

From Experience to Instagrammable: The Role of Experience Economy Dimensions in Malaysian Agritourism: A Conceptual Paper

Nor Diyana Mohammed Shobri, Aida Azlina Mansor, Lailatul Faizah Abu Hassan, Azmi Mat, Nur Najjah Abd Rahim

Universiti Teknologi MARA

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ABSTRACT

The increasing integration of social media into tourism has altered how tourists evaluate and communicate their travel experiences. Destinations are no longer assessed solely on the quality of physical experience, but also on visual representation and social media sharing. This trend is particularly relevant to agritourism, where experiences offer distinctive visual and experiential content. This conceptual paper adopts Experience Economy Theory and proposes that four dimensions of the Experience Economy—namely aesthetic, escapism, educational, and entertainment—influence tourists' perceived Instagrammability at agritourism destinations. Perceived Instagrammability is conceptualized as tourists' subjective evaluation of an agritourism experience as visually distinctive, photo-worthy, and suitable for digital representation and social media sharing. The paper develops four research hypotheses and argues that Instagrammability should be extended beyond the physical attractiveness of agritourism destinations to incorporate experiential value. The proposed framework contributes to tourism literature by extending Experience Economy Theory and introducing perceived Instagrammability as a digital representational outcome of agritourism experiences. From a practical perspective, the proposed framework provides guidance for agritourism operators in designing experiences that are meaningful to tourists and attractive for digital representation.

Keywords: agritourism; Experience Economy Theory; perceived Instagrammability; esthetic experience; escapism; educational experience; entertainment experience

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has become an important driver of economic growth worldwide, including in Malaysia. In 2025, this industry is estimated to generate RM312.0 billion and contribute 15.1% to Malaysia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2025). Malaysia recorded approximately 21.0 million international tourist arrivals in the first half of 2026 (Tourism Malaysia, 2026). Domestic visitors also show strong growth, with the figure rising from 260.1 million in 2024 to 290.1 million in 2025, representing an 11.5% increase (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2026). This may be because Malaysia offers a varied range of tourism experiences, including shopping, leisure and entertainment, cultural and heritage experiences, sightseeing, and nature-based activities. This growth trend shows that Malaysia remains an attractive tourism destination and provides opportunities for the continued development of diverse, experience-based tourism offerings, including agritourism.

Agritourism was introduced in Malaysia in 1991 under the Sixth Malaysia Plan (1991–1995) to support farmers in rural areas, as part of the government's efforts to diversify tourism activities and create additional income opportunities for farmers and rural communities (Jaunis, Russel Mojiol & Kodoh, 2022). Recently, this concept has been refined beyond the conventional farm visit to encompass a variety of recreational, educational, and interactive experiences (Martinus, Boruff & Nunez Picado, 2024). It has been associated with agriculture, livestock, fisheries, and agro-based industries. These activities include farm and orchard visits, fruit-picking activities, farm stays, agricultural demonstrations, recreational activities, and the sale of locally

produced agricultural products. Some top examples of agritourism in Malaysia include Selangor Fruit Valley, Farm Fresh@UPM, Desaru Farm Fruit, Desa Dairy Farm in Kundasang, and the tea plantations and strawberry farms in Cameron Highlands. These destinations demonstrate how Malaysian agritourism integrates agricultural production with education, recreation, nature, and experiential activities to create more engaging experiences for visitors.

Simultaneously, the growth of social media has changed the nature of tourism consumption. During a visit to a destination, tourists are not only consumers of experience but also photographers, storytellers, content creators, reviewers, and digital promoters. Consequently, visual media such as photographs have emerged as essential components of destination marketing and communication. For instance, a study by Michael, Chunawala and Fusté-Forné (2025) and Blanco-Moreno, González-Fernández, Muñoz-Gallego and Casaló (2024) showed that destination marketing organizations use photographs to construct destination identities through visual storytelling on Instagram. Their findings suggest that visual tourism communication and experience involve not only attractive environments but also fun, adrenaline, architecture, and heritage.

