hospitality and tourism research methodology

Year	No. of papers	Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed
2008	1	1	---	---
2013	2	1	1	---
2014	2	---	2	---
2015	3	---	1	2
2016	1	---	1	---
2017	8	---	6	2
2018	9	---	8	1
2019	6	---	4	2
2020	8	---	7	1
Total	40	2	30	8

Source: Authors' research.

3.1.2. Research context

BE in hospitality and tourism has been explored in both the offline and online contexts. The majority of analyzed studies were conducted in an offline context (31 studies), while nine studies focused on the online context. Both included brands from various sectors, namely hotel brands (15 studies) and destination or place brands (9 studies). However, restaurant or coffeehouse brands (8 studies), integrated resorts or casino brands (3 studies), and cruise ship brands (2 studies) were exclusively studied in an offline context. Based on the above, it is possible to conclude that the construct of online brand experience was regarded as important for the management of hotel and destination or place brands but not for brands from other sectors.

In general, findings from the analyzed papers reveal the importance of developing positive online BE as they can impact different stages along the customer journey – from information search and purchase (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019) to the offline brand experience, which customers experienced later during their stay at the location (Castañeda García et al., 2018). Authors agree that the online setting is where, in most instances, the first contact between a potential customer and a hospitality or tourism brand occurs and therefore see technology as a framework enabling the process of customer and provider co-creation of value (Castañeda García et al., 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Researchers have mainly directed their attention toward hotel brand experiences in both online and offline environments. This is in line with previous literature stating that the hotel is a fundamental element in the tourism sector, often providing a hub for the experiences that promote tourists' psychological well-being (Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020). Because tourists are generally traveling for pleasure, academics and professionals agree that hotels need to generate unique, emotional, and unforgettable experiences that facilitate desirable consumer behaviors (Kang, 2015; Khan & Rahman, 2015; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020). While physical facilities can be copied by other hospitality providers, customer experience cannot be easily reproduced, and thus, the experience embodies the uniqueness of the hospitality brand (Manthiou et al., 2016). The same shift was observed in destination brand management, where destination brand experience, described as a new conceptualization in assessing the holistic and unified view of tourism destinations, has emerged as a critical tool for achieving competitive advantage (Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017). In the restaurant and coffeehouse sector, where every touch point, such as food, price, environment, and service, can be an experience itself, authors describe the brand experience as a vital differentiation tool to win customers' loyalty (Ong et al., 2018).

The reviewed papers were classified into three periods, showing the evolution of BE in hospitality and tourism according to their research context: 2008-2013; 2014-2017; 2018-2020.

- **2008-2013:** All three papers published during the first analyzed period were conducted in an offline context. Two papers were focused on place brands (Hanna & Rowley, 2013; Beckman et al., 2013), and one studied hotel brand experiences (Zhang et al., 2008). The initial period is characterized by explorative

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research aimed at better understanding how practitioners manage the place or hotel brand experience. Later, BE started to gain substantial attention in academic research spanning different fields as Brakus et al. (2009) published their seminal work on the conceptualization, dimensions, and measurement scale of BE. Accordingly, scholars started to analyze what experience dimensions visitors (locals vs. tourists) obtain from a branded place and what are the effects of those experiences in terms of word-of-mouth and revisit intention (Beckman, Kumar & Kim, 2013).

- **2014-2017:** During the next three years, the number of papers focusing on BE in the fields of hospitality and tourism increased substantially, amounting to a total of fourteen studies – compared to only three studies from the previous six-year-long period. During this time, researchers were mainly examining the impacts of hotels (Manthiou et al., 2016, Yoon & Lee, 2017; Wiedmann et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2017) destination (Barnes et al., 2014) and restaurant or coffeehouse (Hussein, & Hapsari, 2015; Ding & Tseng, 2015; Khan & Fatma, 2017; Choi et al., 2017; Moreira et al., 2017) BE. Although the concept had been explored to some extent in the fields of hospitality and tourism during the previous period, we find researchers placing greater emphasis on tourism and hospitality, which resulted in more BE scale testing as well as additional scales specifically developed for the measurement of hotel BE (Rahman & Khan, 2017). Empirical research conducted in an online context was introduced, exploring the official brand's website as the medium between tourists and hotel brand content (Lee & Jeong, 2014) and providing insights into key determinants for customers' online BE as well as their responses.

