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# An Examination of the Four Realms of Tourism Experience Theory

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# AN EXAMINATION OF THE FOUR REALMS OF TOURISM EXPERIENCE THEORY

Jurowski: Tourism Experience Theory

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## ABSTRACT

To meet the expectations of sophisticated and affluent consumers seeking memorable experiences hospitality and tourism industries must redesign and reposition their services. A better understanding of the nature of tourism experiences is necessary for successful redesign. This study examines the four realms of tourism experience theory as a structure for the study of tourism experiences. The four theorized realms appear to exist when tested on actual tourist participation in activities but participation in one realm does not preclude participation in an opposing realm.

**Key Words:** experience economy, realms of tourism experience, binary regression, Verde Valley, participation

## INTRODUCTION

Technological innovations and a more sophisticated affluent and demanding consumer have escalated competitive pressures on the hospitality and tourism industry requiring a shift away from a focus on facilities and services to a focus on providing customized experiences (Knutson, Beck, Kim & Cha, 2006). Such a shift requires changes in operational methods and marketing strategies of tourist destinations and hospitality products and services (Erdly & Kesterson-Townes, 2003). For example, several European cities have repackaged their tourist attractions as experiences resulting in a differentiated product with higher economic value (Oh, Fiore & Jeong 2007; Richards, 2001; Tsaor, et al., 2006). To meet the demands of the changing market place tourism enterprises must provide customized experiences that engage consumers in activities and experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) offered a framework for understanding and evaluating experiential consumptions that has conceptual and practical relevance to the tourism industry since experiences are the core product in that industry. The expectation of a pleasurable and memorable experience is what motivates consumers to purchase products and services (Tsaor, Chiu, & Wang, 2006). While tourists create their own unique experiences, the industry provides the input for those experiences (Anderson, 2007). Consumers are willing to pay a premium for quality memorable experiences that transform them. Consequently, an understanding of the nature of tourism experiences is critical to the financial success of hospitality and tourism products and services in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The underlying features of tourism experiences have been theorized as four realms: *education, esthetics, escapism and entertainment* (Gilmore and Pine 2002; Stramboulis and Skayannis 2003). These proposed realms have intuitive conceptual and practical relevance to the tourism industry but empirical evidence of their validity is minimal. More knowledge about the realms of tourist experiences is needed for the design of products and services that elucidate the best experiences. The research presented in this paper studies the extent to which experiences can be segregated into the theorized realms based on visitor activities. Further, the study attempts to determine the relationships among realms of tourism experiences by examining the likelihood of participation in opposing realms of activities.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There is no universally accepted definition or clearly defined method for operationalizing experiences. They are made up of behavior, perception, cognition and emotions that are either expressed or implied (Oh, et al, 2007). Tourism experiences are created through a process of visiting, learning and enjoying activities in an environment away from home (Stramboulis & Skayannis, 2003). They are internally produced. Each person creates his/her own experience based on backgrounds, values, attitudes and beliefs brought to the situation (Knutson, et al, 2006). A number of theories attempt to explain various dimensions of experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) conceptualized four realms of tourism experiences with fluid boundaries. Experiences were described based on their position on a vertical pole where one end point was active participation and the other was passive participation and on a horizontal pole with absorption on one end and immersion on the other (see Oh, et al (2007) for a diagram and further details). Experiences were classified into four realms: *education, esthetics, escapism and entertainment*. Educational experiences were those that fell into the active absorption quadrant. In this type of experience, participants actively absorb the experiences as a mental state. For

example, visiting art galleries or wineries fall into the education category because visitors may learn about wine and increase their ability to be a connoisseur. On the other hand passive absorption experiences are those that appeal to the senses. They are labeled esthetic experiences because even though the mind is immersed in the environment it is not affected or altered as it is in an educational experience. Walking along a creek bed or visiting a historical site can be classified as esthetic experiences because the visitors are passively appreciating and are not becoming actively involved. Escapism experiences involve active participation and immersion to the point where the tourist actually has an effect on the performance or phenomenon. Playing golf and camping are activities in which the efforts of the visitor affect the outcome of the experience. The final realm involves passive absorption experiences where the participant does not affect the occurrence or environment and appreciates or absorbs activities and/or performances such as in attending a concert at a special event (Oh, et al, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999). There is empirical evidence to suggest that the four realms are valid. The Oh, et al (2007) study on a bed and breakfast experience concluded that the four realms of experiences offered “a conceptual fit and a practical measurement framework for the study of tourist experiences” (p.127).

