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CREATIVE PROCESS AND CREATIVE ENVIRONMENT: IMPACT ON EXPERIENCE QUALITY AND BEHAVIOURAL INTENTIONS IN CREATIVE TOURISM SERVICES

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Abstract. This research investigates the intricate relationships between creativity process and environment, experience quality, and behavioural intentions within the unique context of creative tourism service providers. Sustainable issues related to cultural tourism especially in relation to the preservation and conservation of national heritage has fuelled the need to rebrand some tourists' hotspots in Malaysia as a creative destination. However, service providers in this domain struggles to retain their customers, necessitating the exploration of effective marketing strategies based on their creative resources. Drawing from a comprehensive dataset of 500 respondents, obtained through purposive sampling, this study investigates the interplay among these factors and their ultimate impact on tourist's intentions in the creative tourism industry. Employing partial least squares structural equation modelling, the study reveals that creativity, manifested through creative behaviour and innovative ideas, significantly influences the experience quality offered to tourists. Furthermore, this study underscores the essential role of physical and social environments in nurturing creativity and shaping experience quality. Experience quality emerges as a critical mediator in this intricate web of relationships, bridging the gap between creativity and behavioural intentions. The findings offer guidance to creative tourism service providers in enhancing their offerings, optimising physical and social environments, and elevating the experience quality they deliver. These insights are expected to not only benefit the industry but also contribute to a broader understanding of the intricate interplay between creativity, experience quality, and behavioural intentions in the realm of creative tourism.

Keywords: behavioural intentions, creative environment, creative process, creative tourism, experience quality.

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1. Introduction

Creative tourism has been presented as a friendly and sustainable form of tourism, where co-creation, skill development, and sustainable agencies are important (Carvalho et al., 2023a). This niche market caters to travellers seeking immersive and unique experiences that ignite their creativity and offer a deeper connection with the local culture and environment (Qiang Li & Kovacs, 2022) through diverse activities, ranging from hands-on art workshops and cultural exchanges to culinary explorations and eco-friendly adventures. Some authors (Remoaldo et al., 2020) categorised creative tourists into three groups. Novelty-seekers prioritise originality and social interaction to learn about new cultures. Knowledge and skills learners focus on enriching experiences, often traveling with family, and engaging with the

local community whereas leisure creative-seekers value relaxation, enjoying cultural immersion and interacting with co-participants.

In Malaysia, both governmental authorities and private entities have undertaken initiatives to transform selected tourist destinations into creative tourism hubs, leveraging their distinctive creative attractions. One notable example is the Penang State Executive Council Office for Tourism and Creative Economy Development (PETACE) (2021), Malaysia, which expressed optimism in revitalising the state's creative economy through ongoing improvements to creative tourism offerings, exemplified by events like the George Town Festival. Additionally, Sarawak, Malaysia, recently earned recognition as a creative city of gastronomy within the Creative Cities Network (Borneo Post Online, 2022). Despite these efforts, the absence of an alternative tourism framework prioritising the quality of tourist services and the overall visitor experience (Aisyah, 2023) has resulted in tourism service providers still grappling with the challenge of customer retention.

The role of creativity in place-making in tourism destinations has been examined, highlighting the utilization of creativity in designing these places through different strategies (Richards, 2020). However, previous research has frequently overlooked the impact of the creative process and creative environment (Dias et al., 2023), impeding a comprehensive understanding of the role these factors play in shaping individuals' experiences and their decisions to share them with others or to revisit in the future. Additionally, the perceived creative atmosphere in these destinations plays a crucial role in influencing tourists' post-experience behaviours, with examples of such destinations being *Creative Tourism New Zealand*, *Barcelona Creative Tourism*, and *Creative Paris* (Wei et al., 2023). However, there exists a gap in understanding the mediating role of experience quality in the relationship between the creative process, creative environment, and behavioural intentions within the context of creative tourism service providers. Consequently, unravelling these intricate mechanisms emerges as a crucial marketing strategy for retaining existing tourists and attracting new ones (Xia et al., 2023).

Based on these arguments, this research proposes a conceptual model that shifts the focus from a cultural to a creativity-centric tourism model. The study conducts a thorough investigation into the impact of both creative ideas and creative behaviour on experience quality, offering a more nuanced understanding of their roles in shaping individuals' experiences within creative activities. Furthermore, the research delves into the mediating role of experience quality in these complex relationships through the lens of stimulus–organism–response (SOR) theory by Mehrabian and Russell (1974). It is one of the most employed theories in explaining the impact of a unique tourism experience (Jain et al., 2023).

The novelty of this research lies in its innovative approach to studying creativity within the context of experiences. It comprehensively examines various facets, including creative elements and environmental factors, contributing to a deeper understanding of how these components interact to shape individuals' experiences within the context of creative tourism. The study's acknowledgment and exploration of unexpected findings, such as the negative relationship between creative behaviour and experience quality, add complexity to the research and highlight the commitment to exploring phenomena beyond conventional expectations. This emphasis on novelty reflects a departure from traditional perspectives, offering a fresh and innovative contribution to the field of creative studies.