- **2018-2020:** Building on the developments of the previous three years, the next phase continued to investigate the BE impact in various hospitality sectors. Hotel brands remained the leading focus of researchers, but at the same time, cruise ships brands (Ahn & Back, 2019; Kang et al., 2020) and casinos or integrated resort brands (Ahn & Back, 2018; Ahn & Back, 2018a; Lin & Wong, 2020) were added to the study. Accordingly, it is possible to observe that hotel BE has remained highly popular, but researchers enriched the understanding of BE by including new segments. Over the last three years, a growing body of literature on BE in hospitality and tourism has investigated the concept in an online context. Although this research context received some interest from academics in 2014 and 2015, contributions to online BE increased significantly during the last analyzed period, accounting for more than 70% of all reviewed studies on BE in an online context. Studies focusing on online BE continued to explore the official brand's website as the medium between tourists and destination or hospitality brand content (Lee et al., 2018; Castañeda García et al., 2018; Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019, 2020). However, social media platforms started to gain attention in recent years. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube – referred to as official platforms, were studied in two papers focusing on online destination brand experience (ODBE) by Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al. (2019) and Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al. (2020). Other online platforms include TripAdvisor and Booking.com, which are described as social networks and evaluation-booking websites often consulted by customers to gather more data on the hotel before the actual visit (Castañeda García et al., 2018). The complete research context breakdown is depicted in Table 3.

Table 3
Research context evolution

Sector	Online context			Offline context			Total sector
	2008-2013	2014-2017	2018-2020	2008-2013	2014-2017	2018-2020	
Hotel	---	1	2	1	6	5	15
Restaurant & coffee	---	---	---	---	5	3	8
Destination / place	---	---	4	2	1	2	9
Cruise	---	---	---	---	---	2	2
Integrated resort / casino	---	---	---	---	---	3	3
Cross	---	1	1	---	---	1	3
Total	---	2	7	3	12	16	40

Source: Authors' research.

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3.1.3. Country of research distribution

To identify the extent of research carried out on BE across the globe, it is important to know how many studies have been conducted in which country (Khan & Rahman, 2015). The majority of analyzed studies stating the country of research were performed in Asia (11 studies), while the USA and European countries were reported in six studies, respectively. South America was present in one reviewed study (Huaman Ramirez & Merunka, 2019).

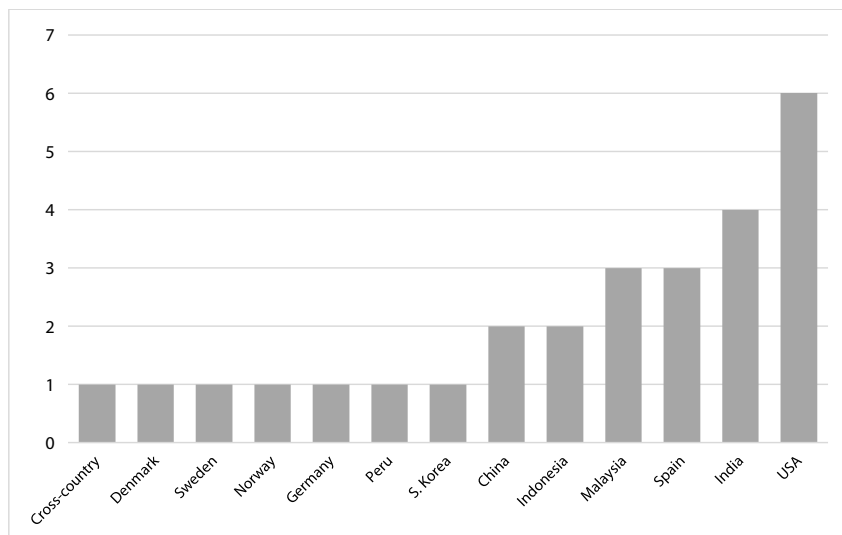Among Asian countries, studies were mostly conducted in:

- India (Khan & Rahman, 2017;2017a; Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017; Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2020),
- Malaysia (Manthiou et al., 2016; 2017; Ong et al., 2018),
- Indonesia (Hussein et al., 2015; Hussein, 2018),
- China (Zhang et al., 2008; Lin & Wong, 2020),
- South Korea (Yoon & Lee, 2017).

Studies from Europe took place in the following countries:

- Spain (Castañeda García et al., 2018; Jiménez Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020)
- Denmark and Sweden (Barnes et al., 2014;)
- Norway (Nysveen et al., 2018), and
- Germany (Wiedmann et al., 2017).

As depicted in Figure 2, scholars have directed their attention toward developing countries. Interestingly, apart from Spain, Europe's tourist attractions (such as France, Greece, Italy, and in recent years, Croatia or Iceland) were mainly left out. Some studies focused on more geographical areas as part of a cross-sectional study (Khan & Rahman, 2015) or to account for differences between perspectives, such as Spain and North America in a study by Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al. (2019). The latter is particularly valuable for understanding potential cultural effects – an area that remains yet to be explored in the domain of BE research (Hussein, 2018), as researchers are advised to seek valuable insights by further investigating possible intra-cultural discrepancies (Lin & Wong, 2020).

