









# Conceptualizing Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism

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**Abstract.** The tourism sector has put a great deal of strain and adverse effects on Langkawi's economy and environment. Such problems have endangered Langkawi's tourism sector and brought the island dangerously near to losing its UNESCO Global Geopark designation. Furthermore, little effort has been made to solve the issues. Instead of creating distinctive, sustainable content for the visitation experience that current visitors crave, the majority of tactics used up to this point have simply concentrated on enhancing governmental regulations and maintaining the aesthetic splendor of the surrounding area. This study is intended to fill these knowledge gaps by exploring aspects specific to developing a distinctive experience that is rich in the context of sustainable tourism. The purpose of this conceptual paper is to show how Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism (ERST) might affect tourists' satisfaction. This study will enable tourism players to pay attention to the specific preferences of tourists and develop various experience-related activities and packages that suit the tourists' different tastes and demands upon visiting Langkawi. The study will extend the existing literature on ERST and satisfaction in the context of Langkawi as a destination.

**Keywords:** Experience-rich · Sustainable · Tourism · Industry

## 1 Introduction

In numerous locations around the world, tourism has been pushed. Many nations think that promoting tourism could help preserve the environment, improve social conditions, and boost economic growth [1]. The well-known island of Langkawi in Malaysia is likewise supporting tourism growth for greater economic gain. Langkawi may appear to be the ideal eco-destination for travelers who want to experience eco-island tourism [2]. However, there is a serious issue concealed behind the lovely geopark and white sand beach. The island's economy, society, and nature are all under a great deal of pressure from the tourism sector. Such effects have resulted in a decrease in visitors to Langkawi.

The Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) tourism performance report showed a pattern of dropping visitor numbers to Langkawi. However, Phuket and Bali have seen

an increase in visitors over the years, as have other Asian neighbor islands. As an illustration, Phuket, Thailand, saw a rise in tourist numbers from 13,274,769 in 2017 to 13,651,301 in 2018 [3]. The number of tourists arriving in Bali, Indonesia increased from 4,927,937 in 2016 to 5,697,739 in 2017, demonstrating the same steady trend [4]. Nevertheless, from 3.68 million to 3.63 million visitors in 2017, Langkawi saw a 1.4 percent decline in tourist visits in 2018 [5].

The diminishing tourist trend was caused by a number of problems, including the deterioration of natural resources and the land structure, damaging tourism activity, alteration of flora and fauna, pollution, poor infrastructure, a lack of water, and troubles with ferry services [6]. Due to these problems, Langkawi came dangerously near to losing its UNESCO Global Geopark designation, endangering the island's tourism sector [7]. Little has been done to address the problems and improve the island's infrastructure, which puts additional stress on the already fragile ecology.

There has been little prior study on experience-rich sustainable tourism published. The majority of research conducted to far have only examined several sorts of experiences, including memorable travel experiences (MTE), high-quality travel experiences, and others. Studies on eco-friendly travel practices, however, are frequently ignored. The goal of this study is to conceive the new Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism (ERST) characteristics in the context of tourism in order to close these gaps. In order to develop a distinctive experience that is rich in the sustainable tourism environment toward visitor pleasure, this study aims to provide insight by examining factors like hedonism, novelty, local cultural, refreshment, engagement, meaningfulness, and knowledge. A framework for experience-rich sustainable tourism (ERST) is then proposed. As a result, this essay is structured as follows: the development of the proposals and conceptual framework, followed by a summary of the underlying theory, a review of the literature on revisit intention and experience-rich sustainable tourism, and lastly the paper's conclusion.

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism

Making unforgettable experiences has therefore been the foundation of the global economy and, more specifically, the tourism industry, as the economy has changed from a product-driven economy to a service-driven economy and then to an experience-driven economy [8–10]. This is due to the fact that the tourist sector is inherently an experience-based sector [9]. Destination managers can establish the destination's positioning and competitive advantage by focusing on ERST [11].

The modern visitors are more likely to base their decisions on prior encounters and memories. The modern traveler wants more than just pretty pictures, cheap trinkets, and a cozy bed. They want to engage with the places and the locals, and they seek for distinctive, real, and compelling experiences. They only buy the trip; it is the experience that they will remember. A memorable experience is said to provide a tourist with joy and enduring memories, especially if the tourism providers are effective in giving the visitors extraordinary memorable tourist experiences [12, 13]. Numerous studies in the field of psychology have shown that memorable experiences make people happier than material goods [14].

