

Article

# A More Sustainable Management of Domestic Tourists in Protected Natural Parks: A New Trend in Sport Tourism after the Covid-19 Pandemic?

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**Abstract:** One of the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis has been the development of proximity tourism in outdoor spaces being less conducive to the spread of the virus. From a study preceding this pandemic, this article seeks to better understand the experiences lived by domestic tourists from when they visited two typical protected natural parks as specific experiential contexts (extraordinary versus ordinary) providing different experiences. Each experiential context enables the distinction of actual visitors' experiences inside each park—education, esthetics, entertainment, escapism, physical activity—differentiated, on one hand by the visitors' participation axis and, on the other hand, by the absorption-immersion axis influencing the visitors' arousal and memory. A structural equation model tested the data collected (n = 1000) in both experiential contexts and shows their moderator effect. The results underline the link between the experiential context and the actual experiences and highlight the interest of a new global framework including the visitors' participation and a bodily axis relative to the specific context. This research could help managers of protected natural parks adjust their domestic tourists' experience offer during pandemic crises by implementing specific sustainable and sanitary strategies.

**Keywords:** protected natural park; experiential context; domestic tourists' experience; physical activity; sustainable tourism



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## 1. Introduction

For the past 30 years, protected natural parks have become a profitable market due to their potential for attracting visitors from around the world. As a financial generator, this sector has been expanding and its actors, both local and national, have begun exploiting the potential of the sector, particularly because of its contribution to regional development. For a decade, the analyses of protected natural parks have been mostly focusing either on the development of their attractiveness in terms of attendance by residents and/or foreign or domestic tourists, or on the preservation of their resources in a sustainable development perspective. Visitors' enthusiasm for active leisure activities raises the problem of regulating the flow of people and managing both the tourist activities and the protected areas in natural parks. To a certain extent, protected natural parks are thematized as “natural” and “certified” by a label, whether national (State), continental (e.g., Europe), or international (e.g., UNESCO). Governments and/or private agencies manage, promote, and sustain them, by establishing pricing policies, accessibility of areas, tourist traffic, etc.

The Covid-19 outbreak has had a very significant impact on tourism including important changes in mobility, social behavior, consumption habits, and leisure [1,2]. One of the consequences has been the rise of proximity tourism and domestic tourism [3] because tourists may consider nearby destinations more affordable, and, more importantly, less

risky due to insecurity and uncertainty. Domestic tourism, which has been underestimated in terms of economic impact, is a forgotten topic in the literature [4–8]. This fact is particularly concerning given that the target population for the parks was typically domestic tourists from nearby areas, staying in the park for a weekend, a short stay [4,9], or at least four hours on a same-day trip [7]. Another major effect of the pandemic crisis has been the development of active leisure in outdoor settings that are less likely to spread the virus during vacations, particularly in natural parks close to home [2,10]. In this regard, what experiences do domestic tourists seek during their stays in protected natural parks? Can outdoor experiences in a protected natural park be considered to be similar to those in more remote destinations?

In this context, for many managers of protected natural parks needing to be competitive, the diagnosis of national tourism experiences is fundamental in order to develop successful and attractive offers in a competitive global context [11]. Natural parks offer a rich array of natural, heritage, or human resources in rural, maritime, or mountain settings, and are generally classified by size or location: rural, urban, national, subnational, or county, etc. Other criteria may be used to classify them. They can be protected or unprotected, free or not, with people living inside or not [9], and they can generate high or low excitement or arousal [12] related to the intensity of visitors' participation in the experience. During vacations or weekends, natural parks are often accessed at an increasing level, for more active activities requiring a high level of intensity such as biking, running sailing, hiking, diving, and others [12–15] as well as for more passive activities such as food or drink testing, spa, massage, visiting local museums, and other amenities [16,17]. In these experiential contexts, in which visitors become more active, it is now difficult for them not to act and simply remain passive, and Pine and Gilmore's 4Es theoretical framework [18,19] could offer an appropriate model to understand on-site experiences in one or all of the four realms (education, escapism, esthetics, and entertainment), including visitors' participation (active or passive). Therefore, what would the experiences of domestic tourists during their stays in protected natural parks be?

Two main approaches exist to study consumers' experience in tourism [20]. The first one considers the experience as product stimulation [18,19,21–24] while the second one considers experience as physical environment stimulation [25,26]. In the first approach, Pine and Gilmore's theoretical framework [18,19] offers a model on how experiences can be categorized, based on two axes including consumers' participation level such as active or passive participation and immersion or absorption into the visitors' experience. In the second approach, protected natural park offers could also be categorized as company-driven or co-driven experiences in Carù and Cova's experiential context continuum [25,27]. Beside the absorption-immersion axis, the connection with the environment should be based on two categories such as company-driven or co-driven. When the company-driven experiential context provides extraordinary and memorable experiences for visitors, the dominant actual experiences are reactive [28] and immersed, while their intensity is optimal (more flow experience such as more memorable and arousal). In contrast, when the co-driven experiential context provides mundane experiences for visitors, the dominant actual experiences are more active and absorbed while their intensity is less optimal (less flow experience such as less memorable and arousal). Therefore, could two different protected natural parks (extraordinary versus ordinary; company-driven versus co-driven) offer different kinds of experiences for domestic tourists (more or less memorable and arousal)?

The main purpose of this article is to establish how the experiential context of protected natural parks may influence the domestic tourists' experiences, as was the case during the Covid-19 pandemic. Firstly, the review of literature adapts the literature on the general tourism experience for domestic tourists in protected natural parks. Secondly, from a study preceding the Covid-19 pandemic in two different countries, methods and analyses of experiences lived by domestic tourists in protected natural park are summarized and presented. Finally, scholarship contributions, sustainable and sanitary implications, limitations, and

directions for future research, are suggested to help managers of protected natural parks adapt their domestic tourists' experience offer, especially during pandemic crises.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Protected Natural Parks and Domestic Tourism in the Pandemic Crisis

Since December 2019, the Covid-19 outbreak has triggered profound changes in the world with many bans or restrictions to travel outside one's country. One of the major repercussions has been the rise of proximity tourism, especially for domestic tourists whose vacations were restricted to a day, a few days, or a week only in or nearby their region [1,3,29]. Domestic tourism, which is in fact more important than inbound tourism for many countries, is a neglected topic in the literature, even though it has been shown that domestic tourism induces a redistribution of national income from metropolitan areas to more rural and remote areas [4]. Some researchers do not even use the terms domestic tourist or domestic tourism, even though their sample consists of such travelers [30–32]. Domestic tourism, which might have been considered old-fashioned just a few months ago compared to the international trips that tourists dream of, seems to be regaining its credentials today in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. Since domestic tourists tend to travel shorter distances [33], domestic tourism often takes place in a context that is relatively close to, or even the same as, one's familiar everyday environment [8]. Proximity tourists may come from neighboring areas for a weekend or a short stay [4,8], or an overnight or a same-day trip (at least four hours' duration) [6]. As park visitor studies indicate that visitors are usually proximity tourists, in this paper, the word 'visitor' is used to simultaneously define domestic tourists in protected natural parks making overnight trips or those spending at least four hours on a same-day trip.

