

IMPACT OF MARKETING AND COUNTRY ASPECTS ON SCUBA DIVING FOR TOURIST OUTCOMES: THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SCUBA TOURISTS' SATISFACTION AND THE MODERATING EFFECT OF MEMORABLE TOURISM EXPERIENCE IN CHINA

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of marketing and country-specific aspects on scuba diving-related tourist outcomes in China, focusing on the mediating role of scuba divers' satisfaction and the moderating effect of memorable tourism experiences in Sanya, China. Data were collected from 385 international scuba tourists using purposive sampling. Structural equation modeling via Smart PLS 4 was employed to assess how marketing elements such as advertisements and brand image, as well as country-specific factors, shape scuba diver satisfaction. Results reveal that while marketing and national attributes positively influence satisfaction, factors like price, safety, security, and accessibility show no significant impact. Additionally, scuba divers' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and revisit intentions. However, memorable tourism experiences do not moderate the link between satisfaction and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions. These findings contribute to sustainable tourism development (SDG 8), advocate for responsible tourism marketing (SDG 12), and support marine-based tourism aligned with conservation principles (SDG 14). The research contributes to the importance of sustainable marine tourism by focusing on the advertisements, brand image, and country knowledge that can motivate scuba diving operators, companies, managers and policymakers to attract scuba tourists.

Keywords: Scuba Diving, Tourist Outcomes, Scuba Diver Satisfaction, Memorable Tourism Experience, Marketing Aspects, Sustainable Tourism, SDG 8, SDG 12, SDG 14, Marine Tourism Development

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. *Context and Rationale*

China is the potential market for scuba diving. The revenue from sales of scuba diving in 2024 is \$233.3 Million and the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of scuba diving equipment in China from 2024 to 2031 is 5.5% (Mali, 2024). The country loves scuba diving with the booming scuba diving economy that is driven by the emerging middle class with disposable income and a love for new experiences. China has become one of the top places for scuba tourism and Hainan Island in China has the biggest diving site in the world with a huge number of dive sites preferred by the Chinese (Chinese Tourist Agency, 2023).

The rationale of the study is that there is insufficient research in understanding the country and market influences for scuba diving to deliver positive tourist outcomes. Sumanapala et al. (2023) stated that long-term studies are currently lacking despite the emergence of recreational scuba diving decades ago. Most studies by Cavallini et al. (2023) and Nababan (2023) are based on the sustainability aspects and ecological impacts of scuba diving, thereby ignoring the satisfaction rate of scuba divers that influences tourist outcomes. Marconi, et al. (2020) stated that there is a requirement to understand the expectations and needs of the divers despite the claims of profile, motivations, preferences, expectations, and satisfaction of the visitors impacting their choice of destination. The quality of the diving experience is a complicated variable that can be translated into the overall satisfaction of the diver with the visit. This requires considerable exploration of country and market influence scarcely found in previous research. This research seeks to explore the country and market influence on tourism outcomes through the mediating factor of scuba diver satisfaction. The next subpoint explains the problem and research gap.

1.2. *Problem and research gap*

The traditional tourism factors fail in scuba diving contexts, as scuba diving is positioned as the experience-dominant, and expertise-driven tourism niche. International scuba diving is more oriented in giving exotic and unique diving experiences, so divers are expected to have unique motivation and preferences (Metastat, 2024). A lack of knowledge of scuba divers can reduce their satisfaction, impacting tourist outcomes. Yiwen (2022) stated that a lack of good domestic sites for recreational diving has resulted in technical scuba diving which requires divers to acquire advanced techniques, operational equipment, and processes to thwart hazards like toxic gases, decompression sickness, and oxygen supply failure. In another investigation, it has been found that a diving instructor had abandoned three tourists in the sea, forcing them to swim for 2 hours to the near shore (Yan, 2024). This has drawn sharp criticism on social media against the scuba diver. Additionally, Prasetyo et al. (2023) stated that there is a lack of Indigenous perspectives on scuba diving due to a lack of community participation. This limited involvement is the reason for stakeholder complexities which can even decline the satisfaction rate of scuba divers to ensure positive tourism outcomes. Local communities can clash with global tourists, negatively impacting scuba diving tourism.

Previous studies could not explore the effects of mediating variable scuba diver satisfaction and moderating variable memorable tourism on tourist outcomes in China. The study by Nian et al. (2023) stated that tourism crowding and outstanding universal value attractiveness positively

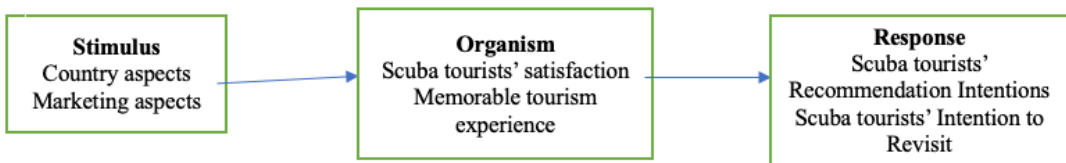
influence visitor satisfaction, but failed to focus on the mediating role of scuba diver satisfaction for positive tourist outcomes in Sanya. Yang et al. (2024) stated that the mediating role of tourist satisfaction and attitude can enhance the environmental experience, service experience, and sensory experience and affect the well-being of the tourists. However, the study failed to explore the mediating role of scuba diver satisfaction on tourist outcomes. The limited exploration of the moderating role of memorable tourism experience on Chinese tourists in scuba diving in previous studies is the rationale for this study. Overall, it can be said that there is a lack of studies regarding regional-specific factors, like Sanya, China, hosting scuba diving events to increase scuba divers' satisfaction. There is a need for intense research to identify and determine the factors influencing scuba divers' satisfaction in Sanya, China. Therefore, the next part explains the objectives and significance of the research.

1.3. Objectives and Significance

The study is significant for scuba divers, tourists, scuba diving companies, dive operators, tourism authorities, and policy makers to understand the importance of country factors, like accessibility, safety and security, country knowledge and marketing factors, like advertisements, brand image and price perception on scuba tourists' satisfaction. It seeks to explore the importance of scuba tourists' satisfaction on recommendation intention and intention to revisit. In Sanya, China. The overall contribution of the research is to understand the country and market factors that can influence scuba diving companies, operators and policymakers to utilise country and market factors to improve satisfaction rate among scuba divers so that they can revisit Sanya, China and recommend it to others.

The Introduction is explained followed by Literature Review to address the theoretical framework and gap for conducting the study. Then, it will address the hypothesis based on previous studies. A brief methodological review will help state the findings and discuss them. Lastly, the conclusion and implication will be presented to justify the findings in practical and theoretical settings.