In conclusion, this research not only addresses critical research gaps but also provides substantial findings that significantly contribute to the theoretical and practical aspects of the field. The study reveals strong support for the positive influence of creative ideas and the physical environment on experience quality, while also highlighting the mediating role of experience quality in connecting various factors within the creative domain. The practical implications extend to organizations and educational institutions, offering guidance on promoting high-quality experiences within the realm of creative engagement. Overall, this research advances our understanding of creativity in the context of tourism experiences, paving the way for future explorations and applications in this evolving field.

2. Theoretical background and hypothesis development

2.1. Conceptual model

To investigate these relationships, this study proposes that creativity, represented by both the creative process and environmental elements, serves as the "stimuli" influencing the experience quality. In this framework, experience quality functions as the "organic states". Ultimately, these aspects of the experience quality led to tourists' behavioural intentions, which is their "response". By applying the SOR theory in this context, this study offers a comprehensive method for understanding the interplay between experience quality and the factors that shape creative tourism experiences, offering valuable insights for the sustainable development of creative tourism businesses (Figure 1).

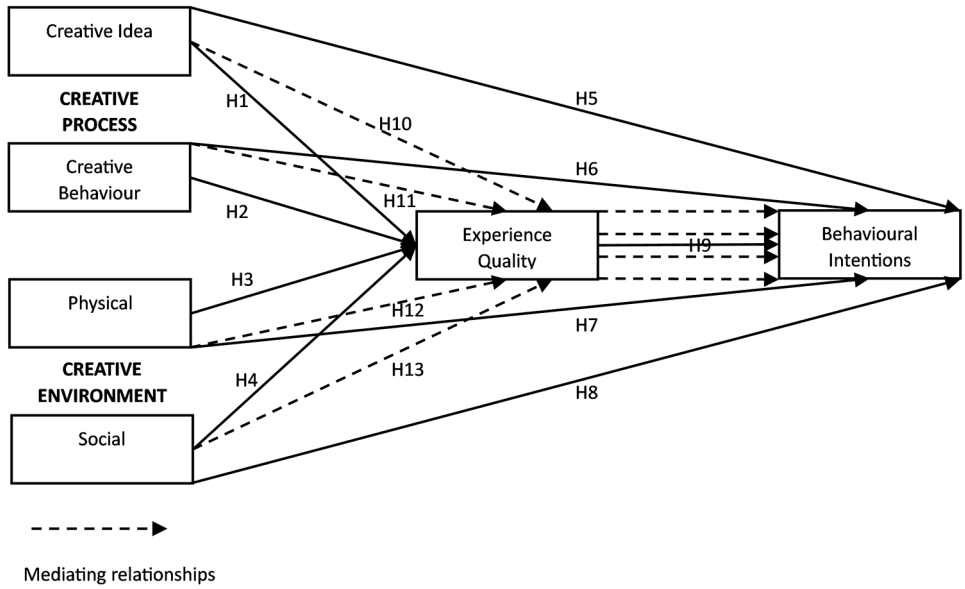

Figure 1. Conceptual model (source: created by authors)

2.2. Hypotheses development

Creativity can be characterised by a cognitive operational process, as well as the dynamic and creative interaction that occurs between the consumer and their surrounding environment (Said-Metwaly et al., 2017). In the context of the cultural and creative industry, it was found that the co-creation process significantly affects behavioural intentions (Yang et al., 2024). Similarly, tourists are likely to revisit and recommend a destination to others if it stimulates them to think and behave creatively as well as makes them feel happy and positive (Rather & Hollebeek, 2021). In creative tourism, the co-creative process involves the co-creation of value between the service provider and the creative tourists (Carvalho et al., 2023b). The co-creative process can be measured based on the quality of the creative idea, relevant creative behaviour, and emotions such as fun and enjoyment (Kantosalo & Riihiaho, 2019).

Lubart (2018) explained that the creative process involves the succession of thoughts and actions that lead to original and appropriate productions. Steele et al. (2018) asserted that both idea generation and idea evaluation (exploration) are vital to creativity, but competency in one process does not guarantee competency in the other. Ball and Christensen (2020) explained that idea generation involves the operation of implicit (associative processes that drive the generation of "pre-inventive forms"), whereas idea exploration involves the operation of explicit (analytical processes that develop and evaluate pre-inventive forms). Both modern (before World War II) and contemporary artists went through this cognitive process to develop their own unique way of communicating with their audiences (Yokochi & Okada, 2021).

Creative process behaviour is one's engagement in the creative process, such as problem formulation/definition/construction, information seeking/gathering, idea generation and idea validation/evaluation (Porter et al., 2020). While engaging in creative process behaviour is within an employee's control, the outcomes can be influenced by numerous other environmental factors, including teamwork, resources allocated to implement the ideas, market outlook and company image (Gupta & Singh, 2014). In tourism and hospitality studies, creative behaviour, sometimes referred to as innovative behaviour, seems to exert a significantly positive impact on leadership, entrepreneurship, and co-creation (Liu & Huang, 2020; Luu, 2021; Pera, 2017). Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: There is a positive relationship between creative ideas and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H2: There is a positive relationship between creative behaviours and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider.

A creative environment is marked by its emphasis on valuing ideas, fostering an atmosphere where individuals are not only permitted but also encouraged to take thoughtful risks and view mistakes as integral to the process (Mishra, 2018). It may differ by space (*e.g.*, educational and corporate contexts) or special forms (*e.g.*, incubators, makerspaces, co-working spaces, and innovation laboratories). Nevertheless, the concept of creative space scales from physical structures such as furniture, layout, interior design, building architecture, and location (Thoring et al., 2021) to social structures such as interactions among artists, participants, and instructors (Stewart et al., 2019).

