Flow, Satisfaction and Storytelling: A Causal Relationship?

Evidence from Scuba Diving in Turkey

Carl Cater

(Associate professor) Swansea University, School of Management, Business Management (Marketing) Department. Bay Campus. Swansea, Wales, UK. Tel: +44 1792 606199. E-mail address: carl.cater@swansea.ac.uk

Tahir Albayrak

Corresponding author (Professor) Akdeniz University, Tourism Faculty, Tourism Management Department. Campus. Antalya, Turkey. Tel: +90.242.3102027. Fax: +90.242.2274670. E-mail address: tahiralbayrak@akdeniz.edu.tr

Meltem Caber

(Professor) Akdeniz University, Tourism Faculty, Tourism Guidance Department. Campus. Antalya, Turkey. Tel: +90.242.3106657. Fax: +90.242.2274670. E-mail address: meltemcaber@akdeniz.edu.tr

Steve Taylor

University of the Highlands and Islands, Centre for Recreation and Tourism Research, West Highland College. Fort William, Scotland. Tel: 07551 036942. E-mail address: Steve.Taylor.whc@uhi.ac.uk

Abstract

The popularity of activity-based tourism is often explained by experiential concepts such as flow. By using a mixed methods approach, this study investigates how the storytelling intentions of scuba diving tourists are influenced by their flow experience. The mediating role of satisfaction and the moderating role of scuba diving experience level are further examined in this relationship. To test these hypotheses, interviews with 20 scuba divers and a field survey with the participation of 426 scuba diving tourists were conducted in Kaş, Turkey. The findings reveal that the influence of the flow experience on storytelling intentions of scuba diving tourists is fully mediated by their satisfaction. The results additionally show that scuba diving experience level does not have a moderating role in the flow experience-satisfaction-storytelling intention relationship.

Keywords. Scuba diving, flow experience, tourist satisfaction, storytelling intention

Introduction

For scholars, understanding the tourist experience is a challenge, since it cannot be observed directly, and "reflects a history of past experiences and anticipations (Elands & Lengkeek, 2012: 33). According to Schmitt (1999), experience encompasses sensing, feeling, thought, action, and belonging which implies that the tourist experience is a subjective, personal, multidimensional, and complicated construct that is very difficult to understand. Scholars have made numerous attempts to better understand it in various research settings, including food tourism (Quan & Wang, 2004), theme parks (Wang et al., 2012), cultural tourism (Altunel & Erkurt, 2015), and sport tourism (Morgan, 2007).

Two contradictory perspectives used by scholars to clarify the tourist experience have been Cohen's (1972) sociological model and Teigen's (1985; 1987) cognitive psychological model (Larsen et al., 2019). Cohen's model proposes that tourists can be positioned as diverse groups such as novelty seekers and familiarity seekers, relying on their degree of adaptation to tourist roles; the second model presumes that tourists are similar to each other as they expect to have an 'interesting tourist experience' (Larsen et al., 2019) irrespective of their tourist role orientation. Teigen's model puts more emphasis on tourists' interests than their personality, and they are predicted to place greater importance on the informativeness of verbal information and the sources of the information available. This theory focuses on activities that tourists are interested in, through the identification of information search behaviour and the generation of experiences.

In this regard, Teigen's approach seems more applicable for investigating tourist experience in activity-based tourism types, such as adventure tourism. The experiential components of such activities are expected to develop strong emotions which may also lead to a deeply involving and enjoyable experiential state, known as 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). Taking a positive psychology approach (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the flow experience in tourism should be considered as one of many optimal, emotional moments in life. Moreover, in the so-called 'experience economy', customer emotions are now positioned at the centre of experience conceptualisation, since study results consistently show that positive emotions are determinants of consumer satisfaction (Cohen et al., 2014). Therefore, tourism activities represent one of the best sources of flow experience and reveal a specific scientific research area.

Adventure tourism often encompasses highly challenging activities and requires specific skills that enable tourists to identify with and join distinct communities through 'social identification' (Tajfel, 1982). Script theory (Tomkins, 1978) helps to describe the role of prior experience in activating future tourist behaviours (e.g. storytelling intention) as the members of distinct communities. Scripts and narratives are based on positive or negative emotions derived from previous tourism experiences and are shared with others through well-crafted stories (Schiebe, 1986). Thus, storytelling behaviour is based on a tourist experience that is extraordinary, interesting, and memorable (Zhong et al., 2017). Although research shows that a (dis)satisfactory tourist experience is often the source of travel stories (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011), there is little knowledge about how the experiences shape the storytelling behaviour of adventure tourists.

Storytelling is a highly important variable with consequences for both the individual and society at large. Individually, adventure experiences drive narrative capital, as it is recognised that "the value of such action is that the consequences of having enjoyed such thrilling experiences flow beyond the bounds of the occasion" (Schiebe, 1986: 136). Furthermore, these broadly circulated narratives may empower the meaning of tourism experiences and encourage higher values (Filep & Deery, 2010), instilling more responsible environmental behaviours. For example, recent interest in the concept of Ocean Literacy (UNESCO, 2020) highlights how the stories that arise from marine tourism experiences are vital to more responsible and sustainable relationships with our environment (Garcia & Cater, 2020). While it has been proposed that hedonism is a requisite for engaging storytelling (Mossberg, 2008), the unravelling critical discourse around the health of our oceans signal a eudemonic component to the narratives, that negotiate and instil a form of environmental stewardship.

The vast majority of the previous studies on storytelling have investigated this concept from the managerial perspective (Li, 2014; Lin & Kim, 2015; Keskin et al., 2016; Yang, 2018). In these studies, storytelling is used as a determinant of satisfaction and brand image. Interestingly, a limited number of research attempts have been made to explore the antecedents of storytelling intention with a 'consumer-focused' approach. It is further noted that storytelling, particularly in the online space, has become perhaps more important than loyalty as "tourists are more likely to believe thousands of comments on a destination generated by online users than limited comments on the destination from friends and family members" (Kim & Kim, 2019:2). Thus, in the context of tourism and travel, more research is needed to explore and to understand the tourist experience and storytelling behaviour from the customers′ point-of-view.