However, previous studies often emphasize physical appearance, scenery, visual appeal, and photo opportunities. For instance, a study by Liu and Li (2021) suggests that visual appeal, including photogenic, aesthetic, and artistic characteristics, is a central component in how tourists evaluate whether a destination is Instagrammability. Similarly, a recent study by Toresson (2025) demonstrates that visually attractive landscapes and distinctive photographic settings contribute to the development of “Instagram hotspots,” and they can provide an appealing background for social media content. In tourism-related Instagram content, these studies highlight the importance of photography and visual storytelling in communicating destination identities and generating greater social-media engagement.

Although these visual characteristics are important, defining Instagrammability predominantly in terms of physical attractiveness may overlook the broader experiential nature of tourism destinations. A tourist may perceive an experience as worth photographing and sharing because it is aesthetically appealing. However, an experience may also become Instagrammability because it is unusual, immersive, informative, culturally meaningful, and entertaining. This may apply to agritourism because the destination not only provides scenic landscapes but also offers immersive harvesting activities, opportunities to learn about agricultural processes, interactions with farm animals, traditional food preparation, and recreational activities. Each of these experiences creates different reasons for tourists to perceive the destination as worthy of visual documentation and digital representation.

Therefore, this conceptual paper proposes that perceived Instagrammability not only involves a physical destination characteristic but also constitutes an experiential outcome. The paper applies Pine and Gilmore's Experience Economy Theory to explain how four experience dimensions—namely aesthetic, escapism, educational, and entertainment—may influence perceived Instagrammability in the context of Malaysian agritourism. Thus, this paper will contribute to the existing literature by extending Experience Economy Theory and introducing perceived Instagrammability as a contemporary digital outcome of experiential consumption.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Agritourism as an Experiential Tourism Context

Agritourism involves tourism experiences that connect visitors to agricultural environments, production processes, farms, rural lifestyles, food systems, and agricultural communities (Jaunis, Mojiol & Kodoh, 2022). It integrates agriculture and tourism by offering tourists opportunities to experience farming practices, rural environments, local food production, and interactions with agricultural communities. They are not only observing agricultural environments but also actively participating in activities, interacting with producers, acquiring new knowledge, and developing connections with the places they visit (Martinus, Boruff & Nunez, 2024).

This characteristic makes agritourism particularly experiential, as tourists can learn, interact, escape from their

everyday environments, and engage in enjoyable activities within agricultural settings (Sieczko, Parzonko & Bieńkowska-Gołasa, 2020). Martinus et al. (2024) emphasized that authenticity, interaction, learning, and location are important elements in shaping deeper agritourism experiences. These findings indicate that the value of agritourism destinations arises not only from the destination's physical attributes but also from how tourists interact with, learn from, and emotionally connect with the agricultural environment. Thus, these observations suggest that agritourism destinations provide an appropriate context for examining tourism experiences through the dimensions of the Experience Economy, as agritourism operators not only provide access to agricultural environments but also offer experiences within them.

With the rise of the social media era, this distinction becomes increasingly important because experiential value can be transformed into digital content. The agricultural landscape can become a photograph, harvesting can become a video, a farming demonstration can become an educational social-media story, and an entertaining farm activity can become shareable digital content. Thus, contemporary agritourism may simultaneously operate within the experience economy and serve as a digital representation.

Experience Economy Theory

The Experience Economy concept was developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998). They propose that economic offerings have evolved from commodities to goods and services, and ultimately to experiences. Experiences differ from services because consumers become personally engaged in memorable events. Pine and Gilmore (1998) classified experiences into two dimensions: the level of customer participation and the relationship between individuals and the experiential environment. The intersection of these dimensions produces four experiential realms: esthetic, escapist, educational, and entertainment. Figure 1 shows the four realms of experience as described in the Experience Economy concept. In terms of esthetic experience, people's senses are stimulated by enjoying the ambiance. They appreciate and absorb the physical and sensory characteristics of the surroundings. In the context of agritourism, esthetic experiences can emerge from agricultural landscapes, farms, plantations, orchards, flowers, rural architecture, mountains, paddy fields, natural environments, and other visually attractive features. Pine and Gilmore (1998) further highlighted that escapism involves people seeking to escape their daily lives at home and at work. It also involves the stress that comes from repetitive routines. The escapist experience can be validated in the context of agritourism. For instance, tourists can participate in agricultural activities such as planting, harvesting, feeding animals, staying on farms, preparing local dishes, or experiencing rural lifestyles.

