

Flowing Through Authenticity: How a Folkloric Event Shapes Memorable Experiences and Word-of-Mouth

Abstract

Memorability has emerged as a critical concept in tourism experience research over the past decade. However, research on how perceived authenticity and flow affect memorable tourism experiences remains scarce. This study examines the relationships between perceived authenticity, flow experience, memorable tourism experiences, and intention to recommend in the context of a folkloric event, namely Sıra Gecesi. Using a questionnaire survey, data were collected from 657 domestic tourists. A structural equation model was employed to examine the relationships between constructs. The findings show that perceived authenticity had a positive direct effect on both flow experience and memorable tourism experiences, but no direct significant effect on intention to recommend. Perceived authenticity positively affected the intention to recommend through the mediating roles of flow experience and memorable tourism experiences. When designing Sıra Gecesi, the dimensions of perceived authenticity – particularly music – should be considered, and the event should be structured to enhance the flow experience. The study enriches understanding of perceived authenticity while providing valuable insights into tourists' flow and memorable tourism experiences.

Keywords: perceived authenticity, flow experience, memorable tourism experiences, intention to recommend, Sıra Gecesi

1. Introduction

Memorability is a crucial aspect of the tourism experience (Kim et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the effects of two critical concepts on memorable tourism experience (MTE) remain unclear: flow experience (FE) and perceived authenticity (PA). FE is an important concept that influences MTE. Kanagasapathy (2017) asserted that tourists may achieve the MTE they desire through FE. However, a rigorous literature review revealed that research on the relationship between FE and MTE is scarce. FE has been frequently studied in the tourism domain; however, only a limited number of studies have been conducted in heritage tourism (Filep, 2009; Kanagasapathy, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019). Thus, this study investigates the effect of FE on MTE in the context of heritage tourism.

In attempting to fill the gap, this study also examines the relationship between PA and MTE. Chhabra et al. (2003) asserted that staging authentic traditions is the core of heritage tourism products. Thus, authenticity is a significant factor in understanding the tourism experience in the context of heritage tourism. Additionally, providing tourists with memorable experiences should be a strategic priority for managers (Kim et al., 2012). Therefore, further investigation is required to elucidate the relationship between PA and MTE in heritage tourism.

Tourism researchers often focus on the tourist behaviour during the trip while neglecting post-trip behaviour, specifically the intention to recommend (IR), which is of high commercial value (Eid et al., 2019). This research was therefore designed to assess the influence of MTE on IR by including IR in the model as a dependent variable. To that end, three research questions are sought to be answered. First, "Does PA affect FE, MTE, and IR?" Second, "Does FE affect MTE and IR?" Third, "Does MTE affect IR?" Overall, this paper is

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a modest effort to contribute to the literature by investigating the relationships between PA, FE, MTE, and IR in the context of a folkloric event held in a heritage tourism destination.

This study contributes to the existing body of literature in several aspects. First, the study aims to contribute to the knowledge gap by investigating the relationship between perceived authenticity and memorable tourism experiences. Second, this study examines whether certain components of authenticity trigger FE, which is an overlooked concept in the context of heritage tourism. It is one of the first attempts to explore whether FE is an antecedent of MTE. Third, this research is one of the first studies that explores FE, PA, and MTE in a heritage tourism context in a folkloric event. Fourth, this study improves our understanding of perceived authenticity by exploring various components that constitute tourists' perceptions.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Perceived authenticity

Authenticity refers to "...the quality of what is real, genuine, and original" (Have & Neves, 2021). According to Jang et al. (2012), the authenticity of something can be verified by the existence of corroborating evidence, or it can be validated according to established customs. Sedmak and Mihalic (2008) define authenticity, taking the start of modern tourism as a reference point. According to the authors, authenticity is defined as attractions that were present in the region prior to modern tourism. These attractions are not imported or global and are not produced on a large scale using industrial methods.