Figure 2
Distribution of papers by geographical area

Source: Authors' research.

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3.1.4. Theories used to explore BE in hospitality and tourism research

The reviewed papers presented a variety of theoretical perspectives (Lee & Jeong, 2014; Lee et al., 2015; Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017; Jeong & Oh, 2018; Castañeda García et al., 2018; Jiménez Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019). Congruity theory was used to explain how customers' positive website experience reflected their self-concept, channel congruence, and congruent values, leading to positive responses in a study performed by Lee and Jeong (2014). Specifically, the authors investigated how self-image congruity, online–offline brand image congruity, and value congruity influenced customers' online brand experiences and their brand trust. Similarly, Kumar and Kaushik (2017) applied the concept of brand identification to explain the relationship between destination brand experience, brand trust, and loyalty. The concept of brand identification is based on social identity theory that defines brand identification as a perceptual construct (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), implying identity matching and identity fit (Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017).

Ding and Tseng (2015) examined the mediation mechanism to account for the influence of BE on brand loyalty by integrating the experiential view of consumption and the appraisal theory of emotion in a restaurant setting. The research showed that brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, and hedonic emotions mediated the relationship between BE and brand loyalty. Moreover, the experiential view of consumption rather than the appraisal theory of emotion played a dominant role in accounting for brand experience's influence on brand loyalty. Kang et al. (2017) investigated the impact of brand experiences on attachment, knowledge, and trust by incorporating the principles of attachment theory which proposes that interactions with a subject significantly influence individuals' attachment to the subject. Additionally, the authors explain that customers' knowledge of a brand is strengthened by the accumulative consumption of experiences.

Transportation Theory and Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning were applied in the online research context. Transportation theory focuses on customers' immersion into the story and their subjective experience, enabling them to fill the gap and create their own meanings in the story (Lee et al., 2018, p. 70). Lee et al. (2018) proposed hotel marketers should design their websites featuring story-format sensory marketing since hotel websites, including story-format sensory information, heightens customers' transportation experiences, BE, emotions, and trust. The study reported that customers' response types included narrative persuasion, experiential, emotional, and cognitive responses. Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) was described as the cognitive process whereby people learn through presentation of textual and pictural information via electronic devices (Jimanez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019, p. 247 based on Mayer & Moreno, 2002). Jimanez-Barreto, Rubio et al. (2019) explain how consumers quickly receive and localize information from electronic environments through sensory channels and can manipulate this information in a conscious manner by means of working memory to ultimately build meaning and obtain a deeper understanding of the information presented. Accordingly, CTML was used to propose a relationship between an initially sensorial experience that influences a subsequent cognitive experience in the online context.

Lastly, previous studies have adopted the value co-creation perspective to emphasize the interdependence between customers and the service provider as a form of symbiotic force that attenuates how offline and online brand experiences are cocreated (Castañeda García et al., 2018; Lin & Wong, 2020). Lin and Wong (2020) conceptualized BE as a moment of truth when customer's responses are evoked by brand-related stimuli that differentiate one brand from another and investigated triadic interactions among casino patrons by modeling employee-to-customer (E2C) interactions as boundary conditions that moderate the effect of customer-to-customer (C2C) and customer-to-companion (Cu2Co) interaction quality on BE.

3.1.5. Dimensionality approaches

To explain the dimensionality of BE in hospitality and tourism, the analyzed papers focused on both scale development and testing. Scale testing mainly involved the application of the Brakus et al. (2009) scale in

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the context of hotels (Manthiou et al., 2016), destinations (Barnes et al., 2014), and restaurants (Hussein et al., 2015).

Brakus et al. (2009) demonstrated that brand experience is composed of four dimensions, namely sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral, which are differentially evoked by various brands and constructed on a scale consisting of 12 items. Sensory experience describes aesthetics as well as sensory attributes that can be detected through sensory organs such as smell, vision, touch, and hearing (Brakus et al., 2009; Kang et al., 2017). More specifically, sensory experiences in a hospitality context are created when a guest interacts with a hotel's atmosphere, especially through music, scent, and visual interior design (Manthiou et al., 2016). The affective experience dimension includes feelings and sentiments (Brakus et al., 2009). Marketers agree that affective experience is crucial for generating customers' perceptions about a brand and influencing their purchase decisions (Schmitt, 1999). The behavioral experience involves a certain type of behavioral response in which individuals become physically active or show alternative lifestyles and interactions (Manthiou et al., 2016). The fourth dimension – intellectual experience, refers to an event or place that stimulates individuals (thinking and makes them feel curious (Kang et al., 2017). Authors used examples such as new technologies in a hotel room or awareness about environmental degradation to explain how marketers can increase intellectual stimulation.

