

Research Article

Utilizing the Experience Economy to Cultivate Unforgettable Moments in Sustainable Tourism: The Case of Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri Village

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Abstract.

Limited attention has been given to the implementation of the experience economy in tourism villages. This research aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the practical applications of the experience economy in the management of tourism destinations, specifically within the framework of Edelweiss Park in the Wonokitri Tourism Village. This study adopts qualitative methodologies, utilizing interviews and on-site observations. The investigation was carried out at Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri village, where discussions were held with both stakeholders involved in the park's management and its visitors. In total, six individuals were interviewed to glean insights into the implementation of experience economy practices within Edelweiss Park. Edelweiss Park offers a unique cultivation tourism experience where visitors actively engage in cultivating edelweiss flowers. The hands-on learning and expert guidance enhance the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of the experience. Edelweiss Park stands out as a conservation-based destination that successfully combines tourism with responsible practices, making it a remarkable model for preserving edelweiss flowers while providing visitors with an enjoyable and rewarding visit.

Keywords: experience economy, tourism village, visitor engagement

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1. Introduction

Sustainable tourism involves the implementation of tourism practices that foster social well-being for the local community, economic prosperity for the local economy, and the conservation of the environment [1]. This encompasses the active participation and collaboration of all stakeholders. The concept of Tourism Villages underscores the local essence and elements of a village as a magnet for tourism, with a specific focus on its natural aspects, culture, and adventurous activities [2]. In order to be recognized as a Tourism Village, it's vital to strike a balance between human and natural resources,

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as these form the core components of such villages [2]. Furthermore, Tourism Villages must meet well-defined criteria, including the presence of attractions that highlight the region's potential for both natural and cultural tourism, a strong sense of acceptance and dedication within the local community, and the availability of a local workforce [2]. The shift towards the experience economy is profoundly shaping the trajectory of Tourism Villages.

The experience economy signifies a departure from merely providing products and services to crafting memorable interactions for customers [3]. In this economic model, consumers actively pursue emotional and noteworthy experiences through their consumption [3]. Within the realm of Tourism Villages, this translates to offering distinctive and immersive experiences that enable visitors to actively engage with the local culture, traditions, and natural environment. The study conducted by [4] delved into the management of tourism villages through the lens of the experience economy. [4] underscored that experiences not only satisfy customers but are also highly valued as products. Moreover [4] highlighted that a key driver for visitors to engage in tourism is the pursuit of distinctive experiences. In the service economy, customers expect more than a service transaction; they desire a seamless and memorable end-to-end experience that stimulates their senses, evokes emotions, and creates lasting memories [5].

Although previous research has extensively explored the application of the experience economy across various segments of the tourism and hospitality industry, such as hotels, cruise ships, lodging, and restaurants [6], limited attention has been given to the implementation of the experience economy in the context of a tourism village. This research aims to bridge this gap by evaluating the practical application of the experience economy in the management of tourism destinations, specifically within the framework of Edelweiss Park in the Wonokitri tourism village. Top of Form

The research has been carried out at Edelweiss Park, located in Wonokitri village in the Tosari sub-district of Pasuruan District, East Java. Due to its proximity to Mount Bromo, Wonokitri village serves as the entry point to Bromo Tengger Semeru National Park from the Pasuruan District side. The initial purpose behind establishing Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri village was to conserve the Edelweiss flower. The Edelweiss flower holds cultural and symbolic significance among the Tenggerese tribe, the local community. It holds a vital role in Tenggerese traditional rituals. Furthermore, the Edelweiss flower has turned into the emblem of Mount Bromo, which has led to overharvesting and the endangerment of its natural populations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Tourism village

Tourism villages represent rural communities strategically developed as tourist destinations, spotlighting the native culture, traditions, and natural surroundings [7]. These villages are designed to invigorate the local community and enhance the local economy through tourism [7]. The evolution of these tourism villages necessitates meticulous attention to diverse factors including infrastructure, lodging, and the human workforce. The fulfillment of these factors is pivotal in crafting a comfortable and appealing tourism experience for visitors [8]. Furthermore, evaluating the efficacy of tourism villages should encompass not only physical parameters but also social dimensions like the village's influence on the local community and their level of engagement [9]. In conclusion, tourism villages are essentially rural communities transformed into tourist hotspots with the aim of empowering the local populace and enhancing the local economy through tourism. Crucial aspects for the effective planning and development of such villages include residents' attitudes toward tourism, cooperation among stakeholders, and the successful realization of various components. Evaluations of tourism villages should holistically consider both tangible and intangible factors, guaranteeing the sustainability of development and the welfare of the local community.