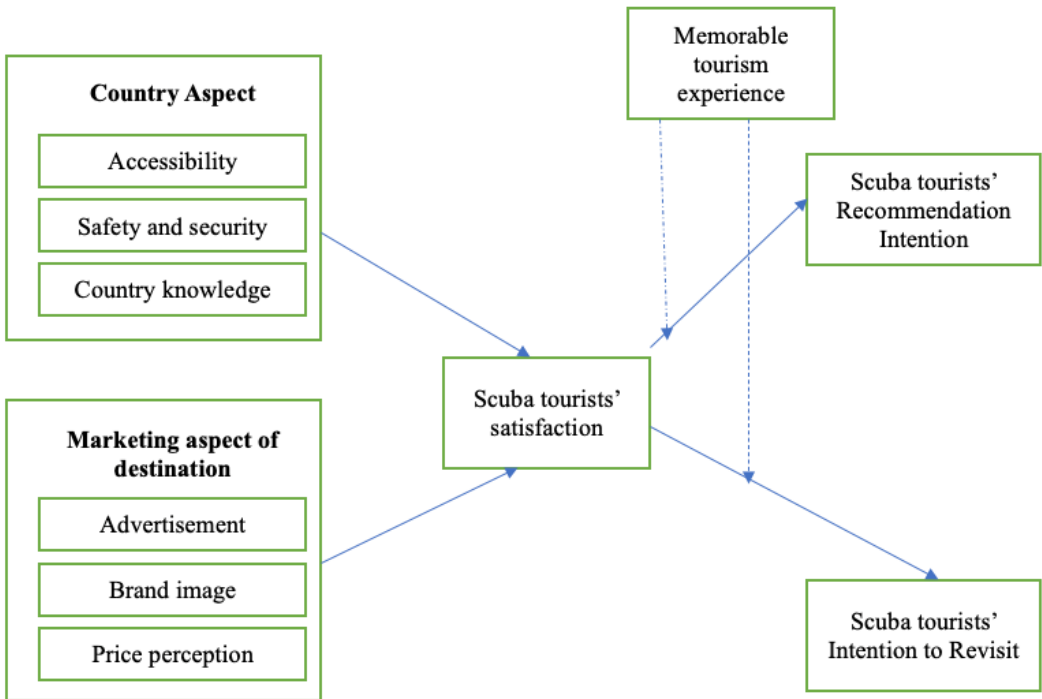
Figure 1: SOR theory



The Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory states that a stimulus can evoke a desired response through an internal process of the organism. The environmental elements are the stimuli as these aspects are external and can be distinguished from emotions and cognitions (Fan et al., 2023). It explores the interrelationship between scuba divers' Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions, satisfaction, and stimulus of services, lodging, facilities, and destination image (Ali et al., 2022). The current framework also aligns with the S-O-R model as the "Country Aspect" and "Marketing Aspect of Destination" act as stimuli (S), influencing the internal state, represented by "Scuba tourists' satisfaction" (O). This internal satisfaction then drives behavioural responses (R), such as "Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions" and "Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit,"

completing the stimulus-organism-response chain. The SOR theory is important in understanding the stimulant factors, like accessibility, security, safety and country knowledge, along with advertisement, price perception and brand image to influence Organism or satisfaction among scuba tourists and tourism experiences for Response or recommendation and revisit intentions of scuba tourists for the specific regions, like Sanya, China. This shows that improving stimulants can influence organism of adventure-seeking scuba tourists for behavioural intention to revisit and recommend the region to others. However, the SOR theory is important for all theories, like Theory of Planned Behaviour and Expectation-Confirmation Theory in this research as it helps in comprehensive understanding of both internal emotions or cognitive states and external environment to explain behaviour of scuba tourists rather than post-consumption evaluation or planned rationality, making it appropriate for tourism studies.

Figure 2: Conceptual framework



2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Country aspects

Coastal areas have become popular among tourists due to greater accessibility. The findings by Marconi et al. (2020) stated that the quality of scuba diving experiences can be improved by

managers when they can access the characteristics of the users in marine protected areas. This can improve the accessibility of the users to the regions to enjoy improved diving experiences. Meanwhile, Albayrak et al. (2021) stated that accessibility and safety act as the pull motivations for holiday tourists in scuba diving. This shows the importance of safety and accessibility for Scuba tourists' satisfaction.

Tourists visit those spots that offer safety and security along with unspoiled characteristics of diving areas. Albayrak et al. (2021) stated that authorities should ensure safety and security precautions while promoting underwater richness to tourists. However, Omar (2020) argued that the diving centres may not fully the factors of safety, security and marine health for beginning divers. This requires intensive research to understand the relationship between safety and security and Scuba tourists' satisfaction.

Country knowledge is crucial for scuba divers to improve tourist experiences. The study by Zhang et al. (2024) stated that the demographic backgrounds of divers influence their underwater behaviour as experienced divers show more responsible underwater behaviour than younger divers. Meanwhile, Lee et al. (2023) argued that environmentally responsible behaviours (ERB) among scuba divers are influenced by the country knowledge since various countries have various ERB segments. This requires further understanding of the relationship between Scuba tourists' satisfaction and country knowledge. Thus, on reviewing and analysing the previous studies, it is found that there is a lack of exploration of accessibility, safety, security and knowledge of country on satisfaction of scuba tourists as they explore scuba diving in Sanya, China, leading to the following hypotheses.

H1- Accessibility positively influences Scuba tourists' satisfaction

H2: Safety and security positively influence Scuba tourists' satisfaction

H3: Country knowledge positively influences Scuba tourists' satisfaction

Having examined the country-specific contexts, the next section discusses about marketing aspects on satisfaction.

2.2. Marketing aspects

Advertisement is crucial for scuba divers to attract tourists. Storytelling is the word-of-mouth communication by which tourists can communicate their experiences to the divers. High involvement, social interaction and qualification of the participants are crucial to investigating flow tourism in scuba diving (Cater et al. 2021). Demircan et al. (2023) stated mobile apps and Ali et al. (2024) stated the importance of online advertising to attract tourists.

A study by Cater et al. (2021) stated that storytelling is the determinant of brand image and satisfaction of tourists and scuba divers. Rondonuwu & Mandagi (2023) Islamy et al. (2022) stated that a strong corporate and brand image could significantly influence tourists to visit a place. However, Set et al. (2023) argued that scuba divers' satisfaction is subjective and is impacted by external factors like the dynamics of the dive group or the weather. Diverse mental experiences of divers can enhance satisfaction following the tour activities. This creates a brand image that can help scuba divers attract more tourists.

Perceived value is the variable that helps companies to set the quality and prices of their services. This requires an analysis of the economic-functional value that influences tourists to return to their destination (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). Qiu et al. (2021) stated that non-local female tourists with younger ages and higher incomes have a higher willingness to purchase quality products than local male tourists with older ages and lower incomes.

