



Iranian children's memorable rural tourism experiences

Hamdollah Sojasi Qeidari^{a,*}, Seyed Reza Hosseini Kahnootj^b, Zahra Solimani^b, Bardia Shabani^c, Nicholas Wise^d

^a Department of Geography, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Mashhad, Iran

^b Department of Geography, Faculty of Letters and Humanities, Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Iran

^c Paul Valéry Montpellier 3 University, Montpellier, France

^d Arizona State University, Phoenix, AZ, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Memorable experiences
Children
Rural tourism
Colaizzi's phenomenological approach
family tourism
children's learning

ABSTRACT

Family traveling, especially to rural areas, may lead to appealing fun experiences for children and make them memorable. Memorable experiences of children from various aspects can be useful for policy makers and planners of destinations, parents and children. The effectiveness of travels and children's learning from traveling are among the most significant concerns of parents and tourism activists. So, identifying and understanding children's memorable experiences of traveling to rural areas of Iran that has various local cultures can influence filling such gaps as future destination planning, developing child-friendly rural destinations, family traveling, designing child-oriented tourism programs, and future generation's being loyal to local destinations. This study aimed to identify Iranian children's memorable rural tourism experiences. The sample includes 37 children from ages 6 to 12. Interpretive phenomenology was used to conduct the study with the help of interviews and the analysis of the content of children's paintings. This study shows that children pay attention like adults to such elements as people, space, activities, objects, and social relations during their travel. Moreover, the conducted interviews resulted in 45 key notions categorized into 6 basic axes of memorable experiences: being exciting, being informative, being novel and unique, being gratifying, being socially involved, and negative experiences. This study provides insights on identifying and understanding the issues affecting the creation of memorable tourism experiences for children that travel to rural areas. The issues would help parents in taking child-oriented tourism travels, planners in designing child-friendly tourism destinations, and tourism service providers in delivering child friendly offerings.

1. Introduction

Tourism is a novel experience for children that enables them to understand ways of living and expose them to new environments (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021). Child-oriented tourism refers to children between the ages of 6 and 12. For children, tourism represents a form of play, entertainment, and curiosity. Tourism can also evoke positive memories, emotions, and experiences while also encouraging children to learn valuable life skills (Durko & Petrick, 2013; Hunter-Jones et al., 2020; Marey-Sarwan & Roer-Strier, 2017; Zhong & Peng, 2021). Tourism also creates value for children as they can expand their knowledge of the surrounding environment, learn socio-cultural skills and customs, and turn the destination into a memorable place in their minds (Gram, 2005).

It is important to note that children are powerful consumers in the tourism system, and the memories they create will influence future travel decisions. Therefore, researchers suggest that we focus more on children so that we can have a more comprehensive understanding of tourism, especially since children are inseparable parts of the tourism community, and destinations invest heavily in family travel accommodations (Carr, 2011; Chiang et al., 2022; Cullingford, 1995). Conducting this research is multi-beneficial for numerous tourism stakeholders. This research informs the future of tourism development (Bakas, 2018; Rhoden et al., 2016; Small, 2008), family companionship (Carr, 2011; Miyakawa & Oguchi, 2022; Shaw et al., 2008) and visitation practice insights related to marketing destinations (Koščak et al., 2023; Poria et al., 2005; Tecău et al., 2019).

Studies that include children's voices in tourism have expanded in

* Corresponding author. Azadi Square, Mashhad, Razavi Khorasan Province, 9177948974, Iran.

E-mail addresses: ssojasi@um.ac.ir (H. Sojasi Qeidari), hossinireza21@yahoo.com (S.R. Hosseini Kahnootj), za.soleymani70@gmail.com (Z. Solimani), bardia_shabani@yahoo.com (B. Shabani), Nick.Wise@asu.edu (N. Wise).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2024.100897>

Received 28 March 2023; Received in revised form 20 April 2024; Accepted 23 April 2024

Available online 11 May 2024

2212-571X/© 2024 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

recent years (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020; Ye et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2018), but the concept of memorability of travel and memorable experiences among children who have visited rural areas have not received attention. Children's opinions on memorable experiences and aspects of traveling are significant. Their opinions show the attractive aspects of traveling and destinations. Many children excitedly narrate and recall parts of their travel story and associated events for a long time at a specific destination (Pedro et al., 2020). These memorable experiences are viewed as their satisfaction with a destination (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Kim et al., 2012). Identifying children's memorable tourism experiences helps the researches and practitioners better understand the transfer of sociocultural values that children learn during their travels. Moreover, this research can help practitioners understand what stimulates people to go to different destinations and to perceive the role of children in shaping destination images and impressions (Gustafsson et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020).

Villages are among the most important destinations that can create memorable experiences. The reasons can be the existence of a more traditional life style, cultural authenticity, and various natural attractions. Such issues as the change of life style, the change of big families into small ones, the increasing growth of urbanization, and the expansion of living in apartments have led to poor mobility among children and a phenomenon called "syndrome of distance from nature". So, visiting rural destinations can be different, attractive, and informative for children (Feng & Li, 2016; Khoo-Lattimore & Yang, 2021; Porutiu et al., 2021). Proper planning and due attention to this age group can significantly impact family tourism, destination planning, and the future of rural tourism (Butler et al., 2012; Lee & Lee, 2021; Naderi et al., 2019; Sadeghi Shahdani et al., 2023; Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021). Children's memorable experiences of traveling to rural areas keep them connected to local cultural values and nature. A gap is felt in knowing children's memorable family travel experiences, especially in rural destinations. This study was conducted to identify and understand children's memorable experiences of family travels to rural areas.

It is common for Iranian families who reside in the national capital of Tehran to visit villages on weekends. They take children to more remote rural areas to spend time with family in a different setting and escape the every day crowded urban environs. Many Iranians have family ties to rural areas, so they seek to create memories for children growing up in larger cities (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021). Therefore, traveling to rural areas is a very good opportunity for children to spend quality time with their families and gain the opportunity to realize local traditional culture (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021).

Attention to child-focused tourism in Iran has not been given much attention by tourism planners and policy makers (Ahmadi Kannahli et al., 2022). Given the context outlined, the question that guides this research is: What were children's memorable experiences during their visit to a rural area? With this guiding question, subsequent results offer effective solutions for exploring children's memorable experiences in other fields of tourism.

The findings of this study can have significant implications for various stakeholders. Policymakers, destination planners, and marketers can use emerging factors to supply experiences. Parents and educators can better work with tourism service providers and local authorities to understand how they create memorable opportunities for children. Moreover, the findings will comprehensively understand all attractions, factors, and events that make travel experiences memorable for children. This study will increase parents' knowledge about creating memorable travels and how planners can more efficiently adopt proper management mechanisms for child-friendly destinations. Finally, this study will help the development of rural tourism and family travels in the future by building loyal destinations so parents, marketers and managers collectively recognize the importance of children's experiences in rural destinations.

2. Literature review

2.1. Memorable tourism experience (MTE)

Tourism experience and memorable tourism experience are closely related but conceptually different notions. Some experiences will last a long time and have more impact on tourists and their future (Hosseini et al., 2021; Zebardast et al., 2021). The experience reinforces significant memories of the destination experience and evokes images of the destination or moments of travel for tourists in the future. Therefore, a memorable tourism experience is defined as an experience that is remembered after the travel ends and is selected based on one's understanding of travelers' experiences and how they think about the past (Sthapit & Björk, 2019). A memorable experience is then a peak, easily separated from everyday life's normal moments (Pedro et al., 2020). Therefore, a memorable experience refers to something impressive and enjoyable that people remember in the future (Zhong et al., 2017). According to Zhang et al. (2018), memorable tourism experiences are those experiences that are selectively made from tourism experiences and are remembered after the travels. Some studies have reported that memorable tourism experiences are made because one evaluates one's own experience of travel. There are seven types of memorable tourism experiences: hedonism, novelty, local culture, novelty, meaningfulness, involvement and knowledge (Kim et al., 2012). Ye et al. (2021) found that travel is made memorable by ordinary experiences (perceived quality and satisfaction) and extraordinary experiences (perceived novelty and enjoyment). Chen et al. (2023) examined memorable experiences of rural-based tourism and identified six types of memorable experiences: hedonism, novelty, local culture, freshness, meaningfulness, participation, and knowledge.

Often, destinations provide a level of challenge or excitement for those who face new conditions not experienced before (Bigne et al., 2020; Novais et al., 2018; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). Memorable tourism experiences are tourists' long-lasting memories of attractions, moments, conditions, and interactions related to products and services of destinations (Ballantyne et al., 2011). According to Chen and Rahman (2018), influential factors forming memorable tourism experiences include a good sense of hospitality, local and tourist interactions, services and attractions, and access to local foods. Hosany et al. (2022) highlight that negative experiences are also memorable but are less tolerated in the potential to return.

Regardless of the experience, recognizing memorable experiences is significant, as tourists use their past experiences and memories when deciding where to visit on their next trip (Putri et al., 2021). Previous memories are valuable sources of information. People reminisce about past travel experiences, feelings, and stories influencing decision-making (Chandralal & Valenzuela, 2013; Loureiro et al., 2022). Individual characteristics and perceptions significantly impact the appeal of travel (Seraphin & Yallop, 2020; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). A challenge for planners is that memorable tourism experiences can vary for individuals, groups, and each destination as attributes and activities differ.

To help fill a gap in the literature, much of these conceptualizations are based on the experiences of adults (Chen et al., 2023; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Kim et al., 2012). From the published literature, a focus on children's memorable experiences has not received enough attention, limiting decisions that policy makers can make. It is therefore important to consider children's experiences, as they are the future generation of visitors to destinations, and their memories can shape decisions when they have families in the future. Childhood travel can have a lasting influence on their lives and thus shape their travel motivations. This can lead to important planning and policy implications as travel has been tied to children's cognitive development and socialisation when exposed to different settings and environments (see Guo & Liu, 2022).

2.2. Children's tourism experiences

In the past, leisure researchers have mostly examined children's experiences in the context of exhibitions, galleries, museums, and zoos (Falk, 1991; Therkelsen & Lottrup, 2015), but currently, tourism businesses such as theme parks and theme resorts, realizing the high value of children's needs and desires over family travels, pay more attention to children tourism and its market (Carr, 2011; Schänzel et al., 2012). Cullingford (1995), focusing on children's views on travel and their experiences of different destinations, categorized attractive and unattractive things in travel based on children's experiences.

Poria and Timothy (2014) posit children's tourism is a subcategory of creative tourism because travel is something unique for children. Delving into the environment during their travels to tourism destinations and experiencing new situations, children try to discover the world around them (Zhong & Peng, 2021). Children always tend to be physically active during their travels, touch diverse tourism elements and objects, and experience new spaces. Therefore, experiencing such conditions leads to children's memorable tourism (Cornelisse, 2018; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021; Sharma & Nayak, 2019). Children's new destinations and experiences are enjoyable, exciting, surprising, and exploratory.