In tourism and hospitality settings, Piancatelli et al. (2021) asserted that the atmospheric (the combination of physical, social, and emotional) condition of a museum determines visitors' intention to revisit and recommend the museum to others. According to some authors (Ali et al., 2018), physical settings with appropriate lighting, comfortable temperature, clean environment, and impressive architecture can positively influence the delight of visitors to a creative theme park and subsequently increase their likelihood of revisiting and recommending it to others. Other tourism settings, such as cruises (Chua et al., 2017) and gastronomy (Dimitrovski & Crespi Vallbona, 2018), displayed similar positive linkages among physical setting, emotion, and behavioural intentions. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3: There is a positive relationship between the physical environment and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H4: There is a positive relationship between the social environment and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider.

The creative process refers to the succession of thoughts and actions that lead to original and appropriate productions (Lubart, 2018). The two dimensions of the creative process consist of creative idea (Steele et al., 2018) and creative behaviour (Kawakubo & Oguchi, 2019), as perceived by creative tourists and operationalized in this study. This study asserts that each of the two dimensions of the creative process mentioned above exerts a positive and direct association with experience quality.

According to Füller et al. (2011), one's ability to yield high quality and quantity of creative ideas is significantly affected by emotional experiences, such as joy and pleasure, during engagement with the creative process. Similarly, according to Kantosalo and Riihiaho (2019), the co-creative user experience is significantly affected by emotions such as fun, enjoyment, and expressiveness. In addition, the reverse relationship between negative and undesirable states of emotions, such as shyness, and creative process engagement results in low creative production (Tan et al., 2019).

Creative behaviour pertains to actions or accomplishments that an individual, or others, deem as original and in accordance with task constraints (Karwowski & Beghetto, 2019). It denotes how people behave or act as they engage in the creative process (Porter et al., 2020). It is important to distinguish creative behaviour from creative outcome as the former does not necessarily lead to implementation. Recent tourism and hospitality studies have empirically assessed, among others, the associations of creative behaviour with leadership, entrepreneurship, and co-creation (Liu & Huang, 2020; Luu, 2021; Pera, 2017). The results revealed that creative behaviour exhibited a strong and positive relationship with emotional experience. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5: There is a positive relationship between creative ideas and experience quality in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H6: There is a positive relationship between creative behaviours and experience quality in the context of creative tourism service provider.

A creative environment is the best place or circumstance in which creativity can flourish (Hashim et al., 2022). The two dimensions of the creative environment are the physical environment and the social environment (Runco & Pagnani, 2011), as perceived by creative tourists and operationalized in this study. This study asserts that each of the two dimensions

of the creative above-mentioned environment has a positive and direct relationship with experience quality.

The physical environment of a creative space comprises, among others, furniture, layout, interior design, building architecture, and location (Thoring et al., 2021). While some of these spaces are private, others are open to the public. Murals or street art, for instance, have become popular in public galleries. Such artwork not only serves as a tool to revitalize the appeal of a building but also to bring aesthetic and emotional experiences to both locals and tourists (Zabawa-Krzypkowska & Groń, 2019). Meanwhile, the social aspect of a creative space refers to the interactions among artists, participants, and instructors (Stewart et al., 2019). Along with appropriate physical settings, service providers can create an emotionally safe space that motivates creativity and helps provide unique experience quality, such as happiness, hope, intimacy, love, and affection (Gkantona, 2019). It has been reported that both the physical and social service scape of an opera significantly influences the positive emotion and behavioural intentions of the audience (Tubillejas-Andrés et al., 2020). Empirical evidence leads to the following hypotheses:

H7: There is a positive relationship between the physical environment and experience quality in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H8: There is a positive relationship between the social environment and experience quality in the context of creative tourism service provider.

The concept of experience quality in tourism has been extensively researched. According to Tang et al. (2021), visitors' experience quality is determined by the psychological outcome of their involvement in tourist activities. Therefore, variations in consumption motivation among different tourist segments can lead to distinct experiential outcomes. Past research on online shopping behaviour suggested that experience quality is best explained by behavioural response (Rita et al., 2019). In tourism studies, experience quality was reported to mediate the relationship between visitor satisfaction and revisit intention (Juliana et al., 2023). In contrast, Zhou et al. (2023) found no empirical evidence to support the direct relationship between experience quality and behavioural intentions in the context of cultural and heritage tourism. However, in a similar context, experience quality was found to mediate the relationship between authenticity and satisfaction (Lu et al., 2022).

Discrepancies in the experience quality construct exist even in the creative tourism context. This is ascribed to the multitude of creative tourism service providers who offer a host of creative activities, including fine arts, performing arts, music, and design, as depicted in the *CREATOUR* project (Bakas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, several scholars concluded that experience quality had a significantly positive impact on behavioural intentions (Sthapit et al., 2020; Suhartanto et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). This study posits that experience quality represented by escape and recognition, peace of mind, unique involvement, interactivity, and learning has a significant effect on behavioural intentions and acts as a mediator in the relationship between creative process, creative environment, and behavioural intentions. Hence, the following hypotheses were developed:

H9: There is a positive relationship between experience quality and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H10: Experience quality mediates the relationship between creative ideas and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H11: Experience quality mediates the relationship between creative behaviour and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H12: Experience quality mediates the relationship between the physical environment and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider;

H13: Experience quality mediates the relationship between the social environment and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service provider.