On the other hand, several researchers pointed out that the indiscriminate use of the theoretical perspective from the studies of Schmitt (1999) and Brakus et al. (2009) represents a developmental issue in BE research because most authors apply them without providing any additional criticism or theoretical elaboration (Andreini et al., 2018; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020). Accordingly, they argue in favor of applying BE dimensions and measurement scales specifically designed for the purpose of hospitality and tourism brand studies (Khan & Rahman, 2017; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020) or extending the four-dimensional BE scale to include additional context-specific BE dimensions (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019).

Based on the findings of several reliability and validity tests, as well as from scale replications across several different samples, Khan and Rahman (2017) developed a 17-item five-dimensional hotel brand experience scale. According to the authors, hotel brand experience consists of (1) hotel location, (2) hotel stay and ambiance, (3) hotel staff competence, (4) hotel website and social media experience, and (5) guest-to-guest experiences. The scale was later tested in another study by Gómez-Suárez and Veloso (2020), which confirmed that the experience scale meets all the psychometric properties related to validity and reliability. The authors argued that the four dimensions of the Khan and Rahman scale (2017) – location, staff, atmosphere, and Web – referred to more observable and easy-to-remember issues, while the items that reflect the dimensions of Brakus et al.'s (2009) model are difficult to understand in a study that depends on participants' memory rather than a previous experiment or particular stimuli exposure. However, the authors underlined that the proposed model and obtained results indicated that location, staff, atmosphere, and Web as dimensions are not a reflection of experience but rather are shaped as antecedent constructs.

Castañeda García et al. (2018) defined the experience in an online environment "…as the global experience deriving from consumer interactions with different platforms where the tourist seeks to find hotel information" (p. 27). The authors applied four dimensions of the online experience medium: (1) pragmatic, (2) hedonic, (3) sociability, and (4) usability to measure online hotel brand experiences of customers exposed to official websites, TripAdvisor and Booking.

Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al. (2019) focused their research on dimensions of positive online destination brand experience and extended the four-dimensional scale created by Brakus et al. (2009) to include "interactive" and "social" experiences. The authors argued that the focus of brand managers should be on generating sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual experiences as well as fostering person-to-person connections and enabling users to create content on the brand's official digital platforms.

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To conclude, the above-discussed findings suggest that BE research in hospitality and tourism can be successfully conducted by implementing measurement scales from the studies of Schmitt (1999) and Brakus et al. (2009). However, hospitality and tourism research could benefit from further refinement of measurement items in the original scale with a goal to eliminate any ambiguity (Beckman, Kumar, & Kim, 2013) or include additional dimensions to account for specific and various interactions resulting in brand experiences on digital platforms (Jiménez-Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019).

3.2. A conceptual framework of BE in hospitality and tourism

To better understand the antecedents and consequences of BE, we summarized key findings from previous empirical research and presented a comprehensive conceptual framework of BE in hospitality and tourism (Figure 3).

3.2.1. Antecedents of BE in hospitality and tourism

Khan and Rahman (2015) proposed a conceptual framework with event marketing, brand contacts, brand-related stimuli, and storytelling as offline antecedents and trust and perceived usefulness as online antecedents of brand experience in multiple research fields, including but not focused on brands from the fields of hospitality and tourism. Later, Khan et al. (2017) empirically tested event marketing, brand clues, and marketing communications as antecedents in a restaurant brand setting. Based on the reviewed papers, additional variables reported as BE antecedents in hospitality and tourism literature could be observed. In particular, the following topics emerged as important when designing superior BE in hospitality and tourism: (1) technology-driven antecedents, (2) multi-sensory marketing, (3) interactions, (4) congruity, and (5) brand image.

Robotic services were observed as a technology-driven antecedent in previous studies. Chan and Tung (2019) examined the effects of robotic service on BE as well as the moderating role of the hotel segment. The findings suggested higher levels of sensory and intellectual experience from robotic service but lower levels of affective experience. For behavioral experience, robotic service influenced a higher rating for midscale and budget hotels but not for luxury hotels. Jiménez Barreto, Rubio et al. (2019) explained that if a website is able to provide esthetically motivating elements (images, graphics, or videos), attractive content, and easy access, it is perceived as being more useful and relevant. The authors proved how perceived web site quality acts as an antecedent to the ODBE. Del Valle Galindo and Martínez Suárez (2018) reported a significant and positive effect of online experience on the construct of offline experience. According to the authors, the online experience was found to be significant in conditioning the tourist experience during the stay, probably because it offered a better knowledge of the resources, activities, and initiatives that the hotel offers.

