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Longing for Digital-Free Trips: The Case of a Yoga Retreat

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ABSTRACT

People today are feeling exhausted by the continual distraction of mobile devices. Some are motivated to take a break from digital devices while travelling away from home. A popular combination is therefore to undergo a digital detox as part of a stay at a yoga retreat. This study examines how perceptions of novelty, effectiveness of co-creation of the digital-free hospitality experience, and the feeling of refreshment affect memorable digital-free hospitality experiences, as well as the relationship between these experiences and participants' subjective well-being, intention to revisit, and psychological resilience. Data were collected using WeChat from 522 Chinese guests who had stayed at a digital-free yoga retreat in China between October 2024 and April 2025. The results suggest that novelty, co-creation, and refreshment positively influence memorable digital-free hospitality experiences. Moreover, stays that are more memorable lead to higher subjective well-being, including psychological resilience, and a greater intention to revisit.

1 | Introduction

The widespread ownership of mobile technologies such as smartphones has transformed the hospitality experience. Today's mobile devices provide guests with full connectivity, including high-speed internet access. Many guests would consider such connectivity to be very welcome, and the benefits of digital connectivity for both guests and hospitality service providers have been discussed in the recent literature (Sthapit, Bjork, et al. 2024). Substantially less attention has been paid, however, to the possible intrusive effects of digital connectivity, which can hinder guests in pursuing their goal of having an enjoyable and memorable stay (Sharma et al. 2025). More and more people are feeling overwhelmed by the constant distraction of mobile devices in their everyday lives, which can motivate them to get away from the daily routine and take a break from digital

devices (Önder and Topsakal 2024). Hospitality service providers are thus beginning to offer products and services that facilitate temporary disconnection from digital technology (Sharma et al. 2025). Free from digital distractions, guests may be more able to relax and enjoy their stay (Sharma et al. 2025).

Scholars have accordingly begun to focus on how digital-free experiences are best designed and delivered. Also known as digital-detox experiences, digital-free hospitality experiences can take the form of a conventional stay where the use of digital devices is either strongly discouraged or banned entirely. Moreover, the stay could be linked to special interests such as spending time in natural areas or participating in mindfulness workshops, yoga classes, or religious retreats (Conti and Farsari 2022). Digital-free stays can be hosted at a wide range of venues, including campsites, spa resorts, mindfulness retreats,

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and hotels (Cai and McKenna 2023). Recent studies on digital-free experiences have examined factors that influence guests' attitudes and intentions with respect to engaging in this form of stay (Sharma et al. 2025). The themes considered relate to, for example, disconnection (Conti and Farsari 2022) and authentic personality (Önder and Topsakal 2024). Some studies have investigated guests' digital-free experiences at places such as digital-detox camps (Sutton 2020) and well-being retreats (Quaye 2025). Despite this growing body of literature, however, there is still limited understanding of how going to digital-free environments can contribute to an individual's well-being, resilience, or re-purchase intentions.

Tourism and hospitality service providers have also at the same time been attempting to make their offers more memorable: a measure of which is that the experiences they have remain as positive, personally significant, long-lasting memories (Sthapit et al. 2025; Stone and Sthapit 2024). Creating memorable experiences is imperative to gain a competitive advantage (Sthapit et al. 2025). Numerous studies have been undertaken, across a variety of settings, to examine the role of memorability: not only in hospitality but also in wider tourism experiences (Arissaputra et al. 2025). Many of these have adopted the seven antecedents of memorable tourism experiences (MTEs) developed by Kim et al. (2012), those being local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, involvement, novelty, hedonism, and knowledge (Sthapit et al. 2019; Stone et al. 2022). Kim et al.'s (2012) study used a student sample, and students' decision making is unlikely to reflect that of typical visitors (Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018), there being little agreement on which specific factors contribute to these experiences (Sthapit et al. 2025). The decision process is, indeed, regarded as being significantly influenced by contextual factors (Murray et al. 2025).

Studies linked to MTEs (which in the hospitality context are often referred to synonymously as memorable hospitality experiences, or MHEs) have often employed one or more measures of guest satisfaction as a means of translating the formation of experience memorability onto specific business outcomes (Kahraman and Cifci 2023). There are strong arguments, however, to suggest that memorable experiences are a superior business outcome to guest satisfaction (Ju et al. 2025; Sthapit et al. 2025). The formation of an experience requires consumers (in this case, visitors and guests) to connect with the site (in this case, the destination and the accommodation venue) and its various features. Such a connection tends to be stronger when the visit is memorable because it necessarily involves the guest having meaningful cognitive and emotional involvement with various aspects of the destination (Bartoloni et al. 2025). This may, in turn, deliver superior outcomes such as greater intention to recommend, greater intention to revisit, greater place attachment and loyalty (Sthapit, Ji, et al. 2024), and/or a lasting increase in personal well-being (Sthapit et al. 2025).

Previous research on memorable experiences does not adequately recognise the special characteristics of digital-free travel, although very few studies have examined the inputs and outcomes of memorable experiences in this specific context (Sthapit, Ji, et al. 2024). The study aims, therefore, to propose and test a model of memorable digital-free hospitality experiences

(MDFHEs) that combines three key antecedents—novelty, co-creation, and refreshment—with subjective well-being (SWB), revisit intention, and psychological resilience as outcome variables. Data were gathered from Chinese guests aged 18 and above who attended a digital-free yoga retreat in China between October 2024 and March 2025. Today, yoga retreat has become prevalent as a fitness choice in China and can be traced back to the Buddhist dissemination of the concept of dharma, and the translation efforts of Kasyapa Matanga, Dharmarakṣa, Amoghavajra, Parthamasiris, and other monks in the Tang Dynasty (Jingwei 2023). The study aims to enhance existing understandings of the memorable hospitality experience concept by applying it to the increasingly important subject of digital-free hospitality in the context of digital-free yoga retreat. Such knowledge will assist industry professionals to more effectively plan and offer digital-free hospitality experiences that deliver an optimum mix of beneficial outcomes for both guests and service providers alike.