"Understand[ing] the nature of specific kinds of tourism experiences" [34] (p. 111) has become a challenge for managers of diverse touristic contexts: theme parks, museums, and festivals [35], cruises [36], temple stays [37], rural territories [38], nature-based tourism [39], and wine destinations [40]. As part of this trend, park managers strive to promote their resources, such as providing opportunities to live arousal and memorable experiences in order to improve ultimate satisfaction for visitors or the quality of their products [34,41,42]. Most recently, a few studies have analyzed the experiential context of natural parks [43,44] considering these nature-based destinations as geographically and culturally delimited. In protected natural park settings, tourists do experience a specific place [45] in which the experience is multidimensional and unique for each situation and consumer [46]. Yet, little is known about how experiences are concretely lived in natural parks in relation to a set of possible activities involving both passive and active participation, and the kinds of links that may exist between visitors' arousal and memorable outcomes.

### 2.2. A Specific Model of Visitors' Natural Park Experience

#### 2.2.1. From Tourists' Experience to the Specific Visitors' Natural Park Experiences

Studies of tourists' experiences and hospitality have been a subject of particular attention in research since [23]. Experience has fully entered the field of consumption [47,48] and marketing to become an experience economy [18,19] for which tourism is a good example [34,49,50]. According to Jennings and colleagues [49], the term *experience* is not new in the understanding of human interactions with people, places, spaces, products, services, organizations, governments, and cultures. For them, the newest fact has been the increased emphasis on experience, especially within the tourist and leisure sectors: authenticity, motivations, gender, identity, cultural differences, activities, satisfaction, etc. "No single tourist gaze exists but rather many perspectives; the host gaze varies by society, by social group and by time and context period" [51] (p. 1). The numerous interpretations depend on temporal, social, cultural, political, and environmental contexts [52]. Many researchers define experience as extraordinary, peak, flow, memorable [18,19,53–55] while others do so as extraordinary or ordinary [46,50,56]. "Experiences have become the hottest commodities on the market [57] and tourism, particularly, has been referred to as the marketplace of

experiences [58] as products of this industry are always experiential [59,60]" [61] (p. 1). Tourist experience has been a respectable investigation field and a healthy and robust tradition of studies over the last three decades [62–65] which means that the influence of the visitors' experience in the highly diversified tourist offer is recognized by the literature. The tourist becomes a consumer of place as well as tourism product and consequently the importance of experiential context must be renowned [66,67].

The numerous natural parks offer people the opportunity to experience and enjoy the natural environment [16,68]. Visitors' experiences in parks provide personal experience benefits such as physical, psychological, well-being, health, and multiple recreation experience [69–72]. Many studies have underlined the link between natural parks and physical activity [12–15]. Indeed, natural parks have become touristic sites and are increasingly used for more or less active or adventurous outdoor recreation such as rock climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, rafting, or skiing [12] for many kinds of tourism such as international, domestic, micro-domestic, and proximity tourism [4,8]. In these specific wilderness and extreme nature tourism settings, physical activity becomes the main aspect of the experience and visitors go beyond mere active participation rather than experience in other settings [15].

## 2.2.2. The Influence of the Natural Park Experiential Context on Visitors' Experiences

The experiential context is "an assembly of stimulus (products) and stimuli (environment, activities) designed to create an experience" [27] (p. 44). To offer specific experiences, the organization produces experiential contexts such as being company-driven or co-driven, in which customers can immerse themselves to access the experience [24,27]. If the experiential context is a place, the physical and spatial aspects will be completed by natural and/or artificial sensory stimulations as well as by more or less formalized scripts codifying the interactions of client-facing staff [73]. Carù and Cova's continuum [25,27] suggest ranking the experiences produced through classifying the experiential contexts in three categories. Two experiential contexts are controlled by the organization, such as being company-driven (more controlled) or co-driven (less controlled). In the case of a company-driven experiential context, consumers are immersed in hyper-real, thematized, closed or locked and secured contexts [25,74], amusement parks and flagship stores, yet also closed natural parks, being examples of the company-driven category. In the co-driven category, the experiences are produced by the organization and the consumers. The organization provides an experience platform to offer a large variety of experiences; however, the consumers shape their own experience from the offered elements [25,27]. The consumers' active participation is essential to the production of experiences; active leisure and live shows being examples of the co-driven category.

In the case of natural parks, the experiential contexts are either company-driven for highly controlled contexts or co-driven for less controlled contexts along Carù and Cova's continuum [25,27]. On one hand, parks are closed and filtered (or paying) for visitors while on the other hand, parks are highly accessible and open (and free) for visitors. In natural park settings, the tourists do experience a specific place [66] in which the experience is multidimensional and unique for each situation and consumer [46]. Considering that organization or destination can create only the environment and the circumstances in which consumers could have an experience, the consumer is the one who adds the final touch, which in turn allows the appearance of the tourism experience by reacting to the staged encounter according to a specific situation [18,19,65,75,76].

## 2.2.3. From Pine and Gilmore's Model to a Specific Model of the Visitors' Natural Park Experiences

Previous research outlined the importance and value of the four realms of the experience model [18,19] as a general integrating framework in tourism and hospitality studies [35,36,42,57,75,77–82]. The effectiveness of this typology [18,19] seems to depend on the experiential contexts associated with the tourist offer, such as accommodation [59], cruising tourism [36], wine tourism [40], festivals, historical sites, and museums [35,83,84].

Pine and Gilmore's typology [18,19] in tourism lacked a study based on natural contexts, which are wilder and more extreme than other settings. The current study measures the effectiveness of this experiential typology in a nature-based destination such as a natural park where diverse experiences co-exist in a single space to respond to different tourist preferences [43,85]. However, in such a nature-based experiential context, one experience axis is missing: the bodily axis. This axis is now truly relevant for park experiences because visitors are really concerned about well-being and are fully aware of health benefits provided by physical activity such as walking, cycling, and running [72]. Some authors [46,86–88] also suggest refining the analysis based on a bodily axis in outdoor tourism in order to better understand, on one hand the prevailing desires and choices before the stay and, on the other hand, the behaviors during the stay. Therefore, in addition to Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19], it seems appropriate to examine and compare how the bodily axis affects or alters the visitors' experiences in parks today.