Inspired from Teigen's (1985; 1987) cognitive psychological model and Tomkins's (1978) script theory, we aimed to fill the aforementioned gaps in the tourism literature. Thus, using the context of scuba diving tourism, the influence of flow experience on storytelling intention is examined with the inclusion of the mediating role of satisfaction. Furthermore, the moderating role of (scuba diving) experience level was investigated in the flow experience-satisfaction-storytelling intention relationship. By adapting a participant-centric research approach, both face-to-face interviews and a field survey were undertaken with tourists who participated in scuba diving in Kaş, Antalya-Turkey. This study′s results are expected to contribute to our understanding about the flow experience of tourists and to guide practitioners' strategies for both the scuba diving tourism market and experiential tourism more broadly.

Literature Review

The Flow Experience

The concept of flow has been widely used in understanding participation in activities, such as scuba diving, that carry limited extrinsic rewards. Originally developed by Csikszentimihalyi (1975: 36), flow is defined as "the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement" in an activity and is characterised by feelings of fusion and fluidity. Such

activities often contain an element of challenge, applying "broadly to any form of skilled activity where the exponent's mental focus coincides fully with their physical practice" (Buckley, 2012: 963), and has been applied to activities as diverse as dancing, chess, and climbing (Taylor, 2010).

Flow is such a complex, and individual, feeling that it is often difficult to describe (Voelkl et al., 2003); subsequently much previous work has attempted to evaluate qualitative dimensions of flow (Cater, 2006; 2008). Flow has been examined in a number of different adventure recreation activities, such as white-water kayaking (Jones et al., 2000), skateboarding (Chang, 2017), and mountain biking (Dodson, 1996) amongst others. Work by Wu & Liang (2011) attempted to separate the antecedents of flow and the flow experience itself, separating the latter into control, focus and time distortion. Control involves a balance between the skill required and the challenge inherent in an act; thus positive feedback occurs in terms of satisfaction. Focus represents the "immediate connection between thought and action" (Buckley, 2012: 964) described by many authors (e.g. Heo et al., 2010). Time distortion may include a loss of sense of time or changed perspectives of time, and is also identified by many participants and researchers who have evaluated the concept (e.g. Taylor, 2010).

Other scholarly works have explored the flow construct in the context of causal relationships with environmental settings, levels of experience, and associated affective states (Kim and Thapa, 2018). For example, Tsaur et al.'s (2013) study found that the transcendent nature of high-altitude mountain climbing was a key antecedent for flow, and that experiencing flow rendered climbers 'happier' as a result. This latter relationship was echoed in Cheng & Lu's (2015) research into surfing, whose data supported a positive relationship between flow and a sense of overall wellbeing; these relationships were found to be much stronger for 'committed' surfers and climbers. This finding correlated with the experience of mountain hikers (Wöran & Arneburger, 2012). For these diverse recreational specialists an important precondition for experiencing flow was the desirable and restorative nature of the setting, whether terrestrial or aquatic.

There is limited evaluation of flow in the scuba diving experience, but in addition to the liquid analogy, it does have clear application, as noted by Dimmock (2009) and Dimmock & Wilson (2009). Scuba diving is, paradoxically, simultaneously relaxing and physically demanding (Cater, 2008), and the skills required and lack of verbal communication underwater accentuates the control, focus and time distortion elements of the experience. Scuba diving also takes place in an alien underwater environment, facilitating the "peculiar state of experience, an experience that is rarely accessible in everyday life" identified as important for flow by Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi (1990: 154).

There have been notable critiques of the flow concept, as authors such as Varley (2006) question its centrality in the adventure recreation experience (Taylor, 2010). Others have shown that, whilst important, its elusive, temporal and often short-lived nature means it can only form a small part of the entire adventure experience (Buckley, 2012). However, the link between activities that provide flow experiences and high levels of satisfaction are still suggested (Cater, 2006). This study seeks to validate these links though extensive empirical

evidence to further investigate the existence of flow in the experience, and impacts on storytelling via satisfaction.

Tourist Satisfaction and Scuba-diving

Tourist satisfaction is an emotional state of mind that contains a set of expectations, perceived outcomes, and memories derived from a tourism experience (Triantafillidou & Petala, 2016). Academic research provides a wide breadth of knowledge on tourist satisfaction with an experience and its positive or negative consequences, its influence on destination loyalty for example (Kim & Thapa, 2018). Many studies indicate that satisfaction generates the behavioural outcomes of loyalty, recommendation, word-of-mouth (WOM), and repeat visitation intentions (Wang, 2016).

Although there is extensive literature on the characteristics, behaviours, and impacts of scuba divers, tourist satisfaction with scuba diving has received relatively little research attention from academics (Ince & Bowen, 2011) and tends to be rather one-dimensional. In one study, in Western Australia, O'Neill et al. (2000) found that tourists were highly satisfied with their experience; the performance and importance of an ′assurance′ attribute was ranked highly. In Musa's (2002) research, diver tourists′ satisfaction on Sipadan Island, Malaysia was measured by the ServPerf model, while in Musa et al.'s (2006) study, tourist satisfaction with scuba diving at Layang Layang Island, Malaysia, was investigated and a high level of overall satisfaction with the activity was identified. Most recently, Albayrak et al. (2019) segmented scuba diving holiday tourists in Antalya, Turkey into four groups by their motivations and satisfactions. They found that tourists with different level of experience have similar pull motivations in destination selection. However, the more experienced tourists in scuba diving (Enthusiastic Positivists) have higher satisfaction levels than less experienced tourists.

Beside the influence of destination attributes, travel motivations, service quality perceptions, and experience levels on scuba divers' overall satisfaction with the activity, their flow experiences also need academic examination as a further determinant. Since flow experience is considered as a satisfactory and enjoyable phenomenon (Chang, 2014), high quality experiences offering a flow perception are expected to generate favourable behavioural outcomes such as recommendation, storytelling, and repeat visitation intentions (Kim & Brown, 2012; Kim & Thapa, 2018).

