

**RESENSES AS A MULTISENSORY FRAMEWORK FOR UNDERSTANDING
TOURISM EXPERIENCES**

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Abstract: Tourism is a fundamentally multisensory and experiential activity, yet existing frameworks often examine tourist behavior, motivation, or destination attributes in isolation. This study introduces the RESENSES Tourism Model, a comprehensive conceptual framework that categorizes the core dimensions of tourist experiences into eight interconnected components: Relaxing & Healing, Experiencing & Learning, Sightseeing, Eating & Drinking, Night Activities, Staying, Enjoying, and Shopping & Admissions. Derived from the word senses, the model emphasizes that tourism engages multiple sensory and emotional dimensions, shaping satisfaction, memorability, and behavioral outcomes. The RESENSES model integrates insights from sensory tourism, the experience economy, and motivation theory, offering both a theoretical and practical tool for understanding and enhancing tourism experiences. It provides a holistic classification of activities, guides destination managers and policymakers in experience design, and lays a foundation for future empirical research on tourist behavior, segmentation, and experience evaluation. This conceptual framework contributes to the advancement of tourism scholarship by emphasizing the interconnected, multisensory, and activity-based nature of modern tourism.

Keywords: RESENSES Tourism Model; multisensory tourism; tourist experience; experience economy; tourism framework; destination management

Introduction

Tourism has evolved into one of the most dynamic and multidimensional sectors of the global economy, driven by rapid advancements in mobility, digitalization, and consumer preferences (Lin et al., 2020; Abdurakhmanova et al., 2021; Jeong et al., 2023a). As destinations compete to differentiate themselves and attract increasingly sophisticated travelers, the nature of tourist behavior has shifted from simple visitation to the pursuit of rich, meaningful, and multisensory experiences. Modern tourists seek not only to see new places, but to feel, taste, learn, enjoy, and immerse themselves in diverse activities that stimulate both the body and mind (Karimov et al.; 2022; Sobirov et al., 2023a; Alcalá-Ordóñez & Segarra; 2025). This transformation aligns with the broader development of the experience economy, where value is generated through emotional, sensory, and experiential encounters rather than the mere consumption of products or services (Yeboah & Ashie, 2024).

Despite extensive research on tourist motivations, satisfaction, destination attributes, and experiential value, existing models often focus on single dimensions of the tourist experience—such as motivation (push–pull factors), behavior (the tourism consumption system), staged experiences (Pine & Gilmore’s experience realms), or sensory engagement (Jeong et al., 2023b; Karimov et al., 2023). While these models provide valuable insights, they frequently lack a unified structure encompassing the full spectrum of activities tourists engage in during their

journey. Many frameworks do not adequately capture the intertwined role of relaxation, learning, entertainment, gastronomy, sightseeing, nightlife, accommodation, and commercial activities as integrated components of the tourist experience (Jeong et al., 2023c; Choriev et al., 2025; Karimov et al., 2025a).

As tourism becomes increasingly driven by emotional well-being, cultural enrichment, and lifestyle preferences, scholars and practitioners face a growing need for a comprehensive, holistic, and intuitive framework that organizes the essential elements of tourist activities in a destination (Yuldoshboy et al., 2022; Sobirov et al., 2023b; Karimov et al., 2025b). Such a framework should reflect the inherent multisensory nature of tourism and offer practical value for experience design, destination management, segmentation, and marketing strategies.

To address this gap, this study introduces the RESENSES Tourism Model, a new conceptual framework that categorizes the core dimensions of the tourist experience based on eight key sensory and activity-based components: Relaxing & Healing, Experiencing & Learning, Sightseeing, Eating & Drinking, Night Activities, Staying, Enjoying, and Shopping & Admissions. The term "RESENSES," derived from the word senses, underscores the model's central premise that tourism is fundamentally a sensory-driven phenomenon, engaging visual, auditory, gustatory, tactile, cognitive, and emotional dimensions.