2 | Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

2.1 | Memory-Dominant Logic (MDL)

This study employs the concept of memory-dominant logic (MDL) to connect three antecedents of MDFHEs—novelty, co-creation of the digital-free hospitality experience, and refreshment—and three outcome variables—SWB, psychological resilience, and intention to revisit (see Figure 1). MDL focuses on the delivery of memorable experiences during the consumption journey (Harrington et al. 2019) and builds on the notion of customer-dominant logic (CDL), which maintains that customers derive value not because the exchange fulfils their basic needs but because it enables them to benefit from various experiences associated with consumption of the product. These are often categorised in terms of the four Es of escapism, entertainment, (a)esthetics, and education (Pine and Gilmore 2011). MDL, meanwhile, depicts those service experiences as interactions that then lead to the creation of value through the formation of memories (Harrington et al. 2019). Service providers and customers interact with one another to co-create these experiences (Mathis et al. 2016). These interactions lead to different customer experiences that create both good and bad memories. These memories can be said to then generate psychological and behavioural outcomes such as SWB, intention to revisit, and psychological resilience.

2.2 | Novelty and Memorable Experience

Novelty is a fundamental component of both hospitality and broader tourism experiences (Mitas and Bastiaansen 2018). In this study, novelty is defined as a situational variable relating to how far a person will find the experiences had in a new, unusual, or innovative place or context more memorable (Baabdullah 2024). Novelty is selected as an antecedent variable in this study for three main reasons. First, recent studies suggest that novelty in hospitality relates to an individual's tendency to search for unique and memorable experiences that are new and different. Guests are known to be motivated to engage in activities primarily by the desire for novelty (Goo et al. 2022).

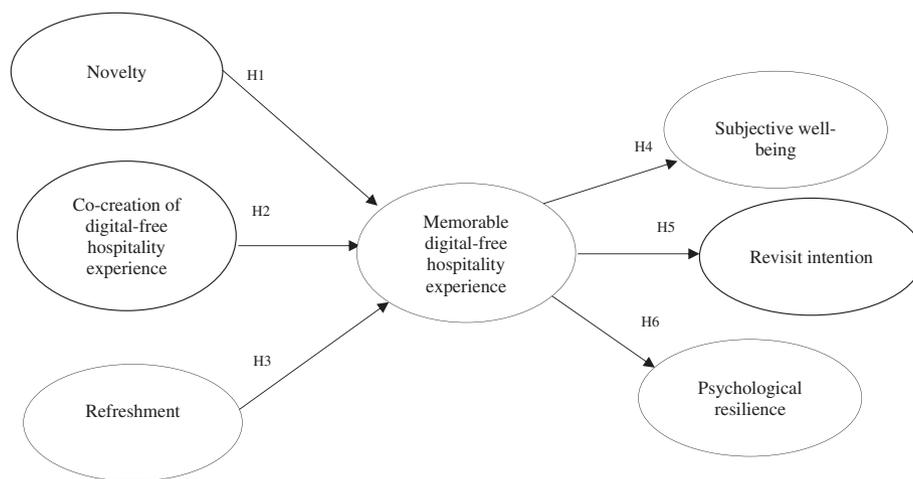


FIGURE 1 | Conceptual framework of the study.

Individuals who are relatively new to yoga are likely to find the experience in this study novel. Secondly, studies have found that the desire for novelty often comes from wanting to explore, relax, enjoy, and escape from daily routines (Pratminingsih et al. 2025). The desire to escape the ever-present clamour of digital devices may be an important type of novelty that guests are seeking. Thirdly, novelty has been found to be an important factor in choosing travel destinations (Liu et al. 2022), in this case a specific yoga retreat. Novelty can also be associated with more enjoyable experiences (Hosany et al. 2022) and can help people remember those experiences more vividly (Chen and Girish 2025). Experiences that are new and unique tend to have a stronger impact on guests, making their stays more memorable than experiences that are familiar (Sthapit et al. 2022). Understanding novelty is thus key to understanding the memorability of experiences (Skavronskaya et al. 2017). As such, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

H1. *Novelty is positively associated with MDFHES.*

2.3 | Co-Creation and Memorable Experience

How guests interact both with hospitality providers and other guests can greatly influence their evaluations of experiences (Hosany et al. 2022). The focus of service-dominant logic (SDL) is on the creation of value as people interact in mutually beneficial ways. It states that service providers and customers must collaborate to create experiences and value, making active interaction essential (Chathoth et al. 2016). Indeed, today's customers expect not merely to be passive recipients of value but to be actively involved in creating it (Forliano et al. 2020). Guests now play a more active role than ever in planning their hospitality experiences, engaging with service providers, and influencing other guests (Mathis et al. 2016). Increasingly, the latter includes the use of social media. Such exchanges and attitudes when sharing experiences are key to co-creating the experiences, and direct interactions are also vital in this process (Campos et al. 2017). The rationale for including co-creation as an antecedent variable is that experiences such as yoga retreats usually involve guests having a great deal of interaction both with service staff and other guests who are also attending the retreat (Sharma

et al. 2025). Research has shown that guest interactions with staff are important for hospitality experiences and that during on-site experience, guests enjoy exchanges with other guests and, in this way, share in their experiences (Pandey et al. 2025). Studies suggest that memorable hospitality experiences depend on this co-creation (Sthapit et al. 2025). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. *Co-creation is positively associated with MDFHES.*