Scuba divers can recommend scuba diving spots to tourists according to their preferences. Persuasive communication between scuba divers and tourists can enable scuba divers to recommend the right places to visit (Sumanapala et al., 2023). Albayrak et al. (2021) further argued that the satisfaction of the scuba divers is crucial in motivating and influencing the tourists to have an enriching scuba diving experience. This can ensure the overall satisfaction of the divers as the divers can easily attract tourists to the region.

Satisfaction has become a major concern in tourism businesses as it leads to the willingness to recommend. Divers generally evaluate their satisfaction with their scuba diving experience after performing their activities (Ali et al. 2022). This can influence tourists to revisit the destination when they are satisfied with the services of scuba divers. When scuba divers are satisfied, they also tend to revisit the destination while recommending the place to the target customers (Zaid, 2023; Marconi et al., 2023; Jawabreh et al., 2023). This also influences the perception risks of the tourists in underwater exploration which also influences their revisit. On reviewing and analysing the previous studies, it can be said that marketing factors can influence satisfaction of scuba divers as they seek unique exploring and travelling experiences under the water. Even though several studies have explored the importance of marketing in tourism, few have integrated both marketing and country-specific dimensions within a unified behavioral framework, particularly in the context of China's scuba diving industry. There needs exploration of advertising, brand image and price perception to understand the satisfaction rate among scuba divers, which can influence recommendation intention and revisit intention, proposing the following hypotheses.

H4: Advertisement positively influences Scuba tourists' satisfaction

H5: Brand image positively influences Scuba tourists' satisfaction

H6: Price perception positively influences Scuba tourists' satisfaction

H7: The satisfaction of scuba divers positively impacts the Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions

H8: The satisfaction of scuba divers positively impacts the Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit

Having examined the marketing-specific contexts, the next section discusses about mediating role of satisfaction of scuba divers.

2.3. Mediating role of satisfaction of scuba divers

The satisfaction of scuba divers is crucial in understanding the tourist outcomes as more satisfied scuba divers can influence tourists to visit the places, thereby increasing revising attention and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions. Satisfaction is the emotional reaction that comes after the consumption process when the customer compares the expected performance with the actual experience (Oliver, 2014). Studies by Sumanapala et al. (2023); Marconi et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2023); and Albayrak et al. (2021) stated that high-quality diving experiences can be rendered through the experiences of scuba divers who can give in-depth information about marine life. The

overall satisfaction of scuba divers can create awareness among users regarding protected areas through pre-dive briefing as argued by (Giglio et al., 2022). This can boost wildlife tourism in the region and attract tourists to marine exploration. When the scuba divers are satisfied with the diving experiences and positive tourist feedback, they are likely to revisit the marine regions. Kozak and Rimmington (2000) stated the importance of relationship between tourists' intention to recommend and perception of overall satisfaction, indicating that higher satisfaction level with the destination can influence them to revisit in the future and recommend the destination. However, Berry et al. (1994) argued that companies are struggling to improve service due to ill-conceived service programs and undermined credibility of the management with no effective actions. The SOR theory can effectively explain that the use of stimulus, like country and marketing aspects to influence Organism (Scuba Tourists' satisfaction) for Response (Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions). On reviewing and analysing the literature studies, it can be said that satisfaction can play a crucial role for scuba tourists to recommend the region to others and also revisit the place to increase the significance of tourist spot, leading to the proposal of the next hypothesis. Previous studies are more concerned with the satisfaction rate of scuba tourists, but the mediating role in scuba diving experiences in Sanya, China needs further exploration.

H9: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Country Knowledge and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

H10: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Price Perception and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H11: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Safety and Security and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H12: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Price Perception and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

H13: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Safety and Security and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

H14: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Accessibility and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H15: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Advertisement and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H16: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Brand Image and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H17: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Accessibility and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

H18: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Country Knowledge and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit.

H19: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Advertisement and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

H20: Scuba Tourists' satisfaction mediates the relationship between Brand Image and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions.

Having examined the country-specific contexts, the next section discusses about Moderating role of memorable tourism experiences.

2.4. Moderating role of memorable tourism experiences

Memorable tourism experiences (MTE) are crucial to deriving positive tourist outcomes through local culture, knowledge and involvement to influence tourist behavioural intention to visit the destination. According to Tung and Ritchie (2011), memorable tourism experiences consist of the following factors affecting the feelings, expectations being met or surpassed, personal significance, and memory of the trip taken afterwards. MTE can ensure heritage tourism by which tourists can identify with the cultural artefacts and revisit the place (Rasoolimanesh et al., 2022). Su et al. (2023) further stated that the tourism experience generally affects the well-being of tourists through storytelling and recollection. This shows that the tourism experience promotes storytelling, recollection and subjective well-being which can influence tourists to revisit the region. The study by Su et al. (2023) criticised the destination crisis events by which tourists can experience sympathy and anger. This can affect their Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit as they may not consider the recommendations of the organisations if they are responsible for this crisis. Cater et al. (2021) stated that the scuba diving experience does not have a moderating role in the experience or satisfaction relationship. Therefore, previous studies show the importance of memorable experiences that can attract the tourists for specific tourist spots to gain unique scuba diving experiences, leading to next hypotheses. The Experience Economy claims that when places offer lively experiences in four areas: entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism, they create memorable tourism value (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). In this way, tourists are seen as active participants, equating them with the consumers who merely enjoy the products. This viewpoint shows the importance of memorable tourism experiences as an experiential construct of higher order, which has an impact on behavioural outcomes in experience-dominant niches like scuba diving.

H13: Memorable tourism experience significantly moderates the relationship between the Scuba tourists' satisfaction and the Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions

H14: Memorable tourism experience significantly moderates the relationship between scuba divers' satisfaction and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit

The current research fills the existing gap in exploring the relationship between country and marketing aspects to influence satisfaction among Scuba tourists. It explores the importance of memorable tourism experiences and satisfaction of scuba divers between country and market factors on recommendation and revisit intention in Asian contexts, unlike in previous literature studies.