They further mentioned that people could gain educational experiences by enriching their knowledge and expertise, which could motivate them to pursue new activities. Agritourism can provide tourists with learning opportunities related to agriculture, food production, traditional farming practices, environmental conservation, and rural culture. For example, tourists can learn about traditional rubber tapping, participate in hands-on salted egg making and local honey and dairy processing, and enjoy interactive animal feeding. The last dimension of Experience Economy highlights entertainment experience. Pine and Gilmore (1998) defined the entertainment experience as the emotions of fun, pleasure, and relaxation. Within an agritourism context, entertainment may emerge from farm demonstrations, cultural activities, agricultural festivals, food-related activities, animal attractions, performances, and recreational farm activities. For example, tourists can enjoy watching traditional dance and cultural performances, cycling through farms, tractor rides, picnicking, playing traditional games, visiting durian festivals, and visiting farmers' markets.

Some previous studies have extensively applied the four dimensions of the Experience Economy in tourism contexts. For example, a study by Lai, Liu, and Lu (2021) applied the Experience Economy to culinary tourism. It demonstrated the importance of experiential dimensions in shaping tourists' satisfaction, memory, and electronic word-of-mouth intentions. On the other hand, a study by Hallman, Zehrer, and Rietz (2021) adopted this concept in sport event tourism. They found that the four dimensions of Experience Economy define the experience at sport events and have a significant influence on revisit intention. Another study by Ye and Huang (2024) investigated theme-park experiences using the Experience Economy to examine visitor loyalty. The findings indicate that the four dimensions of theme park ride experience have varying impacts on visitors' loyalty. A more recent study on heritage tourism by Zu, Chi, Ryu, and Han (2025) highlights that the

experience economy of heritage tourists impacts tourists' satisfaction. Similarly, Naparin (2025) found that aesthetic and entertainment experiences significantly influenced sustainability-oriented tourist loyalty in the context of wetland tourism. These findings reinforce the view that well-designed tourism experiences can generate favorable post-consumption responses, including intentions to revisit and recommend.

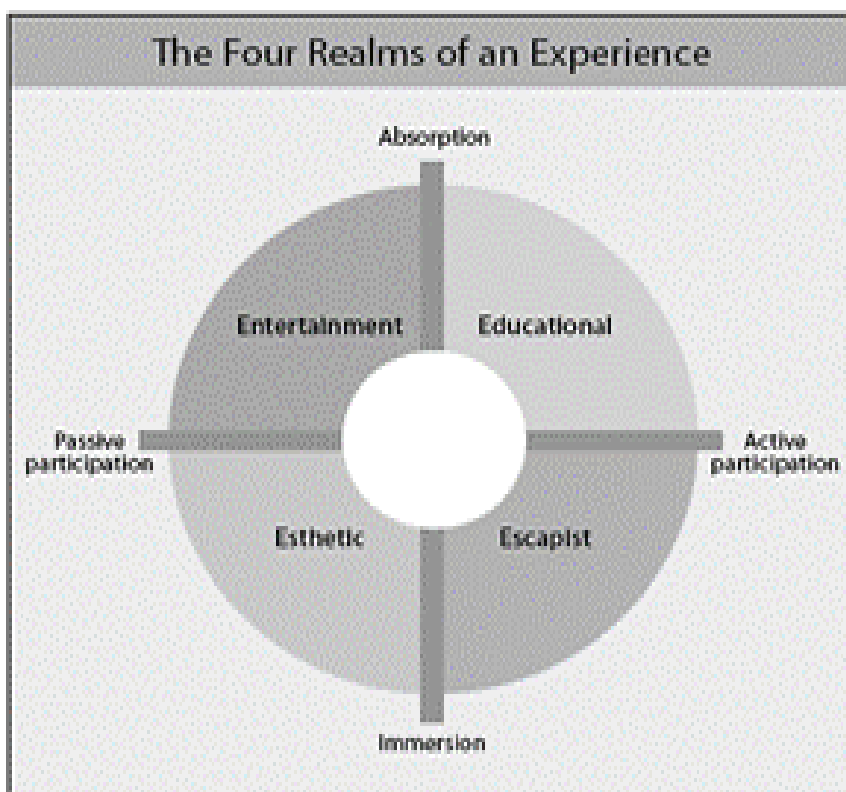
Aslan and Bekar (2026) conducted a study in glamping tourism to examine the four dimensions of the Experience Economy in relation to subjective well-being, emotions, satisfaction, and loyalty. The study found

