

Crafting Memorable Journey: The Role of Experience Economy in Tourism and Hospitality Management

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Abstract

This research was conducted in Sukamandi Tourist Village, one of the tourist villages which are located in Subang Regency, West Java with beautiful natural objects to be a destination for tourists like large rice fields (Sawah Luas), Bukit Jamali, and Curug Cibingbin. The potential of this tourist village is to support the local economy either through the development of tourism or souvenir creative created by SMEs. The study adopts an experience economy approach to understanding the visitors' view of a destination, investigates how this shapes their experiences, and assesses the consequences on customer loyalty and word-of-mouth. This study employs a qualitative approach. The method used in this study was observation, interviews with respondents that are visitors and management of the tourism village documentation, and information gathering from the internet to allow the researcher to know about customer perspectives and expectations towards their experiences during their tourism visit as well as finding out penny real application experience economy elements by those managers. This study suggests that some features of the experience economy, e.g., personalization and emotional engagement, which enable memorable interactions with management or staff, are critical for increasing local loyalty program participation in general as well as potential customer satisfaction levels, word-of-mouth responses, and taking more tourism decisions. According to this study, management uses four experience elements: education, entertainment, aesthetics, and escape, to create meaningful and engaging experiences for guests. It is anticipated that managers and other professionals working in the tourism and hospitality fields will be able to use the findings of this study as a guide to create experiences that tourists will find memorable and appealing, helping to build lasting relationships.

Keywords: Experience economy, Tourism, Customer loyalty, Memorable experience, Sukamandi tourist village

A. INTRODUCTION

The tourism and hospitality industry is increasingly influenced by the experience economy. In recent decades, the tourism and hospitality industry has undergone a significant transformation, marked by a shift from simply providing products and services to a focus on creating memorable experiences. The concept of the experience economy, introduced by Pine and Gilmore in the late 1990s, emphasizes the importance of emotional experiences and deep interactions between customers and service providers. In this context, travel is not just a destination, but also a series of experiences that shape travelers' perceptions and memories (Ek et al., 2008). Changes in consumer preferences that increasingly prioritize unique and authentic experiences are encouraging industry players to innovate in the way they present services (Song et al., 2015). Travelers are now looking for more than just accommodation or tourist attractions; they want deep involvement with local culture, personalized experiences, and stories they can take home with them (Manthiou et al., 2014). Therefore, tourism and hospitality management needs to understand and implement the principles of the experience economy to meet these expectations.

Understanding the experience economy is critical to increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty in tourism and hospitality. Personalized and emotional experiences can increase customer satisfaction levels, resulting in higher loyalty through repeat purchases and positive word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendations. Although not always stated explicitly, customer satisfaction is closely related to their desire to recommend a positive experience to others, making WOM marketing an effective tool. There is a role for psychology in understanding experience because experience is based on basic and unchanging human psychological needs to experience something (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021). Travelers seek meaningful and memorable experiences that tend to be different from everyday experiences. This shows that it is important for tourism and hospitality management to appeal to emotions when designing memorable experiences. Emotional engagement is a key factor in customer loyalty. Travelers shifting to the experience economy increasingly value offering personalized experiences. Personalization can strengthen the emotional connection between the traveler and the experience, increasing its memorability and impact.

Several previous studies point to key aspects of the experience economy that are relevant to tourism and hospitality management. Concepts such as personalization, emotional engagement and co-creation are at the heart of the experience economy. In developing the experience economy, there is an ever-increasing demand for experiences that are not only memorable but personally meaningful and unique. Travelers seek experiences that align with their personal values and aspirations (Kirillova et al., 2017). Personalization is becoming a key element in the experience economy, as it allows businesses to design experiences that suit individual motivations, values and preferences. The concept of “experienced utility” focuses on the immediate enjoyment experienced by individuals, demonstrating the importance of appealing to customers' emotions and creating positive feelings. Experiences that generate joy, create vivid memories, and pay attention to loss avoidance contribute to better consumer behavior (Chang, 2018). Although early conceptualizations of the experience economy emphasized hedonic pleasure, there is growing research that experiences are more impactful than just enjoyment. Transformative experiences that encourage personal growth, self-discovery and sought-after meaning (Kirillova et al., 2017). The shift in the role of consumers with the concept of “co-creation” is part of the experience economy. Consumers are no longer passive recipients, but they actively participate in shaping their experiences, adding an element of personalization and significance (Kirillova et al., 2017). This research encourages a more dynamic approach to experience design. Moving from offers that are static and predetermined by management towards experiences that are flexible and responsive to consumer input (Ek et al., 2008). This allows for a higher level of personalization and co-creation.

