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A strengths-based approach to technology-mediated reminiscence**

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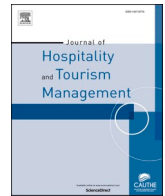
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Journaling memorable and meaningful tourism experiences: A strengths-based approach to technology-mediated reminiscence

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ABSTRACT

Reminiscing on memorable travel experiences is a common practice amongst many travellers. This study introduces positive psychology interventions – cultivation of character strengths and savouring strategies – to examine memorable and meaningful tourism experiences (MMEs). Although both interventions aim to increase well-being, little research has been conducted on their roles in enriching MMEs. MMEs are fundamental to understand as part of the travel reminiscence process. MMEs could be heightened by connecting tourists' past experiences with their character strengths (capacities for ways of behaving). Savouring, on the other hand, facilitates the connections to places. The reminiscence process helps tourists gain self-knowledge and make well-being oriented choices in their future journeys. In so doing, this research study created an interactive strengths-based journal that facilitated tourists to incorporate their character strengths in their past MMEs. The narratives were structured to connect explicit experiential components, such as tourism activities, with implicit psychological factors, such as emotions, character strengths, and values. Data collection involved ten tourists of diverse nationalities who created 51 MME narratives. Participants were then invited to savour their strengths used, reflect on their narratives, and express their behavioural intentions for their next trip. Data analysis, using grouped frequency distributions, found that MMEs were associated with the moderate strengths rather than the signature (prominent) strengths of the participants, such as curiosity and gratitude. Appreciation of beauty and excellence was the most dominant strength observed. The findings showed participants preferred their future journeys to be congruent with their character strengths. Theoretical and practical implications for tourist experience research are outlined.

1. Introduction

Tourists commonly anticipate, savour and remember key moments of their travel journeys. Tourists who perceive tourist experiences as memorable and meaningful look forward to similar experiences in the future (Yan & Halpenny, 2022). Past research (Hosseini et al., 2021; Tung & Ritchie, 2011) has recognised these memorable and meaningful experiences (MMEs) as particularly valuable and gratifying for tourists. MMEs are a reliable indicator of tourist satisfaction (Otto & Ritchie, 1996) and lead to repeated purchases, revisitation and place attachment (Rejikumar et al., 2021). Emotions, sense-making, and memory processes are at the core of any individual tourist experience. Emotions,

which are heightened in MMEs, enhance the vividness of episodic tourist experiences which are registered in the long-term memories of individuals (Levine & Pizarro, 2004) and lead to sense-making. Sense-making refers to the process by which tourists attribute meanings to episodic experiences, which become comprehensible, worthwhile, and significant to them (Steger, 2016). Nevertheless, even though tourists may be participating in the same activity in the same location at a destination, their experiences can vary greatly (Ooi, 2006). Therefore, exploring the inner psychological dimensions pertaining to MMEs can provide a fuller picture of tourists' well-being and their subsequent behavioural intention.

A seminal study conducted by Kim et al. (2012) defined the

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memorable tourism experience as a tourism experience positively remembered and recalled after the event has occurred. The study identified seven tourism experience factors: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement, and novelty. Yet, the theorization of memorable tourism experiences remains weak because other studies failed to replicate the scale (Hosany et al., 2022). The discrepancy may be due to the multifaceted nature of memorable tourism experiences, the different theoretical frameworks and research instruments used. Related tourism and positive psychology research (Filep & Laing, 2018; Vada et al., 2020) has shown interest in hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, which involves tourism experiences that promote personal growth and a higher level of psychological functioning. In particular, recent studies (Miyakawa et al., 2022; Zhang, 2023) showed eudaimonic well-being is strengthened with savouring and strengths cultivation. The combination of the two interventions would allow tourists to gain deeper insights (e.g., self-realisation and self-acceptance) from their past MMEs which could lead to personal growth according to their personality traits and values (Carruthers & Hood, 2004). In other words, reminiscing about past MMEs and building one's awareness on their strengths used in these MMEs could optimise the well-being effects. To further explore the complexity of tourist well-being, Hosany et al. (2022) suggested the need to examine the diversity and individual nature of MME experiences through cross-cultural settings, facilitating participants' recall, and using multiple theoretical perspectives. This research study responds to these research gaps. It introduces positive psychology interventions — character strengths intervention (Niemiec, 2017) and the savouring intervention (Bryant & Veroff, 2007) to study MMEs. This study specifically aims to gain an in-depth understanding of MMEs by connecting them with the character strengths of the tourists in the post-trip savouring process. In so doing, the study develops a novel research instrument (an interactive journaling platform) to guide tourists to connect their character strengths with their past MMEs through reminiscing and reflection.

Two research questions are addressed. First, how do tourists draw upon their character strengths in their MMEs? And second, how do tourists take their MMEs into consideration when planning future trips? This study provides new insights into reminiscence of tourist experiences by understanding their character strengths and the subsequent behavioral intention. It also informs the design of smart tourism platforms and informatics systems that promote reminiscing and encourage tourists to strive for self-improvement in their future trips.

2. Literature review

2.1. Positive psychology, character strengths and savouring

Character strengths are “pre-existing capacities for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that are authentic and energizing to the user and enable optimal functioning, development, and performance” (Linley, 2008, p. 9). The Values in Action Classification of character strengths identified six core virtues and 24 related character strengths (Table 1) that contribute to human flourishing—the optimal continuing development of human potential. There are creativity, curiosity, judgement, love of learning, and the like (see Table 1). Although Biswas-Diener et al. (2011) argue most individuals possess all 24 character strengths to different degrees, signature strengths are the most prominent strengths that represent one's authentic identity and capabilities. However, only about one-third of people can identify their own strengths, and fewer use them consciously in their lives (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011).