that esthetic and escapist experiences positively influenced tourist loyalty, while educational and esthetic experiences contributed to positive emotions and satisfaction, which in turn strengthened loyalty. In the Malaysian context, Mahdzar, Saiful Raznan, Ahmad Jasmin and Abdul Aziz (2020) applied the four dimensions to visitors at a rural tourism destination in Selangor to examine their relationship with visitor satisfaction. This study found that the four dimensions of Experience Economy have a significant effect on visitors' satisfaction.

On the other hand, the increasing integration of social media into tourism suggests that experiences may yield another outcome: tourists' evaluation of the experience's potential for digital representation. However, most of these studies (Lai et al., 2021; Hallman et al., 2021; Ye & Huang, 2026; Zu et al., 2025; Naparin, 2025; Aslan & Bekar, 2026; Mahzdar et al., 2020) adopt the Experience Economy on conventional tourism outcomes, such as satisfaction, memorable experiences, loyalty, and behavioral intentions.

Existing Experience Economy research reveals three broad patterns. First, the four experiential dimensions have been widely examined across tourism settings, including culinary tourism, sport events, theme parks, heritage tourism, rural tourism and glamping. Second, the dominant outcomes remain satisfaction, memorable experiences, revisit intention, recommendation and loyalty. Third, despite the increasing role of social media in tourism consumption, limited attention has been given to how the four experiential dimensions shape tourists' evaluation of the digital representational value of an experience. This leaves an important conceptual gap between experiential consumption and digital destination representation.

Figure 1: The Experience Economy



Source: Pine and Gilmore (1998)

Perceived Instagrammability in Tourism

Tourism experiences increasingly extend beyond the physical destination into digital spaces, where tourists select, curate, and share aspects of their experiences with online audiences via social media platforms such as Instagram (Siegel, Tussyadiah & Scarles, 2025). Tourists have become active producers and distributors of destination-related visual content through photographs, videos, stories, and other forms of user-generated content. With changes in the tourism environment, the concept of Instagrammability has emerged to describe the extent to which destinations, attractions, and tourism experiences possess qualities that make them suitable or desirable for visual representation on Instagram.

Instagrammable refers to destinations with visual and experiential qualities that make them desirable for digital representation and sharing on Instagram (NH, 2023; Adiatma, Rukma, Rahayu, 2024). Most previous studies have associated Instagrammability with visual characteristics. For instance, a study by Liu and Li (2021) demonstrated that Instagrammability is associated with destinations that have photogenic, aesthetic, and artistic qualities. Similarly, Toresson (2025) highlights that landscape images develop as "Instagram hotspots" because the destination is visually attractive and idealized. A recent study by Wibowo, Choiri, Panggabean, and Fatiha (2025) illustrates Instagrammable tourism as a phenomenon in which destinations are increasingly evaluated for their visually appealing and shareable qualities.

However, the concept of Instagrammability should not be limited to the destination's attractiveness alone. Tourism photographs can also represent visitors' experiences, including activities, emotions, cultural encounters, personal achievements, learning experiences, and memorable moments (Liu & Li, 2021; Michael et al., 2025). Therefore, this indicates that "Instagrammable" is relevant to experiential forms of tourism, such as agritourism. This is because during a visit to an agritourism destination, tourists may have moments of picking strawberries, harvesting crops, feeding farm animals, learning traditional agricultural practices, preparing local food, and participating in cultural activities that they consider worth photographing and digitally representing. Thus, this conceptual paper proposes that the Instagrammability of an agritourism experience is the integration of the physical environment and the tourist's lived experience within it. It is conceptualised primarily as an evaluative perception and experiential outcome, rather than as a behaviour or behavioural intention. It has been defined as tourists' perception of whether a destination or experience is worth capturing and representing on social media.