Pine and Gilmore (1999; Gilmore and Pine) proposed the experience economy as a new paradigm for improving business performance in various industries, including tourism and hospitality. This concept has been introduced radically in tourism research and adds a dimension to interpreting tourist experiences. This concept, which has been widely researched and cited, categorizes experiences into four areas, namely entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetics. Each area reflects different levels of consumer participation and attention. This concept is a useful benchmark for understanding various consumer needs and designing experiences according to targets (Pasanchay & Schott, 2021).

Tourism and hospitality management must understand what motivates travelers and what they seek from their tourism experiences to effectively leverage the experience economy. This involves identifying the values, aspirations and needs of tourists. This research aims to explain the role of the experience economy in tourism and hospitality management, explore the key elements

of memorable experiences, and offer implementation strategies that can be used by professionals in this field. In this research, we will analyze how experience economy implementation strategies can be applied by tourism and hospitality managers to increase the attractiveness of destinations, as well as the challenges faced by tourism and hospitality businesses in adopting experience economy principles and ways to overcome them. By understanding and applying this concept, it is hoped that industry players can create trips that not only meet, but exceed travelers' expectations, resulting in high levels of satisfaction and loyalty.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research methods were used in reviewing this research in order to capture a comprehensive picture of the situation by bringing together all perspectives regarding the experience economy in tourism and hospitality. A qualitative approach will answer research problems that require an in-depth and comprehensive understanding of customer loyalty and emotional involvement, as well as a description of the research paradigm in generating conclusions from the research. Qualitative research is research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observable behavior (Moleong, 2012). The flexibility of qualitative methods facilitates adaptation based on themes that emerge during data collection.

This research design uses a case study methodology that focuses on the Sukamandi Tourism Village. Case studies involve case examples of the phenomenon being researched. A case study is a series of scientific activities carried out intensively, in detail and in depth about a program, event and activity, either at the individual, group of people, institution or organization level to gain in-depth knowledge about the experience economy (Rahardjo, 2017).

An interview is a conversation with a specific purpose. The conversation is carried out by two parties, namely the interviewer who asks questions and the interviewee who provides answers to these questions (Abubakar, 2021). Researchers used in-depth interviews or semi-structured interviews. Interviews resemble informal conversations that aim to encourage participants to talk, ask additional questions, and ask participants to explain their answers to dig deeper into the answers given. The researcher will ask a number of questions using an interview guide which is a list of several questions with free answers so that participants have more freedom in answering the questions the researcher will ask, and make it easier for the researcher to find the truth. The interview was addressed to the village secretary and staff as managers of the Sukamandi Tourism Village who have a deep understanding of the topic being researched. In addition, the person in charge is often directly involved in processes or decisions relevant to the research topic.

Observation is one of the strategies in qualitative research data collection procedures, where researchers go directly into the field to observe individual behavior and activities at the research location. During these observations, activities at the location are recorded or recorded in a structured and semi-structured manner (for example by asking the researcher what the researcher wants to know). Researchers can also participate in the roles of non-participant and full participant (Creswell, 2015). Researchers made direct observations in Sukamandi Village.

The documentation method used by researchers is collecting data through studying written sources such as books, reports, minutes, diaries and so on which contain the data or information needed by researchers (Abubakar, 2021). The documents used by researchers are recordings of events that have been experienced followed by documents relating to the Sukamandi Tourism Village. The aim of using this method is to obtain clear and concrete data about marketing activities that can support resilience efforts. Researchers keep documentation in visual form in the form of photos taken by researchers during the research process in the Sukamandi Tourism Village.

Miharjo (2020) explains the data analysis method according to Miles and Huberman used in this research. First, information collection is carried out by converting audio interview results into transcripts, scanning items, and entering field data. The data is then sorted by information source and organized into various categories. Next, data reduction is carried out to organize and process the data so as to produce a clear picture of the object being observed. The third stage is the presentation of data that is structured and clearly formatted, including summary descriptions, statements and relevant category associations. Finally, drawing conclusions or confirmations involves making decisions based on initial findings that may change as further data is collected. The results of this stage are expected to solve the problems identified at the beginning of the research.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Sukamandi Tourism Village

Sukamandi Tourism Village is located in Subang Regency. Researchers chose this research location because Sukamandi Village offers various attractive attractions and activities for visitors who want to experience an authentic rural atmosphere, as well as enjoy the natural beauty and local culture. Based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers with one of the village officials, the tourist attraction of Sukamandi Village presents stunning natural expanses, such as mountains and plantations. Tourists can carry out tracking activities, or just take a walk to enjoy the view. The presence of clear river flows also offers opportunities for refreshing water activities.