2.2. Experiential economy

A destination is a multifaceted entity, amalgamating a multitude of tangible and intangible components, encompassing diverse businesses like transportation, accommodation, restaurants, and tourist attractions. Interactions with service providers significantly contribute to the lasting memories tourists carry. Customers across industries are actively seeking distinctive and unforgettable encounters; tourism, in particular, thrives on crafting these experiences due to its unique nature of offering tangible yet experiential services [10]. The experience economy is co-created through interactions between customers and service providers; customers' involvement is pivotal in shaping the experience and its value [10]. The Experience economy conceptual model delineates four realms: education, entertainment, escapism, and aesthetics, as elucidated by Seker and Unur [6]. By seamlessly integrating entertainment and education within tourism experiences, destinations can furnish visitors with a holistic and enriching journey.

These facets not only captivate and engage tourists but also address their yearning for personal growth, cultural appreciation, and intellectual stimulation.

The experience economy conceptual model proposed comprises four realms: education, entertainment, escapism, and esthetics, as mentioned by Seker and Unur [6]. Additionally, there are two dimensions of experience, namely the type and level of customer engagement, which can further explain the four types of realms [10]:

Entertainment: Entertainment experiences involve passive absorption of events or activities, such as watching a movie, listening to music, or reading a book. It is one of the earliest and most widely sought-after types of experiences. As the experience economy evolves, consumers continuously seek new and unique entertainment experiences that cater to their desires for enjoyment, relaxation, and amusement.

Education: Tourism offerings can incorporate educational dimensions as tourists often have the expectation of increasing their knowledge during their travels. Many destinations have actively encouraged visitors to engage with local people and learn about the destination they are visiting. The realm of education in the experience economy involves active learning, self-development, and the acquisition of knowledge as intrinsic motivations for visiting a destination [11].

Esthetics: The esthetic realm of experience involves immersing oneself in the atmosphere of a place or event without actively participating or having a significant impact. Examples of esthetic experiences include visiting an art gallery, sitting in a historical place, or appreciating the beauty of a landscape. This realm focuses on the sensory aspects and the aesthetic appeal of the experience, allowing tourists to simply “be” and appreciate their surroundings.

Escapism: Escapist experiences entail a higher level of immersion compared to educational or entertaining experiences. In these experiences, individuals actively participate and completely immerse themselves in the events or activities. Tourists seek escapism to temporarily escape the hectic pace of modern life and actively engage in tourism experiences. This can involve participating in sports activities such as water sports, bungee jumping, or horse riding. Escapist experiences are considered the highest form of experience as they involve deep immersion, allowing tourists to fully immerse themselves in both educational and entertaining experiences.

Integrating elements of entertainment and education into tourism encounters can provide destinations the opportunity to offer visitors a comprehensive and enriching

journey. These facets not only serve to captivate and engage tourists, but also cater to their aspirations for personal growth, cultural appreciation, and intellectual stimulation.

The literature acknowledges and establishes a connection between memorability and the experience, characterizing it as enjoyable, captivating, and memorable interactions for consumers [12]. Engaging with fellow participants during and after the experience allows consumers to collectively share emotions and experiences, fostering a more meaningful and memorable encounter [13]. In contrast to acquiring products that provide tangible benefits, consumers opt for tourism services that result in lasting and memorable experiences [14].

In the realm of the experience economy, services are deliberately designed to orchestrate memorable events, thereby generating value for individual consumers [15]. The quality of service and the overall consumer experience significantly contribute to achieving consumer satisfaction and trust [16]. The consumer experience is a multi-faceted concept, encompassing dimensions such as virtue, equanimity, amusement, rapture, and strangeness [17]. The experience presents a variety of information in the minds of consumers, influencing their decisions to make repeat purchases or recommend the experience to others [18].

The primary economic values offered by the tourism and travel industry are inherently tied to experiences due to the intangible nature of the tourism product. Therefore, to create high-quality experiences, innovation plays a pivotal role in transforming ordinary interactions into captivating engagements [19].

The collaborative crafting of tourism experiences, involving active participation of tourists and their inclination to share these experiences with locals and others, is recognized as a crucial aspect of the tourism experience [20]. The emotional encounters of tourists at a particular destination have been shown to significantly influence their attachment to the destination and their likelihood of revisiting in the future [21,22]. Additionally, a positive destination image and diverse experiences are identified as pivotal elements that foster positive emotions and satisfaction among tourists, resulting in a greater inclination to spread word-of-mouth recommendations and revisit the destination [23].