Storytelling Behaviour in Tourism

Studies have shown that extraordinary activities in tourism are, by their very nature, likely to receive higher satisfaction scores than those deemed more ordinary (Danaher & Arweiler, 1996). The experiential turn in tourism means that industry processes often put people in the extraordinary circumstances that form the basis for storytelling. According to Mossberg (2003), an extraordinary experience should have: "an active and dynamic process; a strong social dimension which often accompanies this process; the integration of the components of meaning and a sense of joy; the involvement resulting from absorption and personal control; a

process that is dependent on the context and an uncertainty associated with something new; and an experience always interwoven with life satisfaction" (cited in Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011: 241).

Although current information and communication technologies enable people to share their actual and on-site experiences with others during travel, many people tend to keep on sharing their extraordinary (positive) experiences at the post-travel stage. These ′meaningful′, ′memorable′, and ′extraordinary′′ experiences of travel are, therefore, (re)presented, (re)produced, and (re)created through narratives on postcards, photographs, and through storytelling (Cary, 2004). In this way, tourism experiences play the role of self-perception and become information sources, which are shared with other people through storytelling (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Pera, 2017). Storytelling is, therefore, defined as the "sharing and combining of knowledge and experiences through narrative and anecdotes in order to communicate complex ideas, concepts, and causal connections and build connections and associations" (Keskin et al., 2016: 32).

Storytelling is, nowadays, considered "as an art of describing real or imaginary events with word, photo, and audio" (Akgün et al., 2015: 578) on online/offline media and communication platforms. The storytelling of tourists, therefore, has become more important in influencing people′s tourism-related perceptions and behaviours. Indeed, as Kim & Kim (2019: 2) note in their examination of the influence of authenticity on online engagement "tourists are as collaborators, communicators, and information sources for the destination". This sharing aspect of storytelling is strategically important for reinforcing engagement with social communities and is essential for communicating service quality, relationships, and experiences without influence from the business (Pera, 2017).

The positive emotions generated by tourist stories help to develop perceptions of authenticity and intentions to visit a destination (Kim & Youn, 2017). This relationship is circular as Kim & Kim (2019) show how experience derived authenticity influences engagement on social media. Today, destinations need to provide unique and interesting stories containing favourable narratives for stimulating tourists' attention and empathy, while emphasizing their attractiveness, diversification, and values (Yang, 2018). Numerous study results also support that storytelling affects destination attractiveness, authenticity, branding, tourist satisfaction, travel involvement, value co-creation, and behavioural intention (Li, 2014; Lin & Kim, 2015; Keskin et al., 2016; Yang, 2018; Kim & Kim, 2019). As Kim & Kim (2019) note, social media have increased both the quality and quantity of these user generated stories, with over a million destination related posts a day. In this study, both online (e.g. social media narratives) and offline forms (e.g. WOM, verbal narratives) of storytelling intention are regarded, since social media messages and narratives are ignored in most studies (Pabel, 2018).

Hypotheses Development

The rationale and link to the literature of each hypothesis proposed in the research model are introduced in this section. Following the positive psychology perspective (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Teigen, 1985; 1987), the authors suggest that flow and activity-based

experiences develop strong emotions, satisfaction, and memorable stories to be told to others. From this perspective, flow experience in scuba diving is proposed to directly affect tourist satisfaction and storytelling intention, while satisfaction plays as a mediator and experience level plays a moderator role on this relationship.

There is strong evidence in the tourism literature examining the relationship between tourist experience and satisfaction. In these studies, tourist experience is shown to significantly affect satisfaction (e.g. MacCarthy et al., 2006; Song et al., 2015). For example, by applying Pine & Gilmore's (1998) framework, Mehmetoglu & Engen (2011) revealed a significant effect of tourist experience on satisfaction in the context of both ice music festivals and museums. Recently, by incorporating memory into the tourism experience, Zhong et al. (2017) showed that a memorable tourism experience is a strong determinant of satisfaction in leisure travel. Similarly, in the context of paragliding, Ayazlar & Yüksel (2018) confirmed the positive effect of the flow experience on satisfaction. Based on these findings, the following hypothesis is proposed to investigate the relationship between flow and satisfaction in scuba diving:

H1: The flow experience in scuba diving has a positive impact on satisfaction

Although the specific effect of satisfaction on storytelling intention has not previously been investigated by researchers, the influence of satisfaction on WOM communication has been investigated in some previous research. For example, both Wang et al. (2017) and Triantafillidou & Petala (2016) confirmed the positive effect of satisfaction on WOM intention. Specifically, Palau-Saumell et al.′s (2014) study findings conducted in the Medes Islands, Spain provided evidence about the positive influence of scuba divers′ satisfaction on behavioural intention, including WOM communication. Kim & Kim (2019) have shown how authenticity leads to destination satisfaction and subsequent online engagement, which is a powerful form of WOM communication. Since storytelling is the overarching driver of WOM communication (Zhong et al., 2017), based on the findings of previous studies that found a strong relationship between satisfaction and WOM communication the following hypothesis is posited:

H2: Satisfaction has a positive impact on the storytelling intentions of scuba divers

Most of the previous studies have examined storytelling by focusing on its influence on satisfaction or brand image. One exception is Zhong et al.'s (2017) research that empirically demonstrated that the storytelling intention of tourists was influenced by their memorable experiences. Aside from this exceptional study, researchers have mostly linked tourist experience to WOM intention. For example, a study by Kim et al (2010) showed that memorable tourism experiences, consisting of involvement, hedonism, and local culture components, lead to the generation of positive WOM. Moreover, Triantafillidou & Petala (2016), who investigated sea-based adventure activities in Rhodes, Greece, found that tourism experiences might influence WOM intentions of divers. Therefore, based on the previous studies' findings, it is hypothesised that:

H3: The flow experience has a positive impact on the storytelling intentions of scuba divers