3. Methodology

3.1. Measures

The study employed a seven-point Likert scale to measure all variables (1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree). All items had an adequate correlation with their respective constructs, confirming that they were reflective (Hair et al., 2018). Pre-validated scales were used for all constructs. For the creative process, creative ideas were adapted from Zhang and Bartol (2010) and Steele et al. (2018), whereas creative behaviour was adapted from Youjae Yi, Rajan Nataraajan, and Taeshik Gong (2011) and Kawakubo and Oguchi (2019). Creative idea captures the implicit, associative processes involved in generating pre-inventive forms or ideas as well as the explicit analytical processes that develop and evaluate these pre-inventive forms (Ball & Christensen, 2020) whereas creative behaviour arises during individuals' engagement with the creative process even if it does not necessarily lead to implementation (Huang et al., 2023). By incorporating these dimensions in the questionnaire, the study aims to analyse the influence of creative process on the service provider as perceived by the creative tourists. For creative environments, physical was adapted from Tubillejas-Andrés et al. (2020), whereas social was adapted from other authors (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2020). The physical environment plays a crucial role in shaping the creative atmosphere and providing the necessary resources and ambiance for creative activities within the creative space which includes among others, the layout, design, and facilities. As for social environment, it encompasses the facilitation of interaction among artists, participants and instructors that can influence creativity through collaboration, support, feedback, and exchange of ideas. Measurement items for experience quality were adapted from some authors (Ali et al., 2018) and other researchers (Wang et al., 2020) to capture the various aspect of experience quality that creative tourists perceive when engaging with creative tourism service providers. The dimensions were aligned with the broader concept of experience economy theory by Pine II and Gilmore (1998, 2013). Next, this study adapted items from Ai Ching Lim et al. (2017) and Woisetschläger et al. (2017) to measure behavioural intentions. The intention to revisit represents the intention of a creative tourists to revisit the service provider in the future. It reflects the likelihood that the creative tourist would choose to engage with the service again based on current experience. On the other hand, word of mouth relates to the intention to positively recommend the creative tourism service provider to others. It signifies the likelihood that a creative tourist would share his or her positive experience with others and encourage them to engage with the service.

As presented in Table 1, all constructs reported Cronbach's alpha values greater than the cut-off value of 7.0 (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.2. Common-method variance

In this study, the investigator has incorporated preventive measures based on the recommendations of Füller et al. (2011) to mitigate the potential issue of common-method variance (CMV). These precautionary steps were taken during the initial stages of questionnaire development to minimize the likelihood of CMV. In this study, the measurement items were adapted from various sources. Additionally, negatively worded items were included to counteract any response bias, where respondents might tend to agree with items regardless of their actual sentiments. To enhance the questionnaire's reliability, expert review panels were consulted, and both pre-testing and pilot testing were conducted. Furthermore, the cover page of the questionnaire featured clear instructions for the participants. Finally, by instructing respondents to identify their chosen creative tourism service provider and integrating this information into subsequent questions, the researchers ensured that the evoked experience remained prominent and consistent.

3.3. Data collection and analysis

A survey comprising 36 questions was developed. 630 questionnaires were distributed to creative tourism service providers' visitors in five Malaysian cities, namely, Kuala Lumpur; George Town, Penang; Ipoh; Johor Bahru; and Sarawak, which have shown potential as the country's creative hub (Khoo & Shu Fun Chang, 2021). A total of 500 completed questionnaires were collected. Visitors were asked to name the service provider they visited and were informed that the answers they provided must be based on their experience of visiting the named creative tourism service provider. The purpose of the study was explained to the respondents, and all questionnaires were collected anonymously, with respondents notified that their data will not be used for purposes other than the study. Statistical analysis was conducted using *SPSS* 26 and *SmartPLS* software.

3.4. Limitations of research

One of the primary limitations of this study is its reliance on cross-sectional data, which provides only a snapshot of the relationships at a single point in time. A more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics between creativity, experience quality, and behavioural intentions would benefit from the use of longitudinal or experimental designs to capture changes and causality over time. In addition, the study predominantly relies on self-reported measures, which can be susceptible to response bias. Future research may enhance the validity of the findings by incorporating objective measures or observational data to supplement the results. It is important to acknowledge that the findings of this study are specific to creative tourism service providers. Generalising these findings to other industries or settings should be done cautiously, as the unique characteristics of the creative tourism sector may lead to context-specific results.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics

When analysing the demographic profile of the respondents, we found that most of them were Malaysians, making up 89% of the sample. Among these, a significant portion were female (67%), single (58%), and fell within the age group of 20 to 29 years. The educational background of most participants was at the bachelor's degree level (85%), with a primary focus on arts and creative fields (81%). A substantial number (56%) reported a personal monthly income of 2000 Malaysian ringgit (RM) or less, and a significant percentage were employed in the creative industry (83%).

