

Article

# Eliciting Brand Loyalty with Elements of Customer Experience: A Case Study on the Creative Life Industry

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**Abstract:** The Creative Life Industry (CLI) is an experiential industry within the experience economy in Taiwan. Given the scarcity of research on the realms of experience and brand loyalty within this field of the CLI, this study aims to further our understanding of how designing valuable realms of experience can generate brand loyalty in customers. Employing a qualitative research method, the present study focuses on how the CLI is experienced. Data were collected using in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 customers and through observations; secondary data at two CLI sites in Taiwan were also used. The findings indicate that many elements play a role within the realms of experience in CLI businesses. These include cultural experience interest, relaxing and entertaining programs, guided tours with educational and esthetic meaning, living esthetic program relatability, architectural style and esthetics, fashionable product design, living design different from routine life, and uniqueness of service facilities. Moreover, elements of escapist and esthetic experiences have more significant effects on brand loyalty than other types of experience. The theoretical and practical implications are provided for CLI businesses and researchers.

**Keywords:** experience economy; customer experience; creative life industry; cultural and creative industries; brand loyalty



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## 1. Introduction

Pine and Gilmore [1,2] launched the experience economy theory, which is a widely applied concept within academic research, such as in the tourism, arts and culture, and cultural and creative industries. The authors claimed that there are four stages of evolution in an economy, namely commodities, goods, services and experiences. In this regard, Pine and Gilmore [1,2] suggested four realms of experience, namely entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism (4Es), which imply different degrees of individuals' participation in and connection to an experience. Experience-oriented businesses regard services as stages and products as props, which encourages customers to participate in products and services to generate great experiential value and memories.

In 2002, the Creative Life Industry was promoted as one of the cultural and creative industries by the Taiwanese government. Regarding the experience economy, the Creative Life Industry is also seen to be an experiential industry, which is proposed to orchestrate memorable experiences for its customers through the design of products, services, activities and spaces. In Taiwan, the term 'Creative Life Industry (CLI)' is defined as an industry that uses creativity to integrate core knowledge of the life industry and provide in-depth experiences and high-quality esthetics. A CLI business is certified by the Taiwanese government. The four realms of experience by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], namely entertainment, education, esthetics and escapism, are included in the selection of a CLI business.

Most 4Es studies have used a survey research design and quantitative data analysis techniques, such as structural equation modeling, correlation, etc. The realms of experience should be studied in tourism, such as in golf, mountain or nature-based tourism [3], or in theme parks [4]. The framework of 4Es has been applied in wine tourism [5], casinos [6], and Airbnb accommodations [7], but limited studies have been explored in CLI.

CLI businesses are highly experiential in nature, which brings about a greater understanding of customer experiences in services. Thus, there is a need to use the experience economy to identify customer experience as one core element with which to better satisfy customers and generate brand loyalty of CLI businesses.

Brand loyalty is considered to be one of the key elements of a company's sustainable success. Furthermore, customer experience is regarded as one of the important elements leading to loyalty [8,9], and the realms of experience have different effects on loyalty [3,4,10,11]. If the realms of experience are designed in advance by CLI businesses while considering customers' expectations, experiences may be more attractive and distinctive in eliciting customers' loyalty to a certain brand. Research needs to focus on providing CLI businesses with a better understanding as to how designing experiential elements for customers can lead to stronger brand loyalty. Qualitative research on the realms of experience and on brand loyalty across CLI businesses continues to be scarce. To address this research gap, this study aims to build a framework of customer experience and brand loyalty in CLI businesses from customers' perspectives. The current study seeks to employ an in-depth analysis of the experiential elements arising from customers' participation in CLI business experiences. In addition, the relationship between elements of the realms of experience and brand loyalty will also be discussed.

The goals of this study were as follows: (i) exploring customers' perceptions of experiential elements in CLIs in Taiwan on the basis of experience economy theory to improve CLI businesses' operating results in terms of customer experiences and to extend the practical implications of experience economy theory. (ii) Constructing a framework for customer experience and brand loyalty and identifying the experiential elements leading to brand loyalty. Academically, this study contributes to the literature through extending the concepts of the experience economy to brand management and development. In practice, the results of the current study contribute to the sustainable development of CLIs through assisting operators in optimizing their customer experience design, the effects of which are reflected in extended relationships between customers and business brands.

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1. Experience Economy

Customers desire unforgettable and multisensory experiences more than unadorned products and services [12]. According to Pine and Gilmore's experience economy theory [1,2], experience-based businesses stage memorable experiences instead of merely delivering intangible services. The experience economy theory is based on four realms of experience: the entertainment, educational, esthetic, and escapist realms of experience. Pine and Gilmore [13] also proposed value-creating opportunities to facilitate further progress in the evolving experience economy, such as offering mass customized goods, directing employees to act, and using digital technology to better integrate the real and the virtual.