3. METHODOLOGY

The empirical research method was conducted through the primary research method. The survey data were collected from 385 international scuba tourists in Sanya, China. The primary research method used in this research helped in getting first-hand information and data that have remained unpublished (Taherdoost, 2021). The primary data ensured reliability and validity as it helped in getting high-quality data that could not be obtained from published sources. The quantitative

method was used in this research, as it helped in getting real-time information about the topic. Quantitative data is numerical data that is analysed to determine the relationships through statistical analysis (Taherdoost, 2021). The statistical tests helped in determining trends and identifying the relationships between variables. An online survey was used to collect quantitative data, and a structured questionnaire was used for this purpose. Purposive sampling was used to select the global tourists or non-national Chinese engaged in one scuba diving activity in Sanya who are at least 18 years old and communicate in English or Chinese. The rationale for purposive sampling is that it helps in identifying a particular sample that holds important and different views about the issues and ideas in question and can be included in the sample (Campbell et al., 2020). A structured questionnaire was used through the measurement scale from the studies Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin (2017); Hsu et al., (2017); Cham et al. (2021); Weng et al. (2021); Pars and Gulsel (2011) and Rehman et al. (2023) which helped to conduct this survey. The satisfaction construct was taken from Neal et al. (2007); recommendations from Chen et al. (2020) and Chang et al. (2018), revisit from Maxham III and Netemeyer (2002) and Zeithaml et al. (1996) and memorable experiences from Kim et al. (2012) to determine the variable relationship. (refer to Appendix 1) The questionnaire was adapted through a rigorous translation, validation and pilot testing to ensure measurement accuracy and clarity. The constructs were developed in English in the initial stage, then it was translated into Chinese language through a back translation method, where researcher translated the instruments into Chinese, and then back into English for semantic equivalence. The researcher has made minor adjustments in the words for cultural adjustment and comprehension. A pilot test was conducted for internal consistency with Cronbach Alpha values being 0.70 for all items. After pilot testing, full scale data collection was conducted and validation results were confirmed acceptability reliable. Discriminant and convergent validity ensured that measurement instruments were suitable and robust for testing hypotheses.

The questionnaire was distributed through a Weibo group of scuba divers and users and they were encouraged to participate in the survey, lasting for 72 days. The data was collected through a WJX questionnaire. The questionnaire was framed on a 7-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The collected data was interpreted through Smart PLS 4. The rationale for SMART PLS is due to the small sample size, data non-normality and predictive focus. In this research, descriptive statistics showed the demographic characteristics of the data, whereas Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesis. The study tested the direct, indirect and total effects among the chosen variables through the mediation model. In this research, the sample size was determined by the Cochran formula.

$$n = \frac{t^2 \times p \times (1 - p)}{(m.e)^2} = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times (1 - 0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 384.16 \approx 385 \text{ respondents}$$

Here n = sample size

t = t-stat at 95% confidence interval= 1.96

[p*(1-p)] = maximum estimation of variance that can be obtained m.e.= margin of error; maximum acceptable margin of error is 5%. 95% of the confidence level shows that the stated sample size is feasible in this research. The researcher abided by ethical consideration by getting informed consent from the participants, ensuring privacy and confidentiality of respondents and confirming their voluntary participation.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Descriptive

Table 1: Frequency of the participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Age	18-28	132	34.3	34.3	34.3
	29-39	164	42.6	42.6	76.9
	40-50	57	14.8	14.8	91.7
	>50	32	8.3	8.3	100.0
Gender	Years				
	Male	231	60.0	60.0	60.0
Scuba Driving Experience	Female	154	40.0	40.0	100.0
	0-1	51	13.2	13.2	13.2
	2-3	156	40.5	40.5	53.8
	4-5	97	25.2	25.2	79.0
Scuba Diving Experience in Sanya	6-7	57	14.8	14.8	93.8
	>7 Years	24	6.2	6.2	100.0
	0-1	138	35.8	35.8	35.8
	2-3	94	24.4	24.4	60.3
	4-5	97	25.2	25.2	85.5
	6-7	32	8.3	8.3	93.8
	>7 Years	24	6.2	6.2	100.0

The frequency distribution table shows a diverse demographic of respondents. The majority are 29-39-year-old participants (42.6%) and male (60%). Most participants have 2-3 years of experience in scuba diving (40.5%). However, a significant portion has experience over 2-5 years (50%) in Sanya, China. This indicates that the chosen sample is significantly representative, and further analysis can be possible.

4.2. Reliability and validity

Table 2: Reliability and validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho _a)	Composite reliability (rho _c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Accessibility	0.775	0.796	0.869	0.689
Advertisement	0.724	0.810	0.840	0.644
Brand Image	0.924	0.924	0.952	0.869
Country Knowledge Scuba tourists'	0.785	0.834	0.875	0.704
Intention to Revisit Scuba tourists'	0.809	0.838	0.887	0.723
Memorable	0.726	0.835	0.838	0.642
Tourism Experience				
Price Perception	0.818	0.820	0.892	0.734
Scuba tourists' Recommendation	0.890	0.894	0.931	0.819
Intentions				
Safety and Security	0.768	0.767	0.866	0.683
Scuba Diver's satisfaction	0.694	0.695	0.830	0.619

Table 2 suggests strong reliability and validity. Cronbach's alpha values meet or exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (Cheung et al., 2024), ensuring internal consistency. At the same time, Composite reliability metrics ($\rho_{\alpha\alpha}$ and $\rho_{\rho\rho}$) confirm this reliability, with most constructs scoring above 0.8, indicating high internal consistency (Ahmad et al., 2016), particularly for Brand Image and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions. The AVE values above 0.5 support good convergent validity (Sürücü & Maslakci, 2020). While "Scuba Diver's Satisfaction" has the lowest scores across et al., metrics, it still meets minimum reliability standards. Overall, the data supports the constructs' robustness, making them suitable for further analysis.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterions

	Accessibility	Advertisement	Brand Image	Country Knowledge	Intention to Revisit	Memorable Tourism Experience	Price Perception	Recommendation intention	Safety and Security	Scuba Driver's satisfaction
Accessibility	0.830									
Advertisement	0.578	0.803								
Brand Image	0.535	0.910	0.932							
Country Knowledge	0.433	0.685	0.662	0.839						
Intention to Revisit	0.388	0.831	0.857	0.560	0.851					
Memorable Tourism Experience	0.580	0.972	0.900	0.666	0.839	0.801				
Price Perception	0.521	0.810	0.827	0.617	0.750	0.790	0.857			
Recommendation intention	0.450	0.870	0.945	0.653	0.886	0.857	0.791	0.905		
Safety and Security	0.513	0.560	0.507	0.465	0.418	0.547	0.434	0.455	0.826	
Scuba Driver's satisfaction	0.473	0.845	0.823	0.796	0.782	0.856	0.735	0.800	0.477	0.787

The Fornell-Larcker scores are highly construct valid and the high diagonal figures show good convergent validity. The relationships between the constructs are theoretically significant and they mirror clearly established relationships in tourism behaviour. In general, the measurement model is strong and can be used in the further structural analysis.

