
Exploring Relationships between Experience Economy and Satisfaction of Visitors in Rural Tourism Destination

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Abstract - This study explores the visitors' experience on rural tourism destination in Tadam Hill Resorts, Selangor. The satisfactions were classified into Four Experience Economy which comprises of education experience, entertainment experience, esthetics experience, and escapism experience. The Four Experience Economy has become the foundation to the research frameworks. The study was conducted in Banting, Selangor, a destination that is known for its own charm on rural destinations. A total of 383 questionnaires were collected from the visitors that visits Tadam Hill Resorts and visitors that had experience from Tadam Hill Resorts visits. Correlation analysis are performed to test the relationship between the variables. Based on the results, there is a positive relationship between the four realms of experience economy and visitors' satisfaction. The findings of this study prove that it is crucial to assist the tourism operations of Tadam Hill Resorts to provide the best facilities for visitors' satisfaction from aspects of educational experiences, entertainment experiences, esthetics experience, and escapism experience.

Keywords – *Correlational Analysis, Experience Economy, Experiential Tourism, Rural Tourism, Satisfaction,*

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I. Introduction

The geographical term of rural tourism can be used as describing the cultural activities of rural communities (Lane, 2009). It is also a product for tourism which enables visitors to take part in events, rituals and lifestyles of the local people, a taste of the rural physical and human environment and, as far as possible (Falak, Chiun & Wee, 2014). Rural tourism includes practices for recreation, industry and other uses for people who travel and live in rural areas without mass tourism other than those in their normal setting (Nair, Munikrishnan, Rajaratnam & King, 2015). It also depends on a wide range of publicly and privately owned natural and cultural resources, associated infrastructure, and interpretative facilities, as well as provision of accommodation, foods, beverages, and goods. Furthermore, rural tourism is a 'country experience' which encompasses a wide range of attractions and activities that take place in agricultural or non-urban areas. Rural tourism has great economic contributors to many rural destinations in improving the local standard of living

(Lane, 2009). Tourism developments will conclusively bring both positive and negative impacts to the community. Hence, considering how local communities perceive the impacts of tourism development is vital in accomplishing community support for future planning and managing tourism development (Yoon, Yooshik & Gursoy, 2001). As for rural tourism, it has become a very essential element in evolving an area that is underdeveloped and lacked a comprehensive awareness from government, urban societies of nearby areas. Regularly, local of the rural areas have not been encouraged to equipage the available resources for promoting tourism in the areas (Awasthi, 2018). Therefore, the research will be focusing on the satisfaction of visitors at Tadam Hill Resorts, Selangor as it is necessary to guarantee successful development, promotion as well as operation of the existing and future development. As visitors' experience is multifaceted and multidimensional, no single number can quantify the experience. To adequately describe the wide ranges of experiences in places like national parks, attractions, and urban destinations, a variety of approaches to measure experiences are needed (Jorgenson, 2018). Thus, the studies of visitor's satisfaction with the development at Tadam Hill Resorts are conducted based on the four experience economy such as education, entertainment, escapism and esthetics by Pine and Gilmore's.

II. Literature Review

The tourism experience has its roots throughout academic literature dating back to seminal studies and research on tourism experience has increased in popularity as a result of advances in methodological approaches, shifts in global economies (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), and advancement in theory. Explanation of the Four Realms Experience Economy which consists of education, entertainment, escapism and esthetic and the relationship between economical experience and visitors' satisfaction are covered in the following subsection.

2.1 The Four Realms Experience Economy

Pine and Gilmore's (1999) experience economy model has stood out among the various applications of the experiential view of consumer behavior. Their experience economy framework has been utilized to evaluate tourism products such as heritage trails, special events, and cruise vacations. In addition, these form quadrants are positioned along with two matrices of experience such as the horizontally placed consumer participation either passive or active, and the vertically positioned consumer connection (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Active participation is "when consumers control the outcome or activities that give rise to their perception individually," and when "customers do not impact or influence behavior explicitly the passive participation is" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999). Connecting consumers on a continuum of immersion or absorption, immersion is described as becoming physically or virtually part of the event or performance itself while absorption is engaging the attention of the consumer's mind (Pine & Gilmore, 1999).