This specific model features five dimensions: education, entertainment, escapism, esthetics, and physical activity. Based on Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19], four dimensions are differentiated across two axes: the degree of customers' involvement and the connection of customers with the surroundings. The fifth dimension is the physical activity as a bodily axis. In order to link the experience with the experiential context, the absorptive/immersive axis will be used. The absorptive axis further relates to an ordinary context while the immersive axis does so to an extraordinary context. Two dimensions refer immersive consumers' connection with the surrounding environment, that is to say that consumers are really involved with the experience [18,19]. The esthetics dimension refers to consumers' interpretation of the geophysical environment around them. In this case, consumers have an immersive experience and passive participation [18,19]. Visitors enjoy the act of just being in the destination space [59]. In such a way, visitors react only to the experiential context when it is extraordinary. When the context is ordinary, this dimension is less important [89]. Escapism requires the highest level of immersion in the experience and active participation of the visitors. Tourists engage in an extraordinary experience to escape daily life routine and to revitalize their lives [18,19]. In an extraordinary context, this dimension should be the most important one. Two dimensions refer absorptive consumers' connection with the surrounding environment, that is to say that consumers must have a certain distance to engage with the experience [18,19]. Entertainment requires the lowest level of immersion in the experience and reactive participation of the visitors who observe others' activities in a passive manner. They are not part of the outdoor activities; they are just looking at these activities in an extraordinary or an ordinary context. The education dimension is active and absorptive [18,19]. This absorptive dimension relates to an ordinary context where providers produce intellectual education in connection with flora, fauna, and geophysical characteristics in order to increase visitors' knowledge or skills. The absorptive dimension further relates to an ordinary context rather than to an extraordinary context. In Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19], the physical activity dimension is also mentioned in this educational dimension yet, instead of engaging their body in physical training, some visitors want to practice physical activities such as outdoor activities in connection with the experiential context only. A fundamental characteristic of physical activities is that the individual must actively participate, beyond just relaxing or just wanting to have something to do, and must interact deeply with nature [15,46,86–88]. Therefore, this dimension should be more active and absorptive.

Based on these considerations, the current study presents a conceptual model (Figure 1), which links the different kinds of experiential park context (extraordinary versus ordinary) with the specific visitors' park experiences (actual experiences and experience intensity).



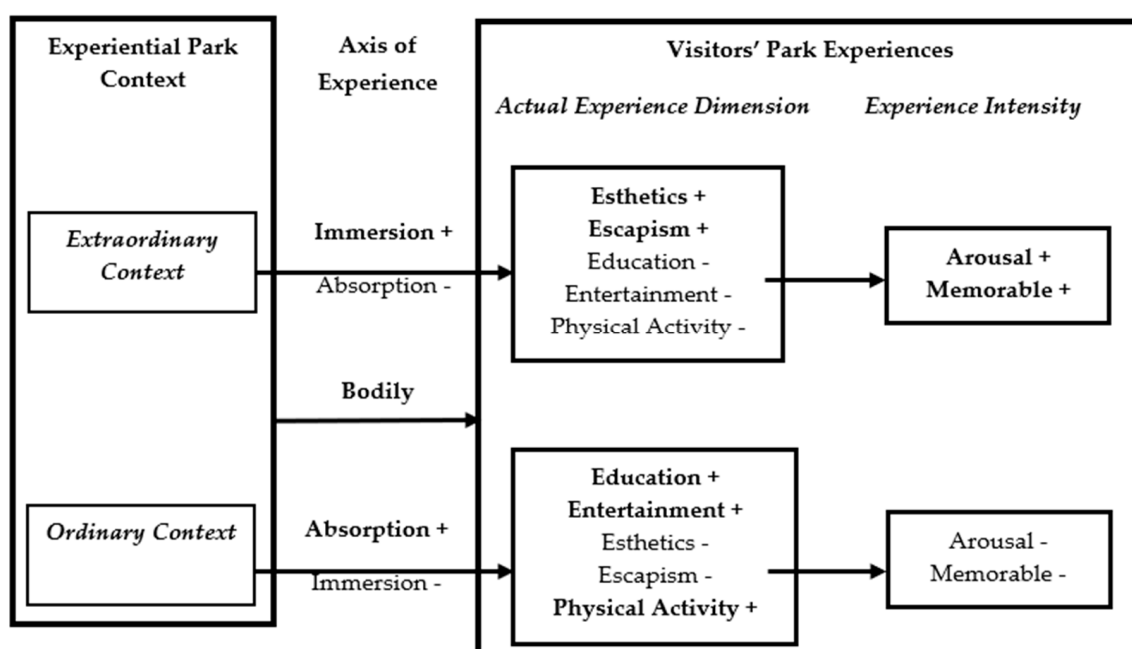


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

### 2.3. Influences of the Extraordinary Versus Ordinary Park Experiential Context on Actual Visitors' Park Experiences

#### 2.3.1. Influence of the Context on the Intensity (Arousal and Memory) and the Five Dimensions of the Experience

Many researchers looked at how the tourist experience is created by hospitality tourism providers and how the context influences the tourist experience. Some researchers proved that the experiential context leads to enhanced memories and arousal [21,59,61,90]. Based on an extant literature review on “extreme experience” such as rafting, sky-diving, mountain biking, mountain adventure tourism, Triantafyllidou and Siomkos [90] indicated that the core experience is linked to memory and arousal in an extreme consumption context, which could be qualified as extraordinary. Other researchers showed that extraordinary activities produce extraordinary experiences [53] namely arousal and memorable experience. Indeed, during the core service consumption, many participants believed that river rafting was a stimulating and challenging experience and found that they lived extraordinary experiences [53]. Thus, the following hypotheses can be made:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *An extraordinary context provides higher arousal and memorable experience than an ordinary context.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *An extraordinary context provides higher experiential dimensions than an ordinary context.*

#### 2.3.2. Influence of the Actual Experience on Arousal and Memory

In experience literature, much research shows that arousal and memory are usually used as outcomes [91–93]. For example, tourists' experiences at the destination are a more powerful driver of future behavior because these experiences determine customers' arousal and memorable experiences [59,94]. Tourism is an experiential area, in which customers are looking for pleasurable experiences above everything else [95]. Since the most commonly recognized tourism experience scopes are the emotional ones [96,97], a touristic experience can induce an arousal emotional state [59]. Tourism providers' competitiveness is based on providing good memorable experiences [39]. Hence, an experience in an experiential context leads to enhance memories [21]. Considering that the fundamental outcomes of experiences are pleasure and memory of the experience [19,71,96,98,99], some scholars [36,59]

show that the four realms of experience positively influence arousal and memory. Using the five experience dimensions and the two outcomes—arousal and memory—the following hypothesis can be formulated:

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *The five experiential dimensions positively influence tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 3.1 (H3.1).** *Entertainment positively influences tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 3.2 (H3.2).** *Education positively influences tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 3.3 (H3.3).** *Physical activity dimensions positively influence tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 3.4 (H3.4).** *Escapism positively influences tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 3.5 (H3.5).** *Esthetics positively influences tourists' arousal.*

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *The five experiential dimensions positively influence tourists' memory.*

**Hypothesis 4.1 (H4.1).** *Entertainment positively influences tourists' memory.*

**Hypothesis 4.2 (H4.2).** *Education positively influences tourists' memory.*

**Hypothesis 4.3 (H4.3).** *Physical activity dimensions positively influence tourists' memory.*

**Hypothesis 4.4 (H4.4).** *Escapism positively influences tourists' memory.*

**Hypothesis 4.5 (H4.5).** *Esthetics positively influences tourists' memory.*

#### 2.3.3. Influence of Extraordinary and Ordinary Experiential Contexts: Differentiation and Moderation

Experiences are linked to the experiential contexts in which these experiences have taken place [61]. For managers, producing peak or memorable experiences is providing experiential contexts which encourage consumer immersion [25]. Even whether the experiential context is well-controlled or not, the experience produced will never be the same for all consumers [25,58,89,100]. The nature of tourists' participation during the experience (e.g., active or reactive participation characterized by an absorptive or immersive connection with the surroundings) is fundamental to the way they live and remember it [18,19]. The absorption-immersion axis connects the customers with the surroundings. To introduce immersion as a conceptual tool for consuming experience [18,19,25,101], there are three qualities allowing consumers' immersion in an experiential context: the context must be enclaved, secured, and closely monitored and thematized. Based on these qualities, specific recreational practices, geophysical characteristics and service offer management resources, a previous qualitative study characterized one natural park as ordinary and the other one as extraordinary [89]. The ordinary context is characterized as a non-enclaved, less secured and monitored place, and a more mundane forest experience in which visitors are absorbed with the surroundings. In a natural park, the visitors' experience is more active and absorbed—education and physical activity. The extraordinary context is characterized as an enclaved, secured and monitored scenery in which visitors are immersed with the surroundings. The natural park visitors' experience is more active and immersed—escapism. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