4.3. Outer loadings

Table 4: Factor Loadings

	Accessibility	Advertisement	Brand Image	County Knowledge	Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	Memorable Tourism Experience	Price Perception	Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	Safety and Security	Scuba Diver's satisfaction
Acc1	0.807									
Acc2	0.893									
Acc3	0.787									
Ad1		0.595								
Ad2		0.897								
Ad3		0.879								
B11			0.895							
B12			0.947							
B13			0.954							
CK1				0.894						
CK2				0.922						
CK3				0.681						
MTE1					0.571					
MTE2					0.896					
MTE3					0.893					
PP1						0.831				
PP2						0.831				
PP3						0.906				
RI1							0.925			
RI2							0.899			
RI3							0.890			
RV1				0.802						
RV2				0.909						
RV3				0.838						
SS1								0.842		
SS2								0.837		
SS3								0.799		
Sat1										0.773

Sat2	0.791
Sat3	0.797

The factor loading matrix indicates significantly good reliability and validity (Factor loadings>0.7). The table above suggests that no substantial cross-loadings support discriminant validity, as each item within the construct has a loading value above 0.7. Even though some of the measurement items (e.g., CK3 = 0.681, MTE1 = 0.571, Ad1 = 0.595, Sat1 = 0.773) have relatively small factor loadings, they were not dropped as they are greater than the 0.50 lower recommended level of acceptable factor loading. This confirms that each item corresponds predominantly with its construct. Hence, this measurement model suits further analysis because the constructs are well-defined.

4.4. Path analysis

Direct

Table 5: Direct effects analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Remarks
Accessibility -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	-0.041	-0.040	1.951	0.051	H1-not-accepted
Advertisement -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	0.395	0.392	6.904	0.000	H4-accepted
Brand Image -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	0.215	0.217	3.918	0.000	H5-accepted
Country Knowledge -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	0.399	0.400	13.802	0.000	H3-accepted
Price Perception -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	0.024	0.025	0.534	0.594	H6- Not accepted
Safety and Security -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	-0.028	-0.029	0.990	0.322	H2-not accepted
Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.236	0.233	3.960	0.000	H8- Accepted
Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.245	0.244	5.268	0.000	H7- Accepted

The direct effects analysis shows significant relationships between various factors and scuba diver satisfaction. Key factors such as advertisement (H4), brand image (H5), and country knowledge (H3) have a strong positive impact on satisfaction, leading to high t-statistics and low p-values (all <0.05). However, accessibility, safety and security, and price perception do not significantly affect satisfaction (p>0.05). Therefore, marketing domain, advertisement and brand image have a direct effect on satisfaction. From country-specific domains only, country knowledge has a significant effect on Scuba tourists' satisfaction. Now, satisfaction strongly predicts Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit (H8) and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions (H7), emphasising the importance of customer satisfaction in driving future engagement.

4.5. *Indirect effects***Table 6:** Indirect effects of analysis

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Remarks
Country Knowledge -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.098	0.098	4.555	0.000	H9- accepted
Price Perception -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.006	0.006	0.520	0.603	H10-Not accepted
Safety and Security -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	-0.007	-0.007	0.897	0.370	H11-Not accepted
Price Perception -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.006	0.006	0.542	0.588	H12-Not accepted
Safety and Security -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	-0.007	-0.007	0.920	0.358	H13-Not accepted
Accessibility -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	-0.010	-0.009	1.760	0.078	H14-Not accepted
Advertisement -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.093	0.091	3.816	0.000	H15- accepted
Brand Image -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.051	0.051	2.491	0.013	H16- accepted
Accessibility -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	-0.010	-0.010	1.800	0.072	H17-not accepted
Country Knowledge -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.094	0.094	3.625	0.000	H18- Accepted
Advertisement -> Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.097	0.095	4.663	0.000	H19- Accepted
Brand Image -> Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.053	0.054	2.665	0.008	H20- Accepted

Table 6 shows that advertisement (H15), brand image (H16), and country knowledge (H18) positively affect Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions via satisfaction ($P < 0.05$). Thus, regarding the destination's marketing aspect, the country's brand image and advertisement both increase revisit intention and Scuba tourists'

Recommendation Intentions via satisfaction. However, in each of these three dimensions, brand image and advertisement from marketing and country knowledge from the country aspect have also shown a direct effect on satisfaction. Therefore, the mediation effect is partial, as a significant portion of revisit and Scuba tourists' Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions can be explained by customer satisfaction, but not completely.

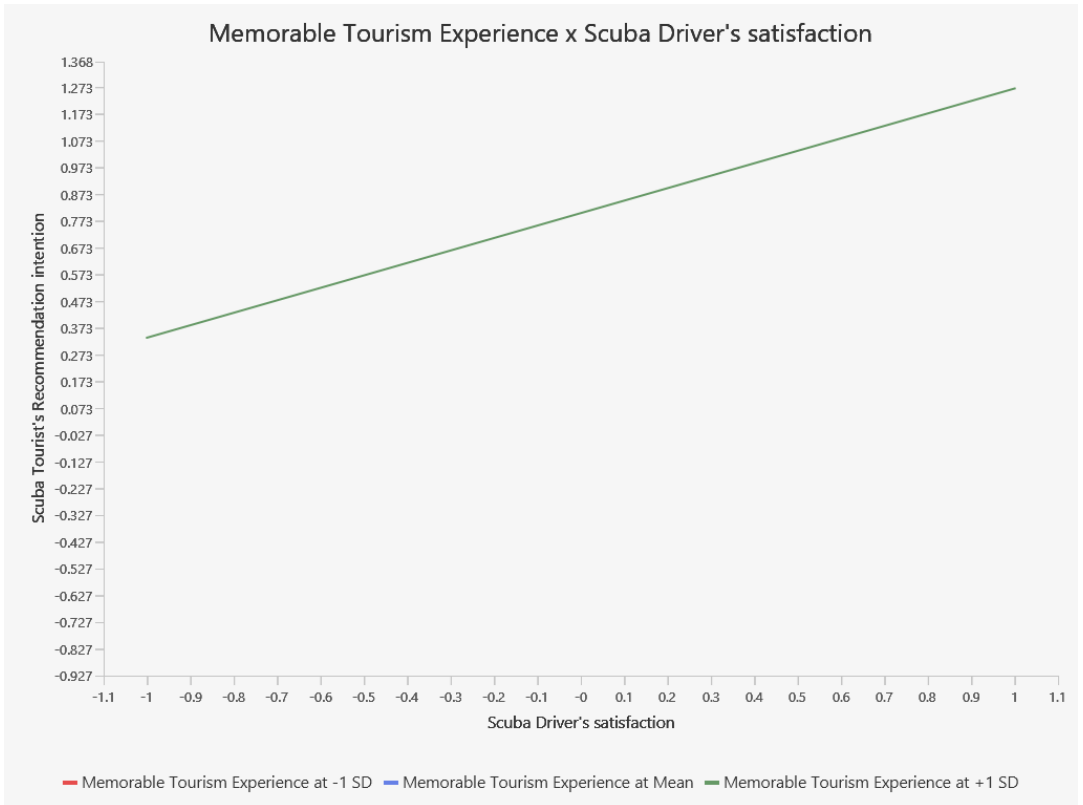
4.6. Moderated

Table 7: Moderation

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	T statistics ((O/STDEV))	P values	Remarks
Memorable Tourism Experience x Scuba Tourists' Satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.064	0.056	1.529	0.126	H22-Not accepted
Memorable Tourism Experience x Scuba Tourists' satisfaction -> Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions	0.221	0.213	4.618	0.000	H21-Accepted