The Relationship Between Experience and Perceived Instagrammability

Aesthetic Experience and Perceived Instagrammability

Aesthetic experience refers to tourists' appreciation of and immersion in a destination's physical and sensory environment. In the concept of Experience Economy, aesthetic experiences occur when people enjoy being in an attractive environment while their participation remains relatively passive (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Within an agritourism context, tourists evaluate aesthetic experiences involving natural scenery, landscape characteristics, architecture, spatial design, colors, and the overall atmosphere of a destination (Şimşek, 2023). Such characteristics can create sensory and visual experiences that tourists consider worthy of capturing (Gabriel & Park, 2025). Similarly, Blanco-Moreno, González-Fernández and Muñoz-Gallego (2024) mentioned that tourists usually represent their destination experiences through photographs and other visual content on social media. This indicates that an enjoyable aesthetic experience may increase tourists' perception of an agritourism destination as Instagrammable. Accordingly, this paper hypothesized that;

H1: Aesthetic experience significantly influences perceived Instagrammability among visitors to agritourism destinations.

Escapism Experience and Perceived Instagrammability

Pine and Gilmore (1998) defined escapism as the temporary detachment from daily routines and the engagement in unusual activities. In the context of agritourism, it can provide tourists with an escapist

experience as they enter rural, agricultural environments that differ substantially from their urban lifestyles. They will engage in activities such as fruit picking, feeding farm animals, harvesting crops, participating in traditional farming practices, and staying on farms, which will be substantially different from their everyday lives (Martinus et al., 2024).

In addition, escapist experiences may enhance perceived Instagrammability, as unusual and immersive activities offer distinctive moments that tourists may wish to capture visually. Social media content is not limited to beautiful scenery; tourists also want to share their experiences at the destination. As noted by Blanco Marenó et al. (2024), tourists use combinations of photographs, text, and hashtags to communicate their tourism experiences on Instagram. Similarly, Huang, Guo, and Zhang (2025) also indicate that social media representation is closely linked with the presentation of tourists' experiences and identities. Hence, this paper hypothesized that;

H2: Escapism experience has a significant influence on perceived Instagrammability among visitors to agritourism destinations.

Educational Experience and Perceived Instagrammability

Educational experience occurs when people actively participate in activities that increase their knowledge, understanding, or skills (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Education is particularly relevant in the agritourism context because agritourism destinations offer tourists opportunities to learn about farming practices, food production, agricultural technologies, environmental sustainability, local traditions, and rural lifestyles (Wang, Zhuang & Wang, 2025). Rather than acting as passive tourists, they co-create value by participating in guided demonstrations and educational workshops, which transform agrotourism visits into meaningful learning experiences (Nguyen & Vu, 2026). Within the agritourism context, tourists may visually document activities that they experience at the destination. Such experiences can provide informative and distinctive content that tourists perceive as worthy of digital representation. Thus, based on the above discussion, this study hypothesized that;

H3: Educational experiences significantly influence perceived Instagrammability among visitors to agritourism destinations.

Entertainment Experience and Perceived Instagrammability

Entertainment experience refers to people's passive engagement in activities that provide enjoyment, amusement, and recreation (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). Previous studies on the Experience Economy continue to identify entertainment as an important component of tourism experiences. For example, Hwang, Joo, and Moon (2023) examined entertainment alongside aesthetics, education, and escapism in the senior tourism industry. A recent study on boutique hotel experiences demonstrates that the four experiential dimensions contribute to guests' emotional responses and the experience's memorability. However, their effects vary with the nature of the experience and the level of thematic congruence (Baldick & Jang, 2025).