**Hypothesis 5 (H5).** *Physical activity and education dimensions are higher than entertainment dimensions for an ordinary experiential context.*

**Hypothesis 6 (H6).** *Escapism dimensions are higher than entertainment dimensions for an extraordinary experiential context.*

Daily life can be seen as a succession of more or less extraordinary or ordinary experiential contexts enabling all kinds of more or less memorable and arousal experiences [50,102,103]. Depending on the kinds of experiential contexts offered (ordinary or extraordinary), the visitors' experiences will be more or less arousing and memorable [18,19,46,50,56]. The following hypothesis can be formulated:

**Hypothesis 7 (H7).** *The experiential context (ordinary or extraordinary) moderates the relations between the dimensions of experience and arousal.*

**Hypothesis 8 (H8).** *The experiential context (ordinary or extraordinary) moderates the relations between the dimensions of experience and memory.*

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Data Collection and Sample Design

Two typical protected natural parks (Morvan Park and Yangmingshan Park) were chosen for this research. The characteristics (geophysical environment, recreational practices, and service offer management) of both parks allowed to qualify one park as an extraordinary context (Yangmingshan Park) and the second one as an ordinary context (Morvan Park) [89]. These areas were selected because the target population of each park was domestic tourists.

The information necessary for the empirical study was collected by a convenient sampling method in both parks through face-to-face interviews before the Covid-19 pandemic. The interviewers for this study were university students trained in the fundamentals of interviewing. Each student had to interview domestic tourists randomly. If interviewees did not qualify as domestic tourists (overnight trip or at least four hours on a same-day trip) or were not willing to participate in the study, the students would interview the next available person.

A total of 1000 usable responses were obtained; 500 in an extraordinary context and 500 in an ordinary context. A large percentage of the respondents were repeat visitors (93% for an extraordinary context and 95% for an ordinary context). The sample was divided almost equally between overnight and same-day tourists and between males and females. A sample profile is summarized in Table 1. The mean age of participants was 39.36 years old, with a standard deviation of 12,105 years for the extraordinary park, and 36.33 years old with a standard deviation of 15,016 years for the ordinary park. There is a statistical difference between the two samples. In the extraordinary park, the visitors are slightly older than in the ordinary park. The study analyzes similarities and differences in visitors' experiences between both experiential contexts. The questionnaire was first elaborated in English then translated to Mandarin and French with the help of native teachers. Back translation was used to ensure equivalency [104].

**Table 1.** Profile of survey respondents.

Variables	Frequency		Variables	Frequency	
Context	Extraordinary (n = 500)	Ordinary (n = 500)		Extraordinary (n = 500)	Ordinary (n = 500)
First Visit			Age		
Yes	7%	5%	≤20	5%	13%
No	93%	95%	21/30	24%	33%
			31/40	29%	15%
Gender			41/50	23%	17%
Male	54%	51%	51/60	14%	16%
Female	46%	49%	61 and more	5%	6%



### 3.2. Questionnaire Design

Three sections compose the survey questionnaire. The first section includes questions regarding visits such as the first visit or multiple visits to the park and the visitors' source of information regarding each park. The second section measures the experience in the experiential context by means of a five dimension' scale referring to the four realms of experience adapted from Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19] and one dimension relates to 'bodily involvement': education, esthetics, entertainment, escapism, and physical activity. The construction of this experience scale is based on previous research and adapted to fit the natural park experience [18,19,36,59,86,89,105–107]. The scale includes 20 experience items evaluated on a 7-point-Likert-type scale. The third section measures arousal and memorable experience as outcomes of the emotional experience induced by the context [59,75,89,91–94,98]. The construct of arousal and memorable experience was estimated with two items for both experiences, evaluated on a 7-point-Likert-type scale based on previous research [36,59]. The fourth section collects demographic information including gender, age, marital status, and education background.

### 3.3. Analyses

The descriptive statistics, the Exploratory Factorial Analyses (EFA) and the correlation table, were compiled using SPSS 22.0. The Exploratory Factor Analysis using the PCA (principal component analysis) method with Varimax rotation was conducted for both studies. The number of factors was determined by using an eigenvalue greater than 1, and the percentage of variance was explained. In both cases, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was greater than 0.7 and Bartlett's test was significant, which indicated adequate sampling.

The confirmatory factor analyses to validate the scale of protected natural park experience in both contexts and the structural equations required to address the hypotheses were carried out using AMOS 22.0 [108], taking into account the recommendations of Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson [109].

In order to validate the approach and the three hypothesis groups, a structural equation model was used including relationships between the dimensions of experience and the two outcomes, arousal and memory. Arousal and memory are the hedonic and sensorial dimensions of actual visitors' experience in the conceptual framework [59,75,98].

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Validity and Reliability of the Measures

First, each park sample was analyzed to see if all indicators were significant (Table 2). Preliminary analyses confirmed the absence of missing values. In the analysis of the ordinary park, the Varimax exploratory factor analysis resulted in four factors. The reliabilities of the four dimensions of the scale were determined by means of Cronbach's alphas. Neither loadings nor Cronbach's alphas of the esthetics dimension were significant. This result could be explained by the sample in which more than 90% of the respondents were repeat visitors. With the deletion of the esthetics dimension, the experience scales for the park sample achieved structurally reliable measurement properties. The Varimax exploratory factor analysis resulted in five factors; therefore, five dimensions were retained in the analysis of the extraordinary context. However, to be consistent with the former analysis, only four dimensions were retained in the analysis of the extraordinary context. For both parks, all indicators of the four dimensions showed significant extractions higher than 0.5 and factor loadings higher than 0.7. The Cronbach's alphas of the four dimensions were between 0.86 and 0.95 [109]. The average variance extracted (AVE) for each factor was well above the recommended threshold levels of 0.50. All squared correlations were lower than the value of the rho convergent validity index, indicating that all aspects of identity were specific and distinct, thus confirming discriminant validity [110]. The construct reliability (CR) ranged from 0.86 for escapism in an extraordinary experiential context to 0.95 for physical activity in an extraordinary experiential context, all well-above the recommended threshold level of 0.70 [109] (Table 3).