The constructed of memorable tourism experience conceptual model was scale-based instrument, and there were seven elements of memorable tourism experience included hedonism, engagement, knowledge, local culture meaningfulness, novelty, and refreshment [15]. This work has received a great deal of citation. An additional component dubbed “adverse feeling” has been introduced to the existing model [16], while [12] added a number of other factors, including surprise and tour guide performance.

Models will be used in the current study as a foundation to evaluate the impacts of ERST, and they will be modified slightly from earlier studies [17]. Following will be a discussion of the seven elements (hedonism, novelty, local culture, refreshment, meaningfulness, engagement, and knowledge) that are frequently employed in tourist literature:

### **Hedonism**

The term “hedonism” comes from the Greek word “hedone”, which denotes enjoyment, amusement, or delight. Hedonism is the pursuit of physical pleasure and social interaction as a key motivation [18], and the 5S concept of sea, sand, sun, sex, and sangria has always been linked to hedonism [19]. The authors also connected hedonism to travelling and partying while looking for a certain nightlife style. Indeed, hedonism is an essential part of the tourism industry [20]. Since most tourists travel to find pleasure and happiness, tourism and leisure pursuits typically “devour” travelers in a hedonistic manner.

### **Novelty**

Novelty is characterized by originality, novelty, and distinctiveness. In general, people frequently travel for various reasons, and novelty is a crucial aspect of the travel experience [21, 22]. From the standpoint of tourism, novelty is best described as a trip that offers an unfamiliar experience. Today’s tourists are increasingly interested in this new value and frequently choose the experience of novelty and strangeness. As a result, visitors prefer to travel to places with distinct cultures and lifestyles from their own [23], as well as in order to satisfy their yearning for something novel or different that they cannot find in their hometown [24]. Curiosity, which comprises sensory search, discoveries, learning, and experiences, is one of the factors that propels travelers to look for uniqueness around the world [25].

### **Local Culture**

Tourists are increasingly participating in local activities, which gives them a unique opportunity to explore the local culture [26]. In reality, travelers are increasingly choosing to engage in a destination’s cultural traditions and languages rather than the usual gorgeous beaches and upscale resorts [27]. Additionally, travelers discover that “cookie-cutter” travel is less inspiring; as a result, they look forward to an ultimate authentic local experience in the area or country they are visiting. It is found that visitors who actively participated in the local culture throughout their stay were far more likely to remember and recollect their previous experiences [15]. Additionally, it has been suggested that interaction with locals enhances tourists’ extraordinary and unforgettable travel experiences [28].

### **Refreshment**

When travelling, tourists frequently look for refreshments. Traveling, or making a trip from a familiar location to somewhere unusual, has created a state of vulnerability that is incredibly beneficial [29]; this releasing and revitalizing sensation is referred to as refreshment. Refreshment was described as a feeling of renewal and renewal that influences one's vacation recollections [15]. Refreshment is the sensation of intense experience involvement [30]. In reality, feeling renewed not only makes one feel good, but it also helps people feel calm and at ease inside.

### **Involvement**

Tourist participation in each stage of the consumption process, including information seeking, service consumption, marketing, decision-making, and procurement, is referred to as involvement [31]. Participation is crucial for improving tourist places [32]. Therefore, engaging in travel experiences helps tourists remember, reflect on, and rediscover their previous experiences. Numerous researchers have determined that participation is essential for effective feelings and experiences [33], which enables visitors to recall their previous encounters and form new memories. In this aspect, travelers are more likely to recall and recover their prior travel experiences more effectively if they are more engaged in their holiday.

### **Meaningfulness**

Tourists today are looking more and more for unique travel experiences that also fulfil their requirements and wishes [34]. Tourists seek significance in life because they believe that meaning is a key to happiness [35]. For instance, rather than only visiting new locations and meeting new people, some tourists perceive their travels as a voyage of personal development. The majority of visitors want an experience that enables them to pursue meaning and achieve substantial personal results, such as enhancing their personal and interpersonal development and enhancing family well-being [36].

### **Knowledge**

Tourists today look for travel experiences that offer fresh learning opportunities, as well as opportunities to pick up new skills while travelling [37]. Visitors also look forward to participating in a variety of activities that allow them to particularly explore their skills and talents [38].

In accordance with this, tourists want to actively engage in local activities with the locals in order to learn new things and better understand the particular destination, such as its history, culture, and cuisine. They also want to listen to the tour guide's explanations and observe the surroundings. Additionally, learning opportunities are perceived as a singular, life-changing event that cannot be had anywhere else [36].