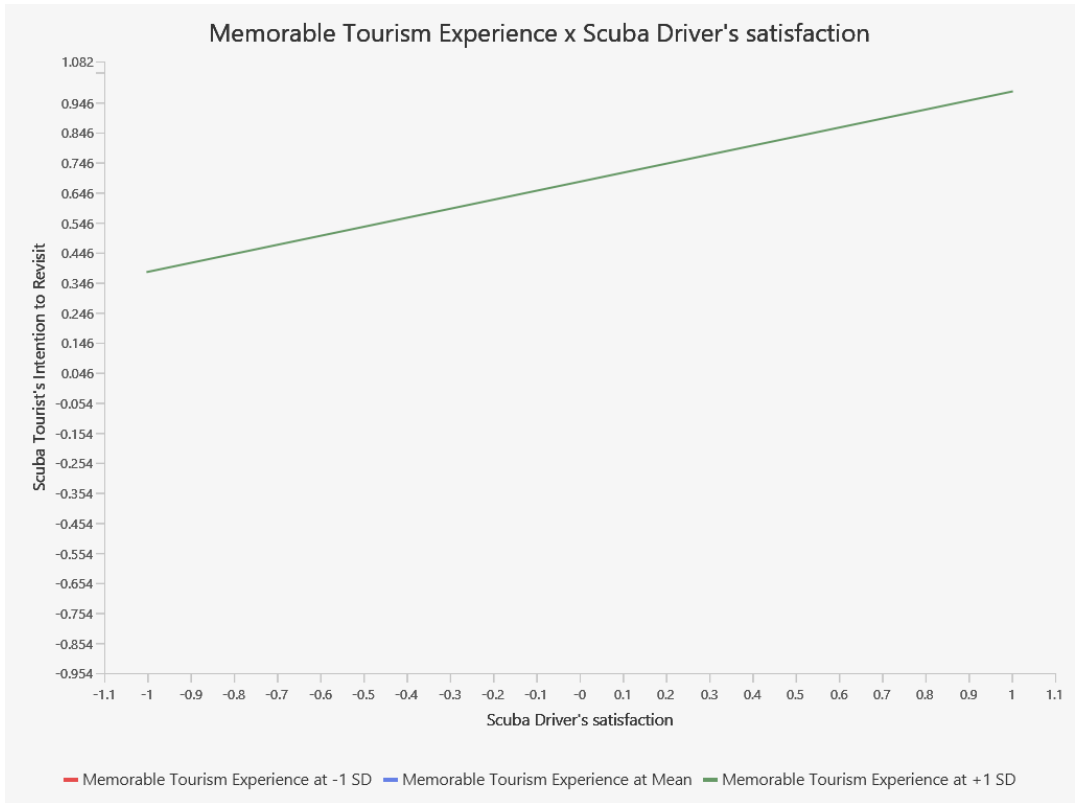
Table 7 above shows that memorable experiences only effectively increase satisfied consumers' ($p < 0.05$). However, memorable experiences cannot be a factor that increases the Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit ($p > 0.05$). A memorable tourism experience significantly enhances the relationship between satisfaction and but does not impact the Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit. Hence, a memorable experience where scuba divers feel satisfied will mostly recommend others to do the same; however, it may not influence them to revisit.

Figure 3: Moderating Effect of Memorable Tourism Experience on the Relationship between Scuba Diver's Satisfaction and Recommendation Intention



The slope shows that scuba satisfaction has a positive moderating relationship with the recommendation intention of the scuba diver, which is influenced by memorable tourism experience. Increased satisfaction results in increased improvement of the recommendation intention as reported by the tourists on more memorable experiences implying that memorable experiences reinforce positive word of mouth behavior.

Figure 4: Moderating Effect of Memorable Tourism Experience on the Relationship between Scuba Diver's Satisfaction and Revisit Intention



The moderation slope indicates that scuba divers' satisfaction produces a more positive impact on revisit intention in the high memorable tourism experience. The level of revisit intention grows steeper as satisfaction grows in higher levels, which means that memorable experiences enhance revisit intention by tourists.

4.7. R-square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit	0.725	0.722
Scuba Tourists' satisfaction	0.814	0.813
	0.813	0.811

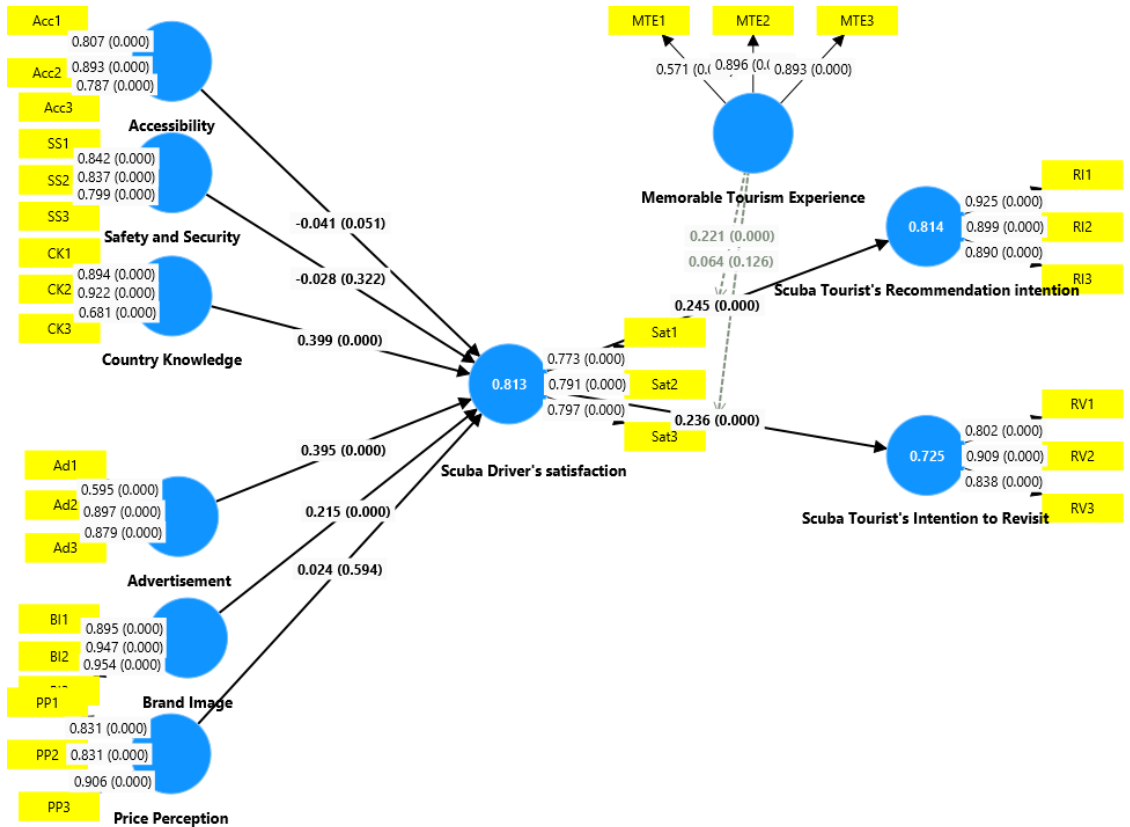
Table 8: R-square

Table 8 demonstrates the built model has strong explanatory power, with R² values of 0.725, 0.814, and 0.813 for Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit, and Scuba tourists' satisfaction, respectively.