The RESENSES model offers several contributions to tourism scholarship. First, it provides an integrated classification of experiential components that have traditionally been examined separately. Second, it introduces a multisensory conceptual approach, emphasizing how diverse activities collectively shape the tourist experience. Third, it offers a practical tool for destination managers, marketers, and policymakers to evaluate and enhance tourism offerings by identifying strengths and gaps across the eight components. Finally, the model opens avenues for empirical research in experience design, tourist satisfaction, behavioral intention, and destination competitiveness.

This paper presents the conceptual development of the RESENSES Tourism Model and its theoretical justification. Following this introduction, the next section reviews relevant literature on tourist experiences, sensory tourism, and experience economy frameworks. The subsequent section outlines the components of the RESENSES model in detail, followed by a discussion of its practical applications. The paper concludes with implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Literature Review

Tourist experience has become a central theme in tourism studies, particularly as destinations shift from product-centered to experience-centered value creation. Early studies conceptualized tourism largely as movement, sightseeing, and consumption of attractions. However, as the tourism market matured, scholars began emphasizing psychological and experiential aspects of travel (Khemthong et al., 2024; Gau et al., 2024). These foundational works highlighted tourism as a multi-layered process involving perception, emotions, memory, and personal meaning. Subsequent research expanded this understanding by focusing on how tourists engage with destinations through learning (Karimov et al., 2025a), authenticity (Paddison & Hall, 2024;), hedonism and escape (Soborov et al., 2023a), and transformative experiences (Seow et al., 2024). Across these frameworks, a common insight emerged: the tourism experience is not singular or linear but composed of multiple interconnected activities that stimulate diverse responses. This shift set the stage for holistic and experiential models, yet many existing frameworks continue to emphasize specific components rather than offering an integrated perspective.

Tourism is inherently sensory, involving sight, sound, taste, smell, touch, and emotion. Recent studies highlight the role of sensory stimuli in shaping satisfaction, memory, and behavioral

intention (Descarten, 2023; Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2023; Karimov et al., 2023). Visual impressions dominate through scenery and attractions, but non-visual senses such as taste in gastronomy or sound in festivals and nightlife equally influence engagement. The concept of sensory tourism argues that destinations should be designed to evoke multisensory interactions to deepen immersion (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2023). However, much of this research focuses on sensory marketing, food tourism, or isolated sensory elements rather than integrating sensory dimensions across the full tourist journey. As a result, there is a need for a framework that brings together activity-based and sensory-based elements simultaneously. The RESENSES model responds to this gap by connecting major forms of tourist activities directly to their sensory and emotional foundations.

The experience economy (Buhalis et al., 2023) profoundly influenced tourism research by proposing four realms of experience: entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism. This model emphasized active participation and immersion, leading tourism scholars to explore how destinations stage or co-create experiences (Alonso-Muñoz et al., 2023; Jeong et al., 2023a). Although widely adopted, the experience economy provides a broad philosophical lens but not a detailed categorization of tourism activities. It does not explicitly include common tourism components such as accommodation, gastronomy, shopping, nightlife, or healing activities. Researchers therefore began developing more tourism-specific frameworks, but most still examine selective areas (e.g., wellness tourism, culinary tourism, or cultural tourism) rather than providing a unified model.

The RESENSES framework complements and extends experience economy theory by offering a practical and comprehensive categorization tailored specifically to tourism.

Traditional motivation theories—such as push and pull factors (Lee & Pennington-Gray, 2025) explain why individuals choose to travel, but they do not address how tourists engage with destinations once they arrive. Later frameworks, such as the Tourism Consumption System (McKercher & Tkaczynski, 2024), mapped various stages of the tourist journey, yet still lacked an explicit, experience-based classification of activities. Similarly, recreation specialization (Buhalis et al., 2023), activity-based segmentation (Jeong et al., 2023b), and leisure motivation studies each examined certain types of tourism behaviors, but none captured the complete experiential structure of tourism.