Regarding their engagement in creative activities, many respondents (68%) were involved in multiple creative pursuits offered by the service provider. Visual activities proved to be the most popular (26%), closely followed by digital (22%) and music-related activities (20%). Approximately 46% of the participants were visiting the service provider for the first time, often opting for a single-day visit (41%) without an overnight stay (87%). The primary motivation for their visit was to engage in arts and creative activities (91%), often accompanied by friends (70%), who actively influenced the decision to visit (52%). Furthermore, a significant portion of the respondents (62%) had prior experience with travelling for creative learning or experiential purposes.

4.2. Measurement model

Based on Table 1, the reliability and validity statistics of the model are above the recommended level of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2018). From the same table, the convergent validity of all of the constructs is confirmed as the outer loadings and composite reliability exceeded the required cut-off of 0.7 and all average variance extracted (AVE) value were more than 0.5 (Ringle et al., 2014). Similarly, discriminant validity was also confirmed in the present study as the correlations between constructs were less than 0.8 (Table 2), and the heterotrait-monotrait value of each pair of constructs was less than 0.9 (Table 3), as recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). In summary, the measurement model of this study confirms to the current standard and accurately represents its underlying concept.

Table 1 provides information on how well the measured items align with their intended constructs, the strength of these relationships, and the overall reliability of the measurement scales. The Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency or reliability of the items within each construct or set of related questions. Higher values, closer to 1, indicate better reliability. The AVE is a measure of how well the items within a construct relate to each other. It reflects the amount of variance captured by the construct relative to measurement error. Values closer to 1 indicate better convergence. Outer loading represents the strength of the relationship between each item and the underlying construct it is intended to measure. It is a key indicator in factor analysis. Higher values indicate a stronger association with the construct. Like Cronbach's alpha, congeneric reliability is a measure of internal consistency. It indicates how well the items within a construct are correlated. Like Cronbach's alpha, higher values are desirable.

Table 1. Congeneric reliability, average variance extracted values, and outer loading (source: created by authors)

	Item	Cronbach's alpha	Average variance extracted	Outer loading	Congeneric reliability
Behavioural intentions (BI)					
BI1	I will spread positive word of mouth about this service provider.	0.89	0.71	0.88	0.92
BI2	I will recommend this service provider to my friends.			0.87	
BI3	I will encourage my friends to visit this service provider.			0.91	
BI4	It is very likely that I will visit again in the future.			0.72	
BI5	It is very likely that I will pay for their services again in the future.			0.81	
Creative behaviour (CB)					
CB2	I had to suggest a creative solution.	0.76	0.81	0.87	0.89
CB3	I had to complete a creative task/ activity.			0.92	
Creative ideas (CI)					
CI1	I had to consider diverse sources of information when generating new creative ideas/solutions.	0.77	0.69	0.83	0.87
CI2	I had to consider several alternatives before choosing the final creative idea/solution.			0.85	
CI3	I had to weigh a new creative idea/ solution's potential cost and benefit.	0.83	0.67	0.81	0.89
Experience quality (EQ)					
QoE4	I did something unique and memorable.			0.78	
QoE5	The artists or instructors were knowledgeable.			0.8	
QoE6	I learned a lot from the creative activities.			0.83	
QoE7	Overall, I am happy with my experience quality.			0.85	
Physical environment (PHE)					
PHE1	The architecture was attractive.	0.76	0.68	0.84	0.86
PHE2	There was enough space to work comfortably.			0.85	
PHE3	The signs used (*e.g.*, enter, exit, toilets) were helpful.			0.78	
Social environment (SE)					
SE2	The artists/instructors were polite to the participants.	0.74	0.79	0.87	0.88
SE3	The participants were friendly.			0.91	

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and correlation values among the studied variables (source: created by authors)

	Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Creative idea	5.3	0.85	1					
2	Creative behaviour	5.52	0.88	.323*	1				
3	Physical environment	5.35	0.83	.334*	.510*	1			
4	Social environment	5.81	0.92	.256*	.292*	.630*	1		
5	Experience quality	6.05	0.78	.433*	.150*	.500*	.643*	1	
6	Behavioural intentions	5.64	0.77	.505*	.395*	.582*	.680*	.660*	1

Note: *$p < 0.01$.

Table 2 provides a snapshot of the mean scores, standard deviations, and correlations between different constructs in the study. The column *mean* represents the average score for each construct, indicating the central tendency of the responses. The column *standard deviation* provides the standard deviation, which indicates the degree of variability or dispersion in the responses. The correlation coefficients give insights into the relationships between these constructs to help understand how variables are associated with each other in their research context. They are presented in a symmetric matrix. To interpret specific correlations, for example, the correlation between creative idea and creative behaviour is 0.323. The asterisk * denote statistical significance at $p < 0.01$ which means that these correlations are likely to be due to true associations rather than by chance.

Table 3. Heterotrait-monotrait analysis (source: created by authors)

Construct	X1	X2	X3	X4	X5	X6
Behavioural intentions (X1)						
Creative behaviour (X2)	0.49					
Creative idea (X3)	0.6	0.49				
Experience quality (X4)	0.75	0.19	0.53			
Physical environment (X5)	0.72	0.65	0.45	0.63		
Social environment (X6)	0.84	0.36	0.36	0.85	0.83	

Table 3 represents a heterotrait-monotrait analysis. Heterotrait-monotrait is commonly used in structural equation modelling to ensure the validity of the measurement model in capturing the intended theoretical distinctions among the constructs. It is calculated by comparing the correlations of a pair of constructs with the correlations of each construct with itself. If the heterotrait-monotrait ratios are below the recommended thresholds (0.85 or a more conservative threshold of 0.9), it provides evidence that the constructs are sufficiently distinct from each other and are therefore valid.