2.4 | Refreshment

Refreshment concentrates on the state of mind and the depth of experiential engagement. Individuals highly value refreshment as a psychological benefit from their travel experiences (Coudounaris and Sthapit 2017). There are three reasons why visiting a digital-free yoga retreat may be associated with refreshment. First, the overuse of digital technologies is known to negatively affect an individual's well-being (Bellis et al. 2021). This implies that digital-free experiences can boost an individual's well-being by relieving their technology dependence and creating a feeling of mental refreshment. Digital-free experiences can thus serve as a reset, helping people return to their everyday lives with greater resilience to the negative impacts of digital technology (Hassan et al. 2022). Second, it is known that refreshment can result from escaping daily routines and worries to relax in a peaceful environment (Voigt et al. 2011). Guests seek relaxation to meet their psychological needs and to have a break from the pressures of everyday life (Cohen 1979). Travelling away from home is about leaving familiar places and discovering new ones, which can also feel very freeing (Caruana and Crane 2011). Relaxation and freedom from daily stress motivate guests, leading to a better mood and less psychological stress (Bowen and Clarke 2009). Kozak (2002) found escapism and relaxation to be the two most important reasons why people take holidays. Third, mindfulness practices such as enjoying nature or, in this case, participating in yoga workshops, can also provide refreshment and relaxation, both of mind and body (Conti and Farsari 2022). Refreshment can also arise from experiences that people remember positively after they return home (Kotur 2022). As such, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. *Refreshment is positively associated with MDFHEs.*

2.5 | Memorable Experience, Subjective Well-Being, Revisit Intention and Psychological Resilience

Guests tend to recall only certain aspects of their hospitality and broader tourism experiences (Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018; Kim and Ritchie 2014). A memorable experience is defined as one that leaves a positive impression that is remembered for a long time after it happens (Kim et al. 2012). In this study, the term MDFHE refers to a positive experience that can be recalled in detail after a stay at a digital-free retreat. This includes activities such as yoga, retreats, spas, and visits to natural places where electronic devices and the internet are banned entirely. Some studies show that memorable experiences in the context of hospitality and tourism are linked to greater SWB (Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018; Hosany et al. 2022) and a strong desire to return to the venue (Hosany et al. 2022). Others have found that memorable experiences are related to the individual having greater psychological resilience when they return home (Sthapit, Bjork, et al. 2024).

SWB plays a crucial role in influencing individuals' decision-making and experiences, particularly in the context of holidays (Rather et al. 2025). SWB serves as a measure of the happiness levels of guests (Qu and Robichau 2024) and reflects an individual's overall positive evaluation of their life, which encompasses feelings of pleasure, the absence of negative emotions, and general life satisfaction (Diener et al. 2009). It is common for individuals to regard SWB and happiness as interchangeable terms (Uysal and Sirgy 2019). Research suggests that happiness is derived from the accumulation of small, enjoyable moments (Gilbert and Abdulla 2004). SWB has been shown to enhance life satisfaction, which can be defined as the positive assessment an individual makes of their life overall (Veenhoven 1991). SWB emphasises the factors that contribute to individual well-being (Nawijn et al. 2010). The dimensions of SWB that are most frequently linked to hospitality and tourism experiences are happiness and life satisfaction (McCabe and Johnson 2013). Additionally, participation in a memorable experience in the context of hospitality and tourism has the potential to enhance a person's happiness and positively affect various aspects of life, including family dynamics and social relationships (Sirgy et al. 2011; Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018). This nuanced understanding of SWB underscores its importance in fostering meaningful tourism and hospitality experiences, which can lead to enhanced well-being for individuals.

Revisit intention constitutes a cognitive state that reflects a form of post-consumption behaviour among visitors, indicating their potential actions following a tourism or hospitality experience (Sthapit and Björk 2019). This concept pertains to the likelihood of a guest returning to a specific destination and denotes their willingness to re-connect with that location based on prior experiences (Sthapit et al. 2020). It is essential for destination organisations to possess a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing guests' decisions to return or refrain from returning, as attracting repeat visitors is generally more cost-effective

than acquiring new ones (Eren et al. 2025). Consequently, revisit intention is recognised as a critical element for the competitiveness of a hospitality or tourism provider (Sthapit and Björk 2019).

The American Psychological Association Psychological define resilience as the process of successful adaptation to adversity, trauma, or normal stresses such as relationship problems, family issues, work stress, serious health issues, and financial problems (Southwick and Charney 2021). In the hospitality and tourism context, psychological resilience refers to customers' ability to handle difficulties and protect their mental health while improving their happiness and quality of life (Kim and Ritchie 2014). The concept includes an individual's mental health and psychological well-being (Smith and Hollinger-Smith 2015). Psychological resilience helps people deal with challenges, change, and uncertainty (Killgore et al. 2020). Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4. *MDFHEs have a positive effect on guests' SWB.*

H5. *MDFHEs have a positive effect on guests' revisit intention.*

H6. *MDFHEs have a positive effect on guests' psychological resilience.*

3 | Methods

3.1 | Sample and Sampling Method

The target respondents in this study were Chinese guests aged 18 and above who attended a digital-free yoga retreat in China between October 2024 and March 2025. The popularity of yoga as a fitness option in China has been on the rise in recent times, with its roots tracing back to the influence of Buddhist teachings and the remarkable translation efforts of monks during the Tang Dynasty (Jingwei 2023). Before the commencement of the survey, all participants were informed about its objectives and made aware of their rights to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any point. The authors affirm that this research adheres to the ethical guidelines established for human subjects, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of all respondents throughout the process. The study methodology was reviewed and granted approval by the relevant university's ethics review board. To qualify for this study, respondents needed to have attended a digital-free yoga retreat in China between October 2024 and March 2025. This criterion was used because empirical studies indicate that memories tend to become increasingly distorted over time (Park and Santos 2017). Given the niche target population, in this case Chinese guests who had stayed at a digital-free yoga retreat in China between October 2024 and April 2025, respondents were contacted using convenience sampling because it provides the most practical and efficient way to access participants who would otherwise be difficult to reach (Sthapit et al. 2019).