**Table 2.** Results of exploratory factorial analysis.

	Ordinary	Extraordinary
	Factor Loading	Factor Loading
Education		
The experience has made me more knowledgeable	0.885	0.865
I learnt a lot	0.895	0.882
It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things	0.835	0.881
It was a real learning experience	0.818	0.871
CR	0.926	0.936
AVE	0.759	0.786
Alpha	0.929	0.938
Esthetics		
I felt a real sense of harmony	NS	0.866
Just being here was very pleasant	NS	0.903
CR		0.831
AVE		0.742
Alpha		0.842
Entertainment		
Activities of others were amusing to watch	0.838	0.901
Watching others perform was captivating	0.863	0.916
I really enjoyed watching what others were doing	0.880	0.891
Activities of others were fun to watch	0.855	0.860
CR	0.949	0.937
AVE	0.824	0.790
Alpha	0.949	0.938
Escapism		
I felt I played a different character here	0.842	0.752
I felt like I was living in a different time or place	0.911	0.841
The experience here let me imagine being someone else	0.886	0.799
I completely escaped from reality	0.786	0.824
CR	0.906	0.862
AVE	0.709	0.610
Alpha	0.903	0.860
Physical Activity		
Just doing physical activities here was very pleasant	0.891	0.898
Physical activities presented were very attractive	0.865	0.929
Physical experiences here provide pleasure to my senses	0.883	0.939
I practiced physical activities to enjoy myself	0.878	0.939
CR	0.938	0.954
AVE	0.791	0.838
Alpha	0.937	0.954
Total variance explained:	83.1%	82.6%
KMO	0.895	0.859
Barlett's test for sphericity	$\chi^2 = 1,396,507 *$	$\chi^2 = 7,516,967 *$

Note: Principal components analysis with varimax rotation. \*  $p < 0.001$ .

**Table 3.** Validity of the construct.

	CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	Arousal	Entertainment	Escapism	PA	Memory	Education
Arousal	0.905	0.761	0.746	0.909	0.872					
Entertainment	0.947	0.818	0.243	0.968	0.478	0.904				
Escapism	0.919	0.739	0.217	0.977	0.407	0.438	0.859			
Physical Act.	0.946	0.814	0.213	0.984	0.462	0.336	0.227	0.902		
Memory	0.922	0.797	0.746	0.987	0.864	0.493	0.466	0.419	0.893	
Education	0.932	0.773	0.328	0.989	0.573	0.453	0.325	0.222	0.535	0.879

Note: Composite reliability (CR), the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) (in bold) and correlations between constructs (off-diagonal).

For both parks, a confirmatory factor analysis was then used for the results (Table 4). Jackson, Gillaspay, and Purc-Stephenson [111] recommend limiting the reporting of fit indices to three types of indicators: (i) the Chi-squared test and its associated  $p$ -value; (ii) an incremental index (TLI, CFI); and (iii) a residual index (RMSEA). The measurement model used in this study showed a good fit for the ordinary context ( $\chi^2 = 203.123$ ; d.f. = 51, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.077) and for the extraordinary context ( $\chi^2 = 221.903$ ; d.f. = 71, CFI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.065), based on the selected approximation fit indices.

**Table 4.** Results of confirmatory factorial analysis for both contexts.

	Chi-Square	d.f	$p$	Cmin/df	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	TLI
Ordinary 4 dim	340,524	98	0.000	3475	0.070	0.954	0.967	0.960
Extraordinary 4 dim	304,088	98	0.000	3107	0.065	0.957	0.970	0.964
Extraordinary 5 dim	358,607	125	0.000	2869	0.061	0.953	0.969	0.962

#### 4.2. Structural Model Validation

The authors assessed the measurement model ( $n = 1000$ ) based on the recommendations of Jackson et al. [111] and considered the recommendations of Hair et al. [109] as well as those of Hooper et al. [112]: TLI and CFI > 0.9; RMSEA < 0.08;  $\chi^2/\text{df}$  is acceptable if its value is between 2 and 5. In this study, the global model indicates a correct adjustment to data with the following indices:  $\chi^2$  ( $\chi^2$ ) = 658,765,  $\text{df} = 100$ ,  $\chi^2/\text{df} = 3467$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , RMSEA = 0.050, CFI = 0.978 and TLI = 0.973 (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Results of SEM.

Chi-Square	d.f	$p$	Cmin/df	RMSEA	NFI	CFI	TLI
658,765	190	0.000	3467	0.050	0.969	0.979	0.973

#### 4.3. Hypothesis Testing

##### 4.3.1. Testing H1: An Extraordinary Context Provides Higher Arousal and Memorable Experience than an Ordinary Context

Table 6 compares memorability and arousal of actual experiences for both extraordinary and ordinary contexts on the mean score. The results of the one-factor ANOVA indicate a significant difference between an extraordinary context and an ordinary one for memorable and arousal experience. An extraordinary context provides more arousal and memorable experience than an ordinary one. This is relevant with previous research with similar results [21,53,59,61,90].

**Table 6.** Results of Anova for Arousal and Memory.

Your Experience at the Park	Means		F	Sig
	Extraordinary	Ordinary		
Arousal	5.2850	4.8680	25,425	0.000
Memory	5.6047	5.0720	50,620	0.000

##### 4.3.2. Testing H2: An Extraordinary Context Provides Higher Experiential Dimensions than an Ordinary Context

According to the scale validation of both studies, the esthetics dimension is only used for the extraordinary context. Table 7 compares the dimensions of experience for an extraordinary and an ordinary context on the mean score. The results of the one-factor ANOVAS indicate a significant difference between the extraordinary and ordinary contexts for two of the four dimensions: entertainment and escapism, whereas the education dimension is not significantly different. Moreover, the test indicates a significant difference between both

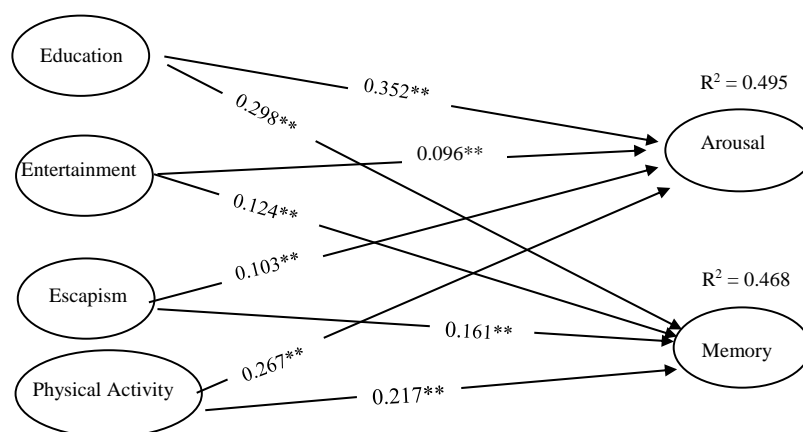
contexts for the physical activity. Results show that the means of all dimensions are higher for an extraordinary context than for an ordinary one. These highest means for the extraordinary context show the importance of the immersion and the optimal experience (flow). These results are relevant with Pine and Gilmore's research [18,19] which indicate that the richer the experiences are, the more they can be found in the four areas of their framework.