Several authors centered their research around the effects of multi-sensory marketing (Lee & Jeong, 2018; Moreira et al., 2017; Wiedmann et al., 2017). Multi-sensory marketing was defined as "...marketing that engages the consumers' senses and influences their perceptions, judgements and behaviors" (Krishna, 2012, p. 333, cited by Wiedmann et al., 2017). Wiedmann et al. (2017) examined the causal relationships among multi-sensory marketing, BE, customer perceived value, and brand strength. The results suggested that multi-sensory marketing is an important means of establishing BE. In addition, both are key drivers of customer perceived value and significantly influence brand strength. Moreira et al. (2017) discovered that sensory stimulation positively influences BE and brand equity, which, in turn, has a positive impact on intentions to purchase the brand in question. Lin and Wong (2020) analyzed a triadic interaction model with respect to how customer-to-customer, customer-to-companion, and employee-to-customer interactions could cultivate brand experience and, ultimately, brand attachment. The findings suggested that low quality of employer-to-customer interaction during the service encounter could hamper the customer-to-customer quality effect and proved that customers' roles (both as strangers and companions) in the service encounter are the foundation of cocreating a memorable customer experience.

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Nysveen et al. (2018) aimed to examine the influence of brands' innovativeness and green image on customers' sensory, affective, cognitive, relational, and behavioral brand experience and, through that, on brand satisfaction. Their study revealed the positive influences of new green products as well as the positive influence of perceived brand innovativeness on perceived green image and concluded that brand innovativeness and green image could help build strong brand experiences as well as brand satisfaction.

In conclusion, the papers analyzed a wide range of variables affecting brand experience and sought to present a unified framework of its antecedents as well. At the same time, the authors called for further research into brand experience antecedents in different settings.

3.2.2. Consequences of BE in hospitality and tourism

All reviewed papers have analyzed the impact of BE to some extent. Accordingly, the topic was approached through both customer-related effects and brand-related effects. Customer-related effects were evaluated in terms of customer satisfaction, service quality, perceived value, visit and revisit intention, word-of-mouth, willingness to pay more, attitudes, hedonic emotions, and emotional attachment.

A large body of literature on brand experience in hospitality and tourism has investigated the impact of brand experience on customer satisfaction. Building on the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998), Brakus et al. (2009) suggested that experiences provide value and, in doing so, increase customers' satisfaction with brands. In line with this, Wiedmann et al. (2017) confirmed that multi-sensory brand experiences stimulate various dimensions of customer perceived value, including financial, functional, social, and individual value. Interestingly, Barnes et al. (2014) tested the influence of brand experience on satisfaction in a destination context and reported positive influences of sensory and affective experiences on destination satisfaction but no significant influences of intellectual and behavioral experiences.

Other papers revealed that brand experience exerts a positive impact on customer loyalty. Ong et al. (2018) sought to determine the relationships between each component of brand experience and customers' true brand loyalties in a restaurant service context. Findings revealed that different types of brand experience influence each customer's true brand loyalty differently, thus confirming that the study of BE impact should account for individual effects of brand experience dimensions.

Finally, Gómez-Suárez and Veloso (2020) found that brand experience had a significant and direct influence on word-of-mouth recommendations. By providing unique and unforgettable experiences, hotels can obtain brand promoters and co-creators of value through positive recommendations.
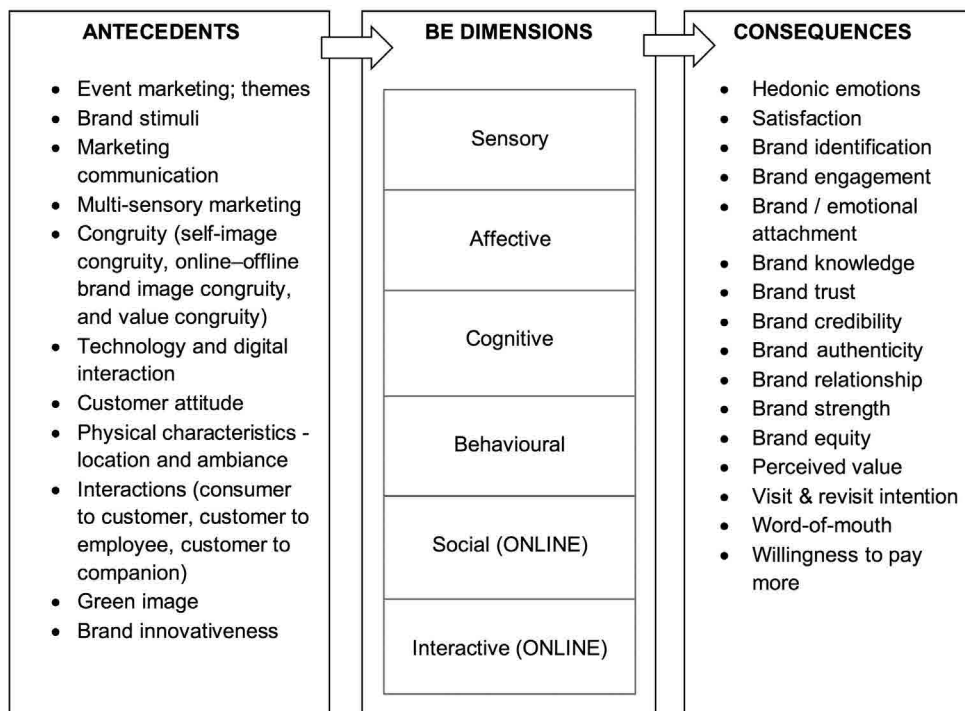
Most of the research on brand experience in hospitality and tourism has centered on brand-related effects, more specifically on brand strategy constructs such as *brand satisfaction* (Nysveen et al., 2018), *brand loyalty* (Ding & Tseng, 2015; Mathieu et al., 2016; Hussein et al., 2015; Khan et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020), *brand relationship* (Yoon & Lee, 2017), *brand strength* (Wiedmann et al., 2017), *brand equity* (Moreira et al., 2017; Castañeda Garcíaet et al., 2018), *brand identification* (Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017), *brand engagement* (Ahn & Back, 2018; Touni et al., 2020), *brand attachment* (Huaman et al., 2019; Gómez-Suárez & Veloso, 2020; Lin & Wong, 2020), *brand knowledge* (Manthiou et al., 2016), *brand trust* and *credibility* (Khan et al. 2017; Khan et al., 2019).