Schmitt (1999 in Tsaour et al, 2006) proposed five components of experiences: SENSE, FEEL, THINK, ACT, RELATE, four of which appear to be similar to Pine and Gilmore’s realms of experiences. Sensory and affective (FEEL) experiences are intuitively similar to entertainment and esthetics while the creative cognitive experiences in the THINK component are similar in characteristics to education experiences. The ACT component seems related to education and escapism. The final component of Schmitt’s taxonomy of experience characteristics, RELATE, does not appear to be expressed in Pine and Gilmore’s experience realms.

In developing a theory of touristic experiences, Aho (2001) suggested four core elements of experiences: emotional impression, informational effects or learning, practiced capacity building and transformational impacts. Emotional experiences were described as universal elements of tourism present in most touristic experiences. Learning or informational experiences were separated into those that were intentional and learning that was unintentional. Practice experiences were explained as having a variety of forms from hobbies to professional experiences. Transformational experiences referred to those experiences that modify either the body or the mind such as health and cultural tourism. Experiences can also be differentiated based on their physical, social, and mental or physic motivations. Physical aspects include physical comfort, safety, natural, and manmade environs while mental elements include meanings, connections and connotations. Social elements on the other hand refer to status, inner reflections, enjoyment and social contacts. Motivational elements are combined to create deeper experiences. For example, enjoying mental harmony while in natural beauty is defined as a physical/mental experience. Other proposed typologies delineate the personal resources needed for experiences, i.e. time, money, knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Aho (2001) analyzes experiences from a different perspective. He theorizes that the traditional three stages of a tourism experiences (before, during, after) can be expanded to seven stages:

1. Orientation (awakening interest)
2. Attachment (strengthening interest)
3. Visiting (actual visit)
4. Evaluation (comparisons)
5. Storing (photos, souvenirs, memories)
6. Reflection (repeated presentations)
7. Enrichment (continued contacts with memorabilia and networks, new practice developed during the trip)

Of the seven stages the first two are pre-trip and the last four are post-trip. Those charged with marketing and strategic management responsibilities may find these theoretical perspectives useful since tourism experiences unarguably define the core of tourism marketing and development.

Another typology differentiates experiences into real, fun and indulgent experiences. Real experiences are those that demonstrate connections, belonging, and shared experiences. Adventure and active involvement are classified as fun experiences. Those that focus on luxury, relaxation and pleasure are labeled indulgent experiences (Hayes and MacLeod 2007).

Experiences have been analyzed as a consumption set with four general resource requirements: time, skills, goods, and services. The tourist is viewed as the one who puts these resources together to create the consumption set needed for an experience (Anderson, 2007). When experiences were examined from a SERVQUAL perspective, seven items were judged to be related to experiences: environment, benefit, convenience, accessibility, utility, incentive, and trust (Knutson, et al, 2006).

In today's competitive market place, the most effective marketing strategy manages the consumer's tourism experience through all the stages outlined by Aho (2001) (Berry & Heckel, 2002 in Knutson et al, 2006). Web and Internet technologies increase pressure on destinations to develop successful strategies because Internet resources make it possible for each guest to find a unique and personal experience (Smith, 2003). According to Richards (2001) experience production is the substance of the economic strategy of destinations. An essential source of competitive advantage is the creation of a desirable experiential environment (Tsaor, et al, 2006). Consequently, an understanding of the tourist experience is critical to the competitive position of tourism destinations. Effective marketing requires a diagnosis of offerings and an analysis of consumer choices (Oh, et al, 2007).