**Table 7.** Results of Anova for the five dimensions.

Your Experience at the Park	Means				F	Sig
	Extraordinary	Rank	Ordinary	Rank		
Education (Ed)	4.5770	5	4.5905	2	0.026	0.873
Esthetics (Est)	6.0230	1	-	-	-	-
Entertainment (Ent)	4.8785	4	4.1477	3	66,752	0.000
Escapism (Esc)	5.1060	3	3.4056	4	377,566	0.000
Physical Activity (PhA)	5.2530	2	5.0883	1	3857	0.050

#### 4.3.3. Testing H3 and H4: The Five Experiential Dimensions Positively Influence Tourists' Arousal and Memory

To respond to H3 and H4, the first step of the study tested the positive influence of the four dimensions of experience in the model on arousal and memory for the whole sample ( $n = 1000$ ). The measurement model of structural results (Figure 2) first showed that the four dimensions of experience positively influenced arousal (education:  $\gamma = 0.352$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.096$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.103$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.267$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and memory (education:  $\gamma = 0.298$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.124$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.161$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.217$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). These results validated H3.1 to H3.4 and H4.1 to H4.2, yet did not validate H3.5 and H4.5, which was not consistent with previous research [36,59]. It found that esthetics, entertainment, and education explain memory and arousal while escapism does not do so in B&B and cruise contexts. The wilder natural experiential context used in this research may explain these different results. In a wildly nature-based experiential context, escapism is an important dimension of experience.



**Figure 2.** Structural results. Significance rate = \*\*  $p < 1\%$ .

#### 4.3.4. Testing H5 and H6: Physical Activity and Education Dimensions are Higher than Entertainment Dimensions for an Ordinary Experiential Context and Escapism Dimensions Are Higher than Entertainment Dimensions for an Extraordinary Experiential Context

To answer H5 and H6, the study tested model 1, which is an unconstrained model. In the second step, six models for arousal and six models for memory were tested for each sample by comparing the nested models. Each model was estimated by constraining two factor loadings while allowing the construct means of the indicators to be equal across

two dimensions. All nested SEM models were compared based on a chi-square difference statistic. Table 8 compares the unconstrained model with six constrained models for both outcomes for an extraordinary context and Table 9 compares the unconstrained model with six constrained models for both outcomes for an ordinary context. All models were found to have good overall fit to the data (Tables 8 and 9). Results showed that there was a change in the  $\chi^2$  value between an unconstrained model (model 1) and the 12 other models for models 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.6 for an extraordinary context and for models 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, 2.1, 2.2, 2.5, and 2.6 for an ordinary context. For an ordinary context, education and physical activity are higher experience dimensions than entertainment and escapism regarding arousal and memory. These results validated H5 and are in accordance with a previous study [89,102] showing that an ordinary context provides more active and absorbed experiences such as education and physical activity for arousal and memory. For an extraordinary context, education and escapism are higher experience dimensions than entertainment and physical activity regarding arousal. Concerning memory, there is no significant difference between all the dimensions. These results did not validate H6 and are in accordance with previous studies [86,89,95] showing that an extraordinary context provides more active and immersed experiences such as escapism for arousal. The insignificant difference concerning memory may come from the large percentage of repeat visitors in the sample and the lack of information concerning the presence of other people.

**Table 8.** Chi-square comparison nested models for the extraordinary context.

Description		$\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	p-Value	Comparison Path Estimate Experience A vs. Experience B (Unconstrained/Equal)	
Model 1	Non-constraint model	402.235	0.979	0.974	0.047					
Model 1.1 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > Ent equal	407.316	0.978	0.974	0.048	5.081	1	$p < 0.05$	<u>0.256 (Ed)</u> /0.183	0.114 (Ent)/0.183
Model 1.2 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > Esc equal	402.368	0.979	0.974	0.047	0.134	1	$p > 0.05$	0.256 (Ed)/0.269	0.284 (Esc)/0.269
Model 1.3 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > PhA equal	409.674	0.978	0.973	0.048	7.439	1	$p < 0.001$	<u>0.256 (Ed)</u> /0.179	0.116 (PhA)/0.179
Model 1.4 Arousal.	Constraint model Ent- > Esc equal	408.805	0.978	0.974	0.048	6.570	1	$p < 0.05$	0.114 (Ent)/0.182	<u>0.284 (Esc)</u> /0.182
Model 1.5 Arousal.	Constraint model Ent- > PhA equal	402.237	0.979	0.974	0.047	0.002	1	$p > 0.05$	0.114 (Ent)/0.115	0.116 (PhA)/0.115
Model 1.6 Arousal.	Constraint model Esc- > PhA equal	408.427	0.978	0.974	0.048	6.193	1	$p < 0.05$	<u>0.284 (Esc)</u> /0.180	0.116 (PhA)/0.180
Model 2.1 Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > Ent equal	404.964	0.979	0.974	0.047	2.730	1	$p > 0.05$	<u>0.220 (Ed)</u> /0.166	0.114 (Ent)/0.166
Model 2.2 Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > Esc equal	402.345	0.979	0.974	0.047	0.111	1	$p > 0.05$	<u>0.220 (Ed)</u> /0.231	0.246 (Esc)/0.231
Model 2.3 Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > PhA equal	406.053	0.978	0.974	0.048	3.819	1	$p > 0.05$	<u>0.220 (Ed)</u> /0.164	0.119 (PhA)/0.164
Model 2.4 Memory.	Constraint model Ent- > Esc equal	406.015	0.978	0.974	0.047	3.780	1	$p > 0.05$	0.114 (Ent)/0.166	<u>0.246 (Esc)</u> /0.166
Model 2.5 Memory.	Constraint model Ent- > PhA equal	402.240	0.979	0.974	0.047	0.006	1	$p > 0.05$	<u>0.114 (Ent)</u> /0.117	0.119(PhA)/0.117
Model 2.6 Memory.	Constraint model Esc- > PhA equal	405.681	0.978	0.974	0.047	3.447	1	$p > 0.05$	<u>0.246 (Esc)</u> /0.166	0.119(PhA)/0.166

Note: Experiences A and B refer to the different dimensions that are in the column 'description'. The underlining figures mean the most significative results (the highest).

**Table 9.** Chi-square comparison nested models for the ordinary context.

Description		$\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	p-Value	Comparison Path Estimate Experience A vs. Experience B (Unconstrained/Equal)	
Model 1	Non-constraint model	495.207	0.971	0.965	0.057					
Model 1.1 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > Ent equal	533.212	0.967	0.961	0.060	38.005	1	$p < 0.001$	<u>0.391 (Ed)</u> /0.190	0.014 (Ent)/0.190
Model 1.2 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > Esc equal	545.547	0.966	0.959	0.061	50.340	1	$p < 0.001$	<u>0.391 (Ed)</u> /0.159	0.030 (Esc)/0.159
Model 1.3 Arousal.	Constraint model Ed- > PhA equal	495.680	0.971	0.965	0.057	0.473	1	$p > 0.05$	0.391 (Ed)/0.413	0.431 (PhA)/0.413
Model 1.4 Arousal.	Constraint model Ent- > Esc equal	495.323	0.971	0.965	0.057	0.116	1	$p > 0.05$	0.014 (Ent)/0.024	0.030 (Esc)/0.024
Model 1.5 Arousal.	Constraint model Ent- > PhA equal	544.512	0.966	0.959	0.061	49.305	1	$p < 0.001$	0.014 (Ent)/0.217	<u>0.431 (PhA)</u> /0.215