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative methodology, utilizing interviews and on-site observations. The investigation was carried out at Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri village, where discussions were held with both stakeholders involved in the park's management and its visitors. These interviews encompassed the leader of the farmer group responsible for operating Edelweiss Park, local villagers, and visitors. In total, six individuals were interviewed to glean insights into the implementation of experience economy practices within Edelweiss Park. The interviews were continued until a satisfactory level of information was gathered and consistent responses were obtained from the interviewees [24]. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for subsequent analysis. The process of thematic analysis was manually executed by the researchers, and to mitigate bias, they alternated in undertaking the analysis. Thematic analysis serves as a versatile and readily applicable technique that allows researchers to systematically delve into qualitative data and reveal significant revelations. This procedure involves the categorization and identification of prevalent trends and patterns within the data, ultimately providing a detailed and comprehensive grasp of the research subject. Through the employment of thematic analysis, researchers can attain valuable insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and viewpoints [25].

4. Results and Discussion

Upon conducting a thorough analysis of the collected data, several noteworthy insights have emerged. The participants' responses shed light on their perceptions and experiences within the context of Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri village. A recurrent theme that surfaced was the deep emotional connection visitors felt with the garden's serene ambiance. This aligns with the findings of Mohd et al [21] and Mohamed et al [22]. The visuals of the garden, coupled with the backdrop of Mount Bromo, left an indelible mark on their memories. The auditory dimension also played a significant role, as participants frequently mentioned the calming effect of natural sounds, such as the gentle rustling of leaves and the melodious chirping of birds. These sensory elements collectively contributed to a heightened sense of relaxation and rejuvenation. This outcome validates the research conducted by Kladou et al [12] and Cho [13], affirming their assertion that sensory elements contribute to creating enduring memories.

Moreover, the café within the garden proved to be a focal point for indulging the palate while basking in the picturesque surroundings. This holistic sensory experience underlines the remarkable synergy between nature's offerings and the carefully curated elements within Edelweiss Park. In the case of Wonokitri village, tourists can expect a sensory-rich experience. They will have the opportunity to see the picturesque Edelweiss Park with the magnificent backdrop of Mount Bromo. The visual beauty of the garden and the surrounding natural landscapes will captivate their sight. Additionally, they may hear the sounds of nature, such as the rustling of leaves or the chirping of birds, providing a soothing and tranquil auditory experience. When it comes to taste, visitors can enjoy light meals and beverages offered at the café within the Edelweiss garden.

Engaging activities are also available to enhance the overall experience. Tourists can explore the Edelweiss garden, taking leisurely walks and immersing themselves in the serene atmosphere. Moreover, there may be opportunities for visitors to participate in interactive activities, such as learning about the cultivation of Edelweiss flowers or engaging in cultural activities organized by the local community. It is important to note that the experience is actively co-created by both customers and service providers through their interactions. Customers play a vital role in shaping their experiences and the value they derive from them. The interactions and engagement with service providers, as well as the participation in activities, contribute to the overall experience of tourists visiting Wonokitri village. This finding corresponds with the research conducted by Cho [13], Peric et al [15] and Gaafar [20] underscoring the importance of interaction and engagement between service providers and fellow visitors in shaping a memorable experience.

Experience economy in the Edelweiss Park is in the form of cultivating Edelweiss Garden Experience for visitors. Visitors need only to pay IDR 25.000 where they can have a hands on experience on how to choose the seed of Edelweis flower, and how to sow the seed, and how to nurse the plants. Visitors also able to adopt Edelweis flower, where the pay a certain amount of money and let the farmer grow their Edelweis flower in the Garden for 8 months to one year and they will get notified when they can harvest the flower. This visitor engagement experience is not only improving visitors experience when visiting Edelweiss Garden but also promoting environment preservation by promoting Edelweiss flower conservation.

"We offer cultivation tourism by request, which requires making a reservation in advance. Our visitors are invited to actively engage in cultivating Edelweiss flowers as

a thematic experience at Taman Edelweis. They will have the opportunity to choose flowers, plant them, learn about the germination process, and understand the proper techniques for growing Edelweiss flowers.” (Informant 1)

“The experience is truly exciting and enjoyable, especially for those accustomed to city living. Visitors are directly taught the cultivation process, including how to obtain seedlings and the proper planting techniques. They learn about various aspects such as duration, different types of Edelweiss flowers, and other valuable insights from the expert members of the farming group. This hands-on learning experience adds to the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of the visitors.” (Informant 2)