The VIA-IS (<https://www.viacharacter.org/>) is a 240-question online survey that allows people to find their strengths in a ranking order. Strengths-based interventions are activities and exercises designed to help individuals identify and cultivate their unique strengths and virtues, aiming to improve overall well-being and lead a more fulfilling and meaningful life (Gander et al., 2013). With more than 70 interventions

Table 1

Values in action classification of character strengths and virtues (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).

| Virtues | Character strengths | Virtues | Character strengths |
|-----------------|--|----------------------|--|
| Wisdom | Creativity – originality, adaptive, ingenuity; Curiosity – interest, novelty-seeking, exploration, openness to experience; Judgment – critical thinking, thinking things through, open-minded; Love of learning – mastering new skills & topics, systematically adding to knowledge; Perspective – wisdom, providing wise counsel, taking the big picture view. | Transcendence | Appreciation of beauty & excellence – awe, wonder, elevation; Gratitude – thankful for the good, expressing thanks, feeling blessed, Hope – optimism, future-mindedness, future orientation; Humor – playfulness, bringing smiles to others, light-hearted; Spirituality – religiousness, faith, purpose, meaning |
| Courage | Bravery – valor, not shrinking from fear, speaking up for what's right; Perseverance – persistence, industry, finishing what one starts; Honesty – authenticity, integrity; Zest – vitality, enthusiasm, vigor, energy, feeling alive and activated. | Temperance | Forgiveness – mercy, accepting others' shortcomings, giving people a second chance; Humility – modesty, letting one's accomplishments speak for themselves; Prudence – careful, cautious, not taking undue risks; Self-regulation – self-control, disciplined, managing impulses & emotions; |
| Humanity | Love – both loving and being loved, valuing close relations with others; Kindness – generosity, nurturance, care, compassion, altruism, “niceness”; Social intelligence – emotional intelligence, being aware of the motives/feelings of oneself/others, knowing what makes other people tick. | Justice | Teamwork – citizenship, social responsibility, loyalty; Fairness – just, not letting feelings bias decisions about others; Leadership – organizing group activities, encouraging a group to get things done. |

developed, most of them consist of a three-step process: the so called aware-explore-apply model (Niemiec, 2017). The awareness stage guides people to become aware of their own strengths, which were implicit to them, and then develop a comprehensive understanding of their signature strengths. The explore stage, which is similar to the savouring process, allows tourists to delve deeper into their strengths by connecting them with important moments of their lives (e.g., memorable and meaningful events). The apply stage involves seeking out new opportunities and devising an action plan to put their strengths to good use, for instance, making positive changes in their lives and others.

Prior research studies (Gander et al., 2013) have found that consciously exercising one's signature strengths significantly increases one's life satisfaction and alleviates depression. Empirical studies on character strengths in tourism studies however are almost non-existent. Warren and Coghlan (2016) investigated what character strengths might encourage travellers to engage in on-site pro-environmental behaviours. A more recent study (Li et al., 2020) connects digital-free tourism with

specific character strengths, such as travellers' self-regulation, social intelligence, and open-mindedness.

The topic of savouring has equally received very little research attention. Savouring is "not just the awareness of pleasure but also a conscious attention to the experience of pleasure" (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. 12). The savouring intervention is a behaviour change strategy that cultivates people's capabilities of appreciating positive experiences conducive to integrated self-development. In the context of tourism, savouring can take place before the trip (anticipation), during the trip (in the moment), and after the trip (reminiscence). Despite the positive effects that the savouring intervention has on people's well-being, it is primarily used by therapists, coaches, and educators (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). Only recently has savouring garnered researchers' attention in tourism (Miyakawa et al., 2022). Prior savouring studies explored the post-travel reminiscence process and the potential for place attachment (Yan & Halpenny, 2021) but their role in MMEs is poorly understood.

2.2. The nature of MMEs and episodic memories

MMEs are stored in the brain as episodic memories, composed of autobiographical and flashbulb memories (Skavronskaya et al., 2017). Autobiographical memory refers to the memory of personally experienced events and episodes. The flashbulb memory, on the other hand, is a type of highly vivid and emotionally charged memory that is triggered by a surprising and consequential news event (Brown & Kulik, 1977). Despite the vividness and high emotional involvement of flashbulb memories, these memories are not especially accurate (Talarico & Rubin, 2003). Although storytelling is an effective way to capture MMEs (Moscardo, 2017), the accuracy of the retrospective report will be limited to memory errors and the influence of recall bias (Yüksel, 2017). This study mitigates problems associated with retrospective storytelling.

Given that digital photo is the most popular medium that travellers use to capture memorable and meaningful moments during their travel journeys (Mang et al., 2016), textual content allows travellers to record personal thoughts and gain insights from their experiences (Hiemstra, 2001). Structured journaling with photo elicitation would enable travellers to accurately reconstruct their MMEs, as diaries created by travellers are often inadequate for post trip reminiscing (Wan, 2019). An effective reminiscing process requires travellers to accurately recall factual and experiential dimensions of their experiences in the narratives, so that memorabilia (i.e., photos) can better support reflection and introspection. Therefore, the journal needs to provide a narrative structure (e.g., context, orientation, key moments, value gained) and experience retrieval cues (e.g., "What did you do?", "Who was with you?", "What did you feel?", "What were the values gained?") to facilitate travellers in narrating their MMEs, connecting their strengths with their experiences, and reminisce them (Hosany et al., 2022). Thus, building the strengths-based journal on an interactive digital platform can help the researchers to collect more accurate data from participants because technology allows for creating personalized strength profiles using user-generated content and generating personalized reports for reminiscing.

3. Research methodology

To meet the aim and address the two research questions, a proof-of-concept interactive journaling platform was created to guide participants in creating strengths-based narratives on their MMEs. The narratives were composed of both implicit psychological dimensions (i.e., emotion, character strengths, and values) and explicit experiential dimensions (i.e., activities, places, and people) of MMEs.

3.1. Features of the strengths-based journaling platform

The journaling platform composed of four sections: user profile, story

creation, story browser, and reflection.

User Profile: User profile mainly consists of the strengths profile from the results of VIA-IS survey conducted prior to the account creation. A short description is provided on each strength which allows users to become familiar with the definition (Fig. 1(a)).

Story creation: This section guides users to create MMEs entries (see Fig. 1(b) for an overview). It consists of nine subsections in which users can upload images, create tags, input descriptions, assign emotions, associate character strengths, provide titles and dates of their experience. The nine sections, which are created based on strengths-based interventions guide users to connect explicit tourism activities and implicit psychological dimensions. The nine sections include people involved, places visited, activities taken, peak moments experienced, character strengths used, the values gained (i.e., the significance of the experience), the title of the story, and the date of the experience.

Here, three subsections helped elicit the implicit psychological dimensions of MMEs from users. First, to facilitate users' expressions, an emotion dial (Fig. 1(d)) was created to allow users to select a representative emoticon to describe the emotions felt of their lived moments. This feature allowed users to express non-verbal dimensions of their travel experiences. Second, users were invited to select a maximum of two character strengths they had drawn upon in the experience. The strengths were arranged according to the user's strength profile to increase usability (Fig. 1(e)). Users were allowed to choose multiple strengths of the experience because strengths are not expressed in isolation but in combination with one another (Biswas-Diener et al., 2011). For each of the strengths selected, users were invited to provide a short description of its contribution to the experience. The last subsection invited users to select the benefits gained as a result of the MMEs. The value section (Fig. 1(f)) listed 17 items which cover hedonic and eudaimonic well-being dimensions that may be associated with tourism activities. Since there is little consensus on what constitutes eudaimonic well-being (Biswas-Diener et al., 2009), this section aggregates well-being dimensions from prominent frameworks in positive psychology and tourism. These frameworks include Ryff's model of well-being (Ryff, 1989), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), and memorable tourism experience scales (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Kim et al., 2012). The list includes self-acceptance, personal growth, meaning and purpose in life, sense of mastery, autonomy, kinship, friendship, health, better world and society, prosperity, wisdom, social recognition, harmony, excitement, knowledge, courage, and justice. Users can register a maximum of two values gained for each narrative.