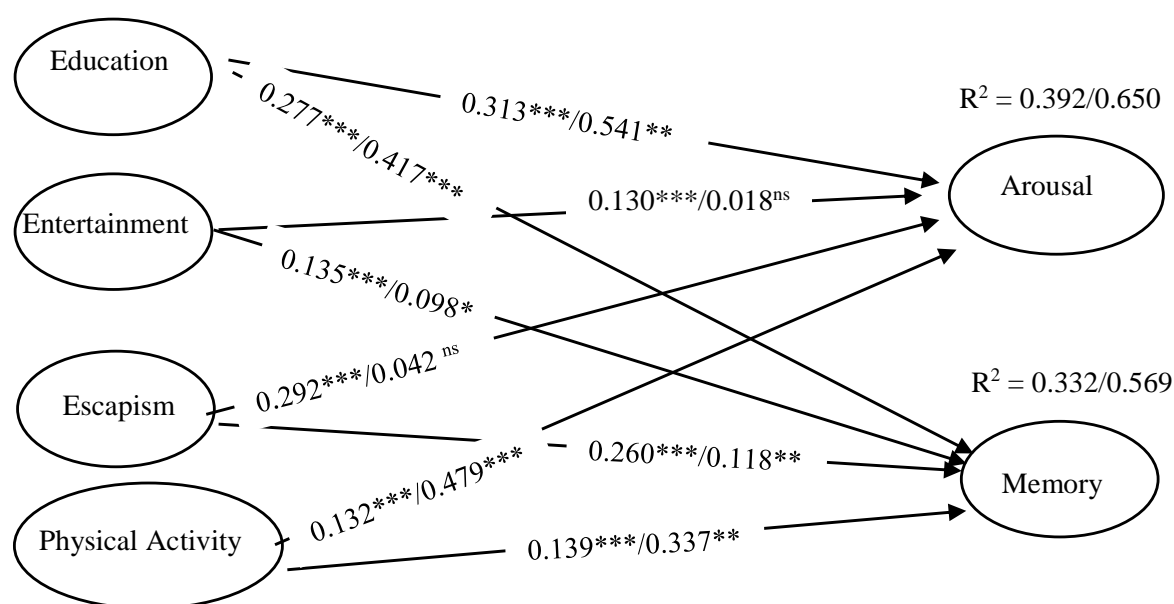
Table 9. Cont.

	Description	$\chi^2$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2$	$\Delta df$	p-Value	Comparison Path Estimate Experience A vs. Experience B (Unconstrained/Equal)	
Model 1.6 Arousal	Constraint model Esc- > PhA equal	572.119	0.964	0.956	0.063	76.912	1	$p < 0.001$	0.030 (Esc)/0.175	<u>0.431 (PhA)/0.175</u>
Model 2.1 Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > Ent equal	515.056	0.969	0.963	0.058	19.849	1	$p < 0.001$	<u>0.374 (Ed)/0.216</u>	0.077 (Ent)/0.216
Model 2.2. Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > Esc equal	522.498	0.968	0.962	0.059	27.291	1	$p < 0.001$	0.374 (Ed)/0.189	0.086 (Esc)/0.189
Model 2.3 Memory.	Constraint model Ed- > PhA equal	496.170	0.971	0.965	0.057	0.963	1	$p > 0.05$	0.374 (Ed)/0.342	0.313 (PhA)/0.342
Model 2.4 Memory.	Constraint model Ent- > Esc equal	495.242	0.971	0.965	0.056	0.035	1	$p > 0.05$	0.077 (Ent)/0.083	0.086 (Esc)/0.083
Model 2.5 Memory.	Constraint model Ent- > PhA equal	509.030	0.970	0.963	0.058	13.823	1	$p < 0.001$	0.077 (Ent)/0.192	<u>0.313 (PhA)/0.192</u>
Model 2.6 Memory.	Constraint model Esc- > PhA equal	517.153	0.969	0.962	0.058	21.946	1	$p < 0.001$	0.086 (Esc)/0.167	<u>0.313 (PhA)/0.167</u>

Note: Experiences A and B refer to the different dimensions that are in the column 'description'. The underlining figures mean the most significative results (the highest).

#### 4.3.5. Testing H7 and H8: The Experiential Context (Ordinary or Extraordinary) Moderates the Relations between the Dimensions of Experience and Arousal and the Experiential Context (Ordinary or Extraordinary) Moderates the Relations between the Dimensions of Experience and Memory

To respond to hypotheses H7 and H8, the study tested the moderating effect of the experiential context on the model. To test the moderating role of the experiential context (extraordinary/ordinary) on the specified relationship between the constructs (Figure 3), Kline's recommendations [113] were followed. A multi-group analysis was performed to test the moderating effect of the experiential context (500 people in an ordinary context/500 people in an extraordinary context). First, it checked the stability of measuring scales. Correlation stability was observed between items and latent variables as well as covariance stability between error terms. It proves that the measurement of constructs is not influenced by the experiential context. In a second step, at the structural level, the moderating effect of the experiential context was analyzed. The structural invariance of the model was tested by the  $\chi^2$  difference. The  $\chi^2$  difference between the unconstrained base model and the constrained group model for the experiential context ( $\Delta\chi^2 (190) = 238.677; p < 0.01$ ) showed a significant difference, indicating the moderating effects of the context [108]. Therefore, the experiential context does have a moderating effect. The t-test for difference was used to examine the moderating effects of the experiential context on each relationship [114]. This test showed the significant moderating effect of the context between the four dimensions and arousal, between education and memory, and between physical activity and memory, yet not for the other relationships (Table 10). The measurement model for an extraordinary context showed that the four dimensions of experience positively influenced arousal (education:  $\gamma = 0.313, p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.130, p < 0.01$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.292, p < 0.01$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.132, p < 0.001$ ) and memory (education:  $\gamma = 0.277, p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.135, p < 0.01$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.260, p < 0.001$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.139, p < 0.001$ ). The measurement model for an ordinary context showed that the four dimensions of experience positively influenced arousal (education:  $\gamma = 0.541, p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.018, p > 0.05$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.042, p > 0.05$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.479, p < 0.001$ ) and memory (education:  $\gamma = 0.417, p < 0.001$ ; entertainment:  $\gamma = 0.098, p < 0.01$ ; escapism:  $\gamma = 0.118, p < 0.01$ ; physical activity:  $\gamma = 0.337, p < 0.001$ ). These results provide support for H7, yet no support for H8. The result providing H7 is consistent with the other results [18,19,46,50,56] showing that visitors' arousal experiences depend on the experiential contexts offered (ordinary or extraordinary). The result providing H8 shows that education and physical activity, which are more individual, may be moderated by the experiential context while entertainment and escapism, which are shared experiences among other visitors, may not be moderated by the experiential context.



**Figure 3.** Moderation extraordinary context/ordinary context. Significance rate = \*\*\*  $p < 0.1\%$ ; \*\*  $p < 1\%$ ; \*  $p < 5\%$ ; ns = non-significant relationships ( $p > 5\%$ ).