Natural Attraction	Cultural Attraction	The Attraction of Crafts	Culinary Attraction
Bukit Jamali Park	Seni Tradisional Buncis	Kerajinan Boboko	Ranginang Ibu Ai
Curug Cibingbin	Pencak Silat		Surabi Jamali
	Situs Makam Eyang Sima Sakti Arya Mangkunegara		Es Kopi
			Nasi Liwet Timpeda

Based on the researcher's observations and the results of interviews, according to the researcher, the indicator of tourist attraction facilities is the existing infrastructure that can attract tourists owned by a tourist destination. In this case, information conveyed from visitors to the Sukamandi Tourism Village is that the facilities are adequate, but maintenance is needed on several facilities such as the parking area, meeting hall, jungle tracking, toilets, culinary delights, prayer room, photo spot, stage, eating place, trash can. what is still lacking, outbound places, play areas that are no longer suitable for use.

Based on the researcher's observations and interviews, the author believes that several modes of transportation can be accessed easily, on smooth roads. However, there is no public transportation that can be directly accessed to the Sukamandi Tourism Village, so private transportation is needed to get to the Sukamandi Tourism Village and the location can be accessed via gmaps.

Ancillary relates to the availability of an organization or people who manage the destination. This is important because even though tourist destinations already have good attractions, accessibility and amenities, if no one organizes and manages them then in the future they will definitely be neglected. Examples include security posts, tour guide services, information centers, and others. Based on the results of interviews with staff at the tourism office, they said: "There are guides at tourist attractions but it depends on the request of visitors who visit the Sukamandi Tourism Village tourist attraction. "In managing it, we really collaborate with the community and MSME actors in the Sukamandi Tourism Village so that harmony can be created and we can provide input to each other in developing the tourist village." From the results of the interview it can be concluded that the Sukamandi Village officials have tried to increase the potential for developing tourist attractions in the Sukamandi Tourism Village.

2. Experience Economy Elements

This research identifies 4 key elements of the experience economy concept according to Pine and Gilmore (Chang, 2018). which contribute to tourist satisfaction.

a. Education

Educational experiences in tourism can increase tourists' understanding and appreciation of tourist culture (Oh et al., 2007). Tourists want to experience more than just passive observation. They want to actively participate in learning activities and gain new skills or knowledge. Sukamandi Tourism Village also has educational tours which are part of the tour packages offered to tourists, such as education on organic rice, handicrafts and several food products produced by local MSMEs.

Educational offerings such as local workshops provide opportunities for tourists to immerse themselves in local culture. This may involve learning about local history, customs, art forms, or culinary traditions. Starting from community service to clean up areas of village land by government officials, village institutions and the community, the village head saw the natural potential and areas that were suitable for sports centers for the community. The village head's idea developed in the initiation of creating a village terrace which was eventually named Bukit Jamali Park, inspired by the name of the location, namely Jamali Block. Apart from Jamali Park, the Village Head added a superior tourist attraction that he felt had the potential to be enjoyed and empowered by the community, namely Cibingbin Waterfall. The management of Sukamandi Tourism Village can immerse tourists in local culture such as traditional bean art, pencak silat and the grave site of Grandfather Bima Sakti Arya Mangkunagara. The management offers boboko crafts and sells various culinary specialties, namely Ibu Ai's ranginang, surabi jamali, Sukamandi specialty iced coffee and nasi liwet timpeda to tourists who visit because of the craft and culinary appeal.

By engaging in educational experiences, tourists develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of the culture at Sukamandi Tourism Village. This can result in a more meaningful and memorable experience.

b. Entertainment

Entertainment is an important aspect of the experience economy, because it can create interesting environments and experiences to attract tourists (Oh et al., 2007). Entertainment often involves passive participation, where tourists enjoy or listen to performances or events. Each tourist village certainly has its own characteristics, including performances that can attract visiting tourists, as is the Sukamandi tourist village which offers local culture such as traditional bean arts, pencak silat and the Makam Eyang Bima Sakti Arya Mangkunagara Site, as well as culture, rice mortar to attract tourists.

Entertainment aims to evoke emotions and create a sense of happiness for tourists. Tourists' emotions can be touched through laughter, joy, admiration and a sense of inspiration from the entertainment provided. Festivals and events can serve as a platform for gaining entertainment-derived experiences. Sukamandi Village offers various types of interesting and impressive entertainment.

One of the main attractions is traditional arts performances, such as regional dances and gamelan music, which can bring visitors to experience the beauty of local culture. Cultural festivals that are held regularly, such as harvest festivals or holiday celebrations, are also the right moments for tourists to feel the atmosphere of joy and warmth of the community. At these events, tourists can interact directly with local residents, learn about traditions, and even take part in various fun activities.

c. Esthetics

An environment that satisfies tourists' aesthetic sense plays an important role in shaping visitors' perceptions and increasing satisfaction. The design and atmosphere of a destination can significantly influence visitor perceptions. This includes elements such as architecture, landscaping and decoration. Beautiful landscapes such as mountains, hills, rivers and lakes can be a major attraction for tourists looking for enchanting natural experiences. Stunning natural views, such as sunrise or sunset on a mountain, can also be a special attraction.