The RESENSES model builds on existing research by providing a more integrated and operationalizable set of categories that can support tourist segmentation, experience design, and behavioral analysis. The literature review highlights a clear conceptual gap: tourism research currently lacks a comprehensive multisensory and activity-based framework that connects the full spectrum of tourist behaviors to sensory engagement. The RESENSES Tourism Model addresses this gap by integrating eight essential categories of tourist activities, linking each component to sensory and experiential processes, and offering a holistic framework capable of guiding empirical measurement, segmentation, product development, and destination management. By synthesizing insights from sensory tourism, the experience economy, tourist motivation, and experiential frameworks, the RESENSES model provides a next-generation conceptualization of tourism, reflecting how tourists actively engage with destinations across multiple senses and activity domains.

3. Conceptual Framework and Model Development

The RESENSES Tourism Model is grounded in the understanding that tourism is a multisensory, experiential, and activity-based phenomenon. Tourists engage not only with attractions and services but also with the sensory, emotional, and cognitive stimuli that shape their overall journey. The framework conceptualizes tourism as a system of eight interrelated dimensions—Relaxing & Healing, Experiencing & Learning, Sightseeing, Eating & Drinking, Night Activities,

Staying, Enjoying, and Shopping & Admissions. These components represent the most common, recurrent activities that structure a tourist's interaction with a destination.

The conceptual foundation of the model draws from several theoretical traditions:

1. Sensory Tourism Theory – Tourism experiences are mediated by visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory, tactile, and emotional stimuli.
2. Experience Economy Theory – Tourists actively seek memorable, immersive, and transformative encounters rather than simple services.
3. Tourism Consumption System – Tourist activities are interconnected and collectively shape satisfaction and behavioral outcomes.
4. Holistic Tourism Models – Although existing frameworks focus on infrastructure or specific motivations, they highlight the need for comprehensive structures.

By integrating these strands, the conceptual framework of RESENSES positions tourism as a holistic, multi-dimensional system. The model posits that each of the eight dimensions contributes to the total experience, and that destinations must balance and strengthen these components to enhance competitiveness, improve visitor satisfaction, and stimulate economic benefits. The framework also allows researchers to examine tourism behavior through an experience-centered lens, enabling segmentation, motivation analysis, experiential design, and policy evaluation.

The eight dimensions operate both independently (each representing a distinct activity domain) and synergistically (collectively shaping the full tourist journey). For example, sightseeing primarily engages visual senses, while eating engages gustatory senses; relaxing activates emotional and tactile responses; and staying contributes to comfort and overall well-being. Such multisensory integration forms the theoretical essence of the RESENSES model.

The RESENSES Tourism Model was developed through a systematic conceptual process that involved three stages: (1) theoretical synthesis, (2) structural categorization, and (3) component refinement.

The first stage involved synthesizing literature from sensory tourism, experience economy, tourist motivation, cultural tourism, wellness, leisure studies, and destination management. This review revealed that tourism experiences are diverse yet share a common thread: they stimulate multiple senses and revolve around key categories of activities engaged by nearly all travelers.

From this synthesis, a list of recurring activity clusters was identified across global tourism contexts. These included sightseeing, culinary experiences, cultural learning, shopping, entertainment, wellness activities, nightlife, and accommodation. These clusters consistently appeared in tourism research, destination planning documents, visitor surveys, and experience design practices.

Through analytical categorization, these clusters were refined into eight core domains that captured the breadth and diversity of tourism activities while remaining conceptually clear and practically applicable.

Each component was matched with its corresponding sensory and experiential dimension. The acronym RESENSES was then constructed to symbolically reflect the multisensory foundation of tourism. The acronym also enhances memorability and theoretical clarity.

The eight components were refined as follows:

- R – Relaxing & Healing: Emotional and physical restoration activities.
- E – Experiencing & Learning: Cultural, educational, and skill-based experiences.
- S – Sightseeing: Visual exploration of natural and built attractions.
- E – Eating & Drinking: Gastronomic and culinary tourism activities.
- N – Night Activities: Entertainment and cultural activities after dark.
- S – Staying: Accommodation and hospitality-related experiences.

- E – Enjoying: Recreational and leisure activities that generate pleasure.
- S – Shopping & Admissions: Commercial interactions, purchases, and access-based activities. This structure represents a new and comprehensive taxonomy of tourism experiences grounded in both theory and practical relevance.