## RESEARCH QUESTION

Several theories support the hypothesis that tourist experiences can be categorized for analysis. Pine and Gilmore (1999) propose that passive immersion experiences (*esthetics*) incorporate different elements than do active immersion experiences (*escapism*) and that active immersion experiences may differ from active absorption (*education*) even though the boundaries are blurred. The greatest differences may be between *escapism* and *entertainment* as well as between *education* and *esthetics* because neither pair shares one of the four theorized realms of experiences. Theoretically, *Entertainment* may be significantly different from *escapism* because the former is passive/absorption and the later is active/immersion. However, the theory proposed by Hayes and Macleod (2007) suggests *entertainment* and *escapism* incorporate elements of indulgent and real experiences. Schmitt's (1999) conceptual experience modules may support Pine and Gilmore's (1999) four realms of experience. For example, *education* is clearly lined to *THINK*, *Escapism* to *ACT*, *esthetics* to *SENSE* and *FEEL*. Yet, an argument can be made that Schmitt's five experiential modules are integrated in each of Pine and Gilmore's four realms. This research seeks to uncover to what extent experiences can be segregated into the theorized realms or components. Research by Oh, et al. (2008) demonstrated a conceptual fit of the four realms proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999) based on a query of statements related to a bed and breakfast experience. Can the same conceptual fit be identified in experiences in a tourist destination based on activities selected by visitors? If so, are those who participate in escapism activities (active immersion) likely to participate in entertainment experiences (passive absorption)? Are individuals who participate in education (active absorption) likely to participate in esthetics (passive immersion)?

This research tests the following hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Activities in a tourist destination cannot be classified in the four realms of experience (education, escapism, entertainment, esthetics).
- H<sub>2</sub> : Individuals that participate in escapism activities are not likely to participate in entertainment activities.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Individuals who participate in educational activities are not likely to participate in esthetic activities.

## METHOD

The research was conducted in the Verde Valley, a popular tourism region of Arizona comprised of five communities with unique natural and cultural resources including a river, two national forests, a ghost town and dramatic geological features. The area has a vibrant history and culture encompassing Hispanic, Hopi, Navajo, and Anglo Saxon descendants of minors, ranchers and tribes. One of the communities attracts visitors in search of metaphysical enlightenment or sophisticated shopping and spa experiences.

The Verde Valley tourism survey instrument was developed in Teleform™, a computerized scanning program, to afford rapid data capture of the completed questionnaires. The two-page survey was designed to obtain information on visitors' activities in the county, communities visited, reasons for visiting, and expenditures while in the various communities. The surveys were coded to allow community level data to be extracted, and were collected according to a seasonally adjusted stratified sample based on community attractions. The surveys were self-administered, i.e., lodging or attraction staff handed the survey to visitors who completed and returned it to staff. The collection schedule was randomized to ensure that surveys were distributed on both weekdays and weekends and that no two communities were surveyed at the same time to reduce the possibility of surveying the same visitor twice. Each community was provided a fixed number of surveys to be distributed according to a predetermined survey schedule. A total of 1284 surveys were collected for the year, for a response rate of 26.8 percent.

The survey instrument asked visitors how interested they were in participating in a list of activities and whether or not they had participated in or planned to participate in each of these activities. The list of activities with participation rates is presented in Table 1.

Several steps were taken to test the hypotheses. Cross tabs and bivariate correlations were examined to

analyze the extent to which visitors participated in cross over activities. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed to uncover the underlying dimension in the list of tourist activities. Next, a series of binary regression analyses were performed to predict the likelihood of tourists participating in activities in one factor grouping based on their participation in an opposing factor group. Activities in the *escapism* factor grouping were regressed against those in the *entertainment* factor grouping. Participation in activities in the *esthetics* factor grouping was regressed against activities in the *education* factor grouping. A backward likelihood ratio stepwise method was used as the variable selection technique for the regression models (Menard, 2001). Regression coefficients were estimated through an iterative maximum likelihood method. The models are expressed with the exponential coefficients ( $\exp \beta$ ) which represent the change of odds ratio corresponding to the change of independent variables (Field, 2000).