The environment and the opportunity to explore new surroundings always pose many new questions for children. Before leaving home, children usually ask such questions: Where are we going? Who will accompany us? Where will we stay? What will we eat? What should I bring? What should I do there to have fun? Although children's questions and using such concepts seem simple, all of the questions are very important in tourism (Hazel, 2005). By reviewing such questions in their minds, children are somehow planning a trip and can even influence the quality and decisions of family travels. According to Radic (2019), children play a key role in choosing a destination, and the ability to have some independence affects these decisions.

Children usually remember those holidays that they enjoy. They like to be active and learn from the games they play. Ryan (1992) believes that entertainment is an essential part of self-development. Moreover, learning processes are among the most significant factors in creating pleasant and memorable experiences, especially when children enjoy remembering the past (Ryan, 1992). To them, such activities as going to the seaside and seeing animals in zoos and protected areas are important. Wu et al. (2019) also found that Chinese children have extensive family travel experiences and a clear picture of tourism experiences (in relation to seeing animals, tasting local food, and experiencing natural environments). Moreover, vacations allow children to experience freedom, make new friends, and spend time with their families (Ryan, 1992; Tecău et al., 2019). However, all children's tourism experiences are different because some experiences are quickly forgotten, and some are unforgettable. Children's memorable experiences are a very good basis for future planning for child-friendly destinations and child-centered services.

2.3. Children's memorable experiences

Tourism destinations make children delve into their surroundings, enjoy new experiences, and make everlasting memories (Bigne et al., 2020; Kim et al., 2012; Pedro et al., 2020; Tsai, 2016). Therefore, paying attention to children plays a significant role in recognizing their memorable experiences (Canosa & Graham, 2016; Chen & Rahman, 2018; Wu et al., 2019). Pomfret and Varley (2019) found that adventurous activities improve children's personalities because they teach children more about themselves and their abilities in environments such as villages. Moreover, Rhoden et al. (2016), examining British children's views of summer travel, found that for children, like others, holidays provide an escape from everyday routines. If dealing with children's memorable experiences of traveling have a definitive form (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019), the strategies for the development of children's

tourism will be adult tourism development, family tourism development, travel repetition, destination branding, and imposing a positive image of destinations. Therefore, exploring and understanding children's memorable travel and tourism experiences would be a helpful way to manage and plan different destinations and the future of tourism and families.

Remembering and retelling the activities show that the travels are memorable. The memorability of children's tourism experiences depends on many factors. Among the most significant factors is the environment of tourism destinations and their elements, phenomena, and attractions (Tecău et al., 2019). Moreover, recreational infrastructure, entertainment facilities and natural scenery are factors that affect children's memorable memories (Rhoden et al., 2016). Seraphin and Yallop (2020) showed paying attention to children's creative activities through play and entertainment is significant in creating memorable tourism memories. Rosa et al. (2018) found that pleasant experiences in direct contact with nature during childhood impact their pro-environmentalism in adulthood. This shows the impact of the memorable experiences of traveling to nature for children.

Memorable experiences for children during travel can include any experience that lends joy, excitement, or happiness, as engaged through physical activity, learning, participation, or simply quality time with family. All experiences should be enjoyable for children, but sometimes negative experiences of travels become memorable and bring about a negative feeling in children towards destinations. In this regard, prospect theory highlights that negative events have more weight in a person's experience compared with positive ones (Baumeister et al., 2001; Pavesi et al., 2016). This feature of cognitive behavior in social psychology is known as negativity bias. According to negativity bias, a negative event is subjectively more potent and salient than a positive one (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Therefore, it can be said that negative experiences remain more than pleasant experiences in children's minds and impact making a memorable image in children about a tourism destination.

2.4. Children and memorable rural tourism experiences (MRTE)

Although rural tourism can play an important role in creating good memories, positive attitudes, and environmental learning in children (Hubbard, 2014; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001), a review of the relevant literature to date suggests that children's memorable experiences at the destination Rurality has been less researched, and those that do exist have mostly been examined from the perspective of adults (Clark, 2001; Li et al., 2020). For example, Bunmajarinon (2022) categorized the characteristics of memorable rural tourism experiences into eight groups: novelty, local culture, freshness, knowledge, involvement, bad emotions, hedonism, and meaningfulness. This study was conducted from the perspective of adults. Also, Small (2008) examined childhood memories of holidays from the perspective of Australian women and girls. Their research found that shared, fun and physical activities are among the most common and positive memories of childhood tourism trips across generations. The memorable experiences emphasized in this study are outside rural environments and are from the perspective of adults in relation to their childhood.

Tourism in rural areas makes the ground for children to see rural environments supported and companied by their families (Schänzel & Smith, 2014). This issue is a significant factor in making the rural tourism experience memorable (Koščak et al., 2023; Poria et al., 2005; Tecău et al., 2019). Therefore, based on the findings of Fu et al. (2014), rural tourism leads to many memorable experiences for children: group and family bonds, communication with peers, escape and relaxation, children's learning, and novelty seeking. Moreover, children's experiences, especially in rural areas, usually lead to discovering new natural and cultural environments. Children in rural environments feel free to play and see the realities of life. All rural elements, phenomena, and attractions surprise children since they face new issues, cultures, and

ways of life that are insightful and informative. Sojasi Qeidari et al. (2021) found that children's tourism experiences support informal learning through communication, experience, and objective observations. These result in an increase in children's awareness and knowledge, creating a memorable atmosphere. This is especially important in rural areas when making new, tangible, deep observational experiences for children. Knowing such experiences among children who visit rural areas is important to understand the enjoyable aspects, create memories, identify the values and customs of local culture, know children's loyalty to rural destinations in the future, and help parents destination managers and planners in paying attention to the needs of children tourism.

Rural destinations are attractive for children since they provide an open and different space for them to have fun, have contact with nature and local culture, interact with new people, and be away from the stressful urban life (Kastenholz et al., 2012; Ribeiro & Marques, 2002). For instance, the experience of walking in the nature of villages, watching and getting to know animals, and playing with water and soil can make memories of traveling to villages memorable for children (Mossberg, 2007; Pan & Ryan, 2009; Richards & Wilson, 2005). Such spaces are enjoyable, exciting, and fun for children and make their experience of rural areas memorable. When children go to natural environments with unspoiled rural culture, they gain memorable and unique experiences specific to the areas. Issues, elements, phenomena, events and activities that are different from the normal life of children such as getting to know many animals hearing the sounds of animals, eating diverse local foods, getting to know different jobs of local people, local languages, rural life style, observing and touching flowers and trees are effective in creating memorable experiences for children. Rural environments and the things within them effectively create memorable experiences for children because they are different from what they see or do in the living environment of cities (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021). Experiences gained in rural areas are nature-based, local, and traditional, making them memorable for children.

Due to the limited research on children's memorable experiences in rural destinations, this study offers a unique opportunity to investigate and categorize memorable travel experiences that children have in new settings.

3. Research method

This study aligns with a Husserlian phenomenological qualitative approach to research design. To do this, the research involves exploring deep accounts of life and experiences. Qualitative researchers seek to describe and understand directly individuals' experiences of a problem (Andriotis, 2009; Merleau-Ponty & Bannan, 1956). Phenomenological approaches are highly applicable in fields like tourism, where the focus is understanding perspectives of human experience (Casmir, 1983; Pernecky & Jamal, 2010; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). Recently, tourism studies have changed from mass generalized accounts and reporting to seeking more individualistic and meaningful patterns. Researchers' priorities are increasing flexibility to gain meaningful experiences (Poria et al., 2005). Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological approach was used in this study for field research and to interpret collected data to better understand children's memorable tourism experiences.

Among the key factors that usually make researchers refrain from studying children is the lack of unfamiliarity with the theories and methods needed to observe children's behavior (Canosa et al., 2019). This research gap is not due to the insignificance of children's tourism experiences (Wu et al., 2019). Still, it is mainly due to the challenges of collecting data and the unknown methods that can be used to research children (Canosa & Graham, 2023; Yewei & Xiaohong, 2020). Moreover, conducting research on children in many countries is difficult due to ethical, legal, and academic considerations (Huang et al., 2020). Conducting such a study necessitates getting ethical approval and permission from the children's parents. Research on children also presents methodological challenges, so researchers need to decide on appropriate

methods regarding how to communicate with children regarding the intended subject matter (Gustafsson et al., 2020). For instance, scale-based questionnaires may not be suitable for obtaining data from children. Researching children requires special expertise (Poria & Timothy, 2014) because interviewing children and obtaining their opinion should be done by researchers familiar with the techniques specific for interviewing children such as drawing, puppetry, storytelling, and visual questions (Zhong et al., 2017). One of the most suitable tools for collecting data for children is drawing (Canosa & Graham, 2016), which was used in this study.

3.1. Sampling

When doing phenomenological research, researchers need to focus on in-depth interviews with a specific population with experience with the problems and/or questions being considered (Van Winkle & Lagay, 2012). This is important because this data cannot be collected by anyone else or generalized from elsewhere. For this research, children with the experience of traveling to rural areas with their families in 2022 were selected as samples.

Five tourism destination villages in rural areas beyond the Tehran metropolis were identified as destinations to study: Taleqan in Alborz Province and Lavasan, Barg Jahan, Darbandsar, and Koshar-e Olia in Tehran Province. Each rural destination was visited (at least two times) at different times during the summer of 2022. These are considered popular summer resorts and provide unique opportunities for family tourism, especially for children.

"Children" include people from toddlers to teenagers (Koščak et al., 2023). In this research, those aged 6–12 years were selected as participants because, contrary to toddlers, the group members are aware of and understand social interactions and environmental complexities (Dallari & Mariotti, 2016). This is also an age where kids act more independently and have learnt ways of communicating with others. Moreover, they are different from older children because they are curious about the environment, try to distance themselves from their parents, and think freely about the phenomena surrounding them (Israfilova & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019).

Eighty-four families traveling with their children were approached and informed about the topic being studied and the research objectives. Parents were asked to let the researchers study their children as samples. Seventy-three families agreed to participate and others did not due to time constraints. Then, the researchers asked for the families' contact numbers so they could continue the research process after three months, on a day off, in their desired place.

Considering the objectives of the study, children who had the following criteria were interviewed: 1) children between 6 and 12 years old; 2) interested in participating in the study and telling the researchers about their experiences; 3) having the experience of traveling with their family to a village; 4) traveling in 2022 (once at least); 5) the length of their last travel had been at least one or two days in the village (each participant had experienced overnight stay). Those who agreed and met these criteria were asked to arrange a time and place for the interview.

Once the interview process began, 13 children wished not to be interviewed due to a lack of interest. Their wishes were granted and the family withdrew from the study. In total, 60 children, accompanied by their parents, participated in this study in semi-structured interviews. Eighteen children were later excluded from the study because they reported no memorable experiences. After interviewing 37 children, it was felt that no new data was reported by retelling the memories of visiting rural areas.