The methodological approach of this study follows a qualitative, theory-driven, and exploratory design, consistent with conceptual model development research in tourism studies. Given that the RESENSES model is a conceptual framework, this approach emphasizes theoretical integration, logical reasoning, and framework construction rather than empirical testing. Such a design is appropriate for proposing new theoretical structures or refining existing concepts within tourism research.

This study employs a conceptual qualitative research design aimed at synthesizing existing theories and frameworks to generate the RESENSES model. Conceptual papers of this nature prioritize the identification of patterns, connections, and dimensions across diverse literature, allowing for the development of a coherent and operationalizable framework. By adopting this design, the study ensures that the resulting model is both theoretically grounded and practically relevant for understanding tourist experiences.

The model was developed through a comprehensive review of interdisciplinary literature, including tourism experience research, sensory and experiential marketing, cultural and gastronomy tourism, wellness and leisure studies, tourist motivation and behavior, destination management and planning, and experience economy and service design. Sources included peer-reviewed journal articles, tourism reports, global tourism frameworks, and theoretical models. Literature selection was guided by relevance to sensory experiences, tourist activities, and experiential dimensions, ensuring that the model captures the full spectrum of tourist engagement.

The analytical procedure consisted of three key steps. First, thematic categorization was conducted to identify recurring themes and activity clusters across tourism experiences. Second, conceptual mapping linked these themes to sensory, behavioral, and experiential dimensions of tourism. Third, framework formulation organized the identified dimensions into a structured and theoretically grounded model. This process reflects established qualitative techniques, including conceptual clustering, inductive categorization, and theoretical abstraction.

To ensure conceptual rigor, the RESENSES model was validated through multiple approaches. These included cross-comparison with existing tourism frameworks such as the 4A and 6A models, the experience economy, and sensory tourism frameworks, theoretical coherence checks to confirm alignment with major tourism theories, and an internal consistency assessment to ensure that each dimension is distinct yet interconnected within a unified structure. While empirical testing is beyond the scope of this conceptual study, these steps provide a strong theoretical foundation for future validation.

Finally, the RESENSES model lays the groundwork for a range of future empirical applications. Potential studies include the development of measurement scales for each RESENSES component, testing relationships between components and tourist satisfaction, using the model for destination segmentation, assessing destination competitiveness across RESENSES dimensions, and applying analytical methods such as structural equation modeling (SEM) or cluster analysis. Overall, the methodology establishes a robust research platform for advancing multisensory and experiential tourism research.

4. Discussion

The RESENSES Tourism Model presents a holistic and multisensory conceptualization of tourism experiences, offering a fresh perspective on how tourists interact with destinations. This

study's findings underscore that tourism cannot be understood through fragmented categories—such as sightseeing, gastronomy, or accommodation—in isolation. Instead, tourism is best conceptualized as a comprehensive system of interconnected sensory and experiential activities. By integrating eight major activity domains, the RESENSES model highlights the complexity of the tourist journey and the interplay between physical, emotional, cognitive, and sensory dimensions.

One of the central contributions of this model is its ability to bridge the gap between traditional tourism frameworks and emerging experience-centered perspectives. Existing models, such as push-pull motivations, the 4A/6A destination framework, and the experience economy, tend to emphasize specific aspects of tourism—either motivation, supply-side components, or experiential states. In contrast, the RESENSES model offers a unified experiential structure, capturing what tourists actually do, how they feel, and which senses are engaged during their visit.

The model also reveals that tourists' experiences are not uniform; they vary significantly according to personal motivations, cultural contexts, age, lifestyle, and travel style (e.g., leisure, adventure, wellness, cultural). For example, “Relaxing & Healing” may dominate wellness tourism, while “Eating & Drinking” is essential for gastronomic tourism, and “Sightseeing” shapes first-time destination visits. The flexibility of the RESENSES structure allows it to be adapted to different tourism forms and destinations.

Additionally, the model provides insights into how tourism experiences are co-created between tourists and destinations. Each RESENSES dimension represents an opportunity for destinations to design sensory-rich experiences that enhance satisfaction, emotional bonding, and loyalty. Night Activities, Staying, Enjoying, and Shopping & Admissions reflect the economic and behavioral dimensions of tourism, while Relaxing, Experiencing, Sightseeing, and Eating reflect deeper sensory and cognitive engagement.