3.2 | Measures

The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first explained that a digital-free yoga retreat means there are no internet or

mobile signals, and that digital technology is used very little. It included questions about the participants' backgrounds and travel preferences. The second section measured the seven key concepts in the study. Answers were based on a seven-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To measure novelty, the study used four questions from Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017). Five questions from Mathis et al. (2016) were used to measure experience co-creation. Refreshment was measured using four questions taken from Coudounaris and Sthapit (2017). The memorability of the digital-free hospitality experience was measured using four questions from Oh et al. (2007). Following Pang et al. (2024), SWB was modelled as a second-order reflective construct comprising two first-order dimensions: happiness and life satisfaction. Happiness was measured with four questions from the Subjective Happiness Scale devised by Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999). Life satisfaction was assessed using four questions from Diener et al.'s (1985) Satisfaction with Life Scale. Revisit intention was measured using four questions from Hu and Xu (2021). Six items adapted from Prayag et al. (2024) were used to measure psychological resilience. Table 1 lists the items questions used in the study. All questions were originally written in English and then translated into Mandarin. The researchers used a back-and-forth translation method to ensure clarity and accuracy (Brislin 1970).

3.3 | Data-Collection Procedure

A pre-test was held in March 2025 involving five professors in hospitality. They were encouraged to point out any unclear or confusing statements. Minor changes to wording were made based on their feedback. The survey link was shared online on WeChat, the most popular social media platform in China. In 2022, WeChat had 1.26 billion active users, who spent an average of 82 min per day on the app (Ma and Cai 2023). To mitigate the self-selection bias inherent in convenience sampling via social media, the researchers employed a targeted distribution strategy. The survey was specifically disseminated through WeChat groups dedicated to yoga, mindfulness, and wellness communities, as well as direct sharing within the professional networks of partnering yoga instructors and retreat operators.

To ensure the data came from eligible participants, screening questions were asked, such as: 'Are you 18 years old?' 'Are you a Chinese national?' and 'Have you recently attended a digital-free yoga retreat in China (from October 2024 to March 2025)?' Those who answered in the negative were directed straight to the end of the survey. Participants were also asked to provide the name of the retreat venue and the dates they attended it. To verify the authenticity of their experience, participants who passed the initial screening were immediately presented with a context-specific verification filter. This verification filter was based on known, unique operational details of digital-free yoga retreats operating during the study period. Participants were asked a multiple-choice question: 'Which of the following items was typically required to be handed over to staff upon arrival at your digital-free retreat?' (A) Your car keys; (B) Your mobile phone and smart watch; (C) Your wallet and passport; (D) Your favourite book. Only selecting the correct, contextually specific answer (B) allowed participants to proceed. The options were carefully designed to be plausible but only truly verifiable by an

attendee. Responses were flagged and removed if they failed this crucial check.

After adjusting the wording of the questions according to the results of a pre-test with a small number of hospitality scholars, as well as a pilot test with 43 individuals, data collection took place in April and May 2025. This resulted in a total of 586 responses. After filtering out 64 'flatliners' (defined as individuals providing identical Likert-scale responses to more than 90% of the items), 522 responses were taken forward for further analysis. The minimum sample size in this study was determined using the A priori Sample Size Calculator for Structural Equation Models Version 4.0. Given an anticipated effect size of 0.3 and a statistical power level of 0.95, the minimum sample size was calculated as 256. As such, the sample size was deemed suitable for further analysis.

The demographic and behavioural profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 2. A large majority of respondents were female (89.7%). Almost all identified as Chinese nationals (98.7%). The most frequent age group was 36–45 years (35.2%). In terms of income, the largest proportion earned between 700,001 and 900,000 RMB annually (39.1%). Regarding marital status, the majority were married (47.5%). Regarding previous experience, most participants had attended two or three yoga retreats in the past 5 months (56.5%). For their most recent retreat, 75.1% had travelled with a companion, while 24.9% had travelled alone. When asked about their preference for travelling to digital-free yoga retreats, 56.7% preferred to travel with a companion, with the other 43.3% preferring to travel alone (Table 2).

3.4 | Common Method Bias

Harman's single-factor test was employed to assess the potential presence of common method bias in the dataset. This involves loading all study variables into an unrotated exploratory factor analysis and examining the resulting factor structure: specifically, the total variance accounted for by the first principal component. The first principal component was found to account for 25.678% of the total variance. According to commonly accepted criteria, a serious common method bias issue is considered absent when a single factor explains less than 50% of the total variance (Conway and Lance 2010). Given that the variance explained by the first principal component in this study is well below this threshold, it can be concluded that no serious common method bias issue existed with the dataset.

3.5 | Data Analysis

For confirming data robustness, the Mahalanobis distance was calculated to detect potential outliers, with no outliers being identified ($p < 0.001$). The normality of the data was then assessed, revealing skewness values ranging from -0.435 to 0.100 and kurtosis values ranging from -1.414 to 0.581 . The dataset thus met the normal distribution assumption (Kline 2011). Consequently, covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was selected for data analysis. This approach was deemed appropriate because the model is theoretically well-specified, the sample size is substantial ($N = 522$), and the

TABLE 1 | Constructs and measurement items.