3.2. Data collection procedure

Ebbinghaus's forgetting curve suggests that after 21 days, only about 21% of learning remains in the mind (Murre & Dros, 2015; Nelson, 1985). Accordingly, the period for examining children's memorable

experiences from traveling to rural areas was considered to be three months to extract their most memorable experiences since a memorable experience should have the ability to last long term, even years after the experience. A time interval of at least three months was considered for the children to be away from the travel destinations. This time interval seems to help remove superficial experiences and highlight important and memorable travel and destination experiences in children's minds. On the other hand, this time interval gave the children the opportunity for the researchers to find out whether the studied children had a memorable tourism experience from their trip to the villages or not.

Considering the sensitivities associated with conducting research with children, conversation and drawings were applied as children's perceptive language instead of a set of closed questions. This method helps interviewees and interviewers see each other more equally (Wu & Wall, 2016). In addition, drawings help children to express their thoughts creatively. It also helps the interviewers to not just be involved in the question-and-answer loop.

The families conducted the interviews based on the schedule and the location previously specified. During the study, one of the parents could optionally be present to reduce possible stress and increase the child's sense of trust and comfort. However, they were asked not to intervene or comment on the data collection process. Before starting each interview, the purpose of the study was explained to all children and their parents. Then, the researcher asked the children to tell the story of their travel to the village. So, when the story of the children's travel to the village was over, the interviewers asked more questions to elicit more possible details about the children's memorable experience and to encourage the children to draw a picture of it. Each interview started with easy and straightforward questions to make the atmosphere better for the children, allowing them to freely express their opinions in a correctly recalled manner. Children were asked: which part of the travel was memorable for you? What do you remember from your travel to the village? What would you describe more if you wanted to explain your trip to the village to your friends and acquaintances? What were the interesting things for you about the family's trip to the village, and would you like to experience and repeat them? Next, the children were asked to describe one of their memorable experiences from their travels to the village and explain it. This way, each child's memorable experiences of visiting a rural area were collected through interviews and drawings. The researchers stopped the interviews when gathering the data reached saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders et al., 2018). Before the interview process, the parents were informed of the information's confidentiality and then asked to allow the interviewer to record and take notes. Because children do not always give clear answers to "why" questions and do not know the reasons behind them, the questions were tailored so that each child shared everything they liked and remembered.

Every session with each child (including the interview and drawing) took an average of 39 min. When everyone agreed, all the interviews were audio-recorded for further analysis.

The interviewer gave all children some A4 paper, a box of colored pencils, a pencil sharpener, and an eraser to help them draw one of the memorable experiences of their travel to the village. The families were assured that no evaluation and scoring would be done and drawings would be used for research. Moreover, the children were told to withdraw if they felt tired and disinterested. In the end, to thank their cooperation, a handicraft made by the villagers and a photo of the village were given to all the children and their families.

3.3. Data analysis method

For data analysis, two methods were used simultaneously. The children's interviews were analyzed using Colaizzi's phenomenological method (Edward & Welch, 2011; Morrow et al., 2015) based on the structure recommended by Lamnek (1995). The analysis of children's drawings was also done using Visual Content Analysis (VCA).

The analysis of the interviews was done in the following order. First, an interpretive evaluation was done using Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to see how children experience something. Collecting the data, the interviewer listened several times to the recorded interviews with the children and took notes of their observations and interpretations. Then, the phrases or sentences related to the desired discussion were extracted. The meanings of all important sentences were clarified, and the main phrases and themes regarding the memorable experiences were made. Similar statements were juxtaposed, and the main themes of children's memorable experiences of traveling to rural areas were identified. In the next stage, researchers categorized and identified patterns based on the intended indicators. Then, the key elements of children's drawings about their memories of visiting the villages were descriptively evaluated. In this stage, such key elements as people, environment (e.g. trees, birds, grass, sun), objects (e.g. toys, vehicles), and social activities and relations (Bigne et al., 2020; Seraphin & Yallop, 2020; Wang et al., 2018) were identified. Finally, in line with the study's main aim, the drawings' theme was juxtaposed with the concepts extracted through a phenomenological method to be analyzed in combination.

The inter-subject agreement was used for the interviews to ensure reliability. Therefore, two research colleagues coded the interviews separately. 126 codes were extracted from the interviews, and 45 codes were common. The reliability was 71%, higher than 60% (Kvale, 1996).

There are several methods for drawing analysis, including Visual Content Analysis (Ertas et al., 2021; Kuhzady & Ghasemi, 2019; Scarles, 2010) and semiotic approach (Turkcan, 2013). Considering the research purposes and the data type, the VCA method was used to analyze children's drawings. Due to the simultaneity of using the phenomenological approach and VCA to analyze the interviews and drawings, the stages of analyzing the drawings proceeded simultaneously with phenomenology. Therefore, in order to extract the concepts in each drawing, it was decided that three stages of open, axial, and selective coding be used (Williams & Moser, 2019). In the first step, all the elements of each painting were manually extracted in the form of open codes. In the next step, related key words and elements were placed together, and similar elements were placed together in the same class as axial codes. In the final stage, the main themes extracted from the analysis of the visual content of the drawings were selected and classified based on the themes extracted from the phenomenological method.

4. Findings

Regarding participants' gender, 21 respondents were girls and 16 were boys. Regarding the age group, 22 participants were 10–12, the largest group. Thirty-two participants were on weekend travels and all of them were with their parents. That is because the family is viewed as a safe entity, so children can feel confident and have fun in nature with its members without much concern about possible dangers. Thirty-three children spent more than one day (24 h) with their parents in rural areas (Table 1).

The analysis of the data collected through interviews and extracting the key points of children's stories led to 45 key axes about children's memorable tourism experiences. Considering the common aspects of the axes, six main themes were identified.

4.1. Physical activity and entertainment

Entertainment is a very complex issue that can be accompanied by physical activities in the environment (Pearce, 2008). Based on Pine and Gilmore's classification, this index is one of the four domains of experience (Tung & Ritchie, 2011). For children, entertainment and physical activities mean enjoying and having fun at the moment. This activity in adult tourism is usually done to fill free time, forget the bad and negative life events, and relieve boredom (Grajek et al., 2022; Luo & Fan, 2023). Children love to play and to have fun and physical activities. They are

Table 1
Socio-demographic profile of participants (N = 37).

Gender	Category	Number	Percentage
	Boy	16	43.24
	Girl	21	56.76
Age	6 to 8	6	16.22
	8 to 10	9	24.32
	10 to 12	22	59.46
Time of travel	Ordinary days (week days)	5	13.51
	Holidays (weekends)	32	86.49
Duration of stay	Less than one day	4	10.81
	Between one day to one week	32	86.49
	More than one week	1	2.70
Villages	Taleqan	9	24.32
	Lavasan	11	29.73
	Barg Jahan	8	21.62
	Darbandsar	5	13.51
	Koshar-e Olia	4	10.81

usually immersed in natural elements and objects. Therefore, the environment where they can play becomes enjoyable and memorable for them, especially if this environment is the village and its elements (Rhoden et al., 2016; Ryan, 1992).

The references that the participating children had on the index of fun and physical activities included themes such as sports and fun (such as hiking, climbing, swimming, and boating), adventurous behaviors (such as visiting new places, going to heights, and setting fire with parents), encountering surprising events, and increasing physical activities. Most children liked physical activities and fun experiences and emphasized that such experiences made their travels to rural areas memorable. For example, a nine-year-old boy says about the memorable story of his travel to the village:

“I had exciting walks with my family in the countryside. I enjoyed activities such as mountain climbing and playing and I would like to have this interesting and fun experience again” (Fig. 1).

A seven-year-old boy, expressing his memorable experience of traveling to the village, emphasized that:

“I played volleyball with my younger brother among the greens and trees. We had much fun, but that was very short” (Fig. 2).

A twelve-year-old girl who explored out of curiosity the nature of the village with her brother emphasized that:

“We were looking to discover new creatures on our travel. We looked carefully at every creature to see how it lived, gathered food, and where it went. Seeing insects was very interesting and fun for us” (Fig. 3).

An eleven-year-old boy, in defining and drawing his memorable memory of visiting a village, said:

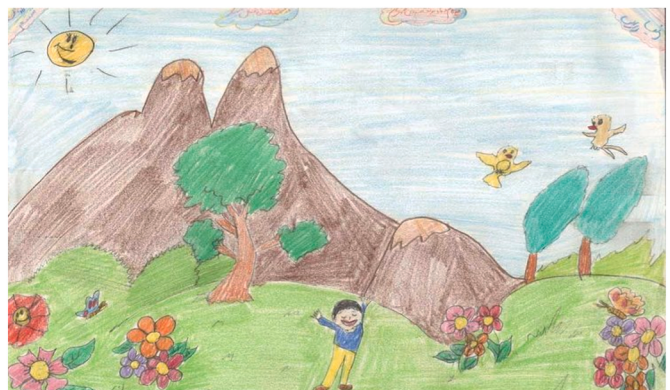


Fig. 1. An exciting walk in the nature of the village (nine-year-old boy).



Fig. 2. Games and entertainment in the village environment (a seven-year-old boy).



Fig. 3. Adventure in the nature of the village (twelve-year-old girl).



Fig. 4. The experience of swimming and playing in the water (an eleven-year-old boy).

“On a travel to the village, I swam and played in a river with my father. This activity was very exciting and memorable for me” (Fig. 4).

Having fun while traveling makes children happy and makes their experiences enjoyable and memorable (Malone et al., 2014; Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). The analysis of the interviews and children's drawings about visiting rural areas showed that games and other entertainments had been enjoyable, exciting, and memorable for the children. A ten-year-old boy said:

"I got on a boat for the first time and even though I was afraid of the water, I paddled; it was a lot of fun. I want to get on the boat again" (Fig. 5).

A nine-year-old girl said:

"During the trip to the village, I enjoyed playing with the animals and feeding them. It was a great experience" (Fig. 6).

Another eight-year-old boy said:

"Riding the donkey was very exciting. Also, I had never seen a horse so close. I would like to ride a horse when I grow up" (Fig. 7).

A nine-year-old boy said about the experience of fishing with his father in the river:

"My good memory of the trip to the village was fishing with my father" (Fig. 8).

4.2. Natural surroundings and knowledge

The novelty of nature and being in a new setting creates memorable experiences for children because then can explore and learn from the environment. Each trip offers a different experience from the last (Farber & Hall, 2007; Zhang et al., 2018). Novelty and accumulation of knowledge are important travel motivations (Wu et al., 2019), and Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018) add that each new experience is a prerequisite for long-term memory retention.

Researchers have investigated how adults stimulate curiosity through travel. People travel in search of new phenomena and elements pertinent to one's desire for a new experience (Witt & Bishop, 2009). Children they have less accounts of what they find desirable in new settings. So, a new setting or different environment for children features learning from unfamiliar experiences in the surrounding nature, opening new possibilities for finding new memories. Therefore, the novelty of tourism knowledge gained from children is the simultaneous connections made through discovery and learning. To conceptualize this perspective, Lee and Crompton (1992) define novelty as the difference in the degree and state of being. The influence of travel becomes a child's memory after visiting a tourism destination. For children, newness and unfamiliarity can spark curiosity and lead to new knowledge retention about a different environment (Cheng & Lu, 2013; Kim et al., 2012).