Overall, the RESENSES model contributes to the ongoing shift in tourism research toward experience-centric, sensory-driven, and emotionally meaningful perspectives. It invites scholars to rethink how tourism experiences should be conceptualized, measured, and enhanced in an increasingly competitive global tourism landscape.

The development of the RESENSES Tourism Model carries several important theoretical contributions for tourism research.

While sensory tourism research has gained traction, it has lacked a comprehensive structure connecting sensory stimuli with concrete tourist activities. RESENSES provides the first integrated framework linking major activity categories (e.g., sightseeing, gastronomy, nightlife, wellness) with the senses they activate. This advances theoretical understanding of tourism as a multisensory experience system rather than a set of isolated interactions.

Traditional theories treat tourist motivation, experience, and behavior as separate constructs. The RESENSES model bridges these areas by showing that motivations (e.g., relaxation, learning, enjoyment) manifest through specific activity domains that, in turn, affect satisfaction and behavioral outcomes. This offers a continuous theoretical pathway from motivation → activity → experience → outcome.

Pine and Gilmore's experience economy has been influential but broad. The RESENSES model extends this theory by translating its experiential dimensions into tourism-specific categories. For example, education aligns with Experiencing & Learning, escapism with Relaxing & Healing, entertainment with Night Activities and Enjoying, and esthetics with Sightseeing and Staying. The model therefore operationalizes the experience economy into a tourism-focused framework.

The model proposes an original classification system that synthesizes decades of fragmented tourism research. It provides structure for understanding how tourists engage with destinations across:

- Cognitive (learning, exploring)
- Emotional (healing, enjoyment)
- Sensory (eating, sightseeing, nightlife)
- Behavioral (shopping, admissions)
- Functional (staying, accommodation)

This taxonomy can serve as a theoretical anchor for future empirical studies.

Tourism satisfaction and memorable tourism experience (MTE) theories highlight affect and memory formation but lack clear structural dimensions. The RESENSES model suggests that the memorability of a trip derives from balanced engagement across multiple activity domains. This can inform new theoretical models linking multisensory stimulation to memory formation and post-trip behavior.

The structured nature of the RESENSES framework enables the creation of new measurement scales, multidimensional indices, and structural equation models (SEM) that can empirically test the relationships among the eight dimensions. This opens a new stream of theoretical and empirical research in experiential tourism.

5. Conclusion

This study introduced the RESENSES Tourism Model, a comprehensive conceptual framework that categorizes the key activities and experiences of tourists through a multisensory lens. By integrating eight core dimensions—Relaxing & Healing, Experiencing & Learning, Sightseeing, Eating & Drinking, Night Activities, Staying, Enjoying, and Shopping & Admissions—the model provides a holistic understanding of how tourists engage with destinations and derive value from their experiences.

The RESENSES model advances tourism scholarship by bridging existing gaps in the literature. Unlike prior frameworks that focus on isolated aspects of tourism, the model emphasizes the interconnectedness of activities, sensory engagement, and experiential value, offering a structured approach for both theoretical exploration and practical application. It highlights the central role of sensory and emotional stimuli in shaping memorable experiences, satisfaction, and post-visit behavior.

From a theoretical perspective, the RESENSES model expands the boundaries of sensory tourism, experience economy, and tourist motivation research. It provides a unified taxonomy of tourism experiences, linking motivation, activity, and behavioral outcomes, and offering a foundation for future empirical testing and measurement development. Practically, the model can guide destination managers, marketers, and policymakers in designing experiences that balance relaxation, learning, entertainment, gastronomy, accommodation, and economic engagement.

In conclusion, the RESENSES Tourism Model represents a novel, flexible, and intuitive framework that captures the richness of contemporary tourism experiences. By focusing on multisensory engagement and integrated activity domains, the model lays the groundwork for future research, destination planning, and experiential innovation, contributing to both academic understanding and practical enhancement of tourism worldwide.

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