Novelty (Coudounaris and Sthapit 2017)	
N1	I had a once-in-a-lifetime digital-free yoga retreat experience.
N2	I had a unique digital-free yoga retreat experience.
N3	My recent digital-free yoga retreat experience was different from my previous hospitality experiences.
N4	I experienced something new during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
Experience co-creation (Mathis et al. 2016)	
EC1	Spending time alongside the staff and other guests allowed me to have enjoyable social interactions during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
EC2	I felt comfortable working with the staff and other guests during my digital-free yoga retreat experience.
EC3	The setting allowed me to effectively interact with the staff and other guests during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
EC4	My recent digital-free yoga retreat experience was enhanced because of my participation in the experience.
EC5	I felt confident in my ability to interact with the staff and other guests during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
Refreshment (Coudounaris and Sthapit 2017)	
R1	I felt that my stress was relieved during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
R2	I felt free from the daily routine during my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
R3	I had a refreshing experience at my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
R4	I felt better after my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
Memorable digital-free hospitality experience (Oh et al. 2007)	
MDFHE 1	I have wonderful memories of my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
MDFHE 2	I will not forget my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
MDFHE 3	I will remember my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience.
Subjective well-being happiness (Lyubomirsky and Lepper 1999)	
SW1	In general, I consider myself very happy.
SW2	Compared to my friends, I consider myself very happy.
SW3	I am happy regardless of what is going on.
SW4	I never seem to be as happy as I might be.
Satisfaction with life (Diener et al. 1985)	
SW5	In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
SW6	I am satisfied with my life.
SW7	So far, I have got the things I want in my life.
SW8	If I could live my life over again, I would not want to change anything.
Revisit intention (Hu and Xu 2021)	
RI1	I would return to this destination for digital-free yoga retreat experience.
RI2	I intend to revisit this destination for digital-free yoga retreat experience.
RI3	I am willing to revisit this destination for digital-free yoga retreat experience.
RI4	If I could, I would go to this destination again for a digital-free yoga retreat experience.
Psychological resilience (Prayag et al. 2024)	
	By recalling my recent digital-free yoga retreat experience:

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

PR1 I tend to bounce back more quickly after hard times.
PR2 I do not have such a hard time making it through stressful events.
PR3 It does not take me as long to recover from a stressful event.
PR4 It is not so hard for me to snap back when something bad happens.
PR5 I come through difficult times with less trouble.
PR6 I do not tend to take such a long time to get over setbacks in my life.

primary research objective is theory testing and confirmation: core strengths of CB-SEM (Hair et al. 2018).

Following the two-stage approach recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the analysis proceeded in two distinct phases. First, the measurement model was evaluated to ensure reliability and validity. Reliability was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficients for each construct, while convergent and discriminant validity were confirmed through the computation of average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR). Once the measurement model was validated, the second phase of the analysis involved the structural model being analysed to examine the relationships within the proposed framework and thereby test the hypotheses (Table 3).

4 | Results

4.1 | Measurement Model Assessment

As SWB was conceptualised as a second-order reflective construct, its first-order factors were initially evaluated through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA aims to test the fit of the hypothesised measurement model with the observed data, rather than to explore the underlying factor structure. The estimation of this initial first-order measurement model identified one problematic item (REI 2), which exhibited a factor loading less than 0.7, which is the commonly accepted threshold. Consistent with Hair and Alamer's (2022) recommendations, factor loadings below this value indicate that the item does not effectively and sufficiently measure its intended construct, which can lead to model misfit or biased measurement of the construct. Consequently, REI 2 was removed from all subsequent analyses. The final first-order CFA demonstrated a good model fit to the data, as evidenced by the following fit indices: $\chi^2 = 510.652$ ($p < 0.001$, $df = 499$), $\chi^2/df = 1.023$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.999; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.998; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.007. These indicators collectively confirm the high adaptability of the measurement model, where a χ^2/df ratio less than 3 signifies good fit, CFI and TLI values above 0.95 indicate excellent model fit, and an RMSEA value below 0.08 suggests minimal residual variance in the model (Hu and Bentler 1999).

The model's convergent validity was supported, as all the standardised factor loadings exceeded 0.70 (Sarstedt et al. 2021). This indicates a high degree of convergence among the measures of each construct. Furthermore, as presented in Table 3, the

composite reliability (CR) estimates ranged from 0.785 to 0.887: all well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Sarstedt et al. 2021), signifying sufficient internal consistency in the constructs. All the values of the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the level of 0.50 recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981), further confirming acceptable construct reliability, which implies that more than half of a variance in a construct can be explained by its indicators.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) was employed to assess the model's discriminant validity. This method is increasingly favoured for its higher sensitivity and accuracy in evaluating discriminant validity compared to traditional methods (e.g., the square root of AVE comparison). Table 4 shows that all the HTMT ratios were below the threshold of 0.85, which strongly confirms good discriminant validity among the constructs (Franke and Sarstedt 2019), indicating that each construct is indeed distinct and separable from the others.

4.2 | Structural Model Assessment

The assessment of the measurement model being complete, the next step was to examine the relationships among the latent constructs. The overall fit indices of the model were: $\chi^2 = 822.974$ ($p < 0.001$, $df = 519$), $\chi^2/df = 1.586$; comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.965; Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.962; and RMSEA = 0.033. These values indicate a good fit between the collected data and the proposed theoretical model, satisfying conventional thresholds for model adequacy. The direct effects hypothesised in the structural model were subsequently examined, with the results presented in Table 4. First, concerning the antecedents of MDFHE, the hypothesis that novelty positively predicts MDFHE was supported ($\beta = 0.282$, $t = 5.996$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the desire for new and unique experiences significantly contributes to the memorability of digital-free hospitality encounters. Similarly, experience co-creation was found to significantly enhance MDFHE ($\beta = 0.249$, $t = 4.644$, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that active involvement in the experience's creation is a key factor in its memorability. Furthermore, the sense of refreshment derived from the experience also significantly contributed to MDFHE ($\beta = 0.432$, $t = 8.938$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the importance of restorative qualities.