The concept of authenticity in general tourism discourse could be separated into two domains: object-related authenticity and activity-related authenticity (Wang, 1999). While activity-related authenticity is about the existential state of being, object-related authenticity is attributed to toured objects. Object-related authenticity is twofold: objective and constructive (Wang, 1999). Modernists/realists use objective authenticity to express the genuineness of toured objects (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). According to this approach, the genuineness of an object is evident since it is provable (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). However, objective authenticity is not applicable to tourist experience (Kühne et al., 2025). The constructive approach asserts that the decision whether toured objects are authentic or not depends on various factors such as imagery, expectations, preferences, and beliefs (Wang, 1999). As Lego et al. (2002, p. 67) note, "Authenticity is in the eye of the beholder." This study adopts the concept of constructive authenticity, which is based on constructivist theory, as it is more suitable for restaurant experiences (Chen et al., 2020; Jang et al., 2011).

2.2. Flow experience

Flow is defined as "a psychological state in which the person feels simultaneously cognitively efficient, motivated, and happy" (Moneta & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). In FE, problems seem to fade away, and a refreshing sense of elevation is experienced (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). A person can achieve this psychological state through intense physical, emotional, or intellectual interaction with the environment (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). This interaction does not need to be physical; one may experience flow while playing tennis, reading a book, or socialising (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002).

The research on the FE indicates that it occurs universally across different cultures, social classes, genders, and age groups (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2002). However, research on FE in heritage tourism remains limited. Kanagasapathy (2017) asserted that heritage tourists experience flow. The perception of authenticity during activities enables cultural tourists to experience flow (Zhang et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2023) suggest that flow can be experienced in dining environments. From this point of view, it can be inferred that SG participants are likely to experience flow.

H1: Perceived authenticity affects flow experiences.

2.3. Memorable tourism experiences

The experience economy posits that businesses must offer memorable experiences to achieve success and sustainability (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Thus, delivering memorable experiences has become a key competitive advantage. Larsen (2007) asserted that the tourist experience is a product of an individual's psychological assessment of their expectations, the events experienced, and the memories formed during a tour. FE offers tourists memorable and unique experiences they seek (Kanagasapathy, 2017). A study conducted at a music festival found that FE positively influenced memorability (Ding & Hung, 2021). Filep (2008) identified eight dimensions of FE within MTEs, concluding that FE offers individuals moments that are likely to be remembered. Memories formed during FE remain vivid and unforgettable even after extended periods of time (Ayazlar, 2015).

H2: Flow experience affects memorable tourism experiences.

According to Teo et al. (2014), learning the traditions of the local people in authentic settings provides tourists with MTEs. Kim and Jang (2016) revealed that PA positively influences MTEs in the context of ethnic restaurants. The authenticity of food has been identified as one of the most critical factors influencing customers' emotions and perceived value (Jang et al., 2012), and positive emotions are an antecedent of memorable experiences (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Thus, it can be inferred that the PA of SG participants can affect their MTEs.

H3: Perceived authenticity affects memorable tourism experiences.

Zhang et al. (2019) identified PA as a key factor contributing to tourists' flow experiences. Csikszentmihalyi (2002) argues that the most memorable and enjoyable moments in life are often associated with FE. Furthermore, previous studies have reported that tourists' PA positively influence MTEs (Kim & Jang, 2016). Accordingly, this study suggests that perceived authenticity enhances MTEs, fostering FE.

H4: Flow experience has a mediation role in the relationship between perceived authenticity and memorable tourism experiences.

2.4. Intention to recommend

IR represents a sub-dimension of behavioural intentions, and refers to consumers' intention to recommend a product, service or experience to others in the future. Potential tourists rely on others' recommendations while planning their trip because it is the most important and reliable source of information for them (Yoon & Uysal, 2005). The antecedents of tourists' IR have been a significant subject of interest for destination marketers concerned with sustainable tourism development (Jeong et al., 2020). A number of researchers have demonstrated that authenticity perceptions positively influence IR (Liu et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020).

H5: Perceived authenticity affects intention to recommend.