4.3. Structural model

To evaluate the structural model, this study looked at the coefficient of determination R^2, blindfolding-based cross validated redundancy measure Q^2, and statistical significance and

relevance of path coefficients as suggested by some authors (Hair et al., 2018). The variance inflation factor (VIF) results displayed in Table 4 show that all values are below 5, indicating the absence of collinearity in the proposed model. The R-squared value signifies the extent to which one variable's variance is elucidated by another variable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). As indicated by Chin (2010), the R-squared values are substantial and moderate. To evaluate the predictive accuracy of the partial least squares path model, the Q^2 value was also calculated, which measures the extent of R-squared as a predictive accuracy criterion. In general, Q^2 values greater than 0, 0.25, and 0.5 indicate small, medium, and large levels of predictive relevance for the model.

Table 4. Variance inflation factor, R-squared, and Q-squared values of the model (source: created by authors)

	Behavioural intentions	Experience quality	R-squared value	Q-squared value
Behavioural intentions		2.23	0.63 (substantial)	0.41 (medium)
Creative behaviour	1.48	1.4		
Creative idea	1.37	1.19		
Experience quality	2.23		0.55 (moderate)	0.34 (medium)
Physical environment	2.07	2.01		
Social environment	2.3	1.62		

Table 4 provides information about different aspects of regression model. VIF helps detect multicollinearity, R-squared assesses the goodness of fit, and Q-squared evaluates the predictive relevance of the model. A VIF value of 2.23 suggests that the variance of the estimated regression coefficient for either behavioural intentions or experience quality is increased by a factor of 2.23 due to the correlation between these two variables. This level of multicollinearity is generally manageable. R-squared value represents the proportion of the variance in each construct that is explained by its underlying latent variables or factors. Higher R-squared values indicate a greater proportion of explained variance. The R-squared value for behavioural intentions is 0.63, which suggests that the latent variables underlying behavioural intentions explain 63% of the variance in behavioural intentions which is considered substantial. On the other hand, the Q-squared value for behavioural intentions is 0.41, indicating a medium level of predictive relevance.

The study explored nine direct relationships corresponding to H1 through H9, as outlined in Table 6. H1 suggested that creative ideas positively affect behavioural intentions, and the findings supported this with a highly significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 8.32$, $p < 0.001$). H2 posited that creative behaviour exerts a positive influence on behavioural intentions. The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.1$, $t = 2.41$, $p = 0.02$). Additionally, H3 examined the impact of the physical environment on behavioural intentions and found a statistically significant positive relationship ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = 3.4$, $p < 0.001$). H4 posited a positive influence of the social environment on behavioural intentions, and the analysis strongly supported this hypothesis ($\beta = 0.48$, $t = 10.93$, $p < 0.001$).

H5 explored the relationship between creative idea and experience quality, with the results showing a significant positive relationship (β = 0.28, t = 8.33, p < 0.001). H6 examined the relationship between creative behaviour and experience quality, and the results indicated a significant negative relationship (β = –0.18, t = 4.59, p < 0.001). H7 explored the relationship between the physical environment and experience quality, with the results indicating a significant positive relationship (β = 0.17, t = 3.69, p < 0.001). H8 examined the relationship between the social environment and experience quality, but the results showed no statistically significant relationship (β = 0.55, t = 14.95, p < 0.001). Lastly, H9 hypothesised that experience quality positively influences behavioural intentions, and the results supported this hypothesis (β = 0.24, t = 6.21, p < 0.001).

H10 investigated the mediation of experience quality in the relationship between creative ideas and behavioural intentions. The results revealed a significant mediating effect (β = 0.07, t = 5.17, p < 0.001), indicating that experience quality mediates the relationship between creative idea and behavioural intentions (Table 6). H11 examined the mediating role of experience quality in the relationship between creative behaviour and behavioural intentions. The analysis showed a statistically significant mediating effect (β = –0.04, t = 3.89, p < 0.001), suggesting that experience quality serves as a mediator between creative behaviour and behavioural intentions. Similarly, H12 explored the mediating effect of experience quality in the relationship between the physical environment and behavioural intentions, and the findings demonstrated a statistically significant mediating role (β = 0.04, t = 3.05, p < 0.001). Lastly, H13 focused on the mediation of experience quality in the relationship between the social environment and behavioural intentions, and the analysis confirmed a significant mediating effect (β = 0.13, t = 6.05, p < 0.001), implying that experience quality plays a mediating role in the relationship between the social environment and behavioural intentions.