While satisfaction is a consequence of evaluation of past events, WOM can lead to a desired behaviour in the future. Thus, researchers have mostly considered satisfaction as a mediating variable between the tourist experience and WOM. For example, Lin & Kuo (2016), by investigating tourist experiences at townships in Taiwan, revealed the mediating role of satisfaction between tourist experience and WOM intention. In the context of nature-based tourism, Sotiriadis (2017) found strong antecedents of tourist satisfaction which had a positive effect on WOM intention. Since storytelling is a particular form of WOM, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: The impact of the flow experience on the storytelling intentions of scuba divers is mediated by satisfaction

In previous studies, a number of researchers found that the experience level in an activity influenced the behaviour of adventure tourists. For example, in the context of sea kayaking, O'Connell (2010) found evidence for the influence of experience level on motivation. More experienced sea kayakers, compared to their less experienced counterparts, were mostly motivated by nostalgia and escaping family. In scuba diving, tourists at different experience levels have been found to have varying motivations (e.g. O'Connell, 2010), expectations (e.g. Meisel-Lusby & Cottrell, 2008), and satisfactions (e.g. Ince & Bowen, 2011). Using experience level as a moderator in the examination of multi-variable relationships is therefore a logical hypothesis. As also noted in previous work by the authors (Albayrak et al., 2019), experience level is a factor in the segmentation of scuba diving tourism, which warrants further testing its influence on satisfaction and storytelling intention. Hence, the following additional hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Scuba diving experience level moderates the influence of the flow experience on storytelling intentions through satisfaction

Thus, Figure 1 reflects the above hypotheses in a research model where the influence of the flow experience on storytelling intention is mediated by satisfaction, and experience level moderates this mediated relationship.
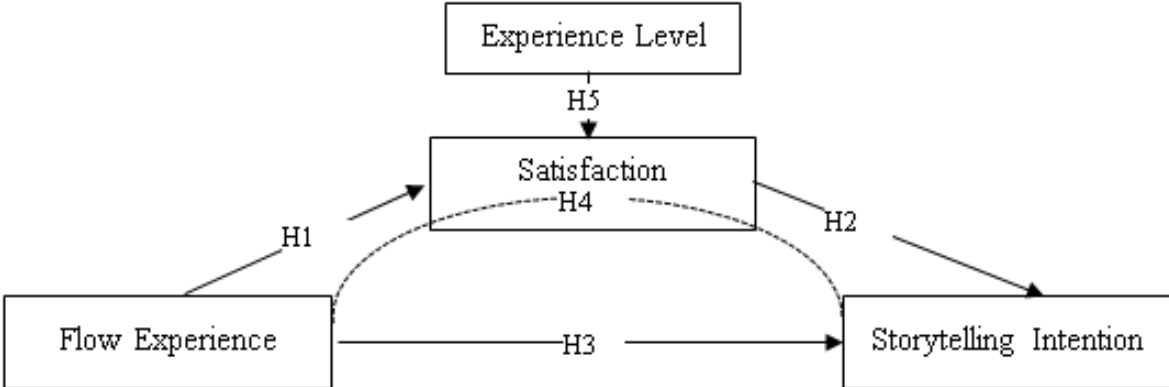

Figure 1. Research Model

Materials and Methods

Research Setting: Kaş, Antalya-Turkey

The town of Kaş, which is located in the district of Antalya, in the south west of Turkey, has been a famous scuba diving site and destination for domestic and international tourists since the mid-1980s. Since 2012 all aquaculture hunting activities have been prohibited in the Kaş Kekova Sea Protection Area, enabling the protection of underwater life and an increase in fish numbers. Owing to its location as a transit route for commercial ships from ancient civilizations (such as Lycia and Rome) many sunken ships can be observed in Kaş′s environs.

The average temperature of the sea water is 19 degrees Celsius in Kaş, which makes it possible to scuba dive all year round, and underwater visibility is very good (often over 40m). In Kaş, boat tours depart mornings and afternoons on a daily basis. On tours, discovery dives are available, lasting 20 minutes in a maximum of five metres depth for beginners, and deeper dives for more experienced participants. Currently 15 scuba diving companies operate in town and more than 30 sites are registered as scuba diving spots (Kaş Rehberi.com, 2019).

Measures

As described above this study examines the relationship between flow, satisfaction, and storytelling. The study adopted a post-positivist paradigm in testing the relationships in the proposed model, but acknowledges that this will not achieve a universal 'truth' (Jennings, 2010). In order to ensure robust and credible interpretation a mixed methods approach was employed, using a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, as recommended by Kim & Kim (2019). The scales used on the survey and parallel interview questions were derived from pre-validated measures in tourism research following the method adopted by Kim & Thapa (2018). The flow experience was measured using nine items obtained from Wu & Liang (2011). Three items from Lee et al. (2007) were used to measure overall satisfaction with the diving experience. For the assessment of storytelling intention five items derived from Zhong et al. (2017) were used. Scale items were measured by using a seven-point Likert-type scale, anchored from ′strongly disagree′ to ′strongly agree.′ In addition, seven questions for identifying the demographic and trip-related characteristics and one question for measuring the respondents′ scuba diving experience were included in the survey. The original English items were translated into Turkish by one of the authors who speaks both languages fluently. Another author reviewed the translation for its accuracy. In addition, a pilot test was conducted with 32 students to ensure the accuracy of translation and wording of the scale items, and based on their feedback minor modifications were made.

Data Collection

The field study was performed in summer 2019 by collaborating with the scuba diving companies that operate in Kaş. For the survey, brief information about the study was presented to the participants by the dive masters of each boat after the diving experience. Then, upon the boat's arrival at the harbour, two interviewers, who were waiting at the harbour, explained the detailed objective of the research to the scuba divers. Only volunteer

respondents who dived were requested to participate in the survey, in either English or Turkish. At the end of the period, a total of 441 surveys were collected. After the elimination of forms that had consecutive identical answers or were incomplete, 426 questionnaires remained for analysis.

In order to provide further elucidation of the variables, qualitative interviews were also conducted by one of the researchers over the same time period, with 20 individuals. These used a semi-structured interview guide with topics similar to those on the quantitative survey. Respondents were approached either on the boats or on return to the harbour and were selected to be representative of the overall sample. This concurrent parallel mixed-methods approach (Creswell, 2007) allowed for triangulation and confirmation of the research data and ensured methodological rigour. The qualitative findings were used to help explain and verify the primarily quantitative data and the model.