These values indicate that a substantial proportion of variance is explained by the selected predictors, reflecting a well-specified, theory-driven model rather than overfitting.

4.8. Final model

Figure 5: Final model



This final model demonstrates the overall model and effective relation among all the constructs. The model explained strong explanatory power and significant influences, particularly in how satisfaction drives Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit and Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions through country-specific dimensions of country knowledge and marketing-specific dimensions of brand image and advertisement.

Table 9: Effect size relevance

Predictor Constructs	Scuba Driver's Satisfaction (f ²)	Intention to Revisit (f ²)	Recommendation Intention (f ²)	Q ²
Accessibility	0.005	–	–	–
Advertisement	0.049	–	–	–
Brand Image	0.069	–	–	–
Country Knowledge	0.448	–	–	–
Memorable Tourism Experience	–	0.248	–	0.508
Price Perception	0.007	–	–	–
Safety and Security	0.000	–	–	–
Scuba Driver's Satisfaction	–	0.128	–	0.188
Memorable Tourism Experience × Scuba Driver's Satisfaction	–	0.018	0.249	0.249

The f² results indicate that country knowledge and memorable tourism experience exert meaningful effects on scuba diver satisfaction, while the interaction effect shows a substantive moderating influence on recommendation intention.

Table 10: Predictive Relevance (Q²)

Endogenous Construct	SSO	SSE	Q ²
Scuba Diver's Satisfaction	1155.000	588.487	0.490
Scuba Tourists' Intention to Revisit	1155.000	604.293	0.477
Scuba Tourists' Recommendation Intention	1155.000	462.463	0.600

The Q² results indicate strong predictive relevance of the structural model. Scuba Diver's Satisfaction (Q² = 0.490), Intention to Revisit (Q² = 0.477), and Recommendation Intention (Q² = 0.600) all exceed zero, confirming substantial out-of-sample predictive accuracy and model robustness.

4.9. Discussion

The empirical results show that country knowledge, advertisement, and brand image positively influence the satisfaction of scuba divers. The findings show that scuba divers are satisfied when they have sufficient country knowledge and can promote tourism products and services. Effective brand image can ensure a high satisfaction rate for scuba divers as they can easily attract tourists. The findings of this research are similar to the findings of Zhang et al. (2024); Lee et al. (2023) showing that scuba divers should know about the country to give enriching experiences to the users. Country knowledge can enable scuba divers to suggest the most interesting scuba diving places to attract visitors. Studies from Cater et al. (2021); Demircan et al. (2023); Ali et al. (2024) is also similar to the findings of this research that show advertisements can augment satisfaction of the scuba divers. Advertisements can enable scuba divers to promote tourist places and regions to augment tourism in scuba diving regions. This can influence more young generations to opt for scuba diving experiences.

The empirical findings also contribute to the research by adding that brand image positively influences satisfaction with scuba diving, which is similar to the literature findings of (Rondonuwu & Mandagi, 2023); (Islamy et al., 2022). The findings show that accessibility does not significantly

and positively influence scuba divers' satisfaction, showing that scuba divers in China, Sanya may not be inclined to scuba diving experiences even if they get scuba diving opportunities. Safety and security do not share a positive relationship with scuba divers' satisfaction, showing that safety and security cannot enhance the satisfaction of scuba divers in China. Scuba divers may not undergo scuba diving experiences even if they are safe and secure. However, the positive relationship between country knowledge and scuba divers' satisfaction shows that knowledge of China, as a country and Sanya, as a region, influences scuba divers to undergo scuba diving experiences. Country knowledge enables scuba divers to understand the regions that can enrich their scuba diving experiences. These findings contradict the literature findings of Marconi et al. (2020) of a positive relationship between accessibility and scuba divers' satisfaction. This shows that accessibility cannot ensure the satisfaction of scuba divers, as tourists can easily gain access to Sanya due to convenient transportation. Scuba tourism has evolved due to accessibility and convenience. The mentioned above is a pattern that supports the argument of Tung and Ritchie (2011) that memorable experiences are often perceived as once-in-a-lifetime events, thus facilitating storytelling and recommendation but discouraging repeated visitation. The research findings also contradict the literature findings of Lee et al. (2023), arguing that safety and security are statistically unsupported scuba diver satisfaction. Scuba divers are not concerned about the safety and security of the region since they are more satisfied with the scuba diving experiences in Sanya. This is because tourists prefer food and hygiene in Sanya to get an enriching diving experience. A literature study by Lee et al. (2023) added that the environmentally responsible behaviour of scuba divers is important to influence sustainable marine tourism. This can enhance tourism satisfaction and loyalty. Rich marine biodiversity is the most vital factor influencing diver satisfaction. Destination managers can formulate effective marketing strategies to improve service quality regarding scuba diving experiences. Contradicting the current findings, safety and accessibility may not ensure scuba diver expectations, as environmental protection activities augment their satisfaction.

The empirical findings show that price perception does not influence the satisfaction rate of the scuba diver contradicting the literature findings by (Carvache-Franco et al., 2022). This shows that scuba divers are not concerned about prices to influence visitors and tourists to scuba diving. This is because tourists and visitors think that the prices in Sanya are reasonable so the scuba tourists are not much concerned about the prices. However, the satisfaction of scuba divers positively influences Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and revisit intention. These findings agree with the literature findings by Sumanapala et al. (2023); Ali et al. (2022); Zaid (2023); Marconi et al. (2023); Jawabreh et al. (2023) to show that scuba divers are satisfied when they recommend the right scuba diving places as per requirements and demands of the tourists, which further influence them to revisit the regions. The empirical findings further support the mediating role of scuba divers' satisfaction in improving the relationship between the country aspect, marketing aspect, Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and revisit intention. The literature findings by Sumanapala et al. (2023); Marconi et al. (2020); Lee et al. (2023); Albayrak et al. (2021) are similar to the findings of this research in understanding that when scuba divers are satisfied, they can recommend right places to the users to influence their revisit. This requires scuba divers to know marketing practices and country knowledge to influence users and visitors for recreational practices in the form of scuba diving.