Entertainment experiences may increase perceived Instagrammability because enjoyable, emotionally engaging activities create moments people consider worth capturing and visually representing. This relationship may be particularly relevant in an agritourism context, where activities such as interacting with animals, participating in agricultural festivals, riding farm vehicles, attending cultural performances, tasting farm products, or engaging in recreational activities can create enjoyable, visually engaging moments for tourists. This entertainment therefore adds experiential and emotional content to the visual representation of a destination. Based on the above discussion, this paper hypothesized that;

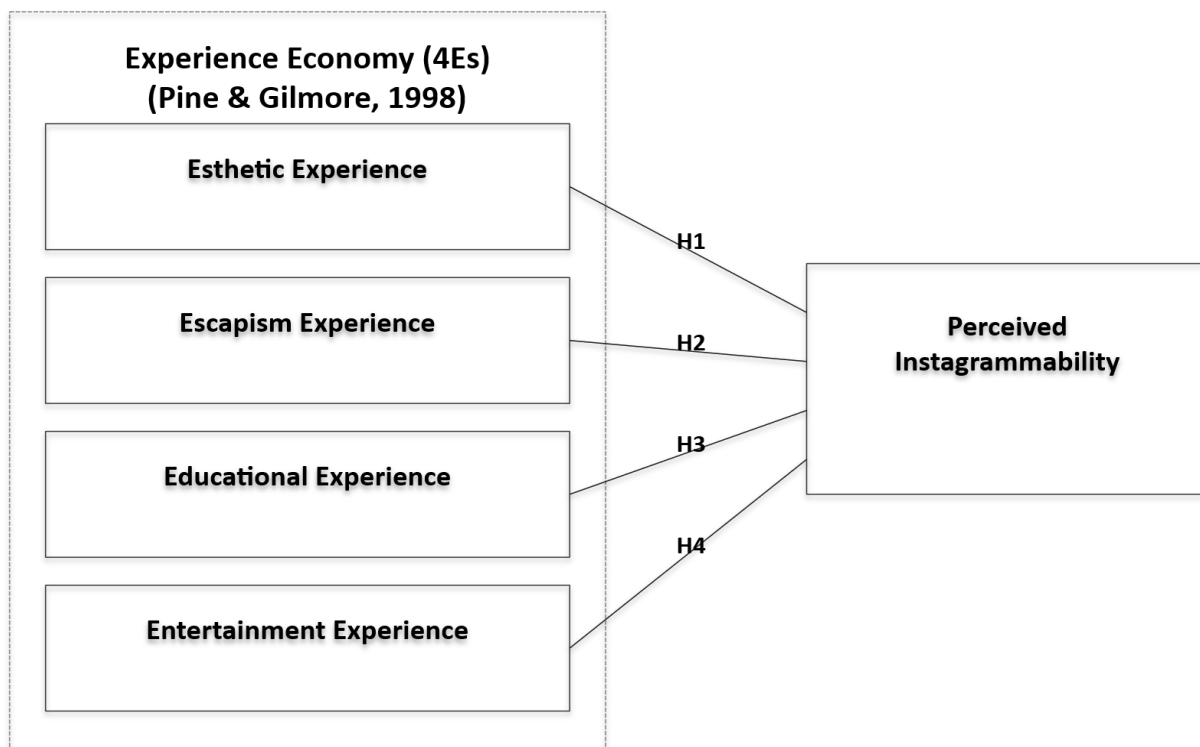
H4: Entertainment experience has a significant influence on perceived Instagrammability among visitors to agritourism destinations.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The proposed conceptual framework explores the relationship between four dimensions of Experience Economy Theory and perceived Instagrammability, as exhibited in Figure 2. It is predicted that aesthetic, escapism, educational, and entertainment experiences significantly influence perceived Instagrammability. The proposed framework acknowledges that some conceptual overlap may exist between the four Experience Economy dimensions and perceived Instagrammability. This is particularly relevant to esthetic experience, as both esthetic experience and perceived Instagrammability may involve visual elements. Esthetic experience refers to tourists' appreciation and enjoyment of the physical and sensory environment, such as landscapes, scenery, architecture, colours, and atmosphere. On the other hand, perceived Instagrammability refers to tourists' evaluation of whether a destination or experience is worth capturing and representing on social media.