FE is reported to be an antecedent of IR. Chen et al. (2020) have demonstrated that FE has an influence on IR. Studies indicate that FE in the restaurant has a positive effect on IR (Kim et al., 2023) as well as intention to revisit (Tsai, 2021). Moreover, a study on bicycle tourism found that FE positively influences behavioural intentions (Meng & Han, 2019).

H6: Flow experience affects intention to recommend.

Studies on tourists' FE in cultural tourism have revealed that FE enhances tourists' happiness and satisfaction (Filep, 2009; Kanagasapathy, 2017). PA increases FE (Zhang et al., 2019) and behavioural intentions (Ramkisson & Uysal, 2011). According to Meng and Han (2019) individuals who engage in flow experience are likely to recommend their experiences to others.

H7: Flow experience mediates the relationship between perceived authenticity and intention to recommend.

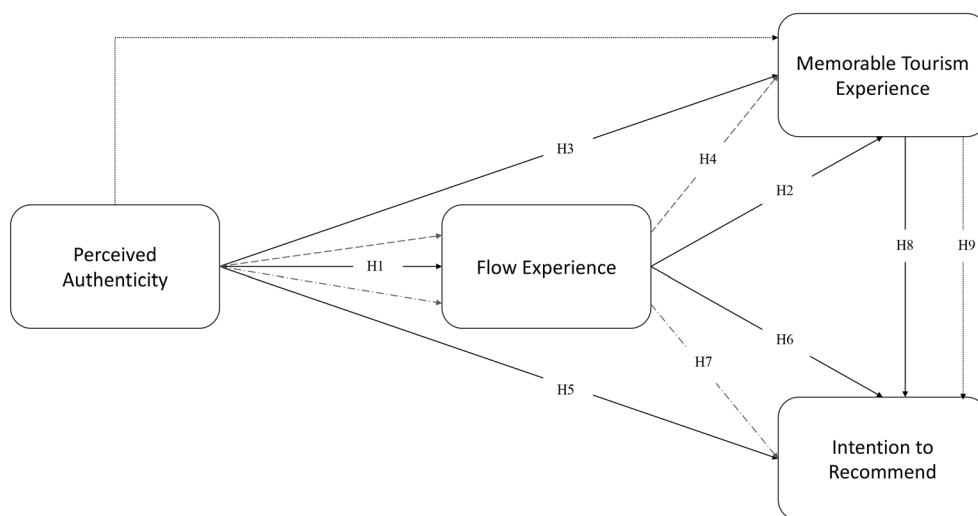
Kim (2018) suggested that MTE should be regarded as the primary antecedent of behavioural intentions. It is among the empirical findings that MTE affects behavioural intentions (Kim et al., 2010). Moreover, it was found that MTE influenced IR (Tsai, 2016). Hence, it can be inferred that MTE might influence IR.

H8: Memorable tourism experiences affect intention to recommend.

Antón et al. (2019) demonstrated that the perception of authenticity has a positive impact on memorable experiences, and ultimately on IR. Loureiro (2020) asserted that authenticity enhances positive emotions, which in turn positively influence IR. Therefore, it is reasonable to infer that tourists seeking authenticity will develop IR through MTEs.

H9: Memorable tourism experiences have a mediation role in the relationship between perceived authenticity and intention to recommend.

Figure 1
Conceptual model



3. Methods

3.1. Study site: Şanlıurfa (Turkey) and Sıra Gecesi

Şanlıurfa is a significant heritage tourism destination in Turkey, located in the heart of Mesopotamia –the land between the Euphrates and Tigris rivers. SG is a traditional folkloric event typically held during winter nights. During SGs, participants play music, serve food and drinks, listen to poetry, and discuss culture and literature (Kürkçüoğlu et al., 2022). Over time, SGs have been commodified into dining events that feature cultural performances and attract significant interest from visitors.