The openness of rural spaces can also spark creativity, and rural settings can be child-friendly spaces as they open opportunities for informal learning. Rural destinations provide suitable places for children to learn, be entertained, develop intellect, and engage in new forms of social development. The participants regularly mentioned the



Fig. 5. Boating on the river (a ten-year-old boy).



Fig. 6. Feeding animals (a nine-year-old girl).



Fig. 7. Riding in the village (an eight-year-old boy).



Fig. 8. Fishing in the river (a nine-year-old boy).

novelty, and findings are categorized into three areas: a) Seeing all kinds of animals, birds, flowers and local plants; b) Tasting and eating local foods and new fruits; c) Gaining new and diverse views.

For example, an eight-year-old boy said:

"I traveled to villages with my family. I ate local food there, which was new and I had never experienced before. It was so delicious that I would like to experience it again" (Fig. 9).

Moreover, a ten-year-old girl said:

"It was very new and memorable for me to see insects and animals like butterflies, dogs, cows, sheep and different birds that I usually don't see in my daily city life" (Fig. 10).

Learning and acquiring new knowledge is one of the memorable experiences children mention. Free learning on environmental phenomena and the life of villagers is very valuable, especially for children who live in cities (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021) and creates memorable experiences in children.

In this regard, a nine-year-old girl said:

"I saw all kinds of flowers and local plants so close and I got a good knowledge about them. This knowledge became memorable for me. They were different from houseplants" (Fig. 11).

Moreover, an eight-year-old girl stated:

"In nature and while walking in the beautiful nature of the village, for the first time I heard the sounds of animals such as eagles, foxes and jackals, which were unknown until then and were very enjoyable for me" (Fig. 12).

4.3. Local community and rural culture

The local community and culture can also impact children's familiarity with engagement and interaction in rural settings. Rural locales provide situations to build familiarity and develop cognitive characteristics (Ying & Zhou, 2007). In recent years, families have sought rural environments with ample outdoor educational opportunities, and these are found in recreation parks or camps. These open children to experiences with new local communities, indigenous cultures, or ways of life in different settings (Kusufa et al., 2022; Tsai, 2016). Similarly to the arguments pointed to above, the majority of research findings are adult-oriented and have pointed to issues surrounding the commodification of cultural values, ethnic identities, local life style, and respect for the values and norms of local areas (Kim et al., 2015; Royo-Vela, 2009). Children participating in this research mentioned becoming familiar with local dialects, villagers' lifestyles, local festivals, local clothing, work and jobs, agricultural tools, and handicrafts.

As a ten-year-old boy mentions about rural jobs and culture:



Fig. 9. Eating new and local food in the village (eight-year-old boy).



Fig. 10. Recalling the images of the elements and phenomena of rural areas (a ten-year-old girl).



Fig. 11. Getting to know new plants in rural destinations (a nine-year-old girl).



Fig. 12. Getting to know new animals and hearing their sounds in the rural environment (an eight-year-old girl).

"Traveling to the village was very memorable for me because I saw the ranchers and their lifestyle in the village up close and learned about their culture" (Fig. 13).

Another eleven-year-old girl pointed out the variety of activities in rural areas. In this participant's drawings, issues such as handicraft production, farming, sheep breeding, and housework are visible:



Fig. 13. Familiarity with life style and livelihood of ranchers in villages (a ten-year-old boy).

"There are different jobs in the village and everyone does something. Travelling to the village taught me new jobs that produce food and equipment for us in the cities. People in rural areas mainly deal with soil, water, plants and animals. It was very memorable for me to see these jobs up close" (Fig. 14).

An eight-year-old girl said:

"I closely witnessed the weaving of carpets by village women. Village women produced yarn from available materials and used it to weave carpets. I had never seen carpet weaving up close and it was a good memory for me from visiting the villages" (Fig. 15).

A twelve-year-old girl, expressing a memorable experience of visiting a village, said:

"Attending a village wedding was very exciting and memorable for me, because the wedding celebration, the type of clothing, and other ceremonies is very different from and more diverse than those in the cities" (Fig. 16).



Fig. 14. Familiarity with jobs such as agriculture and animal husbandry (an eleven-year-old girl).



Fig. 15. Carpet weaving activity by rural women (eight-year-old girl).



Fig. 16. Participation in the wedding party with the family (twelve-year-old girl).

4.4. Family togetherness and social connections

Travel companions and interactions with them add quality to tourism experiences (Wu et al., 2019). When traveling, tourists interact with their families and others and thus are influenced by their behavior (Liu et al., 2017; Schänzel et al., 2005; Wu & Wall, 2016; Yewei & Xiaohong, 2020). For children, being with family and traveling with relatives and friends is very enjoyable as this is who they are closest with (Wu et al., 2019). This study shows that children embrace being together and doing things with the family. Many children mentioned that their parents are very busy at home. When traveling, they have their parents' attention the entire time and can play with them during their travels. For children, this also makes their travel experiences memorable. For example, a seven-year-old girl said:

"I traveled to a village with my parents. They played with me during the travel. The thing I enjoyed most was hide and seek playing with my parents. Although serious at home, they were very friendly and kind to me here" (Fig. 17).

Traveling to rural areas allows children to play in an open space with their siblings and have a memorable experience. For example, a nine-year-old boy said:

"On a beautiful afternoon, I spent my free time with my family. We played games like kite flying with my siblings. I like travelling with my family" (Fig. 18).



Fig. 17. Children playing with their parents during the travel (a seven-year-old girl).



Fig. 18. Children playing with their siblings during the travel (a nine-year-old boy).

In addition to being with family, children can have fun and play with their peers (Gram, 2005; Schänzel & Smith, 2014). In families with only one child, tourism allows these children to play and make friends with peers. Close friends make experiences more memorable, especially when participating in various activities and games (Wu et al., 2019). During travels, children can expand their relationships and interact with different people. Getting the chance to know new people (such as other children, farmers, herders, tourism staff, and accommodation owners) is something children also embrace. Many children participating in this study stated they had made new friends and found new playmates while traveling to rural destinations. They also interacted with local residents, who they mentioned were hospitable and kind, and had treated them cordially. A seven-year-old girl said:

"During my travels, I made many friends in the village. My most enjoyable time was playing with my friends, and I would like to see them again" (Fig. 19).

4.5. Involvement and responsibility

Involvement within a recreational setting can be defined as "the state of identification existing (communication) between an individual and a recreational activity, at one point in time, characterized by some level of enjoyment and self-expression being achieved through the activity" (Prebensen et al., 2013, p. 255). During travels, children voluntarily help their families by gathering stuff, protecting them, and even moving



Fig. 19. Making friends in the village (a seven-year-old girl).

small things, which somehow involves taking responsibility and involvement (Sthapit & Coudounaris, 2018). Cooperating with children in doing different things, whether planning for the travel or during the travel and giving them slight responsibilities make travel experiences memorable for them (Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021) because one of the issues that lead to a memorable experience of responsibility and involvement is doing enjoyable activities in recreational environments (Zhang et al., 2018). Entrusting minor activities to children is enjoyable because they feel they are old enough and influential in family affairs and travels. Among the things that children said about memorable experiences of the travels were: helping parents during traveling with such activities as gathering, moving, and protecting the stuff, making food, and commenting on travel plans like seeing the attractions and choosing places to stay (Khoo-Lattimore et al., 2015). Therefore, the tasks entrusted to children during travels, through involvement and responsibility, cause pleasure and self-expression, leading to a memorable travel experience for children.

For example, an eight-year-old boy said:

"I helped my family prepare and collect things during our travel. I always tried to collect the things earlier than others. That is why my mother always tells others about my work during our travel" (Fig. 20).

Moreover, an eleven-year-old girl said:

"When my family wanted to cook, I helped them too. Cooking delicious food in nature with fire was very attractive to me and I would like to experience it again" (Fig. 21).



Fig. 20. Helping the family with gathering and preparing traveling stuff (an eight-year-old boy).



Fig. 21. Participation in cooking and food preparation (an eleven-year-old girl).

In addition, an eleven-year-old girl said:

"When we traveled to the village, my family and I went to an orchard in the village to buy fruit. The villagers were busy collecting fruits, and my family and I helped the villagers pick and collect apples. Collecting the fruits was a very interesting experience for me and we took a lot of pictures" (Fig. 22).

4.6. Negative experience

Memorable experiences are not necessarily pleasant and positive. Sometimes, a bitter accident may make a journey or a destination memorable (Hosany et al., 2022). Some researchers have even noted that the influence of tourists' negative experiences is much greater than that of positive experiences on future behavior (Kim & Chen, 2010; Kim et al., 2021; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). Therefore, negative experiences in tourism are inseparable parts of tourists' memorable experiences (Pavesi et al., 2016). In childhood, due to vulnerability and lack of enough experiences, the smallest difficulty in travel can create a negative experience. The analysis of the interviews showed that a few children had memorable negative experiences from visiting rural areas. Some negative experiences mentioned by children are getting sick, being hurt and injured, getting lost, losing toys, accidents, fighting, being bitten by insects such as bees and ants, and being scared by animals such as dogs and snakes. For example, a ten-year-old boy said:

"The dogs of the villages are wild. They attacked us and I was very scared. I don't want to visit any village anymore" (Fig. 23).

Moreover, a twelve-year-old girl said about her negative experience from visiting the village:



Fig. 22. Helping the villagers to collect fruit (an eleven-year-old girl).



Fig. 23. Afraid of the village dog (a ten-year-old boy).

"The environment of the village was full of animals and insects. I saw a scorpion near our resting place in the village that was about to sting me and I was very scared" (Fig. 24).

A twelve-year-old boy talked about his experience of visiting the village:

"Our car broke down in an accident while traveling to the village and I cried a lot. My parents were also very upset, and most of our trip involved repairing the car. It was not a good travel at all and it was not enjoyable" (Fig. 25).

Telling a story, a six-year-old boy emphasized:

"I got sick because of the cold weather in the village and lack of a heater. Due to the lack of doctors and medicines in the village, I was very bothered and it was very bad" (Fig. 26).

5. Discussion

Complementing other studies on children's tourism and memorable tourism experiences, this study emphasized the significance of children's memorable tourism experiences in rural destinations. The analysis of the drawings showed that many factors, including environmental elements (trees, plants, animals, water, stones, and soil), phenomena



Fig. 24. Seeing a scorpion during traveling to the village (a twelve-year-old girl).

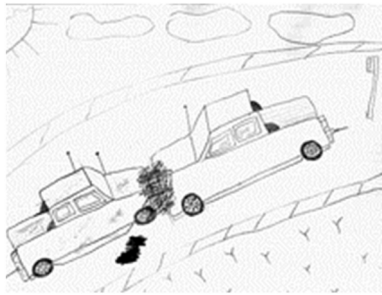


Fig. 25. A car accident while traveling (a twelve-year-old boy).