With respect to the outcomes of MDFHE, the hypothesis that MDFHE influences SWB was supported ($\beta = 0.315$, $t = 5.156$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that these memorable experiences significantly contribute to guests' overall sense of happiness and life satisfaction. Moreover, a strong positive relationship was

TABLE 2 | Profiles of respondents.

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	54	10.3%
Female	468	89.7%
Chinese national		
Yes	515	98.7%
No	7	1.3%
Age		
18–25	16	3.1%
26–35	171	32.8%
36–45	184	35.2%
46–55	139	26.6%
56 or above	12	2.3%
Annual income (RMB)		
50,000 or below	49	9.4%
50,001–70,000	118	22.6%
70,001–90,000	204	39.1%
90,001–110,000	81	15.5%
110,001 or above	70	13.4%
Marital status		
Single	192	36.8%
Engaged	60	11.5%
Married	248	47.5%
Divorced	22	4.2%
Travelled with a companion (most recent digital-free yoga retreat)		
Yes	392	75.1%
No	130	24.9%
Preference for travelling to digital-free yoga retreats		
Alone	226	43.3%
With a company	296	56.7%
Number of digital-free yoga retreats attended in the past 5 months		
1	176	33.7%
2–3	295	56.5%
4 or above	51	9.8%

identified between MDFHE and revisit intention ($\beta=0.512$, $t=13.461$, $p<0.001$), indicating that MDFHEs are a powerful predictor of guests' desire to return to a destination. Lastly, the hypothesis that MDFHE significantly contributes to psychological resilience was also supported ($\beta=0.501$, $t=12.106$, $p<0.001$), demonstrating the profound impact of these experiences on individuals' ability to cope with life's challenges. In summary, all six hypothesised direct relationships within the

structural model were statistically significant and supported by the data, providing robust evidence for the proposed theoretical framework (Table 5).

To gain a deeper understanding of the value creation process, further analysis was conducted to examine the indirect effects within the structural model. The results, summarised in Table 6, confirm that MDFHEs successfully mediate several key

TABLE 3 | Summary of data normality and assessment of the measurement model.

Construct/item	Skewness	Kurtosis	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
Novelty (NO)				0.852	0.851	0.589
NOS1	-0.181	0.060	0.758			
NOS 2	-0.145	-0.114	0.758			
NOS 3	-0.079	0.411	0.772			
NOS 4	-0.113	0.055	0.782			
Experience co-creation (EXC)				0.855	0.856	0.543
EXC 1	-0.225	-0.058	0.707			
EXC 2	0.006	-0.385	0.786			
EXC 3	0.000	0.189	0.709			
EXC 4	-0.090	-0.208	0.726			
EXC 5	0.015	-0.283	0.751			
Refreshment (REF)				0.858	0.857	0.601
REF 1	-0.099	-0.232	0.775			
REF 2	-0.064	0.065	0.79			
REF 3	-0.236	-0.128	0.778			
REF 4	-0.018	-0.223	0.759			
Memorable digital-free hospitality experience (MDFHE)				0.851	0.820	0.534
MDFHE1	0.027	0.340	0.707			
MDFHE 2	-0.009	0.137	0.784			
MDFHE 3	-0.435	0.581	0.705			
MDFHE 4	0.051	-0.375	0.724			
Happiness (HAP)				0.883	0.883	0.652
HAP1	0.000	-1.365	0.813			
HAP 2	-0.037	-1.364	0.784			
HAP 3	0.011	-1.349	0.799			
HAP 4	-0.035	-1.369	0.834			
Satisfaction with life (SWL)				0.887	0.887	0.663
SWL1	-0.025	-1.273	0.794			
SWL 2	-0.032	-1.390	0.814			
SWL 3	-0.075	-1.414	0.834			
SWL 4	-0.035	-1.350	0.814			
Revisit intention (REI)				0.792	0.785	0.550
REI 1	0.007	-0.070	0.741			
REI 3	0.061	-0.020	0.732			
REI 4	0.060	0.066	0.75			
Psychological resilience (PSR)				0.887	0.883	0.558
PSR 1	0.100	-0.149	0.741			
PSR 2	0.091	0.059	0.747			

(Continues)

TABLE 3 | (Continued)

Construct/item	Skewness	Kurtosis	Factor loading	α	CR	AVE
PSR 3	0.033	0.218	0.747			
PSR 4	-0.025	-0.097	0.783			
PSR 5	0.095	-0.130	0.734			
PSR 6	0.009	0.380	0.728			

relationships, underscoring their role as the central mechanism in the Memory-Dominant Logic MDL framework. Specifically, MDFHEs were found to significantly mediate the influence of all three antecedents (novelty, experience co-creation, and refreshment) on the distal outcomes of psychological resilience, revisit intention, and SWB (all $p < 0.001$).

5 | Discussion

This study examines an integrative conceptual model of MDFHEs. Findings provide support for all six hypotheses presented. Notably, the first hypothesis (H1) indicates that novelty exerts a positive influence on guests' MDFHEs. This outcome aligns with previous research suggesting that the pursuit of novelty is a significant contributor to memorable experiences, as evidenced by Chen and Girish (2025). Additionally, this finding resonates with earlier studies that demonstrate a connection between novelty and favourable subjective memories (Sthapit et al. 2022). Consequently, a greater inclination toward novelty correlates with the formation of more memorable experiences for participants in a digital-free yoga retreat.

Second, the co-creation of digital-free hospitality experiences has demonstrated a positive and statistically significant impact on MDFHEs, thereby supporting H2. This finding aligns with recent research indicating that hospitality experiences become more memorable when participants engage meaningfully with staff and with one another (Sthapit et al. 2025). Specifically, guests involved in digital-free yoga retreats are encouraged to participate actively in shaping their on-site experience. It is likely that those who engage in this co-creation process through communication with staff and fellow guests will have more memorable experiences. This reinforces existing literature that identifies experience co-creation as a critical antecedent of memorability (Campos et al. 2017).