3.2. Instruments and measures

A self-administered questionnaire was employed to collect data. The questionnaire comprised five sections: one with questions on demographics and travel habits, and four containing measurement scales. PA was measured with 17 items adapted from relevant literature. FE was measured using 16 items adapted from

Karasakal (2020). A 24-item scale was used to assess participants' MTEs (Kim et al., 2012). Lastly, IR was measured with 6 items (3 for Şanlıurfa and 3 for SGs) adapted from Bonn et al. (2007). All four constructs were measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for PA, MTE, FE and IR were calculated as 0.929, 0.962, 0.932, and 0.939, respectively, indicating that the scales are highly reliable. A single-factor Harman's (1976) test was conducted to address the issue of common method bias. The variance explained by the first factor was calculated as 39.57%, which is below the threshold of 50%, indicating common method bias is not an issue in this study.

3.3. Sample and data collection

Quota sampling was chosen based on the respondents' gender and age. The selection criteria required that participants be Turkish, over the age of 18, have visited Şanlıurfa, have attended an SG in Şanlıurfa, and have voluntarily participated in the study. A pilot study yielded 114 completed questionnaires. Cronbach's alpha coefficients, ranging from 0.921 to 0.957, obtained from the pilot study, indicated that the scales were reliable. Thus, the main data collection process was conducted between February and May 2022 and yielded 657 questionnaires. This research received ethical approval from the Mersin University Ethics committee (Approval date: 19.01.2022; No: 6).

4. Findings

4.1. Participant profile

Among the valid respondents, 59.9% were females, and 40.1% were males. The ages of 64.3% of the participants were between 18 and 39 ages. The majority of respondents had at least an associate degree (79.80%). The proportions of married and single participants were nearly equal.

Table 1
Demographics of the respondents

Variable	Category	n	Valid %
Gender	Female	387	59.9
	Male	259	40.1
Age	18-29	206	37.7
	Secondary School	22	3.5
	30-39	145	26.6
	40-49	104	19.0
	50-59	51	9.3
	60 & above	40	7.3
Marital Status	Married	284	50.3
	Single	281	49.7
Education	Primary School	31	4.9
	Secondary School	22	3.5
	High School	74	11.7
	Associate Degree	69	10.9
	Bachelor's Degree	303	48.0
	Master	108	17.1
	Doctorate	24	3.8

4.2. Assessment of psychometric properties of measures

Content Validity of the Perceived Authenticity Scale: To assess participants' perceptions of authenticity, a scale was adapted with input from 21 experts, using the Content Validity Ratio. First, a 25-item pool was created (24 items from similar studies: Chen et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019; DiPietro & Levitt, 2019; Levitt, 2018; Liu

et al., 2018; Jang et al., 2011; Wen et al., 2020; Sukalakamala & Boyce, 2007; and one item added by the authors). The critical ratio for 8 of the 25 items was below 0.429, which is the critical cut-off point for 21 experts (Ayre & Scally, 2014). The final version of the adapted scale contained 17 items.

Construct validity of the perceived authenticity scale: The EFA was conducted to explore the factor structure of the PA scale. The EFA yielded three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 65.37% of the total variance. The initial factor, comprising eight items, accounted for 26.98% of the total variance ($\bar{x} = 3.80$). This factor consisted of items related to food, thus named the food authenticity (FA). The second factor consisted of five items explaining 19.92% of the total variance ($\bar{x} = 4.02$). The items grouped under the second factor were related to the physical environment, and so this factor was named the physical environment authenticity (PEA). The last factor, which explained 18.47% of the total variance, included four items related to music ($\bar{x} = 4.23$). This factor was therefore named the music authenticity (MA). A statistical comparison of the mean of MA with PEA ($t: 7.76; p < 0.001$) and FA ($t: 14.45; p < 0.001$) revealed that participants of the SG perceived the music as most authentic when compared to food and the physical environment.