Fig. 26. Getting sick while traveling (a six-year-old boy).

(seeing animals), landscapes (mountains, plains, forest), and experiential elements (playing and eating different foods) play an important role in forming travel memories. Some related studies have emphasized such issues (e.g. Carr, 2011; Chiang et al., 2022; Hazel, 2005; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001; Poria & Timothy, 2014; Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021).

Data analysis in this study led to identifying 45 axes pertinent to memorable experiences. Findings are classified into six themes: physical activities and entertainment, natural surroundings and knowledge, local community and rural culture, family togetherness and social connections, involvement and responsibility, and negative experiences. These six emerged categorizations from this study are further detailed in Fig. 27. As children mature, their memories help shape impressions of place and travel and can offer a sense of well-being and positive reflection (Adler & Pansky, 2020).

Most of the children recalled their travel experiences and stories, which mentioned that in rural destinations, it is possible to do physical activities and have fun in open spaces. Such conditions create a sense of freedom of action and behavior, which is attractive and exciting for children who live most of their time in closed spaces of urban houses. Therefore, designing appropriate and safe play spaces for children, planning to play local groups and cooperative games, and providing opportunities for families to play games with children in the destination villages will create memorable images and moments for children. According to the findings, physical activity and entertainment are among the main motivations children have for visiting villages, which confirms the findings of Pomfret and Varley (2019), Rhoden et al. (2016), and Ryan (1992).

On the other hand, traveling to rural areas exposes children to diverse spaces, landscapes, people, and cultures that are informative and instructive to them. Explaining tourism memories by children showed that traveling makes the ground for informal learning and more curiosity for children. According to Farber and Hall (2007) and Zhang et al. (2018), the novelty and specificity of these conditions make experiences from rural tourism more permanent in children's minds. According to Fu et al. (2014), children are mainly looking for new experiences and doing new things. Many children stated that they had experienced new things that they had never experienced before, such as seeing many kinds of animals and birds, local flowers and plants, and eating local foods. So,

these experiences had remained in their minds. Parents should give children the opportunities for new experiences by increasing the variety of places, the number, and travel times. Novel and knowledge-oriented rural travels make them memorable for children. Therefore, making the ground for children to respond to their curiosities regarding nature and its elements, the life and diversity of animals and plants, and the villagers' life style is exciting and attractive for children. Traveling to villages plays the role of a real laboratory for children and allows them to learn more about the surrounding environment, and affects the recording of memorable moments of the travels.

Memorable experiences make children more curious and eager to learn about local cultures, especially the micro-cultures of countries like Iran. Moreover, the experiences make next-generation tourists more curious about continuing their travel and learning more about the surrounding environment. The findings showed that children's visit to rural areas results in real understanding of rural lifestyle, nature, attractions, and environmental things they have seen in textbooks or on TV. This aligns with the findings of Kim et al. (2012) and Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018). Children become familiar with rural areas with various skills and activities through observation and even practical involvement. These memorable experiences in many cases, increase children's creativity, innovation, and self-awareness and will have many positive impacts in adulthood.

Contrary to the findings of Fu et al. (2014) and confirming the findings of Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018), many children mentioned being with their families and playing with them in the nature and open spaces of the villages as one of their memorable experiences. Moreover, traveling to villages, in addition to memorable individual experiences, makes the ground for social involvement and social capital accumulation. Making good relationships with locals, making new friends with other children, and playing with them were among the children's memorable experiences. Again, the finding aligns with the findings of Liu et al. (2017) and Wei et al. (2019). Social interaction and sociability during travel drastically impact the formation of extroversion mood, memorable social experiences, social learning, and accumulation of social capital for Iranian children who visit rural destinations.

Children desire to take on responsibilities, even trivial ones. So, entrusting them with small responsibilities such as moving belongings during travels and asking their opinions about the travel plans make their experiences memorable. Many of the children mentioned this. This finding aligns with the findings of Seraphin and Yallop (2020) and Sthapit and Coudounaris (2018). It would be better that families give roles and responsibilities to children during travel and ask them for their opinions on related issues since participating in travel greatly impacts creating memorable memories.

As mentioned before, memorable travel experiences are usually enjoyable and instructive for children, but some memorable experiences may be negative too (Hosany et al., 2022; Pavesi et al., 2016). Some children in the interviews mentioned memorable negative experiences such as getting lost, getting sick, being injured, and losing things. As Kim (2014) asserts, these findings can create several negative attitudes and feelings towards visiting rural areas among children and their parents and may reduce their motivation to visit rural areas and local communities. Kensinger and Schacter (2006) say that some of these negative experiences are unavoidable but can be minimized if parents and tourism managers pay due attention to creating desirable environments for children. So, parents, destination planners, and service providers' understanding of children's negative experiences of travel may improve the safety of travel and tourism destinations and make the grounds for having memorable good experiences.

Comparing children's behavior with other age groups (adults) in rural tourism shows that most memorable experiences of adults from traveling, especially to villages, are accompanied by the experience of relaxation. This aligns with the findings of Chandralal and Valenzuela (2013) and Bigne et al. (2020). Moreover, children's memorable experiences in villages are accompanied by excitement, playing, physical

Key themes	• key axes
Physical activity and entertainment	• Sports and fun (such as hiking, climbing, swimming, and boating) • Adventurous behaviors (such as visiting new places, going to heights, and setting fire with parents) • Games and entertainment
Natural surroundings and knowledge	• Seeing flora and fauna (all kinds of animals, birds, flowers and local plants) • Tasting and eating local foods and new fruits • Gaining new and diverse views and outlooks • Knowing new places (increasing geographical knowledge)
Local community and rural culture	• New Familiarity with: • Local dialects • Villagers' lifestyle • Local festivals • Local clothes • Rural jobs • Agricultural tools • Types of handicrafts and the way of creating them
Family togetherness and social connections	• Being with family • Traveling with relatives and friends • Getting to know local people and other tourists • Finding new friends • Playing with their peers
Involvement and responsibility	• Gathering, moving, and protecting the stuff • Making food • Commenting on travel plans like seeing the attractions and choosing places to stay
Negative experience	• Getting sick • Being hurt and injured • Getting lost • Losing toys • Experiencing accidents • Fighting • Being bitten by insects such as bees and ants • Being scared by animals such as dogs and snakes

Fig. 27. Key themes and axes of children's memorable experiences of traveling to local communities.

activity, and entertainment, the issues that have been emphasized by Pomfret and Varley (2019), Rhoden et al. (2016), and Ryan (1992). In childhood, the simplest phenomena and new activities are novel and instructive, creating memorable experiences (Li et al., 2020). However, seeing special phenomena and doing unique activities are valuable in adulthood. For adults, rural community culture is nostalgic because they can reflect on family histories (Chen & Rahman, 2018; Pedro et al., 2020). However, according to the findings of this study, for children, experiencing new life styles and activities is very memorable, which is in line with the findings of Fu et al. (2014), Khoo-Lattimore and Yang (2021), Kim et al. (2012), Sojasi Qeidari et al., 2021, and Wu et al. (2019). The involvement and participation of children during travels make their feelings valuable and make their travels memorable by doing cooperative and responsible activities. This has been emphasized by Canosa and Graham (2016), Canosa and Graham (2023), Gram (2005), Khoo-Lattimore and Yang (2021), Liu et al. (2017) and Schänzel and Smith (2014). In adulthood, travels are memorable when conflicts and

responsibilities are less and travelers feel more freedom (Cornelisse, 2018; Hosseini et al., 2021; Rasoolimanesh et al., 2021). Moreover, due to children's sensitivity, the smallest injuries and problems lead to resentment and discomfort, making memorable bitter experiences. This finding of the research has also been emphasized by Hosany et al. (2022), Kensinger and Schacter (2006), Kim (2014), Kim et al. (2012) and Pavesi et al. (2016). Adults on the other hand think that some problems during travels are inseparable from their travel, especially travels to rural areas; small injuries do not result in discomfort and bad experience.

Adults' memorable experience of traveling is usually affected by prior familiarity, fiscal considerations of travels, travel safety, and facilities. However, this study showed that children's memorable experiences, especially in rural areas, are affected by curiosity and discovering, surprise, freedom, novelty, pleasure, excitement, enjoyment, and learning. Therefore, in line with the findings of Mitchell et al., 1997, this study also showed that the most memorable experiences of traveling to

rural areas in children also have a positive aspect, consistent with the cognitive bias of rosy retrospection. In the future, this issue can positively impact children's loyalty to these destinations and the continuation of their travel motivations. Moreover, the variety of children's memorable experiences visiting rural areas shows their interest in Iranian local culture. This study offers a new way of thinking about the multidimensionality of memorable experiences that children gain from visiting rural destinations.

According to the findings and based on a holistic perspective, the framework and process of forming memorable travel experiences among children can be set in four stages: what, when, where and how (Fig. 28). This study is useful for parents, policymakers, planners, managers, marketers, and service providers to understand how children think about travel, the local environment, and the setting they are brought into. Moreover, this study shows that such travels may be memorable for children for various reasons, increase the sense of continuity of travel, and maybe the foundation for building future destination loyalty. Therefore, families, destination planners, managers, and marketers should pay attention to children and the ideas and interests tied to travel.

6. Conclusion

Using a qualitative research design involving in-depth interviews and drawings of travel to rural areas, this study examined children's memorable experiences of visiting rural areas of Iran. The results unveil six main categorizations that offer insight for a holistic model to base future studies on. For practice, destination planners and managers can use these categorizations to engage younger visitors.

It can be concluded that children gain a lot from traveling to rural destinations. By having the opportunity to express their feelings and memories of their travels to rural areas, the children showed emotional, instructive, explorative, enjoyable, and novel experiences that added a sense of value. In particular, an important takeaway here is that travel reinforces social bonds that will remain in their memory. One can say that children have their own interests, needs, desires, and behaviors during their travel and gain many specific experiences. So, rural tourism provides a great opportunity for children to create new memories. Through travel, children learn to see and understand new environments and adapt their mental images to these realities. Children traveling to

rural areas influence their personality, worldviews, thoughts, self-awareness, loyalty to a destination, and behavioral intentions, and they can play a role in intentions to revisit later in life. These findings are important in bridging similarities and differences between childhood and adulthood that tourism industry planners and managers can use for effective destination development.

Many factors related to nature and local culture make rural tourism experiences memorable for children. Children in rural environments have the opportunity to discover and experience the real environment and the elements related to the environment and to know and experience local ways of life and nostalgic cultural elements. Moreover, how children experience traveling to rural destinations can allow them to learn more about native customs. This can help strengthen traditions with younger generations, encourage nationalism, and create a sense of belonging to their country and cultural roots. The experiences keep children connected to the destination and their cultural and native background. These conditions help children distinguish unique differences between rural and urban destinations and settings. Visiting villages for children is accompanied by knowledge, awareness, freedom, novelty, and simplicity. Moreover, memorable experiences gained from children can help the development of child-friendly destinations, build loyalty through positive associations with places, and expand family-oriented tourism.