In both customer participation (active or passive participation) and customers' connection with the surrounding environment (absorption or immersion), entertainment experiences are generated when customers participate passively and absorb the event [1,2]. Entertainment is highly pervasive and offers attractive experiences in business offerings [1,2]. Thus, entertainment experiences can improve or enrich holistic experiences [14]. Educational experiences are produced when customers actively participate and are highly absorbed in the events. Esthetic experiences are explained through passive participation and deep immersion. In esthetic experiences, customers typically participate passively and have no interaction with the surrounding environment [15]. Escapist experiences are generated when customers are actively involved and immersed in the events. A sweet spot occurs when the four realms of experience are harmonized and integrated [2].

Based on the experience economy theory, Oh, Fiore, and Jeoung [15] conducted empirical research on measuring the four realms of experience (entertainment, education, esthetics and escapism). The theory was later adopted by researchers exploring leisure and tourism topics, in settings such as cruises [10], zoos [16], the luxury cruise industry [17],

movie festivals [18], wine tourism [3], rural tourism [19], the Creative Life Industry [20], and heritage museums [21]. The aforementioned studies either discussed the measurement of the four realms of experience or explored their relationships with customer satisfaction, behavioral intention, memory, and behavioral loyalty. The quantitative measurement scale proposed by Oh et al. [15] has proven to be effective in various tourism fields, wherein customer experience and ratings between these fields can be understood and compared. Exploring the experience nature of different sectors helps to expand the applicability of theoretical frameworks related to the experience economy. In their research on heritage museums, for example, Radder and Han [21] confirmed that not all of the four realms independently influenced visitors' experiences. Instead, education and entertainment should be explored simultaneously, thereby proposing three realms that lead to positive experiences among museum visitors: edutainment, escapism and esthetics. In the tourism literature, escapism is a significant element that affects customer experiences. Researchers have proposed that tourists pursue new experiences that provide escapism from their routine life (e.g., Oh et al. [15]; Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [3]; Hwang and Han [17]). Hwang and Han [17] investigated the effect that the four realms of experience have on perception in the luxury cruise industry. Their results indicated that all four realms of experience positively affect brand prestige and loyalty.

Few qualitative studies have explored the nature of experiences and expanded the knowledge of the experience economy theory in different settings, such as wine tours [5], casinos [6], and Airbnb accommodations [7]. Alternatively, Chang [22] discussed the four-realm-based-experience design from enterprise perspectives.

Adopting the experience economy as the framework, Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [5] analyzed literature on wine tourism and proposed the nature of experience constructs. To small business owners in rural areas, the study allowed them to devise strategies as per the proposed experience construct combinations. Shim, Oh, and Jeong [6], by examining the perceived experience of casinos in contemporary South Korea, proposed that casinos were successful in designing the entertainment experiences. According to Bao et al.'s [7] study, esthetics were considered to be an important experience, but educational, entertainment, and escapist experiences seemed to be very limited in Airbnb accommodations in Hangzhou, China.

The aforementioned studies explored the experience nature of specific industries through the use of qualitative methods, thereby helping tourism operators to develop respective strategies. Academically, these studies have broadened the theoretical knowledge of the experience economy. For example, Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [5] confirmed that the esthetic experiences in a wine tour are created by the surrounding countryside landscape, unique accommodation experience, as well as winemaking art and techniques, while the esthetic experiences derived from casinos are decided by the additional services provided for free, such as catering and shows [6]. Shim et al. [6] argued that educational experience was the least relevant for the casino tourism. The authors also suggested that in order to offer "sweet spots", it is a need to design more educational experiences for visitors to learn responsible gambling.

The aforementioned studies demonstrated differences in the perceived experience nature between different industries. Therefore, how to formulate desirable experience perceptions among customers warrants further investigation.

## 2.2. Customer Experience and Brand Loyalty

Loyalty refers to a long-term attachment to repurchase a brand rather than simple repurchasing [23]. According to Oliver [24] (p. 34), loyalty is defined as "a deeply held commitment to re-buy or re-patronize a preferred product or service in the future, by a consistent purchase of a particular brand, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour". Behavioral intention refers to customers' intended behavior, which is an important component of loyalty [25]. Fishbein and Ajzen [26] defined behavioral intention as one's specific planned behavior and their

likelihood of action based on individuals' expectations, which can be used to predict behaviors. In addition, Zeithaml, Berry, and Parasuraman [27] proposed five dimensions with which to measure behavioral intention, namely positive word of mouth (WOM), recommendations, loyalty maintenance, spending more money, and paying premium prices. In research on tourism, revisit intention is an important dimension of loyalty that describes customers' behavioral intentions to visit a destination, good, or brand again in the future [28]. Chen and Chen [29] claimed that customer loyalty is a primary goal in ensuring the sustainability of a firm.