“We teach about the technical aspects of cultivating Edelweiss from scratch. This includes the process of seed collection, seed germination, transplanting, and all the way to post-harvesting. For individuals who wish to have Edelweiss plants, it’s important to note that Edelweiss is an endemic mountain plant and cannot be taken to lowland areas.”(Informant 3)

“The most memorable part, besides being able to hang out at the café, is that we can also learn how to cultivate Edelweiss flowers. Starting from selecting the seeds, planting, and the harvest season. There is also an Edelweiss seedling house where the process of preparing them for planting in the field takes place. We can witness the care and maintenance of Edelweiss seedlings there.” (Informant 6)

“The souvenirs are really cute; they are very creative in making them to attract tourists. I have never seen a tourist who didn’t buy souvenirs like necklaces, rings, bonsai, and keychains made from Edelweiss.” (Informant 5)

“For individuals who wish to have their own Edelweiss plants, it’s important to note that Edelweiss is an endemic mountain plant and cannot survive in lowland areas. However, they can participate in our adoption program, where they can adopt an Edelweiss tree that we will take care of. We will provide regular updates, and when the harvest period arrives, they can either come and harvest the Edelweiss themselves or we can send it to them. The adopted plants are ready for transplantation, with a size ranging from approximately 15 to 30 centimeters, and it takes around one to one and a half years for them to be ready for harvest. The adoption fee for one plant is 350,000 Indonesian Rupiah, and upon harvest, the ownership of the Edelweiss plant belongs to the adopter.” (Informant 4)

In conclusion, Edelweiss park offers a unique cultivation tourism experience where visitors actively engage in cultivating Edelweiss flowers. The hands-on learning and

expert guidance enhance the overall enjoyment and satisfaction of the experience. The park's creative souvenirs and adoption program for Edelweiss plants as a form of sustainable tourism further contribute to its appeal. Edelweiss Park stands out as a conservation-based destination that successfully combines tourism with responsible practices, making it a remarkable model for preserving Edelweiss flowers while providing visitors with an enjoyable and rewarding visit.

5. Conclusion

Edelweiss Park, nestled within the tourism village of Wonokitri, provides a unique opportunity to draw in more tourists through an innovative approach. Educational and heightened immersion actively involve customers as integral components of delivering a memorable experience. By engaging tourists in activities that actively connect them with the destination, the park strives to create a lasting and positive impression on its visitors. As a remarkable model of sustainable tourism development and management, Edelweiss Park not only enhances the local economy but also yields social benefits and contributes to environmental preservation. Beyond financial gains, the local community reaps social advantages, such as the accessibility of Edelweiss flowers from the Edelweiss Garden, serving as a conservation center for these blooms. These flowers hold great significance for the Tenggerese traditional rituals, thus reinforcing the cultural heritage of the community. In essence, Edelweiss Park in Wonokitri serves as a prime illustration of how incorporating escapism and experiential elements into tourism offerings can effectively attract a larger pool of tourists. Furthermore, the park's commitment to sustainable tourism practices empowers the local community, providing them with social benefits and aiding in the preservation of their cultural legacy and the natural environment. To conclude, the achievements of Edelweiss Park as a sustainable tourism destination for Edelweiss flowers are a testament to the collaborative efforts of the government, private sector, and the engaged local community. This cooperative and responsible approach to tourism development serves as an inspiring example of how the tourism industry can positively influence both environmental conservation and the socio-economic well-being of local communities.

Recommendation

Based on the insights gained from Edelweiss Park's success story, it is recommended that other tourism destinations consider adopting similar strategies to enhance their appeal and sustainability. The integration of escapism and experiential elements into tourist attractions can significantly enhance the overall visitor experience, leading to a broader tourist base. By actively involving tourists in meaningful activities that connect them with the destination, lasting positive impressions can be created. Furthermore, the focus on sustainable tourism practices, as demonstrated by Edelweiss Park, should be encouraged across various destinations. This approach not only benefits the local economy but also provides social advantages and aids in environmental preservation. The involvement of the community in these practices enhances their sense of ownership and contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage. In conclusion, the case of Edelweiss Park exemplifies the potential of innovative and sustainable tourism practices. Other tourism destinations can benefit from adopting a similar approach, tailored to their unique strengths and resources. This approach has the potential to attract more tourists, empower local communities, and contribute to both cultural preservation and environmental well-being. This Top of Form/Bottom of Form study has a limitation as it solely focuses on the experience economy's role in sustainable tourism destination development, without addressing its impact on visitor satisfaction. Further research is needed to measure customer motivation in revisiting tourist attractions when they actively engage in activities within the tourism destination.

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