Also, this study's findings can guide marketers to market destinations, help managers manage destinations according to children's interests, and build brand recognition that families can relate to. Considering children's needs is an opportunity for their voices to be heard in relation to destination design, environmental protection, and indigenous ways of life. Creating memorable experiences of traveling to rural destinations promotes awareness of social and environmental concerns early so they learn to become more conscientious travelers in the future. Creating positive feelings towards the environment, elements of nature, and local cultures create a sense of nostalgia that they can relate to and reside over their feelings towards a particular destination.

7. Theoretical contributions

Since only a few studies have been conducted on children's memorable travel experiences, this study can contribute to developing and enriching related literature. By focusing on the concept of "children's

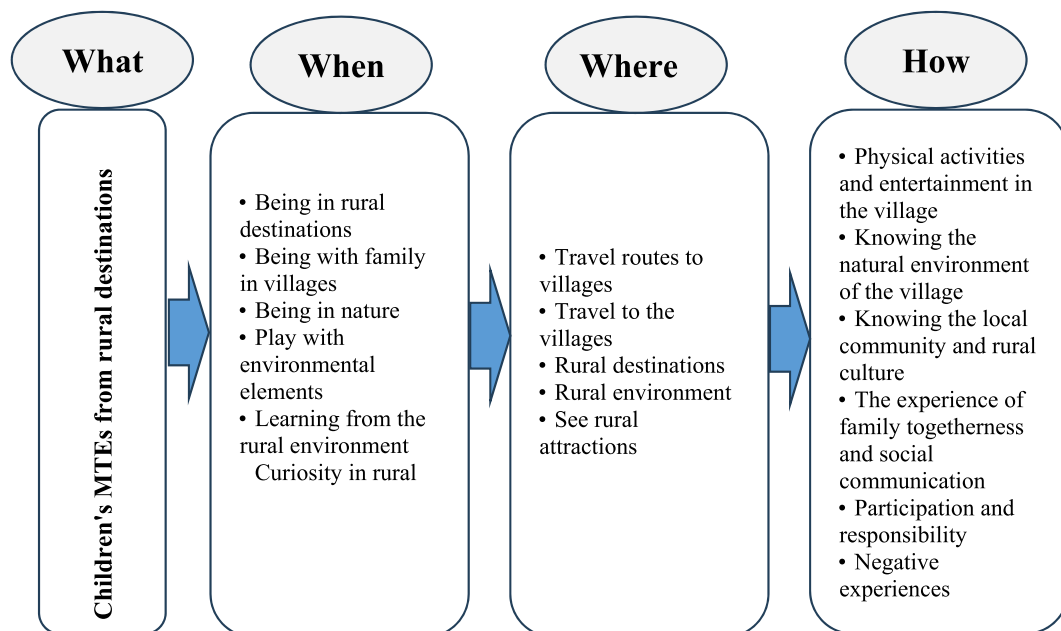


Fig. 28. A holistic theoretical model of children's memorable experiences of traveling to rural destinations.

memorable experiences of tourism”, this research can greatly deepen and diversify the existing literature on memorable tourism experiences. This study first focused on the often-neglected rural destinations in Iran as a developing country and explored how children see and perceive rural areas based on their own experiences of visiting the areas. It gives useful insights into children’s interests and preferences about rural destinations and expands the theoretical understanding of memorable tourism experiences beyond adults’ perspective and urban destinations among children. Therefore, by paying attention to a group of children, this study adds and expands the literature related to memorable tourism experiences. This issue reveals the attractiveness of rural destinations from the perspective of children. The study then critically showed the necessity of representing tourism destinations and services that children in rural destinations need to make their experiences memorable, an issue that has received little attention so far. So, it emphasized the significance of exploring environmental and cultural elements and local rural destinations for making children’s experiences memorable. By identifying children’s memorable experiences of visiting rural areas and effective attractions, this study contributes to developing the concept of attractions from children’s perspectives. Moreover, this study contributes to the understanding and development of theoretical issues on child-friendly destinations, child-oriented services in villages, loyalty to destinations, and family traveling.

8. Practical implications

Based on six themes of memorable travel experiences, this study designs and proposes managerial and practical applications in rural tourism products for children. When considering physical activity and entertainment, designing and developing play and sports spaces exclusively for children builds a niche market that families can relate to. Attractions that promote activity and interactions encourage service providers to supply products that include activities such as climbing, boating, playing with water, playing on slides, fishing, flying kites, fire safety, and seeing different animals are effective in making memories that children hold on to.

When discussing the topic of natural surroundings and knowledge, managers and planners need to create opportunities for children to explore and learn about different animals, plants, and landscapes. Promoting these opportunities is what parents look out for and can relate to when deciding with their children where to travel. This can also include trying local foods and learning about environmental science such as soil, water, and rocks in rural areas.

Regarding the local community and rural culture, the goal is to familiarize children with the local people and rural culture, which is different from the city. Therefore, providing services such as children’s bedrooms and local foods, designing suitable play spaces for children in rural areas, providing local games experience, holding training courses for children to learn more about villages and cultures, getting to know the language, clothing, rural jobs, architecture, agricultural tools, local handicrafts, and attending local festivals can be effective in creating memorable experiences for children from rural environments.

Regarding family togetherness and social connections, the findings are effective in expanding family and group-oriented travels. Encouraging parents to embark on family and group travels and spending free time with children will effectively make rural travels memorable. Families can effectively create memorable travel images by assigning responsibilities and roles to children. Such activities and responsibilities can include protecting things for the child, holding a small item, remembering the names of destinations, taking pictures during travels, helping parents prepare food, and suggesting places to stay.

It is also important to recognize negative experiences. Efforts to reduce such experiences for children are important to ensure children find enjoyment in their travel experiences. This means focusing on safety issues related to the toys and things they interact with, taking care to prevent possible injury, and having available first aid can effectively

create memorable travel experiences so children feel secure.

Overall, the findings of this study can serve as a valuable guide for planners and providers of rural tourism services. Destination managers can use these findings to design child-friendly destinations, develop child-oriented infrastructure and equipment, and provide special recreational and tourism services that allow children to learn more about the natural environment and local cultural values. Additionally, these findings can assist marketers in understanding the preferences and interests of children while traveling with their families, as well as predicting future behavior patterns of families when choosing destinations and attractions. Furthermore, these findings can empower local communities to actively participate in tourism development and offer relevant products and services that meet children’s needs to promote family-friendly destinations.

9. Limitations and suggestions for future research

This exploratory research had some limitations that future research should tackle. The first limitation was the challenge of parents’ comprehensive understanding of children’s memorable experiences since their understanding may differ because of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. What may be a valuable and memorable experience for children may be very simple and insignificant to parents. It is noteworthy that memorable experiences are mental and psychological issues that may be affected by age, gender, education, tourism experiences, cultural and social factors, etc. So, conducting a study on parents’ understanding of their children’s memorable tourism experiences of visiting rural areas and giving importance to them can be useful. Moreover, comparing the type, nature, and variety of children’s and parents’ experiences of a common destination can provide travel planners and organizers with valuable knowledge. This study focused on Iran, so the findings are not generalizable to countries with different socio-cultural contexts. Future studies can explore and compare children’s memorable experiences of visiting rural destinations in other countries to better understand this issue. Tourism is usually adult-oriented, so policymakers have ignored children’s tourism. Children’s memorable experiences of traveling, especially to rural areas, can guide all tourism activists to develop child-oriented destinations and services. Conducting research on child-friendly destinations using children’s memorable experiences can be useful in this regard. Mutual relationships between children’s memorable experiences and their image of the destinations, repeating travel, and introducing destinations to others by children can be usefully investigated from the perspective of travel and tourism studies. Last but not least, children’s memorable experiences of visiting destinations are internalized exciting experiences. So, it would be useful to see the impact of children’s memorable tourism experiences on their daily behaviors, interactions with people and the surrounding environment, and their travel behavior patterns in adulthood about choosing destinations in future.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Hamdollah Sojasi Qeidari: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Conceptualization. **Seyed Reza Hosseini Kahnootj:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resources, Methodology, Data curation. **Zahra Solimani:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resources, Methodology, Data curation. **Bardia Shabani:** Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources. **Nicholas Wise:** Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources.