Story browser: Once the stories were created, they could be viewed in the story browser (Fig. 2(a)). This section allowed users to browse all stories created. Each story is displayed with a picture and a title. Clicking on the picture would bring users to the corresponding story (see Fig. 3 as an example). The filter feature (Fig. 2(b)) allowed users to review entries by selecting specific strengths, values, and people.

Reflection: This section consisted of two components: a dashboard and series of insight cards. The dashboard summarised the strengths related information aggregated from all entries: an overview of the story and tag created; the most used strengths and the top valued gained (Fig. 2(c)). Clicking the elements on the dashboard would bring users to the story browser with the specific content. The purpose of the dashboard is to make the implicit dimension of MMEs explicit which users can inspect. Below the dashboard, a number of insights and suggestions derived from users' entries are listed. The insight cards display users on five attributes in connection with their MMEs: the values gained (Fig. 2(d)), the strengths involved (Fig. 2(e)), the relationships created (Fig. 2(f)), the activities involved, and the place visited. Using this section allowed the researchers to gather users' feedback on their future trip plans with these attributes in mind. By clicking the button on each of the insight cards, participants were asked whether they wanted to develop their strengths, pursue the same values, travel with the same travel mate (s), do the same activity, and visit the same place on their future

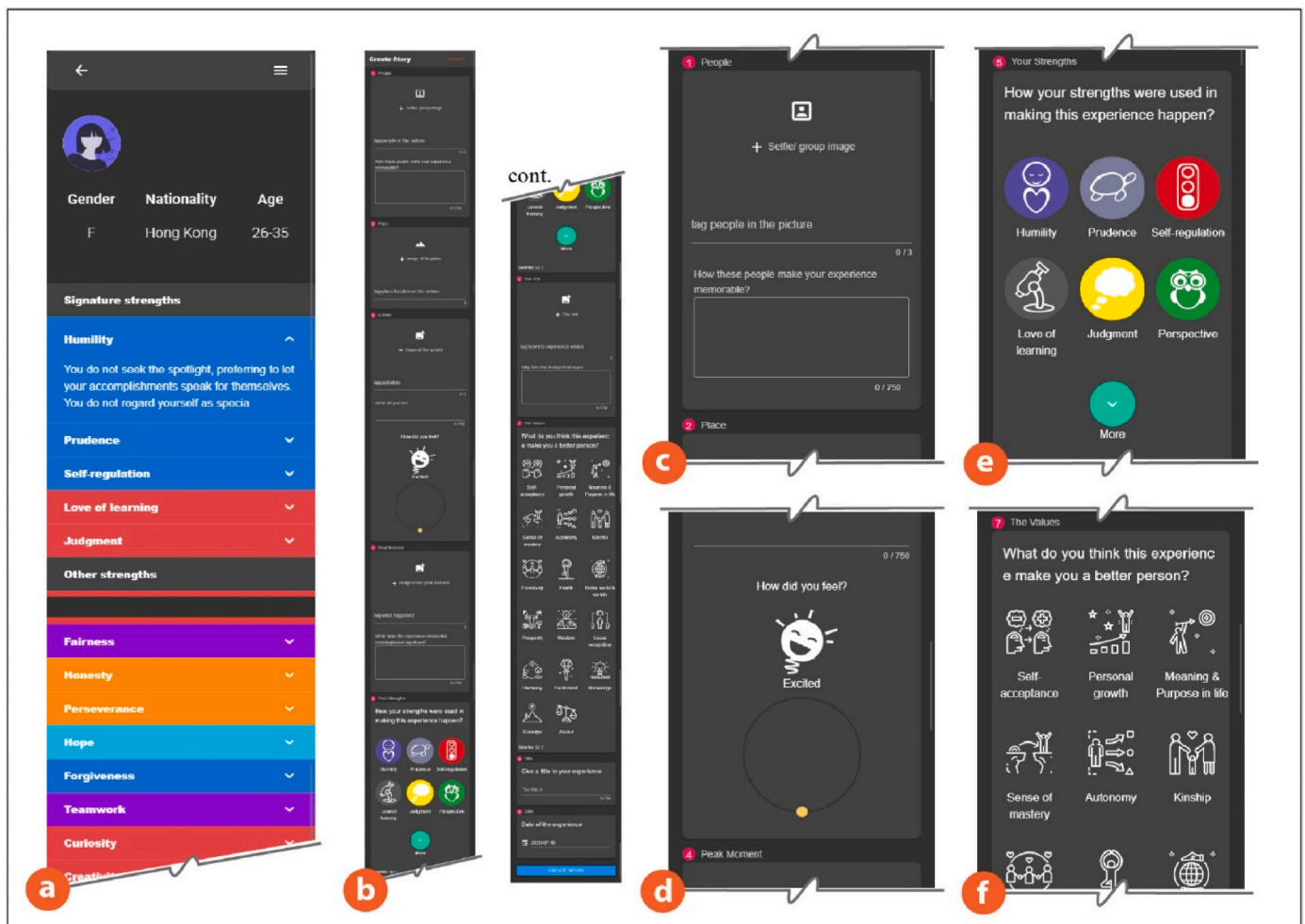


Fig. 1. The strengths-based journaling platform: user profile and story creation (Wan et al., 2021).

journeys (Fig. 2(g)).

3.2. Participant recruitment and data collection

Data collection was conducted in four steps: recruiting participants, collecting their strength profiles, creating stories with the strengths-based journaling platform and interviewing after finishing the tasks. This study used a purposive sampling, where each participant needed to provide at least five MMEs with a fair amount of photos captured on each of these experiences. To the best of the researchers' knowledge, there is no optimal timeframe for reminiscence process to take place. However, extant research (Brown & Kulik, 1977) has found that novel, distinctive, emotionally charged and personally significant experiences can create long-term episodic and autobiographical memories which can last for 5–30 years. This study recruited ten participants through posters and social media platforms (Table 2) during the May–July period of the year 2020. A suitable participant had to have experienced at least five MMEs in the past five years. Owing to the distinctive nature of MMEs, participants self-proclaimed that the stories were memorable and meaningful. Each participant had to provide at least ten photos of every experience and then discuss these experiences. Among ten participants, seven of them were aged 26–35, and three of them were between 36 and 45 years. Six participants were Asian (China, India, Indonesia, and Hong Kong), three African (Nigeria, and Ghana), and one European (British). Participants' travel frequency ranges from once a year to eight times per year. Most MMEs reported were from leisure travel with a few from study and missionary trips. Two-thirds of the MMEs reported were less

than five years. The whole study was conducted online with the help of the conference and instant messaging software for support and interview. Each participant earned a compensation coupon equivalent to US \$10 after finishing all the steps.