Analyses

The qualitative interviews were transcribed and analysed using a thematic coding process. Themes were derived from the initial model and constructs so elements of flow experience (focus, control and time distortion), satisfaction and storytelling were identified. Using this method, reliable and robust findings are guided by the research objectives and derived through multiple readings and interpretation of the findings by the research team (Thomas, 2007). Highlighting was used to allocate text to themes and illuminate meaningful participant quotations, to enable the authors to illustrate meanings of themes, providing real-life examples, and aiding the verification of the quantitative data.

Initially the presence of the model constructs was examined through the interpretation of descriptive statistics, which are widely understood by both academic and lay users (Cater, 2017). To quantitatively test the research hypotheses Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) by performing Partial Least Squares was used for the following reasons. First, the research model is relatively complex, including second-order constructs and mediating relationships (Sarstedt et al., 2014). Second, skewness statistics ranged from -2.411 to -0.639 and kurtosis statistics from 0.409 to 6.392 (Appendix 1), indicating that the data violate normality (Kline, 2011). The results of Kolmogorov–Smirnov test also indicated that the data violated normality assumptions. Thus a two-stage approach suggested by Anderson & Gerbing (1988) was used to estimate the second-order reflective–formative type II model, involving validation of the measurement model, and testing of the structural model. A bootstrapping procedure with 1000 iterations was performed to assess the significance of the loadings, weights, and path coefficients.

To control common method bias, which is a potential problem in survey research, the following steps were followed before, during, and after the data collection process. Before the survey, study constructs were derived from different sources (Podsakoff et al., 2012). In addition, independent and dependent variables were presented in different sections in the questionnaire design. During the survey, the interviewers explained to the participants that there were no right or wrong answers for the questions (Mäkelä & Brewster, 2009).

Furthermore, participants were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. After data collection, Harman's single-factor test was performed, showing that the single factor accounts for 39.44 % of the variance, which is lower than cut-off value of 50 % (Min et al., 2016). To conclude, common method bias was not a problem in this study.

Results

Sample Characteristics, Descriptive Analyses, and Qualitative Verification

Initially we identified the characteristics of the sample, descriptive statistics for the elements of the model and verified these through the qualitative findings. Table 1 presents the demographic and trip related characteristics of the sample. Among the 426 survey respondents, there were slightly more males (52.4 %) than female. The participants of the present study are mostly Turkish (57 %) and British (12 %) tourists who are in the age group between 21-40 years (totalling 64.2 %). They generally work as company employees (61.6 %). In addition, the majority of the respondents are repeat visitors (56.8 %) to Kaş, travelling with their friends (35 %) and family members (21.4 %). In terms of scuba diving, a high number (46.6 %) of the respondents expressed that they had no previous experience.

Table 1. Demographic and trip characteristics of the sample

Characteristics		Percent
Gender	Male	52.4
	Female	47.6
Marital status	Married	58.9
	Single	41.1
Nationality	Turkish	57.0
	British	12.0
	French	8.7
	German	6.6
	Other	15.7
Age	20 and below	8.3
	Between 21-30 years	38.7
	Between 31-40 years	25.5
	Between 41-50 years	17.0
	51 and above	10.6
Occupation	Company employee	61.6
	Public employee	14.8
	Business owner	4.5
	Student	11.7
	Other	7.4
Companion	Friends	35.0
	Family members	21.4
	Package tour	16.2
	Other	27.4
Number of visit to Kaş	First time	43.2
	Second time	11.2
	Third and above	45.6
Scuba diving experience level (total years)	Non-experienced	46.6
	Experienced (1 and above)	53.4

Table 2. Measurement statistics of the constructs

Constructs	Items	Loadings	t value*	Mean (SD)	Composite reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Average variance extracted
Control (C)	C1	0.844	31.55	6.01 (1.00)	0.905	0.842	0.761
	C2	0.933	89.93				
	C3	0.837	44.81				
Focus attention (FA)	FA1	0.714	13.97	6.18 (0.93)	0.895	0.822	0.742
	FA2	0.914	122.64				
	FA3	0.938	174.97				
Time distortion (TD)	TD1	0.930	3.23	5.53 (1.25)	0.855	0.776	0.668
	TD2	0.643	2.12				
	TD3	0.852	2.52				
Overall satisfaction (OS)	OS1	0.954	163.52	5.88 (1.26)	0.966	0.948	0.906
	OS2	0.946	124.48				
	OS3	0.954	143.09				
Storytelling intention (SI)	SI1	0.764	21.65	5.81 (1.17)	0.904	0.867	0.659
	SI2	0.575	11.84				
	SI3	0.862	41.75				
	SI4	0.915	85.33				
	SI5	0.894	61.36				

* t values are obtained with the bootstrapping procedure (1000 samples) and are significant at the 0.001 level; SD: standard deviation; Appendix 1 contains the full version of the items.

Inspection of the study variables′ means in Table 2 shows that the respondents had high scores for all the elements of the flow experience. The participants were extremely focused during the scuba diving experience (mean=6.18), and this was validated by the qualitative responses. The interviews noted the meditative and relaxing aspects of the scuba diving experience and the focus that results:

'For me, it's my meditation It's, yeah it's relaxing down there' SU653 British Advanced 48

'This is the resting of my life…Yes, I am resting under the sea…Because without telephone, without any mail.' SU654 Turkish Dive Master 40s

Control elements had the next highest score (mean=6.01). In interviews, these were linked to confidence in equipment and self, having appropriate qualifications, but also in the professionalism of the guides and operators:

'It was really good, especially the team. They are really confident and they are so funny and just helpful. They were amazing. And made you feel safe all the time' SU661 Turkish Beginner 27

'Yeah all the equipment and stuff is in great condition.' SU669 New Zealand Advanced 25-30