Table 5. Path coefficients and direct effects (source: created by authors)

	Beta value	*t*-statistics	*p*-values
Creative behaviour -> behavioural intentions	0.1	2.41	0.02
Creative behaviour -> experience quality	–0.18	4.59	0.00
Creative idea -> behavioural intentions	0.28	8.32	0.00
Creative idea -> experience quality	0.28	8.33	0.00
Experience quality -> behavioural intentions	0.24	6.21	0.00
Physical environment -> behavioural intentions	0.16	3.4	0.00
Physical environment -> experience quality	0.17	3.69	0.00
Social environment -> behavioural intentions	0.48	10.93	0.00
Social environment -> experience quality	0.55	14.95	0.00

Table 5 provide insights into the strength and significance of the direct relationships between the studied variables. The beta values represent the estimated coefficients (slopes) for the relationship between each predictor variable and the corresponding dependent variable. For example, the beta value of 0.1 for *creative behaviour -> behavioural intentions* suggests that a one-unit increase in creative behaviour is associated with a 0.1 unit increase in behavioural intentions. The *t*-statistics assess the statistical significance of each beta coef-

ficient. It is calculated by dividing the estimated beta by its standard error. Larger *t*-statistics indicate greater evidence against the null hypothesis (*i.e.*, that the true beta value is zero). The *p*-values represent the probability of observing the given *t*-statistic if the null hypothesis is true (*i.e.*, if the true beta value is zero). Lower *p*-values (typically below a significance level, *e.g.*, 0.05) suggest that the predictor variable is statistically significant in predicting the dependent variable.

Table 6 shows the strength and significance of the indirect relationships between the studied variables. In all cases, experience quality appears to play an intermediary role, mediating the relationship between the predictor variables (creative behaviour, creative idea, physical environment, and social environment). The results suggest that the relationships between the predictor variables and behavioural intentions are not direct but are influenced by the intermediary variable experience quality.

Table 6. Path coefficients and mediating effects (source: created by authors)

	Beta value	*t*-statistics	*p*-values
Creative behaviour -> experience quality -> behavioural intentions	–0.04	3.89	0.00
Creative idea > experience quality -> behavioural intentions	0.07	5.17	0.00
Physical environment > experience quality -> behavioural intentions	0.04	3.05	0.00
Social environment > experience quality -> behavioural intentions	0.13	6.05	0.00

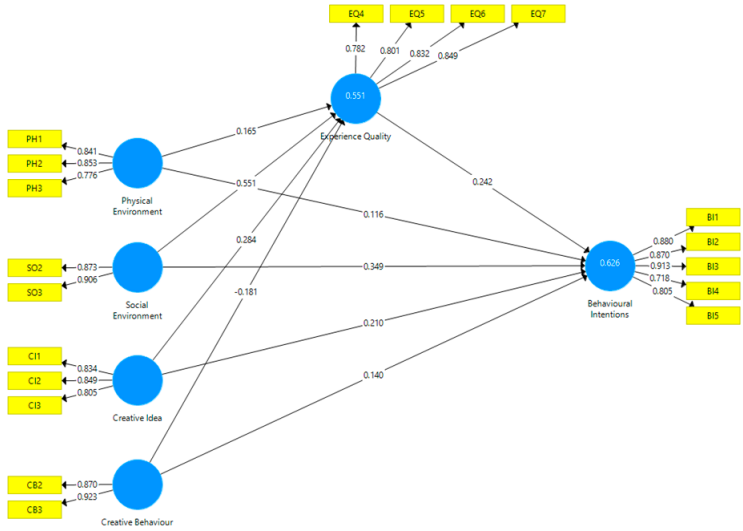

Figure 2. Final model (source: created by authors)

Based on the identified research gaps in the literature and the need to shift from a cultural focus to a creativity focus tourism model, this study proposes a conceptual model to theorize the association between creative idea and creative behaviour (contextual variables representing creative process), physical and social (creative environment), experience quality and behavioural intentions, as shown in Figure 2.

5. Conclusions

In the domain of creative experiences, this study explored the impact of creative ideas and creative behaviour on experience quality. The findings provide strong support for H1 and H2, indicating that both creative ideas and creative behaviour positively influence experience quality. These results suggest that individuals with innovative ideas and those actively engaged in creative behaviours are more likely to enjoy higher-quality experience within the context of creative activities.

In addition, the research examined how the physical and social environment affects experience quality. The study revealed a positive relationship between the physical environment (H3) and experience quality, as well as a statistically significant positive relationship between the social environment (H4) and experience quality. These findings underscore the importance of crafting physical and social environments conducive to enhancing the quality of creative activities.

Hypothesis H5 investigated the relationship between creative idea and experience quality, revealing a significant positive connection. This suggests that the presence of creative ideas contributes to an improvement in the overall experience quality. This observation highlights the potential of creativity to positively impact the experience quality within creative contexts.

On a different note, H6 suggested a significant negative relationship between creative behaviour and experience quality, raising questions about its implications for experience quality. This unexpected result may necessitate further exploration and clarification because it appears counterintuitive. The dynamics between creative behaviour and experience quality require deeper investigation for a comprehensive understanding.

Furthermore, while H7 indicated a positive relationship between physical environment and experience quality, H8 did not establish a statistically significant relationship between social environment and experience quality. These findings imply that physical surroundings play a more prominent role in influencing experience quality in this context, whereas the social aspect may have a less significant impact on overall experience quality.

This study also investigated the mediating role of experience quality in the relationships between creativity and behavioural intentions. The results indicated that experience quality serves as a crucial mediating factor, bridging the connections between creative process (idea and behaviour) and creative environment (physical and social) with behavioural intentions. This suggests that experience quality plays a pivotal role in influencing how these elements impact individuals' experiences within the creative domain.