Third, the analysis found a significant positive relationship between refreshment and MDFHEs, thereby supporting H3. This result suggests that guests who find the experience helps them relieve stress and take time out from digital devices have a more memorable experience. Such findings accord with previous studies showing that refreshment can elicit strong positive memories of hospitality experiences (Kotur 2022).

Fourth, the study identified a positive association between MDFHE and SWB, supporting H4. Guests who find their experiences during a digital-free yoga retreat to be more memorable are more probable to experience key components of SWB, including greater happiness and life satisfaction. This aligns with existing studies establishing a positive impact of memorable

experiences on SWB (Sthapit and Coudounaris 2018; Hosany et al. 2022). In addition, the study affirmed the proposed positive associations between MDFHE and both revisit intention and psychological resilience, thereby supporting both H5 and H6. The results suggest that guests who retain strong positive memories of their digital-free hospitality experiences are more inclined to revisit the destination and cultivate psychological resilience. This is consistent with past studies that have recognised the beneficial effects of memorable experiences on revisit intentions (Sthapit and Björk 2019) and psychological resilience (Sthapit, Ji, et al. 2024).

Fifth, the results also indicate that MDFHEs significantly mediate the relationship between all the three antecedents (novelty, experience co-creation, and refreshment) on the outcomes variable—psychological resilience, revisit intention, and SWB (all $p < 0.001$). This further suggests that the formation of an enduring memorable experience is an essential mechanism through which the unique, restorative, and co-created aspects of the retreat translate into sustained post-visit benefits. These findings highlight that memorable experiences not only directly impact behavioural outcomes and psychological resources but also function indirectly by enhancing a guest's immediate sense of well-being, which then reinforces the desire to return and strengthens the ability to cope with daily life. This complex interplay supports the robust, multi-stage value generation process hypothesised in our model.

5.1 | Theoretical Implications

This study makes three main theoretical contributions to the field of memorable hospitality experiences. Firstly, a large amount of recent literature has focused on replicating the seven antecedents of the MTE scale identified by Kim et al. (2012): namely refreshment, hedonism, meaningfulness, local culture, involvement, knowledge, and novelty in different settings (Stone et al. 2022). However, given that the formation of MTEs is significantly influenced by contextual factors (Hosseini et al. 2025; Murray et al. 2025), this focus often ignores the contextual factors that may influence these experiences. On the contrary, recent studies exploring other experiential dimensions that could affect memorable experiences in specific contexts remain relatively limited (Sthapit et al. 2023). To address this gap, this study proposes a new conceptual framework tailored to the context of digital-free hospitality experiences. In addition, it expands the scope of the existing MTE literature by examining both antecedents and outcomes within this relatively unexplored domain, digital-free hospitality experience. Given the limited studies on digital-free hospitality experiences, this study offers essential

TABLE 4 | Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio values for discriminant validity assessment.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. EXC	—							
2. HAP	0.154	—						
3. MDFHE	0.378	0.197	—					
4. NO	0.375	0.207	0.395	—				
5. PSR	0.436	0.112	0.445	0.472	—			
6. REF	0.326	0.154	0.469	0.306	0.541	—		
7. REI	0.441	0.132	0.467	0.336	0.424	0.481	—	
8. SWL	0.173	0.42	0.177	0.121	0.178	0.214	0.184	—

Note: (1) EXC = experience co-creation; HAP = happiness; MDFHE = memorable digital-free hospitality experience; NO = novelty; PSR = psychological resilience; REF = refreshment; REI = Revisit intention; WSL = Satisfaction with life. (2) HTMT achieved at HTMT 0.85.

TABLE 5 | Path coefficients for direct effect hypotheses.

Hypotheses	β	<i>t</i> -Statistics	<i>p</i>	Outcomes
H1: NO → MDFHE	0.282	5.996	0.000	Supported
H2: EXC → MDFHE	0.249	4.644	0.000	Supported
H3: REF → MDFHE	0.432	8.938	0.000	Supported
H4: MDFHE → SWB	0.315	5.156	0.000	Supported
H5: MDFHE → REI	0.512	13.461	0.000	Supported
H6: MDFHE → PSR	0.501	12.106	0.000	Supported

Abbreviations: EXC = experience co-creation; MDFHE = memorable digital-free hospitality experience; NO = novelty; PSR = psychological resilience; REF = refreshment; REI = revisit intention; SWB = subjective well-being.

TABLE 6 | Results of mediation effect analysis.

Paths	β	SD	<i>t</i> -Statistics	<i>p</i>
EXC → MDFHE → PSR	0.124	0.03	4.107	0.000
EXC → MDFHE → REI	0.127	0.03	4.275	0.000
EXC → MDFHE → SWB	0.079	0.023	3.414	0.001
NO → MDFHE → PSR	0.141	0.028	5.131	0.000
NO → MDFHE → SWB	0.089	0.024	3.74	0.000
NO → MDFHE → REI	0.144	0.027	5.273	0.000
REF → MDFHE → PSR	0.216	0.035	6.159	0.000
REF → MDFHE → REI	0.221	0.033	6.625	0.000
REF → MDFHE → SWB	0.136	0.031	4.437	0.000

Abbreviations: EXC = experience co-creation; MDFHE = memorable digital-free hospitality experience; NO = novelty; PSR = psychological resilience; REF = refreshment; REI = revisit intention; SWB = subjective well-being.

insights into the factors that define MDFHEs in such a unique context. This further emphasises the necessity of applying Kim et al.'s (2012) established model of MTEs with caution in diverse settings beyond its original development (Hosany et al. 2022). While the original model may achieve satisfactory data fit, exploring alternative models based on different variables may yield even more favourable results.