Table 1 Interest in and Participation in Tourist Experiences

Activity	Interest		Participation	
	N	Mean	N	%
Fishing area rivers or creeks	981	1.93	70	5.5
Hiking or walking trails	1045	3.30	390	30.4
Visiting cultural and historic sites	1025	3.54	364	28.3
Visiting national and state parks	1060	3.70	407	31.7
Visiting US Forest Service lands	992	3.20	247	19.2
Visiting Art Galleries	1001	2.74	237	18.5
Rock climbing	972	1.68	43	3.3
Back road tours (Jeep OHV etc)	988	2.41	152	11.8
Bird watching and observing wildlife	1004	2.59	198	15.4
Spiritual Metaphysical Vortexes	982	1.99	119	9.3
Visiting area creeks or rivers	1005	3.00	260	20.2
Mountain Biking	977	1.66	42	3.3
Recreation Vehicle (RV) stay	976	1.77	103	8.0
Camping - Backpacking	971	1.83	60	4.7
Playing golf	982	1.79	74	5.8
Visiting Verde Valley wineries or wine tasting	1001	2.30	84	6.5
Shopping	1040	3.21	365	28.4
Resort or Spa experience	979	2.39	144	11.2
Scenic train or Railway tour	984	2.87	206	16.0
Special Event	133	2.78	43	3.3

Several steps were taken to test the hypotheses. Cross tabs and bivariate correlations were examined to analyze the extent to which visitors participated in cross over activities. Principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed to uncover the underlying dimension in the list of tourist activities. Next, a series of binary regression analyses were performed to predict the likelihood of tourists participating in activities in one factor grouping based on their participation in an opposing factor group. Activities in the *escapism* factor grouping were regressed against those in the *entertainment* factor grouping. Participation in activities in the *esthetics* factor grouping was regressed against activities in the *education* factor grouping.

An analysis of the correlation matrix of activities in which participants engaged revealed that the strongest correlation ( $r=0.686$ ) was between visiting national and state parks and visiting cultural and historic sites. Hiking or walking trails, visiting cultural and historic sites, visiting rivers and creeks and visiting national and state parks were all highly correlated. The weakest correlation ( $r=0.089$ ) was between fishing and visiting spiritual/ metaphysical vortexes. Correlations between fishing and most other activities, especially golf, were also weak. The analysis of the cross tabulations indicated that the strongest cross participation was between visiting national and state parks and rock climbing, mountain biking and fishing. The weakest cross participation was between bird watching and golf and back road tours.

Table 2 presents the results of the factor analysis with associated statistics. Four factor groupings resulted from the factor analysis each of which can be intuitively related to one of the four realms of experience proposed by Pine and Gilmore (1999). The *Esthetics* grouping included hiking or walking trails, cultural and historic sites, national and state parks, US Forest Service lands, bird watching and observing wildlife. These activities can be classified as passive immersion because visitors enjoy being in the destination environment but do not affect or alter the nature of this environment. They are passively appreciating the way the destination appeals to their senses. This factor grouping can be related to Schmitt's (1999) SENSE experiential module and Hayes and MacLeod's (2007) indulgent experiences based on its focus on sensual pleasure.

Table 2 Principal Component Factor Analysis of Participation in Activities

	Component			
	Escapist	Esthetics	Education	Entertainment
Fishing area rivers or creeks	.775			
Hiking or walking trails		.780		
Visiting cultural and historic sites		.645		
Visiting national and state parks		.798		
Visiting US Forest Service lands		.806		
Visiting Art Galleries			.680	
Rock climbing	.793			
Back Road tours (Jeep OHV etc)	.572			
Bird watching and observing wildlife		.642		
Spiritual Metaphysical Vortexes			.517	
Visiting area creeks or rivers		.542		
Mountain Biking	.833			
Recreation Vehicle (RV) stay	.703			
Camping - Backpacking	.776			
Playing golf	.705			
Visiting Verde Valley wineries or wine tasting			.449	
Shopping			.737	
Resort or Spa experience			.749	
Scenic train or Railway tour				.775
Special event				.819

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

A second factor was titled *Escapist* for its close relationship to the “Escapist” experience realm with greater immersion and participation. This experience realm requires the destination to offer specific resources for the participation in the activity. The *Escapist* factor included the following activities: fishing, rock climbing, back road tours, mountain biking, recreation vehicle stays, camping and playing golf. Elements of the activities in this factor grouping can be related to Schmitt's (1999) ACT module and Hayes and MacLeod's (2007) fun experiences.

The third factor grouping was titled *Education* included visiting art galleries and wineries, shopping, resort or spa experiences and spiritual metaphysical vortexes. These activities require active absorption because of the interaction of the mind and/or body with the environment and can therefore be classified as *educational* experiences. The activities incorporate a strong sense of Schmitt's (1999) FEEL experiential module.