Measurement model: A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted for the measurement model, comprising a total of 16 constructs: Seven subfactors of MTE, four subfactors of FE, three subfactors of PA, and two subfactors of IR. Cronbach's alpha for all constructs was above the threshold of 0.70 (0.929-0.962), indicating the measures are reliable (Hair et al., 2009). Composite Reliability (CR) of the constructs was above 0.70 (0.831-0.963), indicating good internal consistency (Hair et al., 2009). The intention to recommend construct consisted of six items representing two related subdimensions: intention to recommend the Sıra Gecesi and intention to recommend Şanlıurfa as a destination (three items each). In the overall confirmatory factor analysis including all sixteen factors, these two subdimensions were modelled as correlated first-order factors, with standardised loadings ranging from 0.900 to 0.961.

Convergent Validity: Convergent validity was assessed by means of average variance extracted (AVE) and standard factor loadings. The results indicated that the AVEs for all the constructs were above the critical cut-off ratio of 0.50, and the standard loadings for all the items ranged from 0.53 to 0.96, which were above 0.50 ($p < 0.001$). This finding supports the conclusion that convergent validity has been confirmed (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Discriminant Validity: AVE and maximum shared variance (MSV) were used to assess discriminant validity. The principle of discriminant validity stipulates that the AVE for each construct should exceed the MSV, and the square root of the AVE should surpass the correlation between paired constructs (Hair et al., 2009). In this study, the AVE values for all constructs exceeded the MSV values. However, except for refreshment, knowledge, meaningfulness, and involvement, the AVE values were higher than the MSV values. Furthermore, the square root of the AVE was higher than the correlations between paired constructs, except for two cases: knowledge-involvement and refreshment-meaningfulness. While these dimensions are conceptually distinct, they tend to overlap in practice due to shared contextual interdependencies. Learning new knowledge is closely linked to involvement, with higher involvement facilitating greater knowledge (Liang, 2012). Previous literature also reported a very high correlation between meaningfulness and refreshment (Su, 2025), indicating that these two constructs are closely connected and share overlapping dimensions. Overall, the model has been determined to be valid (Jamaliah & Powell, 2018).

Goodness of Fit Indices: Goodness of fit indices were utilised to evaluate the proposed measurement model. Chi-square ratio to the degrees of freedom was calculated as 2.017 ($\chi^2 = 3,545.086; df = 1,758; p < 0.001$), indicating that the model has a good fit. Moreover, model fit indices have confirmed that the data fit the model (GFI = 0.850; RMSEA = 0.039; CFI = 0.950; RMR = 0.037; NFI = 0.907). In addition to the first order, a second-order CFA was also performed and produced goodness-of-fit indices indicating that the model

is acceptable ($\chi^2/df = 4.570$; GFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.074; CFI = 0.952; TLI = 0.941; NFI = 0.940). Thus, the structural model was used to test hypotheses.

4.3. Structural model

Four structural models were tested to test the hypotheses. The first model tested the direct relations among the four main constructs: PA as an exogenous latent variable; FE, MTE, and IR as endogenous variables. The model did not generate a desired chi-square test ratio ($\chi^2 = 716.129$; $\chi^2/df = 7.307$) at the first phase; thus, modification indices suggested by AMOS 21 were examined. Two modification indices (loss of self-consciousness-concentration; involvement-knowledge) were applied. Csikszentmihalyi (1990, p. 32) asserted that a person forgets everything unpleasant about life. In the loss of self-consciousness, the person does not focus on the information that normally shows who they are (Jackson & Marsh, 1996). Similar to other aspects of life, individuals set aside self-consciousness and direct full attention to the ongoing activity at hand. Accordingly, participants perceived concentration and loss of self-consciousness similarly. On the other hand, involvement refers to the importance and interest felt toward a stimulus (Odabaşı & Barış, 2010). Pine & Gilmore (1998) asserted that the acquisition of new knowledge is associated with involvement. Thus, considering the items in the involvement and knowledge dimensions of MTE participants regarded the informative, exploratory, enjoyable, and engaging features of this experience in a similar way. After modification indices were applied, χ^2/df was calculated as 4.570, indicating that the data fit the model (Table 2).