In conclusion, this research provides substantial evidence of the constructive influence of creativity and experience quality on tourists experiences within the creative tourism domain. It underscores the importance of nurturing creativity and cultivating supportive environments

to enhance the experience quality. Furthermore, recognizing the mediating role of experience quality contributes to a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms governing these relationships. The observed negative relationship between creative behaviour and experience quality prompts further investigation for clarification within the context of creative tourism providers. Overall, these findings significantly contribute to the field of creative studies and offer practical implications for business organizations and educational institutions striving to promote high-quality experiences during creative engagement.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

First, this study significantly advances the understanding of the creative process, creative environment, and behaviour. It delves into the intricate relationship between creative ideas and creative behaviour, physical and social creative environments and behavioural intentions within the context of creative tourism service providers. By highlighting the role of experience quality as a mediator, this study elucidates how these variables indirectly influence behaviour through the lens of experience quality. This in-depth exploration contributes to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that drive the actions and intentions of creative tourism service providers.

Second, this research demonstrates that experience quality plays a crucial role in translating the impact of various antecedents, such as creative behaviour and environmental factors, into the intention to engage in creative activities. This finding enriches existing literature by emphasizing the mediating effect of experience quality within the context of creative tourism service providers.

Third, the study underscores the importance of physical and social environments in nurturing creativity and experience quality in the tourism industry. The results highlight that a conducive physical environment and a supportive social environment positively influence creative behaviour, idea generation, experience quality, and behavioural intentions. This insight contributes to the literature on workplace design and organizational climate, showing how these factors can stimulate creativity and service quality.

Fourth, this study introduces valuable insights through the application of the SOR theory, particularly in the context of mediation analysis. It underscores the critical role of experience quality as a mediating factor in the relationships between creative individuals, their products, and behavioural intentions. By illuminating the circumstances under which mediation occurs, this study contributes to a refined framework for comprehending how creative process and creative environment indirectly influence behavioural intentions.

In conclusion, this study presents a host of theoretical contributions that significantly advance our understanding of the creative process, creative environments, and behavioural intentions of creative tourism service providers. The exploration of intricate relationships, the highlighting of the mediating role of experience quality, and the emphasis on the influence of physical and social environments deepen our theoretical knowledge in these domains. Moreover, the application of the SOR theory enhances our understanding of mediation processes within this context. These theoretical contributions collectively offer a richer framework for comprehending the complex dynamics that underlie the behaviours and intentions of

individuals engaged in creative tourism, ultimately enriching our theoretical foundation in this area of study.

5.2. Managerial implications

The study's findings offer a range of practical insights and recommendations for creative tourism service providers. Recognizing the intricate relationships between creative behaviour, ideas, physical, and social environments, experience quality and tourists' behavioural intentions, providers can enhance their offerings in several ways. First, they can strive to deliver more enriching and memorable creative experiences by fostering a creative atmosphere and encouraging innovative ideas. This approach allows them to craft unique and engaging activities that resonate with tourists. Additionally, an understanding of the mediating role of experience quality underscores the importance of consistently delivering exceptional experiences. Service providers can improve customer service, invest in top-quality amenities, and ensure that their creative activities meet or surpass tourists' expectations. This not only boosts customer satisfaction but also fosters repeat visits and positive word of mouth recommendations. Furthermore, by investing in well-designed and inspiring physical spaces for creative activities, providers can create environments that inspire tourists to explore their creativity, resulting in more enjoyable and memorable experiences. Cultivating a supportive and collaborative organizational culture further enhances creative behaviour and idea generation among service providers. Encouraging teamwork, idea sharing, and a culture of innovation can lead to a more engaged and creative workforce, resulting in higher-quality creative tourism services and experiences. Finally, training and development programmes that emphasize the significance of creativity, experience quality, and the impact of physical and social environments empower service providers to offer innovative and engaging activities, thus distinguishing themselves in the competitive creative tourism market.

5.3. Directions for future research

Future research could explore how the relationships identified in this study apply to different contexts and industries. While this study identifies the mediating role of experience quality, it does not deeply delve into the underlying mechanisms driving this mediation. Future research could explore the specific processes through which experience quality mediates the relationships between creative variables and behavioural intentions. A more comprehensive understanding of these mechanisms could inform targeted interventions and strategies for creative tourism service providers.

Future research in this field could employ longitudinal research designs to investigate how the relationships identified in this study evolve. Such an approach would provide valuable insights into the temporal aspects of creativity, experience quality, and behavioural intentions in the context of creative tourism service providers.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding, researchers might consider combining quantitative data with qualitative insights, such as interviews or observational data. This mixed-methods approach can offer a richer perspective on the factors influencing creativity and experience quality in creative tourism service providers.

Finally, comparative studies across different industries and sectors could help determine the generalizability of the findings. Analyzing how the relationships observed in the creative tourism sector compare to other fields can yield valuable insights into the broader applicability of the study's results. Researchers should also explore the specific mechanisms through which experience quality mediates the relationships between creative variables and behavioural intentions. Understanding the underlying processes can inform targeted interventions and strategies to enhance creative tourism services.

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