The final factor incorporated only two of the activities – attending special events and a ride on the scenic train or a railway tour. The entertainment value of these two activities makes a case for attributing them to the *Entertainment* realm of passive absorption in which the consumer passively observes the activities and/or performance of others.

A binary regression model tested the likelihood of participation in escapism experiences as a catalyst for participation in entertainment experiences. Significant (at the 0.05 level) relationships were uncovered between one of items in the entertainment factor grouping (scenic train/ railway tour) and all but one of the six items (rock climbing) in the escapism factor grouping. Participants in back road tours were four times more likely to enjoy a train experience. However, the likelihood of participation in the other activities in the factor grouping being a

catalyst for the train experiences was weak as depicted in Table 3. Unfortunately, there was not enough data to analyze the likelihood of participation in special events in relation to escapism activities.

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Table 3 Exponential  $\beta$  based on Logistic Regression of Participation in Escapism Experiences against Entertainment Experiences

	Entertainment	
	Scenic train or railway tour	
Escapism	$\beta$	Sig.
Rock climbing	1.87	0.10
Back road tours (Jeep OHV, etc)	4.09	0.00*
Mountain Biking	1.69	0.19
RV stay	2.04	0.01*
Camping-backpacking	1.36	0.38
Playing golf	1.82	0.04*

\* Significant at the .05 level. Note: Missing values prevented an analysis of the likelihood of participation in special events.

When the items in the esthetics factor group were regressed against those in the education factor grouping, several relationships were insignificant (sig. <0.05). Of the remaining significant relationships, only three demonstrated a more than 3 times likelihood of participation in one experience if participating in another. Those who visited cultural and historic sites were 5.7 time more likely to visit art galleries and 3.7 times more likely to enjoy shopping. Those who enjoyed shopping were 3.5 times more likely to visit national and state parks. Bird watchers are less likely to go shopping than those that visit creeks, rivers, and hiking trails. The resort/spa experience only minimally encourages esthetics experiences. Table 4 displays the exponential  $\beta$  and significance levels of the logistic regression analyses of participation in education experiences regressed against participation in esthetic experiences.

Table 4 Exponential  $\beta$  based on Logistic Regression of Participation in Education Experiences against Esthetic Experiences

Education	Esthetics											
	Hiking or walking trails		Visiting cultural and historic sites		Visiting national and state parks		Visiting US Forest Service lands		Bird watching & observing wildlife		Visiting creeks or rivers	
	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.	$\beta$	Sig.
Visiting art galleries	2.28	0.00*	5.66	0.00*	2.31	.000*	1.66	0.12	0.74	0.20	1.50	0.07
Spiritual, metaphysical, vortexes	1.69	0.60	3.68	0.00*	2.11	0.30	1.52	0.09	0.65	0.10	2.34	0.00*
Visiting wineries or wine tasting	1.12	0.72	5.24	0.00*	1.81	0.12	1.26	.410	1.04	0.89	1.42	0.25
Shopping	1.70	0.01*	3.74	0.00*	3.50	0.00*	1.15	0.53	1.03	0.90	2.76	0.00*
Resort or spa experience	1.72	0.04*	2.73	0.00*	1.94	0.02*	1.05	0.83	0.56	0.02*	2.43	0.00*

## DISCUSSION

The data does not support the null hypothesis  $H_1$ : Activities in a tourist destination cannot be classified in the four realms of experience (education, escapism, entertainment, esthetics). Based on the factor analysis it appears as if tourist activities do have underlying commonalities that can be classified as escapism, education, esthetic and entertainment. The results of this study combined with those of the study by Oh, et al. (2007) confirm the value of

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the four realms of tourism experiences theory. In the later study the emergence of the four realms was based on agreement with responses to statements about a bed and breakfast experiences while in the present study the confirmation comes from participation in activities thereby making a strong case for the affirmation of the hypothesized realms.

The knowledge that there are four realms of tourism experiences may be useful for planners and developers. Current offerings can be analyzed using the parameters of the four realms to determine gaps in the offerings and to identify the underlying themes in a tourism destination. The knowledge is also useful for tour operators who can use the basic premise of the realms of tourism experiences to match available resources with one or more realms of experiences. The parameters of, say, an esthetic experience can be useful in the design of a new offering. Resort operators that seek to add activities for their guests can use the components of the realms of tourism to create new tourism experiences to satisfy guests. However, further exploration of the realms is necessary for the development of travel packages and marketing strategies.