The findings of this research also show that memorable tourism experiences positively moderate the relationship between Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and Scuba tourists' satisfaction. MTE can augment the satisfaction of scuba divers when they can recommend the right places to the tourists. This can improve recreational expectations and needs of tourists for scuba diving in Sanya. The literature studies by Rasoolimanesh et al. (2022). Su et al. (2023) supported the findings by stating that memorable tourism experiences can influence tourists to visit the place. The findings show that people have enriching experiences while visiting Sanya for scuba diving experiences. However, the findings of this research contradict the findings of the literature by stating that a memorable tourism experience cannot moderate the relationship between Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit and scuba divers' satisfaction. This implies that the tourists may not revisit the place even after having a memorable tourism experience. Even if the tourists are satisfied with the tourism experience, the scuba divers are not satisfied. The phenomenon observed here aligns with the experience economy rationale put forth by The Experience Economy by Pine & Gilmore (1999), which argues that emotions and memorability are the main outputs of experiences and that these are often the factors leading to more vocal support than to repeat consumption. The research is culturally relevant to understand the importance of sustainable marine tourism and destination marketing more than safety diving standards to influence satisfaction among scuba tourists.

5. CONCLUSION

It can be said that advertisement, brand image, and country knowledge influence scuba divers' satisfaction with positive tourist outcomes in China. The findings show that price perception, safety, security and accessibility could not influence scuba divers' satisfaction. This satisfaction also performs the mediating role to improve Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit. Scuba divers can improve the tourist experience by scuba diving through memorable tourism experiences. When the tourists are satisfied with the recommendation of scuba divers, they tend to revisit the regions. However, memorable tourism experience cannot moderately influence the Scuba tourists' satisfaction and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit. This shows that the tourists seek new places and regions to enjoy scuba diving. Scuba divers can improve their understanding of the area to give a memorable diving experience to the tourists so that they can revisit the region.

5.1. Theoretical implications

The research contributes to theoretical understanding by explaining the mediating role of scuba divers' satisfaction and the moderating role of memorable tourism experiences to influence tourist outcomes in scuba diving in China. This is done through the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) theory to explain the stimuli through country and marketing aspects. The organism is the Scuba tourists' satisfaction which drives behavioural responses such as Scuba tourists' Recommendation Intentions and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit. This research is crucial to understanding that price perception cannot influence scuba divers' satisfaction. Accessibility, safety and security cannot influence scuba divers' satisfaction for positive tourist outcomes. This research is crucial in understanding that a memorable tourism experience does not moderately influence the relationship

between scuba divers' satisfaction and Scuba tourists' Intention to Revisit. The research contributes to the theoretical understanding by stating that advertisement and brand image are necessary to improve scuba diving experiences of the tourists and visitors. It helps in understanding the importance of the SOR model to explain the importance of scuba divers' satisfaction to suggest the right regions for the tourists to ensure positive tourist outcomes. The research is extended to SOR theory to denote the importance of country knowledge, brand image and advertisement are the important stimulus factors to influence organism or satisfaction of scuba tourists to influence revisit and recommendation intentions of the scuba divers. It exceeds the generic tourism in specifying the importance of country and marketing factors for scuba divers to revisit the regions and recommend others to do the same.

5.2. Practical implications

The research has practical implications for scuba divers to understand the ways they can improve tourist outcomes in China. Scuba divers can easily develop targeted marketing strategies to attract users for enriching scuba diving experiences. The divers can easily influence the users revisit to the regions for their recreational and adventure purposes. Additionally, divers can engage in digital and social media marketing strategies to attract more tourists to Sanya. The research can help scuba divers focus on localised content to attract global customers for scuba diving. The scuba divers can ensure a memorable tourism experience by increasing local and cultural engagement practices. The results of this research can influence the stakeholders to augment satisfaction among scuba diving tourists, particularly regarding dive safety standards, destination marketing, and sustainable practices. It can also enable managers of scuba diving companies to influence scuba tourists to engage in memorable scuba diving experiences in Sanya, China through advertising, brand image and knowledge of the country.

5.3. Limitations and Future Study

The research produces comprehensive data and information about the influence of country and marketing aspects on tourist outcomes in China with the mediating role of scuba divers' satisfaction and the moderating role of memorable tourism experiences but it has certain limitations. Firstly, a cross-sectional study was conducted with a limited sample size within a limited time which could prevent the generalisation of the findings for a large population. The research design excludes interview data which could have enriched the research study. Secondly, the research is confined to understanding scuba diver satisfaction while ignoring tourist satisfaction. Thirdly, the research is confined to scuba diving experiences in China while ignoring the other developed regions where scuba diving is popular among users. This research will contribute to future studies by conducting a longitudinal study with a large sample size and focus on the tourist satisfaction rate in scuba diving experiences.

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APPENDIX

Accessibility (influenced by the scale of Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017)

There are many alternative ways to get to Sanya, China.

There are many convenient ways to get to Sanya, China.

There are many convenient transportation possibilities for getting around.

Safety (influenced by the scale of Hsu et al., 2017)

The food hygiene and safety standards in Sanya are excellent.

Public places in Sanya are clean and tidy.

Tourist attractions and facilities in Sanya are safe and secure.

Country (influenced by the scale of Cham et al., 2021)

I can easily obtain information about Sanya, China.

The quality of Travel in Sanya, China is excellent.

China's Sanya has a reputable travel service.

Advertisement (influenced by the scale of Weng et al., 2021)

The advertisement is very attractive

The advertisement catches my attention

I hope to learn about the history and culture of this place

Brand image (influenced by the scale of Pars & Gulsel, 2011)

There are many natural beauties at Sanya, China.

The accommodation facilities are adequate in number.

Sanya has high-quality accommodation facilities.

Price perception (influenced by the scale of Rehman et al., 2023)

I think the prices at Sanya are reasonable.

The price for the tour at Sanya region is appropriate.

Overall, the price charged in the Sanya region is inexpensive.

Satisfaction (influenced by the scale of Neal et al., 2007)

My overall assessment of this tour experience is favourable.

I am satisfied with this tourism experience

Recommendation (influenced by the scale of Chen et al., 2020)

I would suggest Sanya to anyone who intends to travel there.

I would tell my relatives, friends, and colleagues about the advantages of Sanya.

I would be happy to recommend Sanya to my relatives, friends, and colleagues.

Revisit (influenced by the scale of Zeithaml et al., 1996)

I will say positive things about Sanya, China.

I will tell other people about this place

I will speak about the good experiences on this trip with other people.

Memorable tourism experience (influenced by the scale of Kim et al., 2012)

I had a once-in-a-lifetime experience in Sanya

I had a unique experience in Sanya

My trip to Sanya was different from previous trips