Compared to other flow experience elements, the time distortion perception mean of the participants was the lowest (mean=5.53), although it was still clearly in evidence. In particular, the participants identified the alien underwater landscape as giving them a sense of perspective, in some cases linked to geological time scales:

'I can't describe it really. [Laughter]. It's just another thing. I don't know. Completely different. My underwater world.' SU651 German Open Water 25

'The canyon was like thirty metres high, you looked up and that was incredible, I said, I mean, I'm really small' SU656 Turkish Advanced 62

Moving to the other elements of the model, overall satisfaction with the activity was high (mean=5.88), particularly with the dive operators themselves:

'The briefings are perfect; the dive spots are very nice.' SU651 German Open Water 25

'I can say if it can compare out of ten it gets about nine. Pretty good.' SU660 Turkish Advanced 26

Furthermore, the participants had a high storytelling intention (mean=5.81) about their scuba diving experience. Storytelling was often supported by operators, providing pictures of the scuba diving experience (at extra cost). In interviews, respondents explained how contemporary storytelling often involved the use of social media, but respondents were keen to stress that this was not about 'showing off' - it was more a means to connect to family and friends and log memories. Notably the social media storytelling item (*I intend to use social media to share my scuba diving experience with others*) was the lowest of any of the study variables (mean=5.06).

'Yeah actually I have my friends from my university. So they are asking how you feel in Kaş? Can you recommend us? I'll definitely be commenting.' SU660 Turkish Advanced 26

'I have a You Tube channel and I upload the video to see all the family around where we were going, where we visit, that's why I do that' SU657 Turkish Beginner 50

Evaluation of the measurement model

Firstly, reflective constructs and then formative constructs were assessed in terms of their validity and reliability. As suggested by Hair et al. (2014), indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the first order reflective constructs were evaluated. Table 2 shows that all Cronbach′s Alpha values exceed the cut-off value of 0.70, suggesting acceptable indicator reliability (Nunnally, 1978). Convergent validity was assessed by factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 2 depicts that all item loadings are higher than the recommended value of 0.6, except an item related to storytelling intention. In addition, CR values are above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, ranging from 0.855 to 0.966 (Hair et al., 2014). AVE values range from 0.659 to 0.906, which exceed the cut-off value of 0.5. To conclude, these results support convergent validity.

Discriminant validity was determined by following the procedure proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981). In addition, Heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) criteria were used (Henseleret al., 2015). As shown in Table 3, the square root of AVE of each construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs, which provides evidence for discriminant validity. In

addition, all HTMT correlation values of constructs are lower than the threshold value of 0.90, indicating discriminant validity.

Table 3. Discriminant validity assessment

	C	FA	TD	OS	SI
Control (C)	**0.873**				
Focus attention (FA)	0.635(0.731)	**0.861**			
Time distortion (TD)	0.080(0.135)	0.222(0.212)	**0.817**		
Overall satisfaction (OS)	0.229(0.257)	0.191(0.205)	0.651(0.753)	**0.952**	
Storytelling intention (SI)	0.301(0.393)	0.160(0.227)	0.441(0.747)	0.785(0.834)	**0.812**

Diagonal elements (Bold) are the square root of the AVE. Off-diagonal elements are the correlations among constructs. HTMT ratios are in parentheses.

To investigate validity of the flow experience, as the second order construct, indicator weights, their significance, and the multicollinearity of the indicators were estimated. As shown in Table 4, all outer weights are significant. In addition, variance inflation factor (VIF) values ranges from 1.059 to 1.756 which are below the suggested value of 3, indicating multicollinerarity is not a problem (Hair et al., 2014). Moreover, the nomological validity of the flow experience was supported, since it significantly influences overall satisfaction (Table 5), as suggested in the related literature (e.g. Wu & Liang, 2011).

Table 4. Weights of the first-order constructs on the second-order constructs

Second-order construct	First-order dimensions	Weights	t value	VIF
Flow experience	Control	0.517	16.85*	1.688
	Focus attention	0.491	24.58*	1.756
	Time distortion	0.288	5.03*	1.059

* significant at 0.001 level based on 1000 bootstraps

Evaluation of the structural model

After the measurement model was confirmed, hypothesized relationships in the structural model were estimated. In this study, relationships between the constructs under study were evaluated by using path coefficients and their significance. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) value, as the measure of the model's predictive accuracy, and Stone-Geisser's Q^2 value, as the indicator of the model's predictive relevance, were used. The results revealed that the model has predictive relevance, since R^2 values of the endogenous latent variables are higher than 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992). More precisely, flow experience explained 45.7 % of the overall satisfaction with diving experience, while 63 % of the storytelling intention of the scuba divers was explained by their overall satisfaction and their flow experience. Q^2 values of overall satisfaction and storytelling intention were respectively 0.390 and 0.375, reflecting that the model had good predictive relevance for endogenous variables (Chin, 2010).

Moreover, to evaluate model fit, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) index was calculated as proposed by Tenenhaus et al. (2005). The GoF index has been used by many researchers for the model

fit assessment (e.g. Anasori et al., 2019). The obtained value of 0.637, which is much higher than $GoF_{large}= 0.36$, reflects that the model has a good fit to the data (Wetzels et al., 2009). As presented in Table 5, the results of the structural model show that flow experience is a significant determinant of overall satisfaction ($\beta=0.677$; $p<0.001$) with the diving experience, providing support to H1. Findings also reveal that overall satisfaction significantly influences storytelling intention ($\beta=0.810$; $p<0.001$), thus H2 is supported. However, the direct effect of flow experience on storytelling intention was not supported ($\beta=-0.023$; $p>0.05$) which leads to the rejection of H3. After the test of direct relationships between the constructs, the mediation effect of the overall satisfaction between flow experience and storytelling intention was examined. As reflected in Table 5, there is ′indirect-only mediation′ pattern according to Zhao et al.′s (2010) classification. In other words, overall satisfaction fully mediates flow experience-storytelling intention relationship which confirms H4.