The research team contacted participants, explained to them the procedures involved, and checked with the participants their MMEs and materials (e.g., photos and information). Then the participants were invited to identify their character strengths using the online VIA-IS survey. The research team created a user account with the character strengths profile of each participant. Participants were invited to create at least five MMEs stories from their past journeys within two weeks. Fig. 3 shows an example of MME entry by Ron. After the journaling task, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences by browsing the dashboard (Fig. 2(c)) and insight cards (Fig. 2(d)–(f)). They were prompted to rate their behavioural intentions related to any future trip plans (Fig. 2(g)). The data collection was finalised with a short online semi-structured interview (10–15 min in length) discussing the rationale for their responses and their experiences of the interventions.

The study resulted in four sets of data for the analysis: 1) 10 character strength profiles; 2) 51 strengths-based MME entries (one participant created six entries); 3) 471 responses on behavioural intentions about future trips; and 4) the participants' feedback on their choices made. Interviews were conducted in English and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis. The process involved familiarisation with the data, coding, generating themes, reviewing and defining themes, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Participants' quotes were used to illustrate the themes identified.

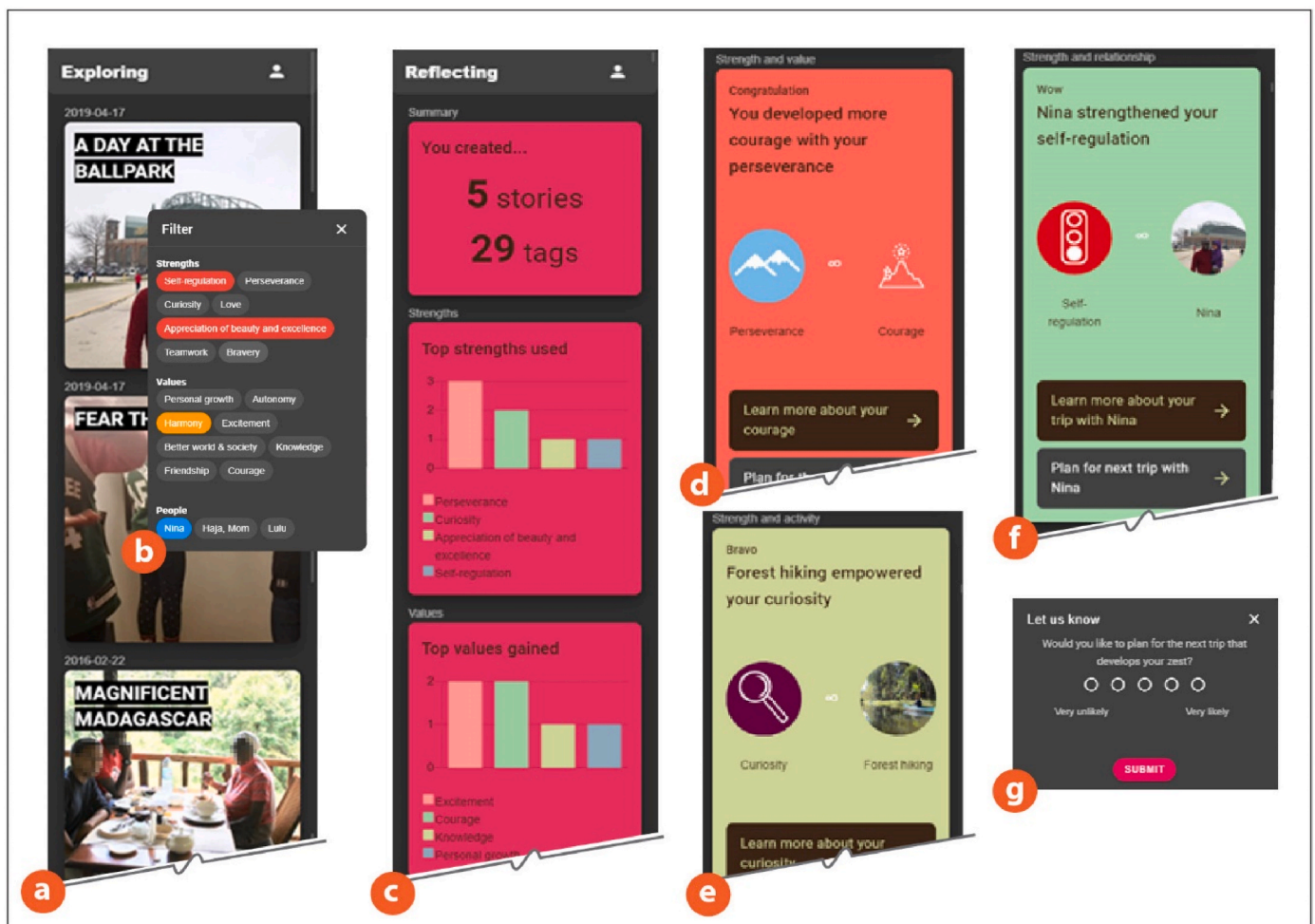


Fig. 2. The strengths-based journaling platform: story browser and reflection.

4. Data analysis and findings

4.1. Strengths involved in the production of MMEs

The first research question aimed to understand how do tourists draw upon their character strengths in their MMEs (RQ1). Three types of strengths were identified according to their significance to one's life: the signature strengths (i.e., the top five strengths of one's VIA profile), the moderate (middle) strengths (i.e., the sixth to nineteenth strengths), and the lesser strengths (i.e., the bottom five strengths). Since participants can register up to two character strengths for each entry, the strengths involved in the production of MMEs were categorised into nine groups (Table 3). The first four groups (1–4) consisted of 17 entries (33%) which registered at least one signature strength of participants. The next three groups (5–7) accounted for 30 entries (59%) which affiliated to moderate strengths. The last two groups (8–9) composed of four entries (8%) that involved the lesser strengths of participants.