Nysveen et al. (2018) examined the influence of green image on brand satisfaction via brand experiences and revealed that sensory and behavioral experiences had a positive influence on brand satisfaction in hotels but found no significant effect on affective and relational experiences. The authors argue that for hotels with different experiential foci, other results will probably be revealed. "Among hotels offering gourmet food, for example, sensory experiences will likely have a significant influence. Hotels designed for wedding arrangements will likely find significant influences of affective experience" (p. 2921). Given this, the authors strongly recommended that future research test the framework among hotels with various experiential foci.

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Brand loyalty was by far the most researched outcome of BE among the analyzed studies, which is in line with Khan and Rahman (2015). The well-established notion that superior value creation is vital for a business looking to achieve better profits for sustainable business performance through customer loyalty (Reichheld, 1996; Ong et al., 2018) was referenced as a key motivation for studying BE in relation to brand loyalty. Manthiou et al. (2016) analyzed the direct and indirect influence of brand experience on brand loyalty. They proposed that consumers build cognitive structures or brand knowledge after experiencing a brand and form memories that serve as the basis for consumers' preferences. Thus, richer brand experiences lead to higher brand knowledge which in turn builds brand loyalty. The results confirmed the influence of brand experience but also showed this was partially mediated by the effect of brand knowledge.

Brand identification was reported as an important mediator for the relationship between destination brand experience and destination trust as well as between destination brand experience and destination loyalty (Kumar & Kumar Kaushik, 2017). Other studies introduced moderating effects in the relationship between hotel brand experiences and hotel brand loyalty, such as gender, loyalty card membership, age, and critical incident recovery (Khan et al., 2020). Furthermore, the relationship between brand experience and brand loyalty was tested in the context of restaurant brands showing both direct and indirect effects via customer satisfaction (Hussein et al., 2015). In a cross-sectional services study, Khan et al. (2019) incorporated brand engagement, brand experience, brand trust, and commitment into a framework emphasizing the role of brand commitment as a mediator. Brand engagement was the analyzed end-outcome of two additional studies (Ahn & Back, 2018; Touni et al., 2020). All studies in this section confirmed the decisive role of brand experience in developing consumer-brand relationships. On the other hand, certain authors suggested additional research should be performed focusing on the effects of individual dimensions (Huaman Ramirez & Merunka., 2019; Ong et al., 2018), while other proposed testing mediation models (Ding & Tseng, 2015) to facilitate the interpretation of experiential marketing.

Figure 3
A conceptual framework of BE in hospitality and tourism

ANTECEDENTS	BE DIMENSIONS	CONSEQUENCES
• Event marketing; themes • Brand stimuli • Marketing communication • Multi-sensory marketing • Congruity (self-image congruity, online–offline brand image congruity, and value congruity) • Technology and digital interaction • Customer attitude • Physical characteristics - location and ambiance • Interactions (consumer to customer, customer to employee, customer to companion) • Green image • Brand innovativeness	Sensory Affective Cognitive Behavioural Social (ONLINE) Interactive (ONLINE)	• Hedonic emotions • Satisfaction • Brand identification • Brand engagement • Brand / emotional attachment • Brand knowledge • Brand trust • Brand credibility • Brand authenticity • Brand relationship • Brand strength • Brand equity • Perceived value • Visit & revisit intention • Word-of-mouth • Willingness to pay more

Source: Authors' research.