To test the moderating effects of diving experience on the relationships between flow experience and storytelling intention through satisfaction (i.e. moderated mediation analysis), between-group comparison was performed, as proposed by Lowry & Gaskin (2014). With this purpose, the sample was firstly divided into two groups based on the respondents′ total years of experience in scuba diving. Respondents who had one or more years of diving experience were categorised as experienced divers (n=230) and others classified as non-experienced divers (n=196). Therefore, two datasets (one for experienced and other for non-experienced scuba divers) were obtained. Secondly, the structural model was tested for both datasets, and the total indirect effect of flow experience on storytelling intention via overall satisfaction was calculated for experienced ($\beta=0.591$; $p<0.001$) and non-experienced ($\beta=0.524$; $p<0.001$) divers. Thirdly, the t value was calculated to test the difference between the indirect effects of flow experience on storytelling intention via overall satisfaction for the two groups. As reflected in Table 5, there is no significant difference (t value= 0.713) between the indirect effects of experienced and non-experienced groups. In other words, the mediated effect does not vary across groups of a moderator, which leads the rejection of H5.

Table 5. Structural model results

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	t value	Support
H1	FE -> OS	0.677	15.591*	Yes
H2	OS -> SI	0.810	21.579*	Yes
H3	FE -> SI	-0.023	0.349 ns	No
H4	FE -> OS -> SI (mediation)	0.548[a]	12.508*	Yes
H5	FE -> OS -> SI (moderated mediation by moderator: scuba diving experience level)		0.713ns	No

FE: Flow experience; OS: Overall satisfaction; SI: Storytelling intention
* Significant at the 0.001 level based on 1000 bootstrapping; ns: non-significant; a: the indirect effect of FE on SI

Discussion and Theoretical Contributions

In this study –inspired by Teigen's (1985; 1987) cognitive psychological model and Tomkins's (1978) script theory – we presumed that some tourism forms requiring the active participation of tourists lead to flow emotions and satisfaction, and that these outcomes

motivate tourists to share their experiences with others, in the form of stories. Although all types of tourists can expect a memorable and interesting tourism experience in Teigen's (1985) model, a great deal of importance is given to the activities in tourism destinations as the determinants of an experience. Hence, tourists' choice regarding travel is primarily based on the activities they wish to do (Kask, Kline, & Lamoureux, 2011). For example, adventure and nature-based tourists tend to find information about the activities available in destinations when deciding where to travel. They also prefer to be actively involved in activities rather than to observe passively (Chui et al., 2010; Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016). Accordingly, tourists participating in active pursuits can be presumed to generate flow and satisfaction outcomes and share their experiences with others through storytelling.

Being motivated by the scarce number of studies on scuba diving tourists' flow experience and related attitudes, we performed a rigorous mixed-research method to explore the components of this specific kind of experience and its influences on satisfaction and storytelling intention. As an activity that requires high involvement, qualification, and social interaction of the participants, scuba diving is a useful platform for investigating flow experience in tourism. The initial data showed that flow elements (control, focus, and time distortion), satisfaction, and storytelling are all evident in the scuba diving experience. The links between these variables were then explored through a structural model. Thus, the findings of this study offer important theoretical contributions to the related literature.

Most of the previous studies investigated flow experience by using qualitative methods (Cater, 2008) and there are fewer studies that examine the effect of flow experience on customer outcomes such as storytelling, especially in the scuba diving setting. Thus, the main contribution of this study lies in establishing the influence of flow experience on customer satisfaction and storytelling intention. Apart from understanding the tourist flow experience, it also adds to important contemporary work that examines storytelling (e.g. Kim & Kim, 2019), as customer referrals are more trustworthy than companies' messages.

Specifically, the results of the study indicate that flow experience is a strong determinant of overall satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of Ayazlar & Yüksel (2018) and Wu & Liang (2011) that show the positive influence of flow experience on satisfaction in the paragliding and white-water rafting contexts, respectively. Moreover, the results revealed that satisfaction had a very strong influence on storytelling intention. Since storytelling is considered as a type of WOM, it can be concluded that this finding is in line with previous researches showing the positive effect of satisfaction on WOM communication (Palau-Saumell et al., 2014; Triantafillidou & Petala, 2016).

We would also suggest that whilst this study provides empirical proof that flow is in evidence, it is still a difficult construct for participants to articulate after the experience itself. As other researchers have suggested (e.g. Varley, 2006), whilst flow is important, and can be a welcomed side-effect of challenging adventure sports, it is not the sole, nor even principal reason for participation in adventure activity, and it can be quite elusive (Taylor & Carr, forthcoming). Nevertheless, the results reflect that the storytelling intention of scuba diving tourists was not directly affected by flow experience. This outcome contradicts the findings of Zhong, Busser & Baloglu (2017). However, it should be noted that these authors investigated

memorable tourism experience construct rather than flow experience, as examined here. Notably, this study shows that the influence of flow experience on storytelling intention was fully mediated by satisfaction which supports a number of previous studies showing the mediating role of satisfaction between tourist experience and WOM intention (Lin & Kuo, 2016; Sotiriadis, 2017). Moreover, this finding reveals that satisfactory experiences, which are stored in the memory, may affect behavioural intentions (e.g. storytelling) when they are activated, as emphasised in script theory. Thus, the current study also represents a step forward by confirming script theory as a suitable framework to understand tourist behaviour in the scuba diving context. In additon, similar to Manthiou et al.'s (2016) research where script theory is extended by the inclusion of satisfaction, our study results confirmed the mediating role of satisfaction between experience and behavioural intention.

The findings also reveal that experience level does not moderate the flow, satisfaction and storytelling sequence examined here. This result is not fully consistent with the general view in the literature, which assumes that adventure tourist behaviours may show differences based on the experience levels of the participants (Pomfret & Bramwell, 2016; Caber & Albayrak, 2016). This could be explained by the fact that previous studies mostly investigated the influence of experience level on specific variables such as motivation, rather than testing its moderator role on satisfaction and in the relationship among other variables. Ascertaining other reasons for these tendencies opens up new research horizons for academics.