The distinction is also important for the other Experience Economy dimensions. They may contribute to Instagrammability through different forms of experiential value. Escapism can create Instagrammability through immersion and experiential distinctiveness, educational experience through informative and meaningful content, and entertainment experience through enjoyable and engaging moments. These experiences may therefore be perceived as Instagrammable even when their value does not primarily come from the visual attractiveness of the destination.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

This study makes several theoretical contributions to tourism literature. First, it extends the Experience Economy Theory developed by Pine and Gilmore (1998) by introducing perceived Instagrammability as a contemporary digital outcome of tourism experiences. Previous studies that adopt Experience Economy Theory have predominantly examined conventional post-experience outcomes such as satisfaction, memorable tourism experiences, revisit intention, place attachment, and loyalty. The proposed framework extends this perspective by suggesting that experiences also shape how tourists evaluate the digital representational

potential of their experiences. Second, this paper broadens the conceptualization of Instagrammable beyond physical attractiveness and destination aesthetics. Most previous studies (Adiatma et al., 2024; Toresson, 2025; Wibowo et al., 2025) have frequently associated Instagrammable with photogenic qualities, beautiful scenery, and visually appealing environments. However, the proposed framework in this paper argues that an experience may also be perceived as Instagrammable because it is immersive, educational, entertaining, distinctive, and meaningful.

From a practical perspective, the proposed framework provides useful guidance for agritourism operators in designing experiences that are both meaningful to tourists and attractive for digital representation. Rather than focusing solely on constructing decorative “Instagram spots,” agritourism operators should consider how the entire tourist experience can generate naturally photo-worthy and shareable moments. For example, in the context of aesthetic experience, agritourism operators can enhance the visual quality of agricultural landscapes while preserving their authenticity. Well-maintained orchards, flower gardens, tea plantations, traditional farm buildings, walking trails, viewing areas, and the attractive presentation of agricultural products can enhance tourists’ appreciation of the environment while providing opportunities for photography.

In terms of the escapism experience, agritourism operators can provide greater opportunities for tourists to become actively immersed in agricultural life by creating experiences that differ substantially from their everyday routines. Such distinctive experiences may offer them unique moments they perceive as worth capturing and sharing digitally. The educational experience can be enhanced through interactive workshops, guided farm tours, agricultural demonstrations, sustainability education, food-production activities, and storytelling about local agricultural traditions. Agritourism operators can design these learning experiences in ways that are both informative and can be visually documented. Similarly, agritourism operators can develop enjoyable activities that can enhance tourists’ entertainment experiences. This can create spontaneous photographic moments and strengthen the overall tourist’s experience.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper proposes a framework for understanding how the four dimensions of Experience Economy Theory (aesthetic, escapism, educational, and entertainment experience) can shape perceived Instagrammability among tourists to Malaysian agritourism destinations. This paper argues that the value of an agritourism experience is derived not only from tourists’ enjoyment of the physical attractiveness of the destinations but also from how they perceive the experience as worthy of digital representation and social-media sharing. Perceived Instagrammability should not be limited to physical attractiveness; it may also be fostered in agritourism experiences that are immersive, informative, entertaining, distinctive, and meaningful. This paper extends Experience Economy Theory by introducing perceived Instagrammability as a digital outcome of tourism experiences. It examines what makes a tourism experience Instagrammable, rather than focusing only on how Instagrammability influences tourist behavior.

Besides that, this paper also provides practical guidance for agritourism operators. They should develop Instagrammable agritourism experiences that go beyond attractive photo spots, where agritourism destinations allow tourists to enjoy beautiful surroundings, participate in unique activities, learn about agriculture, and have fun. Thus, these experiences create photo-worthy moments that they may want to capture and share on social media, thereby increasing the visibility and attractiveness of agritourism destinations. As a conceptual framework, the proposed relationships have not yet been empirically validated. Future research should therefore operationalise and validate perceived Instagrammability as a distinct construct and empirically test its relationships with the four Experience Economy dimensions. Subsequent quantitative studies among visitors to Malaysian agritourism destinations could test the proposed relationships and examine relevant boundary conditions.

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