Table 2
The summary of the structural model results

	Parameters	β	Std. β	SE	R2	t	P	Result
H1	PA→FE	0.962	0.838	0.066	0.703	14.464	***	Supported
H2	FE→MTE	0.573	0.624	0.078	0.613	7.337	***	Supported
H3	PA→MTE	0.192	0.182	0.085		2.257	0.024	Supported
H5	PA→IR	-	-	0.082	0.733	-0.003	0.998	Not supported
H6	FE→IR	0.639	0.682	0.091		6.997	***	Supported
H8	MTE→IR	0.216	0.212	0.055		3.933	***	Supported

Five of the six hypotheses testing direct relationships between the main constructs have been supported. PA explained 70.3% of the variance of the FE. Although the effect of PA on IR was not significant, 73.3% of the variance in the IR was explained by FE and MTE.

A further three structural models were employed to test the mediating effects, with the Bootstrap technique. According to this technique, if the lower and upper values in the 95% confidence interval do not contain zero, the indirect effect is confirmed (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The first mediation model confirmed the full mediating effect of FE on the relationship between PA and MTE ($P < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.589$; CI [0.418-0.791]; H4). The second mediation model revealed the full mediation effect of FE on the relationship between PA and IR ($P < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.627$; CI [0.492-0.783]; H7). Lastly, the third model showed the partial mediation effect of MTE on the relationship between PA and IR ($P < 0.001$; $\beta = 0.374$; CI [0.275-0.475]; H9).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This paper contributes to the extant body of knowledge on the subject of tourism experiences in the context of heritage tourism. As the participants consisted mainly of relatively young and well-educated domestic tourists, this should be considered when evaluating the findings. The results reveal that a cultural event with local food, music, and physical environment is one of the MTEs that cultural tourists seek. The findings also serve to strengthen the idea that tourists who have had memorable experiences are more likely to recommend these experiences to others. The findings of the present study provide evidence to support the assertion that

the flow experience is a salient concept in the context of heritage tourism. The study found that cultural tourists' perception of authenticity contributes to their flow experience, which plays a pivotal role in creating a memorable experience for the cultural tourist and encouraging them to recommend the experience to others. Moreover, the model indicates that MTE and FE are significant variables in mediating the relationship between PA and IR, suggesting that perceived authenticity alone is insufficient for cultural tourists to recommend an experience to others. Instead, cultural tourists will associate PA with mediator variables –MTE and FE– when recommending the event to others. The paper concludes by providing theoretical and managerial implications based on these findings.

5.1. Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the literature in several ways. First, the present study has advanced our understanding of the concept of perceived authenticity in cultural presentations. Rather than developing an entirely new instrument, this research emphasises the adaptation and validation process, with the contribution being the emergence of a three-dimensional authenticity structure. Second, participants perceived the SGs as highly authentic. A number of studies have shown that cultural presentations are perceived as authentic (Mokoena, 2020; Chhabra et al., 2003; Zhang et al., 2021). The findings suggest that music is perceived as more authentic than other components, and therefore, music is prioritised for the overall authenticity of the SGs. As Matheson (2008) notes, even when commoditised, participants would maintain their belief in the authenticity of music. Third, consistent with previous research, the current study confirmed the significant role of PA on FE (H1, Zhang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2021) and on MTE (H3, Teo et al., 2014; Ates et al., 2025).

Fourth, the results of this study suggest that FE and MTE may act as mediators for the effect of PA on IR in the context of heritage tourism. While the direct effect of PA on IR was found to be insignificant, PA had an indirect effect on IR through the mediating role of FE and MTE. Several other studies (Novello & Fernandez, 2016; Jang et al., 2011) also reported that while PA has no significant direct effect on behavioural intentions, it has an indirect effect via the mediating role of third variables. A possible alternative explanation is that PA is not the only variable capable of generating desired behavioural outcomes in SGs (Jang et al., 2011). The model proposes that tourists who perceive SGs as authentic are more likely to recommend these experiences to others, because they experienced flow and had memorable tourism experiences.