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4. Conclusion and future directions

Fierce competition in the marketplace has made products and services commoditized and less competitive (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Ding & Tseng, 2015). To escape the commoditization trap, practitioners are investing in experiences, which in turn has elevated BE into a priority research construct for marketing scholars across various industries (Brakus et al., 2009; Gilmore & Pine, 2002). So far, the construct has received noticeable attention in the hospitality and tourism industry, where almost every service can be leveraged to stage a compelling experience (Gilmore & Pine, 2002). However, a systematic review of previous research has not yet been performed. Therefore, the present study makes a contribution as it attempts to identify the most relevant insights into BE in hospitality and tourism by analyzing and systematically presenting the academic literature. The reviewed papers suggest that BE is a critical and substantial ingredient of successful tourism and hospitality brand management. Although a steady increase of research papers exploring the construct of BE has been observed, there are still areas that could benefit from further analysis. Drawing on the previous discussion of the literature, research gaps were identified. We discuss potential themes for future research with respect to the following six areas: (1) research methodology, (2) research context, (3) country of research, (4) theoretical perspective, (5) dimensionality approach as well as (6) antecedents and outcomes of BE.

First, when it comes to research methodology, BE researchers in hospitality and tourism seem to favor quantitative, empirical research over qualitative or conceptual approaches. This represents a potential shortcoming since BE is a relatively new concept in hospitality and tourism brand management literature, and conceptual studies could help establish the construct (Rahman & Khan, 2015). Additionally, future research choosing a qualitative approach could include experts from various sectors, but also marketing communication professionals as communication is one of the key brand-related stimuli shaping experiences (Brakus et al., 2009), altogether providing further insight into the process of promoting customers' future experiences across online and offline channels. Overall, a reassessment of the BE design and evaluation process, as seen by marketing experts, could offer a new perspective on key dimensions, barriers to successful implementation as well as expectations from investing in BE.

Second, with respect to the research context, future studies combining both online and offline are welcomed to explain how the two impacts each other and, furthermore, how marketers can better integrate online and offline BE touch points. Additional research is needed to better understand how different online and offline brand touch points influence each stage of the customer journey (Lemon & Veheof, 2016). Moreover, it is possible to extend the understanding of online BE by analyzing the potential of restaurants and coffeehouse brands to create symbolic value for customers via online touch points.

Applying a theme could represent a novel area of interest in the context of destination and place brand management. The destination brand literature already recognized how even a singular tourism magnet, described as the Bilbao effect, can have a transformational effect (Franklin, 2019). Alternatively, places and destinations host events to provide visitors with unique opportunities to live memorable experiences, which, in turn, could enhance their appeal and attractiveness (Guerreiro et al., 2020). Upcoming studies could examine the potential of themes as well as events in fostering superior destination BE by answering questions such as: "How does theming or organizing specific events affect BE across different stages of the destination visitor journey? How can destination brand managers choose between various themes, tourism magnets, and/or events? And "What are the moderators conditioning positive outcomes? ".

In addition, authors have pointed out the disruptive effects of digital development on the economy and society, which have resulted in the emergence of new players such as Airbnb (Ramón-Rodríguez et al., 2021). Accommodation providers in the sharing economy are increasingly competing with the hotel industry vis-à-vis the guest experience (Mody et al., 2017). On the other hand, there were no studies directly connecting BE with such accommodation providers, which could present an area of interest for future studies. It would

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therefore be potentially worth asking: "How does BE in this particular segment relate to brand trust and brand authenticity in comparison with other hospitality providers?".

Third, while some geographical areas were well represented in academic literature, others were completely left out. For example, hospitality and tourism brands from Australia and New Zealand have not yet been studied in terms of BE. On a country level, it seems that traditional tourism destination brands with fierce competition have been underrepresented by Khan and Rahman (2015). On a global level, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a rise in the popularity of work from anywhere, and the emergence of digital nomads as an important tourist segment (Choudhury, et al., 2020). Thereafter, both developing and developed markets could be interested in how digital nomads, described as "…young professionals working solely in an online environment while leading a location independent and often travel reliant lifestyle where the boundaries between work, leisure and travel appear blurred" (Reichenberger, 2018, p. 364) experience destinations and hospitality brands.

Fourth, when it comes to referencing a specific theoretical perspective, we expect co-creation as well as social behavior theories to guide a growing number of future BE research in hospitality and tourism. This is because authors report that brands are increasingly taking advantage of social media connectivity to foster organic consumer interactions and deliver personalized customer service in real-time with the goal of empowering co-creation (Buhalis & Sinarta, 2019). More to the point, certain authors even state that customer involvement and enactment in the service delivery process is now a key value-added process that enhances customer experience (Wen et al., 2021).