Furthermore, Pine and Gilmore (1999) proposed that consumption experiences incorporating all four dimensions lead to stronger memories (Gilmore & Pine, 2002) and subsequent positive evaluations. Memorable tourist tourism experiences have been identified to be composed of positiveness, engagement with others, and acquisition of new knowledge. In the assessment of tourist experience on tourism product or services if their expectations are met before the purchase or after they have consumed or visited the destination, they will be satisfied with their travel experience. The importance of having pleasant experience and satisfaction in rural tourism in particular has been recognized as having a positive effect on behavioral intentions.

The first realm, educational experience role as a motivator lends evidence that the experience economy model is appropriate for the rural tourism experience. Residing on the absorption and active participation quadrant, learning as a consumer motivation consistently materializes in the rural tourism research literature regardless of the demographics. Consumer increases skills and knowledge through absorbing information presented interactively. For example, educational experience in rural tourism destinations are such as archery, team building, and bamboo rafting where consumer will be actively participating in the interactive engagement of one's mind and body. Next, the entertainment experience as expressed by Pine and Gilmore (1999), falls more on the passive participation or absorption dimension of the model. It is engaged by performances where the consumer's attention is occupied by the services offered. Examples of entertainment experience that is provided by Tadam Hill Resorts are such as limbo, *congkak*, badminton, volleyball, giant *jenga*, table tennis, basketball, and lake swimming. The consumer will passively observe the activities and performances of others. The third realm, esthetic experience is where consumers passively participate in the esthetic experience, as with the entertainment experience, and are immersed in the experience as they are in the escapist realm. "The gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from every day and routine experiences", based on esthetic judgments, particularly of the rural environment. Places are selected for the pleasure and uniqueness they offer that differs from modern, everyday urban or suburban life. Examples of such entertainment experience of rural tourism destination are offered in activities like Tarzan swing, diving platform, bamboo accommodation, and wedding photo shoot. Finally, the escapist experience research about

rural tourism motivations supports both the esthetic and escapist components within the model. It is the difference of place that draws urbanity to the rural tourism experience and signifies the escapist realm. Various rural destinations provide various activities in which the visitors may be engaged in activities ranging from flying fox to All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV). Activities such as these are consistently rated high as reasons for rural tourism. The greater the number of activities offered within the rural destination, the greater the potential for customers to fully realize the escapist dimension on the active participation and immersive in an actual or virtual environment. The four realms were found to demonstrate differing strengths in effecting the tourist's experience.

2.2 Visitors' Satisfaction

Satisfaction is defined as expectations in comparison before and after visiting a destination (Ramseook-Munhurrum, Naidoo, Seebaluck, and Pillai, 2006). Visitor's satisfaction was recognized as the remarkable factor that affects the success of any industries (Som and Badarneh, 2011; Adetola, Adewumi, and Olonimoyo, 2016) because of the potential to influence visitors' future behavior (Hussein, 2016) and to gain visitors' loyalty (Ohn and Supinit, 2016).

Satisfaction can only be produced through expressive activities (Jensen 2017). Jensen (2017) stated that in explaining general satisfaction, expressive indicators that form core recreational experiences are more important than the other expressive indicators. Expressive factors were considered as absolutely motivating and providing satisfaction, but the instrumental is viewed as maintenance factors that can create dissatisfaction if it is gone. Therefore, it is clear that facilities and attraction possess the difference between expressive and instrumental roles that may complementary to satisfaction.

Visitors' satisfaction is the feeling of happiness created from the experience included in tourism activities as stated by Caru and Cova (2003). The experiences that were obtained from tourism activities were said to be critical to differentiate the destination from their challenger (Walls, Okumus, Wang, and Kwun, 2011). Visitors' satisfaction is one of the key factors to determine visitors' future investment and intention to revisit (Choo et al., 2016), as the dissatisfaction of the visitors might result in future critical visitors' behaviour intentions (Zeithaml and Bitner, 2000). Visitors' satisfaction towards the products and services such as offered in tourism destination has implications on their extent of destination visitation. For example, visitors who are satisfied with the destination are intended to revisit destination again and promote the destination to others. Why people visiting the attractions and the factor of the quality of the visit is due to their satisfaction with the destination. The performance of attraction providers that provide service to their visitors make the visitor satisfied (Mahdzar, 2017). Furthermore, the higher the service experience perceived by the visitors at the destination attraction, the more satisfied the visitors will be (Haji, 2018).

Visitors' satisfaction is the emotional state of visitors after receiving experience as suggested by Baker and Crompton (2000). The suggestions were supported by Spreng, MacKenzie, and Olshavsky (1996) who explained that it is important to determine the feelings of satisfaction which a product or service fulfills a person's desires, and this must be included in measuring the satisfaction level.