Aesthetics appealing to the senses involving sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste can create a positive and immersive atmosphere. A well-designed aesthetic environment can evoke positive emotions, such as relaxation, calm, or joy. With its natural beauty, it creates precious memories by capturing beautiful moments amidst the stunning backdrop of hilly views.

d. Escape

The desire to escape the daily routine and experience something different is a powerful motivator for travel. Travelers seek escapist experiences to temporarily distance themselves from the stress and monotony of everyday life. The experience of escape can provide an opportunity for recovery and psychological rejuvenation.

Escapism involves seeking out new and different environments, activities, and experiences. This could take the form of traveling to exotic destinations, trying new foods, or engaging in adventurous activities.

Personalization as an important factor in forming a positive experience in the Sukamandi Tourism Village. Management practices that prioritize personalized service are appreciated by travelers, highlighting the value of individualized attention in the travel experience (Clarke, 2010)). Tailoring experiences to suit individual preferences significantly impacts overall satisfaction levels, as visitors feel more connected and engaged throughout their stay (Kirillova et al., 2017). This evidence suggests that customization should be a key focus for tourism service providers looking to improve their offerings (Oh et al., 2007), ultimately leading to greater customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth referrals. By actively considering and meeting the unique desires of each visitor, tourism managers can create memorable experiences that resonate with their guests.

Emotional involvement is very important in creating lasting memories for visitors to Sukamandi Tourism Village, as proven by the findings of this research. Guests report that the most memorable aspect of their visit is an emotionally resonant experience. Activities that encourage emotional connections—such as interactive cultural experiences and personal interactions with local artisans—result in higher levels of satisfaction and loyalty. This highlights the importance of

designing experiences that not only entertain but also emotionally engage visitors. By cultivating these relationships, tourism and hospitality managers in Sukamandi can improve the overall visitor experience, encourage repeat visits and generate positive word of mouth recommendations. Therefore, prioritizing emotional engagement in experience design is emerging as an important strategy for building lasting relationships with guests and promoting sustainable tourism development in the region.

3. Challenges in Implementation

Sukamandi Tourism Village is still in the development stage. In managing a tourist village that is still developing, it will definitely face challenges that need to be watched out for together. As a tourist village that has natural attractions, it requires a planned approach and ensures sustainability by building community awareness (pokdarwis, youth organizations, etc.) as an effort to preserve the environment, as well as contributing to local economic development. Here are some of the main challenges often faced in implementation:

a. Infrastructure

Adequate infrastructure such as road access, transportation access, sanitation, accommodation, electricity, clean water and public facilities are very necessary to support tourist activities and support tourist comfort. It is important for villages to provide adequate infrastructure, especially in terms of accessibility to tourist attractions.

b. Local Community Involvement

The main thing for the success of tourist villages is the involvement of local communities in the decision-making process, program creation, and ensuring community empowerment and sustainability so that tourism development is in line with the needs and desires of village communities. There is a need for strengthening local communities such as tourism awareness groups (Pokdarwis) which can assist in managing tourist villages and promoting tourist villages.

c. Impact on Culture and Environment

Efforts are needed to maintain and promote the cultural heritage and environment of tourist villages. This can be done by providing outreach to the public regarding the importance of preserving culture and protecting the environment as well as holding cultural events. By holding cultural events regularly, it can attract tourists and strengthen local cultural heritage. Cultural events can be packaged as social life traditions, village community traditions, and local values. This can be a special attraction for tourists who want to try a new experience of living in a village.

d. Visitor Settings

Tourist villages need to regulate the number of visitors (tourists) so as not to exceed capacity and minimize negative impacts on the environment and local culture. For example, this can be done with a session distribution system, managing the number of ticket sales, and providing information to visitors about travel behavior.

D. CONCLUSION

Sukamandi Tourism Village in Subang Regency offers an authentic tourism experience with a variety of natural, cultural, craft and culinary attractions that are able to provide a complete tourism experience for visitors. The main attractions include the natural beauty of mountains, plantations and clear rivers, where tourists can enjoy tracking activities or refreshing water activities. Sukamandi Tourism Village also applies the experience economy concept with a focus on

four main elements: education, entertainment, aesthetics and escape. Visitors can learn about local culture, enjoy art performances, enjoy beautiful natural views, and feel relaxation from their busy daily lives. However, the development of this tourist village is not without challenges, including infrastructure that still needs to be improved, more active involvement of local communities, cultural and environmental preservation, as well as regulating the number of visitors to maintain the sustainability of the tourist village. Future research can explore deeper information regarding how Sukamandi Village overcomes the challenges and potential of Sukamandi Village apart from tourism that uses the experience economy concept.

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