Secondly, existing studies on MTEs have examined outcome variables such as place attachment (Sthapit et al. 2025) and loyalty (Burhanudin et al. 2025). This study further contributes to the existing MTE literature and achieves a noteworthy advancement by establishing a relationship between MDFHEs, SWB, revisit intention, and psychological resilience within a single study, thereby offering a fresh perspective on existing MTE research and in the context of hospitality. In addition to evaluating the different antecedents of MDFHEs, this study identifies MDFHEs as instrumental in enhancing SWB, revisit intention, and psychological resilience. In essence, the more memorable the MDFHE, the more substantial its impact on shaping individuals' SWB, revisit intention, and psychological resilience. Thus, the findings contribute to the knowledge about the outcomes of MDFHEs, providing a robust foundation upon which to build future research.

Thirdly, previous studies have often operated on a limited theoretical foundation when examining memorable experience in the context of tourism and hospitality. Alternatively, few studies have drawn upon theories of positive psychology including organisational management, sociology, psychology, and environmental psychology (Hosany et al. 2022). This study is novel by employing the MDL concept as its theoretical foundation and thus demonstrating the antecedents and outcomes of MDFHEs from a new theoretical perspective. The findings highlight the significance of MDL, which posits that service experiences should be understood primarily as

outcomes resulting from service encounters rather than simply as inputs. In addition, the results emphasise that MDFHEs can yield positive outcomes, specifically in terms of SWB, intentions to revisit, and psychological resilience, ultimately benefiting guests.

5.2 | Managerial Implications

A number of managerial implications follow from this study for companies providing digital-free retreats generally and for digital-free yoga retreats more specifically. First, this study found that novelty has a positive impact on MDFHEs in general. This novelty is associated with the increasingly rare phenomenon of spending an extended period of time in the absence of digital devices. This research puts forward evidence that digital-free experiences can be memorable for those undertaking them. Companies providing these retreats can increase this memorability in a variety of ways, including, for example, ensuring that guests are offered activities that engage all of the senses. According to the experience economy framework, retreat providers can also increase the memorability of the experiences they provide by harnessing the elements of education, escapism, aesthetics and entertainment—for example, by adding opportunities for guests to learn during the retreat. The effectiveness of this would undoubtedly benefit from being mixed with entertainment. Such ‘edutainment’ would, of course, have to avoid the use of digital devices and media for it to be effective in this particular instance.

This leads directly to the second major managerial implication, which is that yoga retreat providers more specifically can offer additional unique and innovative activities for guests to enjoy alongside their yoga sessions. These could include, for example, guided meditation and breathwork, nature hikes and walks, arts and crafts, and music classes or performances, or even sound baths. These additional activities may further help tourists to experience novelty during their yoga retreat. The use of novelty to generate memorable experiences may prove to be a challenging strategy for retreat providers to follow, however, particularly when appealing to repeat visitors, who may need to experience new activities every time they visit.

Third, it is important for such retreats to facilitate active co-creation by allowing guests to play a meaningful role in shaping their own MDFHEs. For example, this can be achieved by ensuring that retreat staff members have been adequately trained and are encouraged to communicate with guests in creating personalised experiences through sharing knowledge on breathing techniques, sequences of postures to enhance strength and flexibility, and utilising props for support. This collaborative approach could help sustain guests' interest and maximise their overall sense of well-being during the retreat.

Fourth, during the process of co-creating their experiences, the activities offered by the retreat should emphasise relaxation, tranquillity, and mindfulness, allowing guests to experience a sense of ease, relief, and revitalisation. This will enable guests to be refreshed during their visit, not only from the rigours of everyday life generally, but specifically from the many hassles and distractions of the digital world. The well-being benefits of these

experiences should be clearly articulated through interactive interpretive sessions and the incorporation of calming music, contributing to the formation of favourable MTEs. In conclusion, by incorporating elements of novelty, experience co-creation, and refreshment into the marketing strategies for digital-free yoga hospitality experiences, providers can effectively appeal to guests seeking a respite from digital devices and foster enjoyable, memorable hospitality experiences.

5.3 | Limitations and Suggestions for Future Studies

There are limitations with this study that must be acknowledged. Firstly, the analysis was confined to three antecedents and three outcomes of MDFHEs. While the inclusion of additional factors could potentially enhance the model's performance, for example, destination attachment (Sthapit et al. 2017), eudaimonic well-being (Sthapit et al. 2023), self-expansion (Chen et al. 2025), subjective happiness (Lee et al. 2024), and pro-environmental behaviours (Liang et al. 2025), it may also complicate its interpretation. Secondly, given that most respondents were female (89.7%), the results are subject to gender bias, and this study admits the severe gender imbalance in the sample. This significantly limits the generalisability of the findings to a broader population. Future studies could use quota sampling for a better composition of the sample in terms of gender. Thirdly, the data were sourced exclusively from Chinese nationals, which may serve to limit the generalisability of the findings presented here to other demographic groups. Different sample populations could be used to validate the findings of this study, including comparative studies of domestic and international tourists. Fourthly, this study acknowledges the potential recall bias given that data collection occurred during the post-visit stage, requiring participants to rely on their recollections of experiences and varying periods of memory (October 2024 and April 2025). There may be incongruence between remembered experiences and on-site experiences; thus, it is advisable for future research to gather data from guests quickly after their digital-free yoga retreat to ensure more accurate reflections of their experiences. Fifthly, the current study focused solely on participants who attended a digital-free yoga retreat in China; expanding the research to other geographic locations could yield valuable insights. Fifthly, the methodology relied on an online questionnaire for data collection. Using different data-collection methods could help to mitigate this limitation (Cha et al. 2024; Kim and Hyun 2024; Li et al. 2024).

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Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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