2.3 Relationship between Four Realms of Experience Economy and Satisfaction

According to Oh (2007), tourist satisfaction, positive perceptions of overall destination quality, corresponding psychological arousal, and strong memories are the results based on the experience staged at a destination. The force of the relationship may be possible upon the destinations between the four realms of experience and tourist satisfaction due to the empirical nature. Besides, escapism is identified as impacting remarkably on satisfaction with the music festival, and education affecting satisfaction with a museum visit. Education, esthetics, and entertainment showed positive significant influence on satisfaction in a film festival context (Kastenholz, 2017).

Past studies have emphasized the crucial role of each realms in the tourism industry. For example, Chen and Chen (2010) studied the relationship between the educational experience and traveler satisfaction using 477 heritage tourists in Tainan. The result revealed that the educational experience aids to increase perceived value, which leads to a high level of travelers' satisfaction. Hosany and Witham (2010) investigated the effect of entertainment on satisfaction and recommendation intentions using empirical data collected from 169 customers in the cruise industry. They suggested that entertainment is a key factor affecting both satisfaction and recommendation intentions. The esthetic experience was also found to enhance customer's behavior in both positive and negative responses and behavior (Han, 2019). Ryu, Lee, and Kim (2012) also claimed that esthetics was a major factor influencing travelers' future behavioral intentions such as word-of-mouth or revisit. Thus, esthetic experience may further evoke emotional feelings, which contribute to visitors' satisfaction with their visit (Lovelock & Wirtz, 2004). Previous studies (Quadri, 2012) had found that escapism factors are crucial in the tourism setting that influences on the revisit intention. Boorstin (2012) also supported this finding that individuals with inauthentic, alienated, and routine daily life occasionally wants to escape or disconnect in

search of a unique experience, therefore satisfy their travel experience. Bahrin (2017) on their study on Malaysian museum visitors' experiences also suggested that the four realms of experience economy had positive and significant impact on satisfaction. Qu (2017) investigated the impact of experience on satisfaction on theme park. The results of his study showed that esthetic, entertainment and educational experiences were significant predictors of satisfaction. Thus, the link between experience economy and customer satisfaction has been empirically confirmed by studies conducted in several tourism contexts.

III. Methodology

The sample size used in the study amounted to 382. This sample size fits with the studies accordance with the table of population and sample size (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). As recorded in Kuala Langat District Council (2015), the amount of population in Banting, Selangor is 93,497. According to Krejcie and Morgan, the perfect sample size for population over 75 000 is 382. Data have been collected for two weeks in November 2019 from visitors who visit the Tadam Hill Resorts, Selangor. 383 of 400 questionnaire was used for analysis since 17 questionnaires have been removed due to several reasons such as incomplete answers or answers marked more than one.

A self-administered questionnaire was used as the main primary data for the research. The questions are prepared in English and it is comprised of three sections. Section A (demographic portfolio), Section B (visitors' experience at Tadam Hill Resorts) and Section C (visitors' satisfaction at Tadam Hill Resorts). Questions for the demographic profile and visitors' satisfaction contains 6 items and 3 items each, and it was adopted from Mahdzar (2019), for visitors' experience consists of 15 items was adopted from Hosany & Witham (2009) and Manthiou et al. (2014). The visitors were approached by the researchers to complete a questionnaire willingly after they have experienced the experiential attributes of the resort. Descriptive and Correlational Analysis is then used to explore the strength of the relationship exists between four variables of visitors' experience and satisfaction.

IV. Results and Findings

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Based on Table 1, the highest mean value for visitors' education experiential attributes were (learn more) (learning experience), entertainment (fun) and (amusing), escapism (escape), (adventurous) and (motivated), and esthetic (pleasant). According to visitors at Tadam Hill Resort, Selangor the least important attributes for visitors' experience were (stimulated curiosity) and (appealing).

Table 1: Visitors' Experiential Attributes of Tadam Hill Resort, Selangor.