References

- Adler, O., & Pansky, A. (2020). A "rosy view" of the past: Positive memory biases. In *Cognitive biases in health and psychiatric disorders* (pp. 139–171). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-816660-4.00007-6>.
- Ahmadi Kahnali, R., Biabani, H., & Baneshi, E. (2022). Scenarios for the future of tourism in Iran (case study: Hormozgan province). *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 14(2), 183–199. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19407963.2020.1839087>
- Andriotis, K. (2009). Sacred site experience: A phenomenological study. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 36(1), 64–84. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.10.003>.
- Bakas, F. E. (2018). The political economy of tourism: Children's neglected role. *Tourism Analysis*, 23(2), 215–225. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354218X15210313504562>
- Ballantyne, R., Packer, J., & Sutherland, L. A. (2011). Visitors' memories of wildlife tourism: Implications for the design of powerful interpretive experiences. *Tourism Management*, 32(4), 770–779. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.06.012>
- Baumeister, R. F., Bratslavsky, E., Finkenauer, C., & Vohs, K. D. (2001). Bad is stronger than good. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(4), 323–370. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.5.4.323>
- Bigne, E., Fuentes-Medina, M. L., & Morini-Marrero, S. (2020). Memorable tourist experiences versus ordinary tourist experiences analyzed through user-generated content. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 45, 309–318. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2020.08.019>
- Bunmajarinon, S. (2022). Interpretation model of memorable tourism experience for the millennial generation tourist in community-based cultural tourism destinations. In *The graduate school of tourism management*. national institute of development administration (NIDA). Doctoral dissertation.
- Butler, R., O'Gorman, K. D., & Prentice, R. (2012). Destination appraisal for European cultural tourism to Iran. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 14(4), 323–338. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.862>
- Canosa, A., & Graham, A. (2016). Ethical tourism research involving children. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 61, 219–221. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2016.07.006>
- Canosa, A., & Graham, A. (2023). Reimagining children's participation: A child rights informed approach to social justice in tourism. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 31(12), 2667–2679. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2022.2073448>
- Canosa, A., Graham, A., & Wilson, E. (2019). Progressing a child-centred research agenda in tourism studies. *Tourism Analysis*, 24(1), 95–100. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354219X15458295632007>
- Carr, N. (2011). *Children's and families' holiday experience*. London and New York, NY: Routledge.
- Casmir, F. L. (1983). Phenomenology and hermeneutics: Evolving approaches to the study of intercultural and international communication. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 7(3), 309–324. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(83\)90035-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(83)90035-4)
- Chandralal, L., & Valenzuela, F. R. (2013). Exploring memorable tourism experiences: Antecedents and behavioural outcomes. *Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 1(2), 177–181. <https://doi.org/10.7763/JOEBM.2013.V1.38>.
- Chen, J., Huang, Y., Wu, E. Q., Ip, R., & Wang, K. (2023). How does rural tourism experience affect green consumption in terms of memorable rural-based tourism experiences, connectedness to nature and environmental awareness? *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 54, 166–177. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2022.12.006>
- Chen, H., & Rahman, I. (2018). Cultural tourism: An analysis of engagement, cultural contact, memorable tourism experience and destination loyalty. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 26, 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2017.10.006>
- Cheng, T., & Lu, C. (2013). Destination image, novelty, hedonics, perceived value, and revisiting behavioral intention for island tourism. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(7), 766–783. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2012.697906>
- Chiang, Y. C., Su, C.-J., Liao, H.-H., Chaudhary, M., & Lan, Y.-F. (2022). Children's dominance in family vacation decision-making (FVDM): A multi-national analysis. *Tourism Review*, 77(3), 796–814. <https://doi.org/10.1108/TR-07-2020-0317>
- Clark, A. (2001). How to listen to very young children: The mosaic approach. *Child Care in Practice*, 7(4), 333–341. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575270108415344>
- Cornelisse, M. (2018). Understanding memorable tourism experiences: A case study. *Research in Hospitality Management*, 8(2), 93–99. <https://doi.org/10.1080/22243534.2018.1553370>
- Cullingford, C. (1995). Children's attitudes to holidays overseas. *Tourism Management*, 16(2), 121–127. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(94\)00022-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(94)00022-3)
- Dallari, F., & Mariotti, A. (2016). Children in tourism: A fresh perspective? The experience in Italy, from summer camps to the seninter project. *Tourism Review*, 10(10). <https://doi.org/10.4000/viatourism.1407>
- Durko, A. M., & Petrick, J. F. (2013). Family and relationship benefits of travel experiences: A literature review. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(6), 720–730. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287513496478>
- Edward, K. L., & Welch, T. (2011). The extension of Colaizzi's method of phenomenological enquiry. *Contemporary Nurse*, 39(2), 163–171. <https://doi.org/10.5172/conu.2011.39.2.163>
- Ertas, Ç., Ghasemi, V., & Kuhzady, S. (2021). Exploring tourism perceptions of children through drawing. *Anatolia*, 32(3), 430–442. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2021.1883079>
- Falk, J. H. (1991). Analysis of family visitors in Natural History museums: The national museum of Natural History, Washington, D.C. *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 34(1), 44–50.
- Farber, M. E., & Hall, T. E. (2007). Emotion and environment: Visitors' extraordinary experiences along the dalton highway in Alaska. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 39(2), 248–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2007.11950107>
- Feng, X., & Li, M. (2016). Children tourism: A literature review. *Tourism Tribune*, 31(9), 61–71. <http://www.lyxk.com.cn/EN/Y2016/V31/I9/61>.
- Fu, X., Lehto, X., & Park, O. (2014). What does vacation do to our family? Contrasting the perspectives of parents and children. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 31(4), 461–475. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2014.883350>
- Fusch, P. I., & Ness, L. R. (2015). Are we there yet? Data saturation in qualitative research. *Qualitative Report*, 20(9), 1408–1416.
- Grajek, M., Rozmiarek, M., Sobczyk, K., & Sas-Nowosielski, K. (2022). Electronic forms of entertainment in the context of physical activity and addiction risk—a knowledge review. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 12(6), 130–141. <https://doi.org/10.12775/JEHS.2022.12.06.013>
- Gram, M. (2005). Family holidays. A qualitative analysis of family holiday experiences. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 5(1), 2–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250510014255>
- Guo, X., & Liu, T. (2022). The Psychological process and emotional cognition of children's tourism experiences in Chinese family culture. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10, Article 960534.
- Gustafsson, J., Lind, J., & Sparrman, A. (2020). Family memory trips—children's and parents' planning of adoption return trips. *Journal of Heritage Tourism*, 15(5), 554–566. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743873X.2019.1702666>
- Hazel, N. (2005). Holidays for children and families in need: An exploration of the research and policy context for social tourism in the UK. *Children & Society*, 19(3), 225–236. <https://doi.org/10.1002/chi.838>
- Hosany, S., Shapit, E., & Bjork, P. (2022). Memorable tourism experience: A review and research agenda. *Psychology and Marketing*, 39(8), 1467–1486. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21665>
- Hosseini, S., Cortes Macias, R., & Almeida Garcia, F. (2021). Memorable tourism experience research: A systematic review of the literature. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2021.1922206>
- Huang, X., Zhang, L., & Ihnatolova, L. (2020). Spatial memory bias in children tourists. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 16(1), 78–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2020.1718051>
- Hubbard, C. K. (2014). The great outdoors: Advocating for natural spaces for young children. *Children, Youth, and Environments*, 24(2), 244–246. <https://doi.org/10.7721/chilyoutenvi.24.2.0244>
- Hunter-Jones, P., Sudbury-Riley, L., Al-Abidin, A., Menzies, L., & Neary, K. (2020). When a child is sick: The role of social tourism in palliative and end-of-life care. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 83, Article 102900. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2020.102900>
- Israfilova, F., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2019). Sad and violent but i enjoy it: children's engagement with dark tourism as an educational tool. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 19(4), 478–487. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1467358418782736>
- Kastenholz, E., Carneiro, M. J., Marques, C. P., & Lima, J. (2012). Understanding and managing the rural tourism experience: The case of a historical village in Portugal. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 4, 207–214. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2012.08.009>
- Kensinger, E. A., & Schacter, D. L. (2006). When the red Sox shocked the Yankees: Comparing negative and positive memories. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 13(5), 757–763. <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03193993>
- Khoo-Lattimore, C., Prayag, G., & Cheah, B. L. (2015). Kids on board: Exploring the choice process and vacation needs of Asian parents with young children in resort hotels. *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 24(5), 511–531. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2014.914862>
- Khoo-Lattimore, C., & Yang, M. J. (2021). The constructions of family holidays in young middle-class Malaysian Chinese children. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 16(1), 62–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2018.1513884>
- Kim, J. H. (2014). The antecedents of memorable tourism experiences: The development of a scale to measure the destination attributes associated with memorable experiences. *Tourism Management*, 44, 34–45. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.02.007>
- Kim, J.-H., & Chen, J. S. (2010). The effects of situational and personal characteristics on consumer complaint behavior in restaurant services. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 27(1), 96–112. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548400903539773>
- Kim, J. H., Ritchie, J. B., & McCormick, B. (2012). Development of a scale to measure memorable tourism experiences. *Journal of Travel Research*, 51(1), 12–25. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2F0047287510385467>
- Kim, J. H., Wang, Y., & Song, H. (2021). Understanding the causes of negative tourism experiences. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 24(3), 304–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2020.1711711>.
- Kim, H., Woo, E., & Uysal, M. (2015). Tourism experience and quality of life among elderly tourists. *Tourism Management*, 46, 465–476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2014.08.002>
- Košćak, M., Knežević, M., Binder, D., Pelaez-Verdet, A., Işık, C., Mičić, V., ... Šegota, T. (2023). Exploring the neglected voices of children in sustainable tourism development: A comparative study in six European tourism destinations. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 31(2), 561–580. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1898623>
- Kuhzady, S., & Ghasemi, V. (2019). Pictorial analysis of the projected destination image: Portugal on instagram. *Tourism Analysis*, 24(1), 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354219X15458295631954>
- Kusufa, R. A., Nurfarida, I. N., Wilujeng, S., & Firdaus, R. M. (2022). Tourism experience in tourism villages: Persons with disabilities (PwD) perception. *European Journal of Development Studies*, 2(4), 24–28. <https://doi.org/10.24018/ejdevelop.2022.2.4.126>
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An Introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks California, CA: Sage.