4.2. Prominent strengths used and values gained

Regarding the frequency of strengths used, the top five strengths used are the appreciation of beauty and excellence (23.5%), curiosity (21.6%), gratitude (17.6%), teamwork (17.6%), and perseverance (13.7%) (see Table 4). The distribution is affected by the type of tourism activities documented in the entries. For instance, the appreciation of beauty and excellence is related to contact with nature, discovering cityscape, and exploring historical sites. The strength of curiosity was

mostly associated with the first-time encounter with local culture, immersing themselves in the local history, interacting with locals. The strength of gratitude, on the other hand, was of thankful feelings towards special encounters with people, service, food, and nature. The result of these encounters gave participants a sense of privilege and comfort. The strength of teamwork was mostly related to facing and tackling challenges with others for accomplishing more challenging and purposeful missions. At times, it also related to unexpected incidents that happened over their journeys. Lastly, the strength of perseverance entailed sports and outdoor activities under adverse conditions.

The participants could associate a maximum of two values per each entry. The values indicated why the experience was perceived as memorable and meaningful to the participants. A total of 86 values were attributed to 51 MME entries (Table 5). Around one-fourth of stories were affiliated with knowledge (23.5%). Friendship and personal growth both shared 21.6%. Harmony accounted for 19.6%, and meaning and purpose in life accounted for 15.7%, followed by excitement (13.7%) and better world and society (11.8%). The data suggested that gaining new knowledge is highly appreciated by the tourist group. Gaining friendships and personal growth are very important aspects of MMEs. Personal development also seems to be a key aspect of MMEs and it may offer new opportunities for people to formulate growth goals for their future journeys. Interestingly, excitement, which is often considered as an important factor in tourism experiences only received 13.7%. The lower percentage may be due to the fact that the participants were asked to report on their memorable as well as meaningful travel experiences, instead of solely being asked to report on their memorable

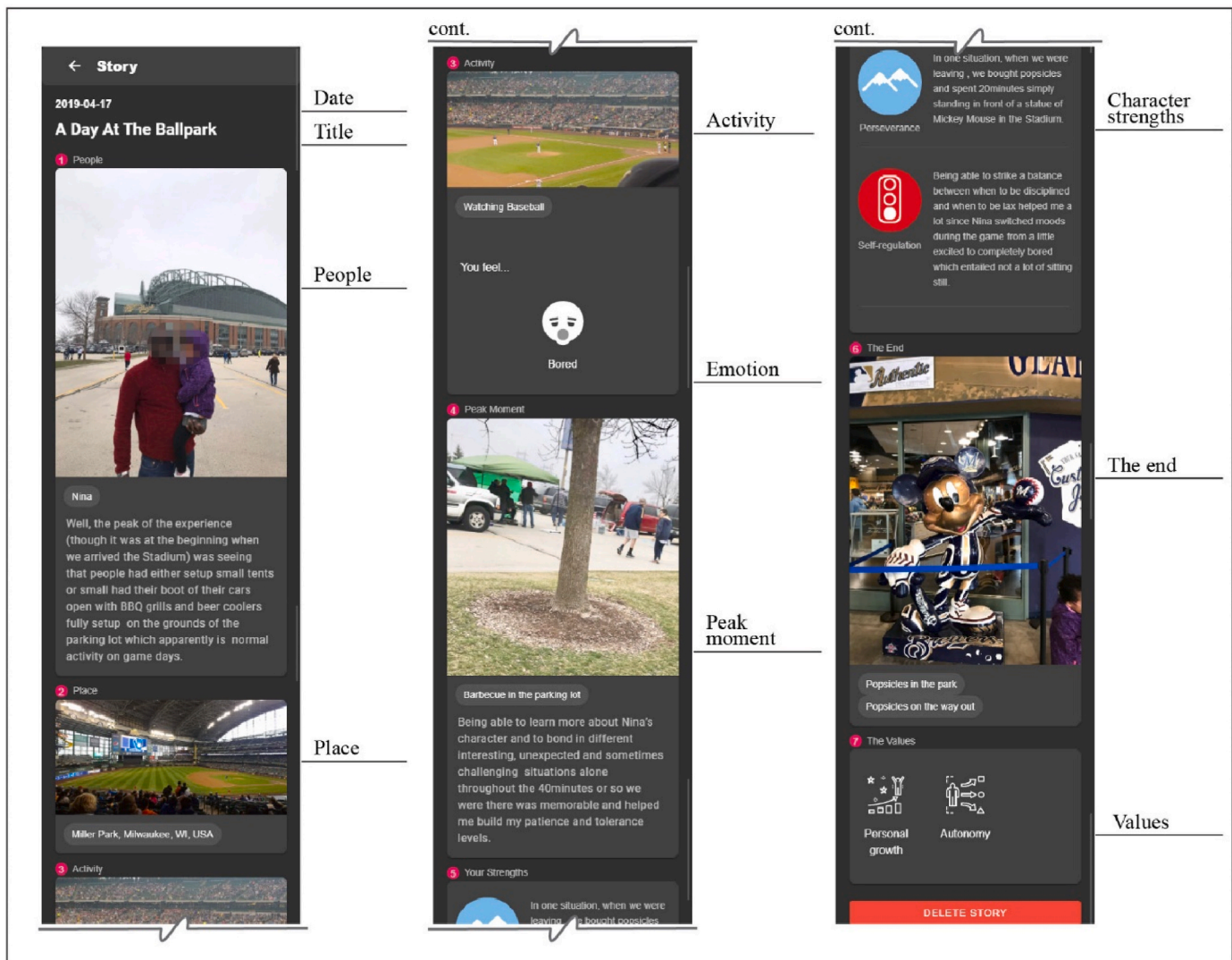


Fig. 3. A sample of MME entry provided by Ron (P10) (Wan et al., 2021).

Table 2
List of participants.

| Code | Pseudonym | Gender | Age | Nationality | Profession | Frequency of travel (per year) |
|------|-----------|--------|-------|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|
| P1 | Susan | F | 26–35 | Hong Kong (China) | Medical Scientist | 3–5 |
| P2 | Cherry | F | 26–35 | Hong Kong (China) | NA | 6–8 |
| P3 | Jane | F | 46–55 | Canadian | Programme Officer | 1–2 |
| P4 | Allan | M | 20–25 | Ghanian | NA | 1–2 |
| P5 | Florian | M | 26–35 | Ghanian | Postgraduate Student | 1–2 |
| P6 | Pauline | F | 26–35 | Indonesia | Postgraduate Student | 3–5 |
| P7 | Yolanda | F | 26–35 | Hong Kong (China) | Designer | 8+ |
| P8 | David | M | 36–45 | British | Educator | 6–8 |
| P9 | Sylvia | F | 26–35 | Indian | Researcher | 3–5 |
| P10 | Ron | M | 36–45 | Nigerian | Computing | 3–5 |

experiences, as in prior studies (e.g., Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2015; Kim et al., 2012).