**Table 10.** Analysis of moderating effects of the context.

	Model		Gr 1 = Extraordinary	Gr 2 = Ordinary
Moderated Relationships	T-Test for Difference According to Grade p		Standardized Coefficient	Standardized Coefficient
Education–Arousal	1.767 *	*	0.313 ***	0.541 ***
Entertainment–Arousal	−2.251 **	*	0.130 **	0.018 (ns)
Escapism–Arousal	−3.688 ***	***	0.292 **	0.042 (ns)
Physical activity–Arousal	5.718 ***	***	0.132 ***	0.479 ***
Education–Memory	1.793 *	*	0.277 ***	0.417 ***
Entertainment–Memory	−1.16 (ns)	ns	0.135 **	0.098 *
Escapism–Memory	0.00 (ns)	ns	0.260 ***	0.118 **
Physical activity–Memory	3.247 ***	***	0.139 ***	0.337 ***
Significance rate = *** $p < 0.1\%$ ; ** $p < 1\%$ ; * $p < 5\%$ ; ns = non-significant relationships ( $p > 5\%$ )				
Adjustment indices			$\chi^2$ /ddl	2.362
			GFI	0.924
			CFI	0.975
			TLI	0.969
			RMSEA	0.037

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

These final discussion and conclusion highlight the main theoretical and methodological contributions related to the results, the sustainable and sanitary implications of this research, particularly for protected natural park managers in a context of pandemic crisis, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

### 5.1. Contributions to Scholarship

The main purposes of this article were to establish how the experiential context of protected natural parks may influence the domestic tourists' experiences, as was the case

during the Covid-19 pandemic and how different experiential dimensions influence the domestic tourists' arousal and memory in two different experiential contexts (extraordinary versus ordinary). Theoretically speaking, this research analytically extended the 4Es model [18,19] for domestic tourists in two different protected natural parks. The results of this experiential context comparison underline the link between the experiential context and the actual experiences and highlight the interest in a new conceptual framework of experiences. Based on the findings, a framework showing that the visitors' experience is comprised of two axes—immersion-absorption and more or less bodily—representing four dimensions including entertainment, escapism, education, and physical activity, is given to identify the profiles of the visitors' dominant actual experiences in each context.

Nevertheless, this study supports partially Pine and Gilmore's framework [18,19] with only three of the four experiences. Indeed, the esthetics dimension does not differentiate both parks adequately because esthetics should be everywhere in an extraordinary park while nowhere in an ordinary one; that is why this dimension is not a component of this framework in this study. In this sense, the scale [59], adapted from Pine and Gilmore's framework [18,19], is less efficient in some protected natural parks that offer an ordinary experiential context. Both previous studies using the four dimensions of experience [36,59] were carried out in closed and artificial or hyper-real areas, B&B (Bed and Breakfast) establishments, and cruise boats where the esthetics dimension is highly important. This framework is not sufficient to apprehend the whole experience in a less secured environment such as a protected natural park, which requires a bodily dimension for the visitors' research [46,86–88].

Methodologically speaking, this research questions the scale [59] based on Pine and Gilmore's research [18,19] for protected natural parks, firstly through the removal of the esthetics dimension as discussed previously and, secondly, because of the lack of information concerning the presence of other people as a social axis. Using the consumers' experience framework of Walls et al. [46] enables to include social and physical dimensions as well as extraordinary versus ordinary experiences.

This new conceptual framework consists of five dimensions—education, esthetics, entertainment, escapism, and physical activity—differentiated on one hand by the visitors' immersion-absorption axis and, on the other hand, by more or less bodily axis influencing the visitors' arousal and memory. Depending on the experiential context offered, the visitors' experiences will thus be more or less memorable and more or less exciting. The results indicated the distinction of the actual visitors' experiences inside each context with education and escapism in an extraordinary company-driven park and education and physical activity in an ordinary co-driven context.

## 5.2. Sustainable and Sanitary Implications for Protected Natural Park Managers

This research could help managers implement specific sustainable and sanitary strategies in protected natural parks, especially in the context of a global health crisis with more domestic tourists. If countries continue imposing strict sanitary measures and limiting international travel, it would be interesting to promote further authentic and/or more specific local holidays with services developing nature or outdoor activities and ecotourism [10,29,115] to enable domestic tourists to (re-) discover the richness of their local territories (nature, culture, leisure, heritage, gastronomy, etc.) with guides capable of optimizing their arousable and memorable experiences [36,39,116–118] in protected natural parks.

For example, managers could promote services with low arousal and mundane experiences in a more ordinary environment [119,120], which could provide domestic tourists with creative and repetitive pleasure through the discovery of their own limits, new sensations, etc. In extraordinary protected natural park, managers should also offer active participation experience to visitors, allowing for education experience and either escapism experience underlying local tourist services in controlled and secure areas. They can create specific zones such as playful visits or event spaces in which tourists can co-produce

and co-create experiences more easily and based on their own intellectual and physical resources [55,97], whether the protected natural park is free or controlled. They can also manage overcrowding by restricting access to certain paths, the development of mobile applications to alert people to overcrowding and reporting irresponsible behavior [2,120].

Despite the maintenance of strict sanitary conditions, deeply local and sustainable tourism, in which encounters, culture, and leisure activities will have a prominent place, would allow domestic visitors to seldom travel, go nearer, and in better and safer conditions [10]. To take the sanitary constraints imposed by the pandemic one step further, natural park managers could use an official website, an on-site platform, or a mobile app to create a trusted interface increasing mutual participation between service providers and visitors [118]. The establishment of an effective communication system (Facebook, Snapchat, YouTube, and Instagram), new innovations and digital services should contribute to the recovery of the domestic tourist market. For instance, new individual or collective protection equipment enabling compliance with sanitary regulations while facilitating exchanges, visits and experiences; or digitizing events, monuments, museums and sites with virtual or augmented reality services.

### *5.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research*

This study bears limitations leading to directions for future research. There is a statistical difference between both samples concerning the average age, as the visitors of the extraordinary park were slightly older than those of the ordinary park. Only two protected natural parks as experiential contexts were tested for this study, and the findings should not be generalized over other protected natural parks. Further research could be done to confirm the interest in re-establishing Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19] and its applied scale [59] in the analysis of visitors' experiences in protected natural parks or other theme parks with different experience process (i.e., absorption versus immersion, [17,18]) or experience perception (i.e., more extraordinary versus more ordinary, [121]) for domestic tourists.

Approaching the domestic tourist experience as a whole with physical and mental involvement [122] would also be consistent with the more active versus the more passive (reactive) axis on visitors' participation of Pine and Gilmore's model [18,19]. Indeed, even if physical activities were mentioned in the educational dimension in the 4Es model, the practice of outdoor physical activities in connection with the natural context is not taken into account by the scale of Oh and colleagues [59]. By applying Walls et al.'s consumers' experience framework [46], in protected natural parks, it would be possible to include the social and physical dimensions of domestic tourists (including the influence of other people on visitors' experiences), as well as the different influences between extraordinary versus ordinary experiential contexts.

Finally, it would now be interesting to compare the predictive results of this research in the real context of a pandemic crisis for domestic tourists visiting protected nature parks in their country. In addition, it would be important to analyze the sustainable and sanitary strategies of park managers to see whether they adapt their actions beyond the respect of health risk management rules.

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