## **2.2 Tourist Satisfaction**

A good reaction brought on by a favourable evaluation of the eating experience is known as satisfaction [39]. While overall satisfaction refers to the total amount of happiness with the consuming experience as a whole and a pleasurable condition of consumption that meets the needs of the consumer [40]. In other words, when expectations and experience

are compared, consumers will be satisfied if their satisfaction is met. According to the expectation-confirmation paradigm, satisfaction results from a performance that is evaluated as being better than or on par with what was anticipated [41].

While the expectation-confirmation theory has been extensively used in tourism literature to study tourist satisfaction, the disconfirmation model contends that satisfaction is actually more influenced by low expectations, and that visitors are more likely to be satisfied if their expectations are low. The disconfirmation model had been heavily criticised because there isn't concrete evidence to support the claim that visitors' low expectations do, in fact, have an impact on satisfaction [42]. There is a need to quantify satisfaction in the context of tourism on a worldwide scale because studies have shown that low expectations hardly ever result in satisfaction [43].

### **2.3 Relationship Between Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism and Tourist Satisfaction**

Travel experience and contentment are closely related. Numerous research on tourism have demonstrated the importance of the tourist experience in determining customer happiness [44, 45]. For instance, among wine tourists, it was discovered that a positive travel experience significantly influenced their pleasure and loyalty [46]. Additionally, it was discovered that elements like entertainment and beauty had a favorable impact on cruisers' pleasure [44]. Furthermore, based on the four characteristics of experience proposed by [9]—aesthetics, education, entertainment, and escapism—tourist experience does actually positively increase satisfaction, as demonstrated by [47].

Past scholars have additionally incorporated a number of experiential aspects that affect enjoyment in addition to these four dimensions of the realm experiences model [48–50]. For instance, the three experiential qualities of engagement, peace of mind, and educational experience were found to affect visitors' pleasure with Taiwanese heritage sites. It found that new, well-organized, and enjoyable tourist experiences have a favorable and significant influence on behavioral intentions through satisfaction in adventure tourism [50].

#### **Propositions**

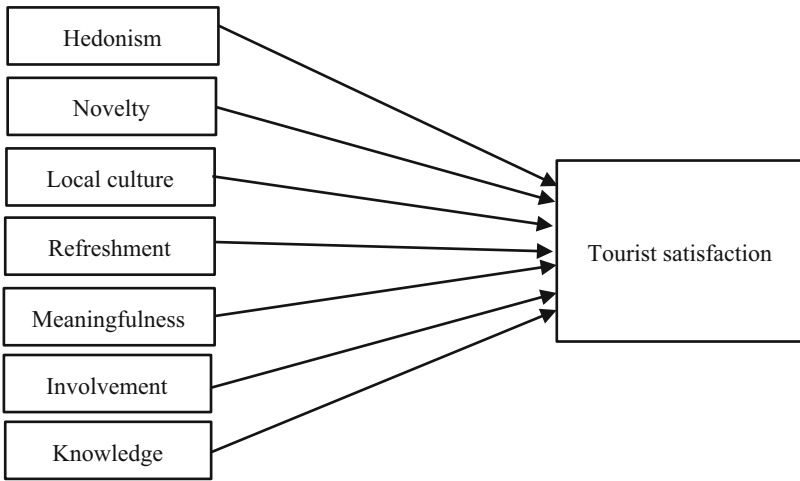
Based on the previous empirical findings from primary studies, the paper propositions are as follow:

- Proposition 1. Hedonism will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 2. Novelty will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 3. Local culture will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 4. Refreshment will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 5. Meaningfulness will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 6. Involvement will be positively related to tourist satisfaction
- Proposition 7. Knowledge will be positively related to tourist satisfaction.

#### **Conceptual Model**

Based on the preceding discussion, a conceptual framework is proposed as shown in Fig. 1.

Experience-Rich Sustainable Tourism



**Fig. 1.** Proposed conceptual framework of experience-rich sustainable tourism and tourist satisfaction.

**3 Conclusion**

The current study can assist tourism players in enhancing their marketing strategies to be heavily focused on destination experiential aspects rather than destination attributes. It can also help tourism suppliers improve their businesses in the competitive business environment and provide better insights into the notion of ERST among tourists. In addition, this research is very helpful for policymakers (LADA) in strategizing their planning, particularly in the recently released Langkawi economic blueprint (HELANG), which aims to increase the island’s tourism industry by showcasing its singularity through multi-experience travel. The current study makes a compelling case for broadening the setting to include a useful research contribution as prior study has never been done in such setting. In addition, this study also contributes to serves as a guideline for future study improvement, predominantly on the current subject matter and the applicability of the ERST scale to various tourism experiences and contexts. A proper experience-related marketing strategy is more critical than enhancing tourist satisfaction alone because this helps improve tourists’ future behavior.

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