4.2.1. Reminiscing and behavioural intentions

The strengths-based journal can make the implicit psychological dimension (i.e., character strengths) of MMEs explicit via a structured narrative. As a result, participants would be aware of their character strengths gained from their MMEs. Therefore, RQ2 examined participants' willingness to do the following: 1) pursue the values gained, 2) develop the strengths used, 3) travel with the same person, 4) do the

same activities, and 5) visit the same place in their future journeys after creating MMEs entries. Overall the above 5 points addressed the broader goals of RQ 2 which were to understand how do tourists take their MMEs into consideration when planning future trips.

On 51 stories created, the platform generated 131 questions on the values gained, 107 questions on the character strengths used, and 131 questions on the relationship created, 51 queries on the activity taken and place visited. Fig. 4 shows the means score of participants' responses while the error bar displays the standard deviation of the questions answered. The shorter error bar indicates consensus among participants

Table 3
Categories of character strengths used.

| No | Strength Category | Frequency ^a (N = 51) | Percent ^b |
|----|--|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 | Two signature strengths | 2 | 3.9 |
| 2 | One signature strength | 7 | 13.7 |
| 3 | One signature strength and one moderate strength | 6 | 11.8 |
| 4 | One signature strength and one lesser strength | 2 | 3.9 |
| 5 | Two moderate strengths | 7 | 13.7 |
| 6 | One moderate strength | 15 | 29.4 |
| 7 | One moderate strength and one lesser strength | 8 | 15.7 |
| 8 | One lesser strength | 3 | 5.9 |
| 9 | Two lesser strengths | 1 | 2 |
| | Total | 51 | 100 |

^a The participants could attribute a maximum of two character strengths to each MME entry.

^b Percentage is calculated based on the total number of entries (N = 51).

on the questions. The result suggested that participants were more willing to pursue what they had found valuable to them. Many of them were willing to develop the strengths they had used in their past journeys but were less determined to take a trip again with the travel mates they had traveled with in the past. Place re-visitation was the least favorable option among the five experiential attributes.

Thematic analysis was then conducted to capture the participants' perceptions of the interventions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The result showed three benefits from using the platform: 1) gaining new insights from MMEs, 2) becoming more aware of character strengths, and 3) supporting decision making for future journeys.

4.2.1.1. Gaining new insights from MMEs. Participants found the reflection section (Fig. 2 (c)) helped them gain insights into their innate needs and capabilities. For instance, Jane (P3) mentioned that the reflection section helped her to plan her trip with the focus on developing her strength of leadership, which she had never thought of before. Allan (P4) found the reflection section illuminating. She revealed that

the trips she made revealed her sense of personal growth. “These experiences really taught me a whole lot of lessons in life and made me become who I am today” noted Allan.

4.2.1.2. Becoming more aware of character strengths. Participants (P1, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9) gained greater willingness to cultivate their character strengths and pursue meaningful goals. This broadened their minds and allowed them to have more choices when planning for their future journeys: “I will now consider my character strengths and values into my future trips” (Allan, P4). David (P8) was excited to know that the experiences were connected to his character strengths: “I now understand why I treasure these experiences so much!”.

4.2.1.3. Supporting decision making for future journeys. Reminiscing about MMEs with character strengths in mind triggers tourists to embark on future trips with a clearer set of goals and intentions that are congruent with their character strengths. Cherry (P2) stated that she would prioritise love of learning and appreciation of beauty and excellence (her signature strengths) instead of seeking autonomy when planning future trips. In contrast, Susan (P1) valued the sense of autonomy more than seeking a better world and society (one of the values she realised in her past journey) and she will utilise this sense of autonomy in the future. Ron (P10) claimed that he had always been planning trips with his personality traits in mind.

5. Discussion and implications

5.1. Discussion

There is little doubt that tourism provides opportunities for tourists to create MMEs. This study facilitated tourists to gain a deeper awareness of their MMEs by connecting them with their character strengths through reminiscence, addressing both RQs 1 and 2. The reminiscence process involved using a strengths-based journaling platform to create MME stories that connected explicit tourism activities (people, places, activities, peak moments) with implicit psychological dimensions (emotions, character strengths, values). Reflecting on these experiences allowed the participants to identify behavioural and psychological patterns and express their future travel intentions. The results revealed that

Table 4
Frequency of strengths used across stories.

| Strengths | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Freq. ^a | Pct. ^b |
|-------------------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|--------------------|-------------------|
| Appreciation of Beauty & Excellence | 2 | 1* | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | – | 2* | 1* | 1* | 12 | 23.5 |
| Curiosity | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1* | * | * | 1* | 2 | 11 | 21.6 |
| Gratitude | 2 | 1* | 3 | 1* | – | 1 | – | – | 1 | * | 9 | 17.6 |
| Teamwork | 1 | 1* | * | 1 | 1 | * | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1* | 9 | 17.6 |
| Perseverance | – | – | 1* | 1 | * | – | 1 | – | 1* | 3 | 7 | 13.7 |
| Love of learning | 1* | 1* | – | 1* | 1 | – | * | – | 2 | – | 6 | 11.8 |
| Love | 1 | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 9.8 |
| Self-Regulation | * | – | – | – | – | – | 2 | – | – | 1 | 3 | 5.9 |
| Bravery | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 | 3.9 |
| Social intelligence | – | – | – | – | – | * | 1 | – | 1 | – | 2 | 3.9 |
| Spirituality | – | * | 1 | * | * | * | 1* | * | – | – | 2 | 3.9 |
| Creativity | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Forgiveness | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Honesty | – | – | * | 1* | * | – | – | – | * | – | 1 | 2 |
| Humility | * | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Kindness | 1 | – | – | * | – | * | – | * | * | * | 1 | 2 |
| Leadership | – | – | 1* | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Perspective | 1 | – | – | – | * | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Prudence | * | 1 | – | – | – | – | * | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| Zest | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | 1 | 2 |
| Fairness | – | – | * | – | – | – | – | – | – | * | 0 | 0 |
| Hope | – | – | – | – | – | – | * | – | – | – | 0 | 0 |
| Humor | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | * | – | – | 0 | 0 |
| Judgement | * | – | – | – | * | – | – | – | – | – | 0 | 0 |