- Lamnek, S. (1995). *Qualitative Sozialforschung/2 Methoden und Techniken*. Psychologie-Verlag-Union.
- Lee, T. H., & Crompton, J. (1992). Measuring novelty seeking in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 19(4), 732–751. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383\(92\)90064-V](https://doi.org/10.1016/0160-7383(92)90064-V)
- Lee, K. J., & Lee, S. Y. (2021). Cognitive appraisal theory, memorable tourism experiences, and family cohesion in rural travel. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 38(4), 399–412. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2021.1921094>
- Li, M., Xu, W., & Chen, Y. (2020). Young children's vacation experience: Through the eyes of parents. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2019.100586>. Article 100586.
- Liu, C. H., Horng, J. S., Chou, S. F., & Huang, Y. C. (2017). Analysis of tourism and hospitality sustainability education with co-competition creativity course planning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 21, 88–100. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2017.08.008>
- Loureiro, S. M. C., Roschk, H., Ali, F., & Friedmann, E. (2022). Cognitive image, mental imagery, and responses (Ci-Mi-R): Mediation and moderation effects. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61(4), 903–920. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00472875211004768>
- Luo, J. M., & Fan, D. X. (2023). Exploring entertainment tourism experience in integrated resorts: A process-based perspective. *Anatolia*, 34(4), 612–625. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13032917.2022.2109179>
- Malone, S., McCabe, S., & Smith, A. P. (2014). The role of hedonism in ethical tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 44(3), 241–254. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2013.10.005>
- Marey-Sarwan, I., & Roer-Strier, D. (2017). Parents' perceptions of risk for children: A case study of bedouin parents from unrecognized villages in Israel. *Social Service Review*, 91(2), 171–202.
- Merleau-Ponty, M., & Bannan, J. F. (1956). What is phenomenology? *CrossCurrents*, 6(1), 59–70. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24456652>
- Mitchell, T. R., Thompson, L., Peterson, E., & Cronk, R. (1997). Temporal adjustments in the evaluation of events: The "rosy view". *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 33(4), 421–448. <https://doi.org/10.1006/jesp.1997.1333>
- Miyakawa, E., & Oguchi, T. (2022). Family tourism improves parents' well-being and children's generic skills. *Tourism Management*, 88, Article 104403. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104403>
- Morrow, R., Rodriguez, A., & King, N. (2015). Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method. *The Psychologist*, 28(8), 643–644. <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/id/eprint/26984/>
- Mossberg, L. (2007). A marketing approach to the tourist experience. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 7(1), 59–74. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022550701231915>
- Murre, J. M., & Dros, J. (2015). Replication and analysis of Ebbinghaus' forgetting curve. *PLoS One*, 10(7), Article e0120644. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0120644>
- Naderi, A., Nasrolahi Vosta, L., Ebrahimi, A., & Jalilvand, M. R. (2019). The contributions of social entrepreneurship and transformational leadership to performance: Insights from rural tourism in Iran. *International Journal of Sociology & Social Policy*, 39(9/10), 719–737. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSSP-06-2019-0124>
- Nelson, T. O. (1985). Ebbinghaus's contribution to the measurement of retention: Savings during relearning. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, and Cognition*, 11(3), 472. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0278-7393.11.3.472>
- Nickerson, N. P., & Juroski, C. (2001). The influence of children on vacation travel patterns. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 7(1), 19–30. <https://doi.org/10.1177/135676670100700102>
- Novais, M. A., Ruhanen, L., & Arcodia, C. (2018). Destination competitiveness: A phenomenographic study. *Tourism Management*, 64, 324–334. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2017.08.014>
- Pan, S., & Ryan, C. (2009). Tourism sense-making: The role of the senses and travel journalism. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 26, 625–639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10548400903276897>
- Pavesi, A., Gartner, W., & Denizci-Guillet, B. (2016). The effects of a negative travel experience on tourists' decisional behavior. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(5), 423–433. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2060>
- Pearce, P. L. (2008). Tourism and entertainment: Boundaries and connections. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 33(2), 125–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2008.11081299>
- Pedro, R. M., Mendes, J., de Matos, N., & Ascensão, M. P. (2020). A conceptualization of the senses, emotions, and memories in memorable tourism experiences. In *Handbook of research on resident and tourist perspectives on travel destinations* (pp. 208–231). IGI Global. <http://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2020072147526>
- Pernecky, T., & Jamal, T. (2010). (Hermeneutic) phenomenology in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(4), 1055–1075. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.04.002>
- Pomfret, G., & Varley, P. (2019). Families at leisure outdoors: Well-being through adventure. *Leisure Studies*, 38(4), 494–508. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2019.1600574>
- Poria, Y., Atzaba-Poria, N., & Barrett, M. (2005). Research note: The relationship between children's geographical knowledge and travel experience: An exploratory study. *Tourism Geographies*, 7(4), 389–397. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616680500291121>
- Poria, Y., & Timothy, D. J. (2014). Where are the children in tourism research? *Annals of Tourism Research*, 47, 93–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2014.03.002>
- Porutiu, A., Tirpe, O. P., Oroian, C., Mihai, V. C., Chiciudean, G. O., Chiciudean, D. I., & Porutiu, C. (2021). Analysis on tourists preferences for rural tourism destinations in Romania. *Societies*, 11(3), 92.
- Prebensen, N. K., Woo, E., Chen, J. S., & Uysal, M. (2013). Motivation and involvement as antecedents of the perceived value of the destination experience. *Journal of Travel Research*, 52(2), 253–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287512461181>
- Putri, D. A., Susilowati, M. H. D., & Semedi, J. M. (2021). Tourist attraction and tourist motivation in the Patuha mountain area, west java. *The Indonesian Journal of Geography*, 53(1), 95–102.
- Radic, A. (2019). Towards an understanding of a child's cruise experience. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 22(2), 237–252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13683500.2017.1368463>
- Rasoolimanesh, S. M., Seyfi, S., Hall, C. M., & Hatamifard, P. (2021). Understanding memorable tourism experiences and behavioural intentions of heritage tourists. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 21, Article 100621. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2021.100621>
- Rhoden, S., Hunter-Jones, P., & Miller, A. (2016). Tourism experiences through the eyes of a child. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 19(4), 424–443. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2015.1134337>
- Ribeiro, M., & Marques, C. (2002). Rural tourism and the development of less favored areas - between rhetoric and practice. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4(3), 211–220. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.377>
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2005). Developing creativity in tourist experiences: A solution to the serial reproduction of culture? *Tourism Management*, 27(6), 1209–1223. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.06.002>
- Ritchie, J. R. B., & Hudson, S. (2009). Understanding and meeting the challenges of consumer/tourist experience research. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 11(2), 111–126. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.721>
- Rosa, C. D., Proffice, C. C., & Collado, S. (2018). Nature experiences and adults' self-reported pro-environmental behaviors: The role of connectedness to nature and childhood nature experiences. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1055. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01055>
- Royo-Vela, M. (2009). Rural-cultural excursion conceptualization: A local tourism marketing management model based on tourism destination image measurement. *Tourism Management*, 30(3), 419–428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2008.07.013>
- Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B. (2001). Negativity bias, negativity dominance, and contagion. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 296–320. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0504_2
- Ryan, C. (1992). In J. B. Ritchie, & D. Hawkes (Eds.), *The child as a visitor, in world travel and tourism review-indicators, trends and issues* (Vol. 2). CAB International, Article 135139.
- Sadeghi Shahdani, H., Torabi Farsani, N., Moslehi, M., & Zahedi, M. (2023). Designing an event calendar for children and teenagers: A tool for educational tourism. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10963758.2023.2176312>
- Saunders, B., Sim, J., Kingstone, T., Baker, S., Waterfield, J., Bartlam, B., Burroughs, H., & Jinks, C. (2018). Saturation in qualitative research: Exploring its conceptualization and operationalization. *Quality and Quantity*, 52(4), 1893–1907.
- Scarles, C. (2010). Where words fail, visuals ignite: Opportunities for visual autoethnography in tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 37(4), 905–926. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.02.001>
- Schänzel, H. A., & Smith, K. A. (2014). The socialization of families away from home: Group dynamics and family functioning on holiday. *Leisure Sciences*, 36(2), 126–143. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2013.857624>
- Schänzel, H. A., Smith, K. A., & Weaver, A. (2005). Family holidays: A research review and application to New Zealand. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 8(2–3), 105–123. <https://doi.org/10.1080/11745398.2005.10600965>
- Schänzel, H., Yeoman, I., & Backer, E. (2012). *Family tourism: Multidisciplinary perspectives*. Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781845413286>
- Seraphin, H., & Yallop, A. (2020). An analysis of children's play in resort mini-clubs: Potential strategic implications for the hospitality and tourism industry. *World Leisure Journal*, 62(2), 114–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16078055.2019.1669216>
- Sharma, P., & Nayak, J. K. (2019). Understanding memorable tourism experiences as the determinants of tourists' behaviour. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 21(4), 504–518. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2278>
- Shaw, S. M., Havitz, M. E., & Delemere, F. M. (2008). "I decided to invest in my kids' memories": Family vacations, memories, and the social construction of the family. *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 8(1), 13–26. <https://doi.org/10.3727/109830408783900361>
- Small, J. (2008). The absence of childhood in tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 35(3), 772–789. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2008.06.002>
- Sojasi Qeidari, H., Shayan, H., Solimani, Z., & Ghorrooneh, D. (2021). A phenomenological study of the learning experience of children in rural tourism destinations. *Tourist Studies*, 21(2), 235–259. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468797620985781>
- Shapit, E., & Björk, P. (2019). Relative contributions of souvenirs on memorability of a trip experience and revisit intention: A study of visitors to Rovaniemi, Finland. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 19(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2017.1354717>
- Shapit, E., & Coudounaris, D. N. (2018). Memorable tourism experiences: Antecedents and outcomes. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 18(1), 72–94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15022250.2017.1287003>
- Tecău, A. S., Brătucu, G., Tescașiu, B., Chișu, I. B., Constantin, C. P., & Foris, D. (2019). Responsible tourism: Integrating families with disabled children in tourism destinations. *Sustainability*, 11(16), 4420. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11164420>
- Therkelsen, A., & Lottrup, M. (2015). Being together at the zoo: Zoo experiences among families with children. *Leisure Studies*, 34(3), 354–371. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.923493>
- Tsai, C. T. (2016). Memorable tourist experiences and place attachment when consuming local food. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 18(6), 536–548. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.2070>

- Tung, V. W. S., & Ritchie, J. B. (2011). Exploring the essence of memorable tourism experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(4), 1367–1386. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2011.03.009>
- Turkcan, B. (2013). Semiotic approach to the analysis of children's drawings. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 13(1), 600–607. .
- Van Winkle, C. M., & Lagay, K. (2012). Learning during tourism: The experience of learning from the tourist's perspective. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 34(3), 339–355. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2011.646981>
- Wang, W., Yi, L., Wu, M. Y., Pearce, P. L., & Huang, S. S. (2018). Examining Chinese adult children's motivations for traveling with their parents. *Tourism Management*, 69, 422–433. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2018.06.024>
- Wei, C., Zhao, W., Zhang, C., & Huang, K. (2019). Psychological factors affecting memorable tourism experiences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, 24(7), 619–632. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10941665.2019.1611611>. .
- Williams, M., & Moser, T. (2019). The art of coding and thematic exploration in qualitative research. *International Management Review*, 15(1), 45–55.
- Witt, P. A., & Bishop, D. W. (2009). Situational antecedents to leisure behavior. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 41(3), 337–350. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.1970.11969984>
- Wu, M. Y., & Wall, G. (2016). Chinese research on family tourism: Review and research implications. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, 12(3–4), 274–290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19388160.2016.1276873>
- Wu, M. Y., Wall, G., Zu, Y., & Ying, T. (2019). Chinese children's family tourism experiences. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 29, 166–175. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.11.003>
- Yang, M. J. H., Yang, E. C. L., & Khoo-Lattimore, C. (2020). Host-children of tourism destinations: Systematic quantitative literature review. *Tourism Recreation Research*, 45(2), 231–246. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02508281.2019.1662213>
- Ye, S., Wei, W., Wen, J., Ying, T., & Tan, X. (2021). Creating memorable experience in rural tourism: A comparison between domestic and outbound tourists. *Journal of Travel Research*, 60(7), 1527–1542. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0047287520951641>
- Yewei, C., & Xiaohong, F. (2020). Little children with giant power: The influence of product knowledge on family holiday decision impact in perspective of tourism attachment at heritage destination. *Revista Argentina de Clinica Psicologica*, 29(4), 697. <https://revistaclinicapsicologica.com/archivesarticle.php?id=82>.
- Ying, T., & Zhou, Y. (2007). Community, governments and external capitals in China's rural cultural tourism: A comparative study of two adjacent villages. *Tourism Management*, 28(1), 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2005.12.025>
- Zebardast, M. A., Soltanhosseini, M., & Salimi, M. (2021). The effect of tourism experience quality on perceived competitiveness and behavioral intentions of foreign sport tourists. *Journal of Sport Management*, 13(1), 221–236. <https://doi.org/10.22059/JSM.2019.283579.2289>
- Zhang, H., Wu, Y., & Buhalis, D. (2018). A model of perceived image, memorable tourism experiences and revisit intention. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 8, 326–336. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdmm.2017.06.004>. .
- Zhong, Y. Y. S., Busser, J., & Baloglu, S. (2017). A model of memorable tourism experience: The effects on satisfaction, affective commitment, and storytelling. *Tourism Analysis*, 22(2), 201–217. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354217X14888192562366>
- Zhong, S., & Peng, H. (2021). Children's tourist world: Two scenarios. *Tourism Management Perspectives*, 38, Article 100824. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2021.100824>
- Hamdollah Sojasi Qeidari:** His research focuses on the management and planning of national and rural tourism.
- Seyed Reza Hosseini Kahnnooj:** His doctoral dissertation is in the field of rural tourism.
- Zahra Solimani:** Her doctoral dissertation is in the field of rural tourism.
- Bardia Shabani:** His research focuses on destination image, gamification and events.
- Nicholas Wise:** He publishes in the areas of behavioural geographies, placemaking and destination competitiveness.