The second hypothesis, H<sub>2</sub>: Individuals that participate in escapism activities are not likely to participate in entertainment activities was not supported. Participation in back road tours, an escapist activity, increased the likelihood of participation in the scenic train or railway tour, an entertainment activity, four fold. The results suggest that while the four realms of tourism experiences may be useful for theoretical analysis of tourism experiences, they are not mutually exclusive. In the context of participation in experiences, boundaries may be nonexistent rather than amorphous as theorized by Pine and Gilmore (1999). While some activities, rock climbing, mountain biking and camping or backpacking seem to have no significant relationship with the entertainment experiences, others have a clear relationship. Staying in an RV or rock climbing, for example, almost doubles the likelihood of participating in a rail experience.

Similarly, evidence is lacking to support hypothesis, H<sub>3</sub>: Individuals who participate in educational activities are not likely to participate in esthetic activities. A likelihood of experiencing educational and esthetic activities was true for about half of the activities. Visiting cultural and historic sites increased the likelihood of participating in all of the education activities. However, participation in any of the education experiences does not increase the likelihood of participating in bird watching and observing wildlife. Resorts and spas experiences are likely to be a catalyst for hiking, and visiting natural areas as well as cultural and historic sites. Resort properties may be able to encourage extra day stays by providing experiences related to the mentioned activities.

The large number of cross participation activities suggests that visitors enjoy a mix of activities in this destination and the findings may be useful in identifying a marketable mix of activities. For example, it appears as if there is a market for a tourism experience that incorporates art galleries, wineries and cultural and historic sites. The bird watching visitors do not appear to be interested in educational experiences but are somewhat likely to enjoy a resort or spa experience. Marketing that incorporates shopping opportunities or art galleries and wineries may not be effective for attracting the birding market. On the other hand, packages that incorporate art galleries along with wineries and visits to natural areas may be effective in attracting a niche market.

Understanding the relationship between various types of tourism experiences can be useful for marketing strategies. For example, the data suggests that back road tours should cross market with the scenic train and railway tours. Art galleries and wineries can take advantage of opportunities for marketing at cultural and historical sites and the latter may also wish to form partnerships with spiritual and metaphysical attractions to create a unique experience. Based on the finding that the only significant relationship between bird watching and other activities was a rather weak connection to a resort or spa experience, birding tourists may be considered a unique group not interested in other activities. The regression analysis offers only a glimpse into the connection among the activities in the four realms of tourism activities. Further analysis may reveal other interesting associations.

## CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study provides evidence to support the “Four Realms of Tourism Experiences” theory by demonstrating that the underlying dimensions of tourist participation in specified activities can be organized as entertainment, education, escapism and esthetics. Destination marketing organizations (DMOs), tour operators, travel planners and researchers may use this organizational scheme to evaluate the mix of activities in current offerings. The analysis may provide information to reveal strengths and weaknesses in each of the realms and thereby influence marketing strategies.

However, the results imply that the boundaries between the realms are extremely fluid and unstructured. DMOs that seek to manage the consumer’s experience and create a desirable experiential environment need a greater understanding of the connection between and among the four realms. The development of packaging and marketing strategies requires an understanding of factors that create a relationship between specific activities such as

the strong connection between back road tours and the scenic train ride or the connection between wineries, art galleries and culture and historical sites. International CHRIE Conference-Refereed Track, Event 23 [2009]

While the study revealed that visitors who participate in esthetic activities are likely to participate in education activities, it does not provide information about satisfaction levels. Future research should examine satisfaction levels related to combinations of realms of experiences. Is a visit to art galleries enhanced more by a visit to wineries than a visit to a cultural site or to a national park? Which combination of experience realms yields the greatest satisfaction for which market niche? Pine and Gilmore's theory suggests that there is a "sweet spot" when all four realms are being experienced. More research is needed to validate the existence of a "sweet spot" and the role that transformation plays in visitor satisfaction. It is clear that the exploration of the realms of tourist experience theory is in its nascent stage and that a significant amount of research is needed to guide planners and marketing managers in creating memorable and transformational experiences.

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