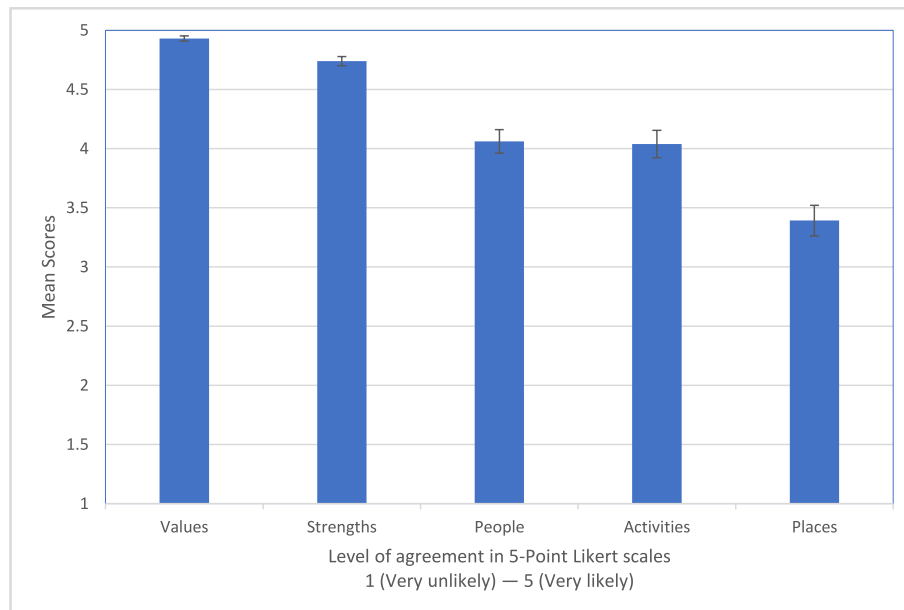
^a Each MME entry could be associated with a maximum of two character strengths.

^b Percentage is calculated based on the total number of entries (N = 51) [*] Signature character strength.

Table 5

List of the values gained.

| No. | Value gained | P1 | P2 | P3 | P4 | P5 | P6 | P7 | P8 | P9 | P10 | Freq. ^a | Pct. ^b |
|-----|-----------------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 | Knowledge | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 12 | 23.5 |
| 2 | Friendship | 1 | – | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 21.6 |
| 3 | Personal growth | 1 | – | – | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 11 | 21.6 |
| 4 | Harmony | 1 | 3 | 1 | – | 1 | 2 | – | – | 1 | 1 | 10 | 19.6 |
| 5 | Meaning and purpose in life | 1 | – | – | 1 | – | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | – | 8 | 15.7 |
| 6 | Excitement | – | – | 3 | – | – | 1 | – | – | 1 | 2 | 7 | 13.7 |
| 7 | Better world and society | 1 | 1 | – | – | 1 | – | 1 | – | 1 | 1 | 6 | 11.8 |
| 8 | Courage | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | 1 | 2 | 4 | 7.8 |
| 9 | Wisdom | 1 | 1 | – | 1 | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | 4 | 7.8 |
| 10 | Autonomy | 1 | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 3 | 5.9 |
| 11 | Kinship | – | 1 | – | 1 | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | 3 | 5.9 |
| 12 | Sense of mastery | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | 1 | – | 2 | 3.9 |
| 13 | Health | – | – | 2 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 2 | 3.9 |
| 14 | Self-acceptance | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | – | 2 | 3.9 |
| 15 | Social recognition | – | – | – | 1 | – | – | – | – | – | – | 1 | 2 |
| 16 | Prosperity | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | Justice | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | – | 0 | 0 |

^a Each MME entry can attribute a maximum of two values.^b Percentage is calculated based on total number of entry (N = 51).**Fig. 4.** The participants' responses regarding their attitudes towards future trip planning.

Notes:

1: Values gained ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 0.26$, $SEM = 0.02$, $n = 131$), strengths used ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.45$, $SEM = 0.04$, $n = 107$), travel with the same travel mate(s) ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.14$, $SEM = 0.10$, $n = 131$), do the same activity ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.33$, $SEM = 0.12$, $n = 51$), and visit the same place ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.5$, $SEM = 0.13$, $n = 51$).

2: Error bars represent standard errors across the participants' responses.

tourists were more willing to embark on a journey that is congruent with their character strengths.

While prior literature mostly focused on developing character strengths of individuals in non tourism settings, this study shows tourism offers a unique opportunity for people to cultivate their strengths. More than two-thirds of MMEs were associated with character strengths of participants. Most of the study participants indicated willingness to develop their strengths even though these may not be their signature strengths. The dominance of moderate strengths over signature strengths might be due to two factors. Firstly, the participants might not be familiar with the character strengths terminology. For example, “curiosity” might be easily confused with “love of learning”. Secondly, most of the journeys reported were group activities, which might not resonate with the core signature strengths of the participant. Curiosity (openness to new experiences) accounted for one of the most frequently used strengths in this study. The other four most used strengths reported in this study were: the appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, teamwork and perseverance. Literature on strengths (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016) recognised three aspects of the appreciation of beauty and excellence strength: beauty, moral excellence, non-moral excellence.

Beauty is a subjective experience that involves perceiving and appreciating what is beautiful and excellent in the physical and social worlds. Moral excellence, on the other hand, is the ability to perceive and appreciate moral goodness or virtue in the world. Non-moral excellence refers to the ability to perceive and appreciate talent or skills in the physical and social worlds. Probably, nudging tourists to participate in cultural tourism which entails moral excellence (e.g., visiting the Anne Frank House) as well as non-moral excellence (e.g., visiting art museums) may increase the appeal of their future travel experiences. Tourists who have a stronger ability to appreciate beauty and excellence tend to be more empathic and altruistic (Martínez-Martí et al., 2016), which in turn enhances their sense of gratitude and teamwork (the other strengths identified in this study). Developing gratitude can help release stress and alleviate depression (Wood et al., 2009). As outlined in other tourism studies (Glover & Filep, 2015), gratitude inducing activities are related to novel and unique experiences (e.g., waiting for a sunrise), and experiences of trust (e.g., in hospitality settings). Teamwork accounted for the fourth most used strength in this study, probably because tourism often involves travel companions and other social actors (e.g. a tour guide). The participants reported many instances of experiences of

co-creation over their journeys. Some of these experiences were unexpected (e.g., encountered by accident), while others required collective efforts. Lastly, the strength of perseverance was identified in physical activities (e.g., hiking) in this study. Perseverance is strongly associated with grit and prosociality (Disabato et al., 2018), especially in the context of pursuing intrinsic goals and autotelic activities. Tourism literature (Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023) reveals that perseverance is conducive to transformative tourism experiences, especially when overcoming emotional, physical and mental challenges.

The data collection process itself deserves some further discussion. The design of the journaling platform exemplified principles of reflective informatics (Baumer, 2015), such as breaking down important moments in life by asking participants to provide images and texts related to their MMEs. This process allowed participants to scrutinise the travel experiences from different perspectives. Asking participants to disclose their internal psychological factors provided a moment of inquiry that allowed reflection and introspection to take place. Features were created to facilitate expressions of these implicit dimensions by allowing participants to elaborate from a list of provided items. Nevertheless, the inquiry process itself was found to be challenging amongst some participants because they seldom previously reflected on their travel experiences in such great depth. The reflection section of the platform capitalised on the implicit dimensions of the MMEs by providing a dashboard that charted top strengths used. Overall, the study showed that participants were willing to plan their future journeys based on their strengths.