Managerial Implications

The findings have important managerial implications for both scuba diving companies' managers and destination authorities. Despite the assertion that flow is not central to the storytelling intention, it is clear that it has an indirect effect on storytelling through satisfaction. As tourist satisfaction is a principal goal for tourism companies (Tsauret al., 2015), they should pay attention to the design of the experience, tailored for different market segments (Prebensen & Xie, 2017). Thus, opportunities for the 'emotional choreography' (Buckley, 2012) of clients' focus, control, and time distortion can be maximised. These conditions will enhance possibilities for experiencing flow and consequently lead to enhanced satisfaction.

The finding related to the impact of flow on storytelling intentions is mediated by satisfaction, does suggest that although flow is not easy to articulate, if it is experienced, and participants are satisfied, they may relate elements of the experience to others. This is especially important as recreationalists who have some form of transcendent experience are more likely to revisit a destination (Tapar et al., 2017, Kim & Thapa, 2018) and provide repeat customers for tourism companies. Businesses should strive to portray these transcendental possibilities to customers (Prebensen & Xie, 2017), through encouraging customer reviews and the use of inspirational videography for example. In the pre-experience phase, scuba diving companies should highlight the unique, novel aspects of individual dive locations, especially to less experienced participants who may have less contextualised knowledge.

Since satisfaction significantly influences storytelling intention, company managers and destination authorities should actively encourage and enable the satisfied scuba divers to share

their positive experiences and stories, as emphasised by Kim & Kim (2019). The immediate sharing of positive affective feelings should also be given a platform, to allow for post-experience 'communal effervescence' (Turner, 1974) and the social interactions among scuba divers that may enhance social capital possibilities (Buckley, 2012). In doing so, the satisfaction through a more inclusive and interactive diving experience is increased, as well as influencing greater levels of participant re-engagement, review and recommendation (Triantafillidou & Petala, 2016).

As Oppewal, Huybers, & Crouch's research (2015: 474) demonstrated, destination marketers may influence tourists' destination choices by "selectively and sequentially exposing information about the destination and what it offers". Particularly where there is limited material about a planned experience, tourists will look for external information (Manthiou et al., 2016). Therefore, destination authorities are recommended to motivate tourists to share their experiences with others on various communication platforms like social media, so that potential visitors can be attracted by tourist stories, which are perceived less commercial than a destination's marketing messages.

Moreover, destination authorities may benefit from tourists' storytelling behaviour as a tool for destination image generation, branding and promotion. This is a result of the storytelling concept not only encapsulating tourists' personal narrations about their experiences, but also their stories about a destination through various communication media such as travel guides, magazines, documentaries, guided tours, and web sites (Chronis, 2012). Hence, informative and attractive tourist narratives can be shared both through personal interactions (WOM for example), and online-community platforms (such as social media).

As nearly half of the respondents in this survey classed themselves as inexperienced, this finding suggests that the flow experience is not the preserve of the scuba diving elite. If the opportunities for flow are to be enabled, the challenge should be correlative to the participants' skill levels. If the participants are pushed too far out of their comfort zone or skill limits, a negative flow experience can damage either revisit or recommendation intentions (Triantafillidou & Petala, 2016). For nascent participants in particular the guide should seek to moderate the risk and ensure a safe experience, paying attention to their physiological and psychological states (Tsaur et al., 2015); this will enable situations where the challenge is well matched to participants' skill levels. There is value in businesses catering for a wide range of experience levels and ensuring that such 'holistic sensations' are universally attainable. Both inexperienced and skilled participants are capable of feelings of flow and the intrinsic affective satisfaction it engenders, thus providing powerful material for the resultant social capital opportunities that arise from their experiences.

Study Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

This research has some limitations that should be mentioned. One of these is performing the research survey on tourists in a single destination, so the results may affect the generalizability of the findings for other destinations. However, the mixed methods approach,

significant sample and rigorous analysis allows for credible interpretation of the data available. Research data were collected in high season at the destination; therefore, seasonal differences in tourist characteristics, quality of services, and other factors were not taken into account. Arguably, it is most important to collect data at such times when the industry is running at peak capacity. In addition, the researchers collected data from both inexperienced and experienced scuba divers. This enabled them to obtain a heterogeneous and comparable data set of both quantitative and qualitative elements. The present study's research model should be also tested on other adventure tourism activities in other destinations. Whilst we have shown that experience level does not moderate satisfaction it is possible that it may influence other elements of the tourist experience and subsequent storytelling, so this may warrant further investigation.

Appendix 1. Descriptive statistics and normality test results (N=426)

Items	Description	Mean	Std. Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
C1	When I dived, I felt completely in control	6.101	1.072	-1.226	1.682
C2	I felt things were under control when I dived	5.937	1.163	-1.092	0.926
C3	Scuba diving equipment helped me to control everything	6.016	1.214	-1.900	4.877
FA1	I did not think of other things when I dived	6.192	1.312	-2.411	6.392
FA2	I totally concentrated when diving	6.188	0.916	-1.541	4.329
FA3	I became totally absorbed in diving	6.169	1.051	-1.319	2.133
TD1	Time seemed to pass quickly when diving	5.955	1.099	-1.201	1.858
TD2	I tended to lose track of time when diving	5.204	1.719	-1.047	0.409
TD3	Seeing different underwater landscapes, made me feel time passed quickly	5.453	1.677	-1.321	1.085
OS1	I am satisfied with the diving experience	6.087	1.137	-1.723	2.969
OS2	I am satisfied with the diving experience when compared with my expectations	5.707	1.588	-1.740	2.635
OS3	I am satisfied with the diving experience when considering my invested time and effort	5.873	1.275	-1.532	2.358
SI1	I intend to post photos to share my scuba diving experience with family and friends	6.012	1.204	-1.231	0.511
SI2	I intend to use social media to share my scuba diving experience with others	5.061	1.812	-0.639	-0.919
SI3	I intend to talk about my scuba diving experience with others by telling stories	6.124	1.341	-2.004	3.929
SI4	I intend to provide a narrative of my scuba diving experience to others	5.707	1.627	-1.383	0.796
SI5	In conversations, I intend to talk about my scuba diving experience through stories	6.162	1.305	-2.038	4.040

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