Finally, this study not only focused on FE but also demonstrated that FE should be considered as a significant antecedent of MTE. Consistent with the literature, this study confirms that flow can be experienced in restaurants (Kim et al., 2023; Karaca, 2018). Similarly, Zhang et al. (2021) reported that cultural performances provide participants with FE. Thus, this study contributes to the literature, providing further evidence that flow could be experienced in heritage tourism during a folkloric event such as SGs. Furthermore, according to Csikszentmihalyi (2002), FE provides individuals with memorable moments. Jackson and Csikszentmihalyi (1999) state that “Once attained, flow experiences remain etched in the memory and provide the blueprint for returning to this optimal experience.” This study found that FE increased tourists' MTEs. This positive effect of FE on MTE (H2) is consistent with a limited number of studies (Ding & Hung, 2021; Filep, 2008). Thus, this study provides empirical evidence that FE should be considered as one of the antecedents of MTE, raising a question that deserves further investigation: Are our most memorable tourism experiences those in which we are in flow? After all, the idea that our most memorable moments are those in which we lose track of time is intriguing and worth exploring.

5.2. Practical implications

This study presents significant insights for both SG organisers and destination managers. First, the results of this study give important clues about authenticity and memorability. Gilmore and Pine (2007) assert that consumers seek authentic and memorable experiences. Thus, in order to be competitive, a destination should

provide tourists with authentic and memorable experiences. Second, property managers should consider maintaining MA while taking steps to improve PEA and FA. For example, attention should be paid to issues such as playing only local music that is authentic to the region at SGs, and not playing popular music for commercial reasons. Balakrishnan et al. (2020) asserted that tourism leads to the creation of a touristified version of local foods. Thus, items relating to food presentation, preparation and cooking are perceived as the least authentic. SG organisers should act to improve these aspects. Usually in SGs, Çiğköfte (the most characteristic food associated with SGs) is prepared in front of participants in a ritual presentation. SG organisers could find a way for participants to see the preparation of other foods and drinks.

Third, this study helps SG organisers and destination managers to realise the importance of FE and MTE in building IR for competitive advantage. This study revealed that FE and MTE are both important antecedents of IR and also have a mediating effect on the relationship between PA and IR. Therefore, the main concern for folklore event organisers and destination managers should be how to enhance visitors' FE and MTE. For example, since active physical participation in an event contributes to a more profound flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), participants should be given the opportunity to actively engage in activities such as folk dancing or preparing traditional foods during the event. Destination managers should focus on events and activities that can provide tourists with FE and MTE for the sake of their effect on IR, which will enhance the competitiveness of the destination.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Perception of authenticity is influenced by the degree of familiarity with the visited culture (Ebster & Guist, 2005). The study sample was limited to domestic and relatively young tourists. Future studies could test the model with international tourists participating in SGs and compare the results with the current study. It would be beneficial to test this model in a variety of folkloric events and traditional performances in other destinations to increase the generalizability of the study. Second, it should be acknowledged that certain constructs employed in this study conceptually share overlapping dimensions (loss of self-consciousness–concentration; involvement–knowledge). While we have treated them as distinct, the boundaries between these constructs are not always clear-cut, which may have implications for interpretation, at least in our sample. Third, constructive authenticity based on constructivist theory was used, ignoring object and existential authenticity. Participants may feel Wang's (1999) existential authenticity when they accompany local music and dance during SGs, as it could be seen as a sign to behave freely, away from social norms that suppress their true selves. Thus, future studies could test other approaches to authenticity. Fourth, the mediating role of FE and MTE on the effect of PA on IR was analysed without considering other potential variables that could be used to better understand this relationship, such as satisfaction and positive emotions. Finally, further research could be conducted to better elucidate the link between FE and MTE, i.e., flow should be tested as one of the sub-dimensions of MTE.

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Declaration of Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no known competing interests that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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