5.2. Theoretical implications

This study showed that tourists would gain a deeper understanding of their MMEs when connecting their experiences with their character strengths and thereby drives future behavioural intentions. Reminiscing allows tourists to recollect and re-live important episodes of their journeys (Tung & Ritchie, 2011; Yan & Halpenny, 2021). Recent studies (Miyakawa et al., 2022; Teoh et al., 2023) found reminiscing on one’s travel journey can help tourists build knowledge about the locals and places they visited and lead to transformative experience. This study provides new insights into reminiscence of tourist experiences by understanding their character strengths. This helps build new knowledge and inspires tourists to strive towards self-development in their future trips. By making the implicit psychological dimensions of MMEs explicit,

tourists are more likely to choose future journeys to be congruent with their character strengths and values rather than visiting the same place. A new conceptual model is therefore proposed based on this study (Fig. 5) which links post-trip reminiscence of MMEs with the benefits of strengths-based reminiscing and the subsequent behavioural intentions for future trips.

5.3. Practical implications

The results contribute to the design of smart tourism platforms and informatics systems (e.g., recommender system). For instance, a tourist may be able to search for a destination not only based on geographical locations but based on their character strengths. Character strengths can be integrated into tourism experience design and delivery by tour guides. For instance, a museum might consider integrating several guided tours that correspond to the travellers’ different character strengths.

The study also has some practical implications related to the use of the journaling platform. The journaling platform helps users organise their digital footprints and document moments that are valuable and significant to them. This practical narrative process guides users to find connections between explicit tourism activities and implicit psychological dimensions. Making the implicit explicit helps user to gain deeper insights into their travel experiences. Users can apply the filter, use the dashboard, and employ insight cards to find behavioural and mental patterns of past journeys. The process may facilitate transformative experiences (Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023) inspiring users to develop themselves and pursue their personal future travel goals.

6. Conclusions, limitations, future research

Meaningful and memorable travel experience research is gaining traction in tourism research (Cámara et al., 2023; Zhao & Agyeiwaah, 2023). However, designing such experiences is challenging because every tourist has its own values and motives for self-development (Sheldon, 2020). The experience may not always be pleasant and enjoyable. The strengths-based interactive journaling platform presented in this study facilitates tourists to narrate memorable and meaningful events and, by so doing, supports them to build a greater awareness of their implicit values. The platform connects travel events with tourists’ character strengths. The study contributes to positive

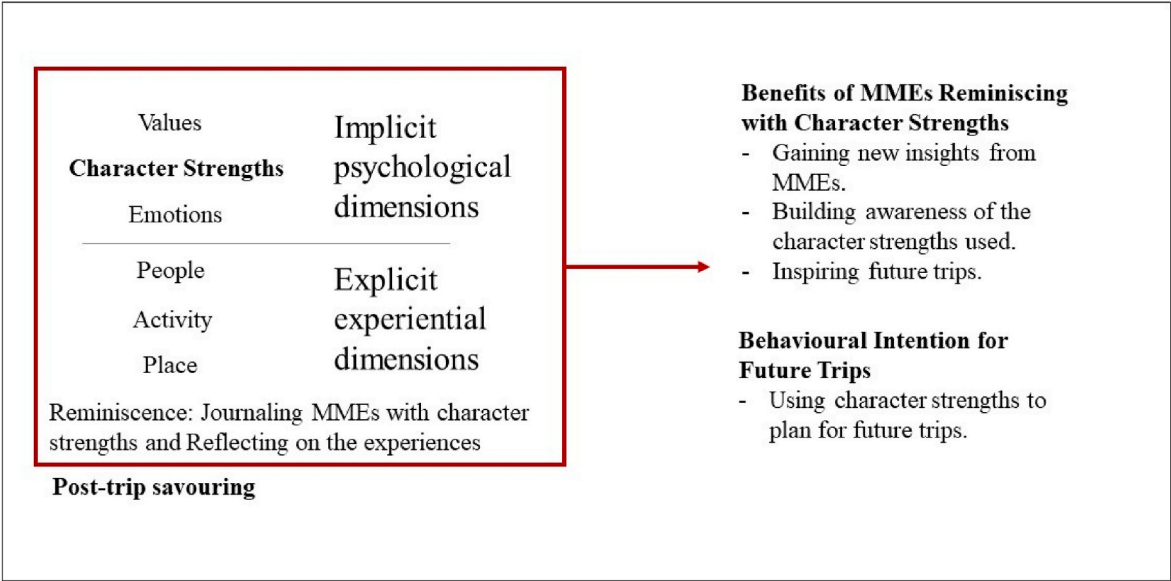


Fig. 5. A conceptual framework of reminiscing about memorable and meaningful tourism experiences with character strengths (Adapted from Bryant & Veroff, 2007; Niemiec, 2017).

tourism research (Filep et al., 2016) using strengths-based approaches and guided journaling to facilitate self-discovery and reflections. The results inform the future use of positive psychology interventions and technology-mediated reflections in tourism experiences. Future tourism researchers could explore how to support meaningful tourism activities in the planning and on-site stages of the journey that incorporate one's psychological dimensions.

The study has a few key limitations. First, the MMEs provided by the participants were based on their past journeys. Future studies can invite tourists to create MME entries in-situ, during their actual trips so that more vivid emotions, memories, and opinions can be captured. Second, our modest budget made the journaling platform limited to photos and text entries. Future studies may add videos and animations. Third, future research can examine the well-being benefits derived from journaling in an explicit manner. Future research can opt for longitudinal studies so that the well-being changes can be observed over a long period. Fourth, further in-depth qualitative research is needed to validate our initial conclusions in this study, especially the results of the thematic analysis which was based on short online interviews. Lastly, increasing the sample size in future studies could help future researchers understand the complexity of MMEs more thoroughly as MMEs are typically very diverse in nature. More empirical studies are needed to understand the connections between character strengths and tourism activities. Lastly, the study was conducted during the COVID-19 period when travel restrictions were imposed on travellers. The entries were created based on participants' past journeys in the pre-pandemic period. The platform should be deployed to collect new data in the post pandemic period. Future research will allow for further in-depth explorations of the complexities of memorable and meaningful tourism experiences.

Author statement

Bruce Wan: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data Curation, Writing – Original Draft, Visualization. Cees de Bont: Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing. Paul Hekkert: Supervision. Sebastian Filep: Writing – Review & Editing. Kenny Chow: Supervision, Writing – Review & Editing.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare. All co-authors have seen and agree with the contents of the manuscript, and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that the submission is original work and is not under review at any other publications.

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