Experiential Attributes	M	SD	n
Stimulated Curiosity	4.10	.655	383
Learn More	4.26	.658	383
Knowledgeable	4.18	.621	383
Learning Experience	4.25	.625	383
Entertaining	4.19	.633	383
Captivating	4.19	.622	383
Fun	4.20	.623	383
Amusing	4.21	.646	383
Different	4.17	.650	383
Escape	4.22	.638	383
Adventurous	4.21	.628	383
Motivated	4.24	.631	383
Appealing	4.16	.647	383
Pleasant	4.23	.631	383
Landscape	4.19	.645	383

4.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2 exhibits the Pearson Correlation Matrix for all the independent variables namely education experiences, entertainment experiences, escapism experiences and lastly esthetic experiences. Followed by the dependent variable, which is visitors' satisfaction at Tadam Hill Resorts. Results of the correlations between the entire variables were statistically significant. There is a high association between the visitors' satisfaction on esthetics element ($r = .909$, $p < 0.01$) which also means that there is a positive relationship between the

independent and dependent variables. Among all the elements, the esthetics element achieved the highest range and highly significant with the visitors' satisfaction. Visitors are highly agreed on Tadam Hill Resorts are appealing, pleasant and pay close attention to the design details.

Therefore, Tadam Hill Resorts should be consistent with the infrastructure and maybe upgrade it for visitors to feel more satisfied. It can also be seen that there is high alliance between visitors' satisfaction on escapism element ($r = .886$, $p < 0.01$) when visitors feel more adventurous and motivated to try new things followed by visitors satisfaction on education element ($r = .869$, $p < 0.01$) which makes visitor become more knowledgeable about that place and get a real learning experiences by the activities provided there. Finally, the least but still at the high association between visitors' satisfaction and entertainment element ($r = .826$, $p < 0.01$). Therefore, Tadam Hill Resorts should concentrate more on the entertainment element as it is the least range among all of the elements. The place can consider adding more entertaining activities and improve it such as zorbing, craft workshops, wellness classes and so on.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix for Study Variables

	Education	Entertainment	Escapism	Esthetics	Satisfaction
Education	1	.818	.877	.841	.869
Entertainment	.818	1	.821	.786	.826
Escapism	.877	.821	1	.865	.886
Esthetics	.841	.786	.865	1	.909
Satisfaction	.869	.826	.886	.909	1

V. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to reveal the relationship between the four realms of experience and visitors' satisfaction when visiting Tadam Hill Resort. The result has indicated that there is a positive relationship between all the four realm of experience (education, entertainment, escapism, and esthetics) and visitors' satisfaction. Based on the result of the study, most of the visitors agreed that the four realms of experiences contributed to the satisfaction of the visitors of Tadam Hill Resorts.

The study shows that esthetics experience has the highest means, followed by escapism experience, education experience and entertainment experience. The study is in line with the existing limited literature such as, Mahdzar (2017), Ho and Tsai (2011), Mazlina (2017) and Bahrin (2017) found visitors' experience (four realm of experience) had positive and significant impact on satisfaction. Their studies also indicate that visitors were highly satisfied with esthetics experience and escapist experience. Therefore, Tadam Hill Resorts should keep the esthetic values at the destination and plant more trees to feel the pleasant, positive or artful appearance of a person or things. This is to ensure the esthetic experience are continuously provided to visitors.

Escapism experience ranked second importance, thus Tadam Hill Resort should always consider to limit the number of visitors visiting the destination to avoid overcrowding. Moreover, the management should improve the facilities provided and are consistent with the infrastructure provided for the visitors. The adventurous activities should remain as the top activities in Tadam Hill Resorts because it is a way for the visitors escape from their daily life routine.

As education experience is also important, therefore the management should also educate their employees to deal with the visitors by teaching them languages and a proper guide to customer services. The operations of Tadam Hill Resorts can consider highlighting the wellness classes as people nowadays are concern of wellness. Increasing emphasis on health and wellness gives such pleasure for visitors to revisit the destination.

The entertainment experience receives the lowest mean scores for visitors' satisfaction. Therefore, management of the resort should do more activities to improve the entertainment experience for the visitors. Further activities would be perfect for Tadam Hill Resort, such as outside events can be held for races or competitions. Tadam Hill Resorts also can add an activity like a craft workshop to encourage visitors to get in touch with their creative side. Also, providing them with souvenirs allow the visitor to always remember the place. It is also suitable for children to take part in and boost children's creativity.

In this study, the attributes only focused on the four realms of experience based on visitors' assessment at Tadam Hill Resort. The result only portrays few parts in tourism experiential concept, and it is suggested for future research focus on other elements such as the 'memorable' tourists' tourism experience aspect and visitors' future behavioral intentions get a full and better understanding on tourism experiential concept.

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