Fifth, researchers are starting to recognize the role of BE as an underlying mechanism guiding customers' responses to key marketing strategies. Mediation through BE has been identified in a number of studies (Moreira et al., 2017; Ahn & Back, 2018; Seong et al., 2018; Jiménez Barreto, Rubio et al., 2019), further enriching the understanding of the construct in hospitality and tourism brand management literature. In the future, both individual dimensions and holistic approaches could be considered since experience dimensions can have different effects when examined individually (Ong et al., 2018). This seems to vary according to the experiential foci of the brand as well (Nysveen et al., 2018), a hypothesis that could be empirically tested in future studies.

Sixth, outcomes of BE were extensively covered in hospitality and tourism brand management literature and will continue to represent an integral part of BE research. As the most heterogeneous area, the question of designing superior BE was approached by incorporating principles from multiple disciplines. Based on the reviewed papers and recent market developments, we suggest that the principles from multi-sensory marketing, digital marketing, and green marketing, as well as their combination, will have the greatest impact on future BE research. With the adoption of new technologies, it is possible to observe a substantial increase in studies focusing on digital interactions and brand experience (Petit et al., 2019). Research including all sensory stimuli is especially important for the online context, where the study of sensory interaction has been limited to visual inputs delivered through storytelling (Lee et al., 2018). On the other hand, digital interactive technologies have already made other sensory interfaces available (such as touch screens, together with a range of audio, virtual, and augmented solutions) for people to interact online (Petit et al., 2019). Therefore, future contributions are necessary to determine the influence of new technologies on delivering superior BE via multiple sensory stimuli and across all stages of the customer journey. This is important because, in the future, customers are expected to undergo radically new experiences owning to new technologies (Hoyer et al., 2020; Morgan, 2020).

The World Tourism Organization has been promoting sustainable tourism for years now (Harchandani & Shome, 2021), and hotels are increasingly resorting to green marketing strategies to meet customers' rising eco-awareness (Wu & Chen, 2014). As a result, delivering services in a sustainable manner through the development and adoption of green technologies and related services currently represents a leading priority for service research (Ostrom et al., 2010, cited by Rosenbaum & Wong, 2015). However, only one reviewed study

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has proposed and empirically tested the role of BE as a mediator between green image, brand innovativeness, and brand satisfaction (Nysveen et al., 2018) and found a significant mediation effect for two dimensions of BE. Future studies are encouraged to test the influence of green image on brand experience as well as the role of BE in driving brand satisfaction, loyalty, authenticity, engagement, citizenship behavior, etc., as a reaction to green marketing strategies. More specifically, it could be worth asking: "how do the mediation effects of BE compare with mediation effects by well-established concepts in customer-brand relationship literature such as customer-brand identification (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Cha et al., 2016)? In addition, we already know that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the competitiveness and sustainability of tourism activity (Ramón-Rodríguez et al. 2021). Accordingly, additional insights are needed to evaluate the COVID-19 pandemic effects on the relationship between green marketing strategy, brand experience, and customer behavior.

As customers are increasingly using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter to express themselves, empirical research aimed at understanding how to approach the design of BE with the goal of facilitating user-generated content (UGC) is needed. Differently from e-WOM, user-generated content is generated, and not just conveyed, by users (Roma & Aloini, 2019) and has not yet been studied in relation to hospitality and tourism BE. Hence, we suggest the discussed themes could enrich the knowledge of BE and potentially result in more actionable guidelines for the design of effective multi-sensory, digital, and green marketing programs.

Finally, the reviewed articles on BE in hospitality and tourism have not included negative brand experiences. This is an understudied but important area since tourism and hospitality are full of frequent contact between customers and firms, where the probability of negative customer behavior is likely (Chen et al., 2020). Thereby, future research could focus on the conceptualization of the construct or provide a better understanding of the mechanisms by which negative experiences could be transformed into positive ones.

5. Limitations of the study

There are several limitations to this study: First, the review is limited to papers published in English. Furthermore, the choice of categories for coding the gathered data might lead to the omission of certain valuable insights. What's more important, the review is limited to papers that included or directly contrasted the conceptualization of brand experience offered by Brakus et al. (2009). This was done in order to focus the discussion and increase reliability, as suggested by Khan and Rahman (2015) in their review paper on BE in various industry settings. By doing so, we were also able to discuss the evolution of findings from previous empirical research regarding the antecedents and consequences of BE. However, future reviews could include other conceptualizations to provide a different perspective on the construct (see So & King, 2010). Finally, the method of content analysis is subject to personal interpretation. Future research could combine content analysis with best practice case studies to discuss how emerging areas in hospitality and tourism brand management are shaping brand experiences.

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Appendix

List of analyzed papers by chronological order (not included in the reference list)

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