Aaker [30] (p. 44–p. 45) proposed that “brand loyalty, long a central construct in marketing, is a measure of the attachment that a customer has to a brand. It reflects how likely a customer will be to switch to another brand, especially when that brand makes a change, either in price or in product feature”. Aaker [30] and Oliver [24] focused on the possibility of consumers switching their behavior toward a brand, reflecting their attachment toward the brand. Keller [31] proposed that the characteristics of brand loyalty, in addition to behavioral loyalty, also include attachment toward a brand, active engagement, and attitudinal loyalty.

Brand loyalty consists of two dimensions, namely behavioral loyalty and attitudinal loyalty [32–36]. In terms of the behavioral perspective, a consumer's behavioral loyalty refers to the customer's frequency of repurchase choices or their relative volume of purchasing the same brand. In tourism, behavioral loyalty would refer to the frequency of repeat visits. From an attitudinal perspective, attitudinal loyalty is concerned with a customer's intention toward a brand. Attitudinal loyalty is illustrated by an intention to visit and by positive recommendations. Reviewing the brand loyalty in Aaker [30] and Keller [37,38], attitudinal loyalty toward a brand is the dependent construct within this study. For the Creative Life Industry, attitudinal brand loyalty is a more appropriate dimension of loyalty than is repeat visitation. Previous research has suggested that tourists can be loyal toward a destination even if they cannot visit the destination repeatedly [39–41]. In this study, attitudinal brand loyalty refers to positive feelings toward a CLI business destination.

Mascarenhas, Kesavan, and Bernacchi [8] pointed out that a growing number of businesses are designing customer experiences to strengthen and sustain enduring lasting customer loyalty. The four realms of experience were employed in cruise experiences, and the results showed that customers' esthetic experiences had the biggest impact on their memories of and loyalty toward a cruise [10]. Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [5] employed the four realms of experience in explaining the experiential nature of wine tourism. The authors proposed that fulfilling the four realms will lead to customers' intentions to revisit and recommend a wine destination. Ali, Hussain, and Ragavan [11] also applied the realms of experience within a hotel and found that all realms positively influenced customers' memories and loyalty. Reviewing literature, this study finds that the four realms of experience proposed by Pine and Gilmore [1,2,13] may have different impacts on customers' loyalty in different businesses.

In the marketing context, scholars proposed that customer experience plays an important role in affecting brand loyalty [1,2,8,9,13], while the effects of the four realms of experience may lead to different effects on brand loyalty. While some studies have found the impact of the four realms of experience upon loyalty, there is still a gap in research on how the four realms of experience can lead to brand loyalty. To bridge the research gap, research needs to focus on providing CLI operators with a better understanding as to how designing valuable realms of experience for customers can lead to stronger brand loyalty.

### 2.3. Customer Experience and Creative Life Industry

The CLI is a special category in the cultural and creative industry in Taiwan. In the early 2000s, the Taiwanese government changed its strategies from export-oriented strategies to domestic-market-oriented strategies. The government encouraged different industries to transition from manufacturing and production orientations to life and design

orientations. The goal is to provide people with products or services that facilitate quality life experiences and that guide the continual innovation of industries.

Regarding the experience economy perspective [1,2], CLI-related strategies have been proposed to center on customer experience designs and to encourage practitioners to use local features and cultural elements combined with creative, technological, and esthetic elements to contribute to the core knowledge of the industry. Through products and spatial design, high-quality and esthetic services and activity designs are propagated to enable consumers to engage fully in experiences and to create customer experience value. In the CLI, some farm owners convert their land into tourist farms where visitors can experience agricultural life through food and farming education, ecological interpretation, and experiential lodging. The ceramic industry is declining because of increasing land and labor costs. Some businesses have therefore converted their factories into museums or leisure parks to preserve industrial culture and to enable tourists to participate in ceramic making, ceramic painting, workshops, and creative art demonstrations. These industries and businesses represent the development of Taiwanese traditions and its society and cultures as well as the innovation of economic activities.

According to Pine and Gilmore [1,2], entertainment essentially stimulates a “desire to enjoy” among people. Entertainment experiences are generated through passive participation as well as absorption in specific events or settings. CLI businesses generally offer entertainment experiences to consumers, such as on-site visits, artistic performances, and demonstrations by tea sommeliers. Educational experiences stimulate a “desire to learn” among people, reflected in spontaneous participation undertaken to acquire specific knowledge, abilities, or skills. CLI businesses provide diversified programs of learning experiences, such as DIY activities, as well as culinary arts activities and tea sessions for tourists, thereby providing tourists with enriched value for their life and personal growth.

Esthetic experiences stimulate people’s “desire to be there,” reflected in their passive participation and immersion in an event or environment. Experiences are created as a result of the sensory attraction of a particular event or environment. In CLI business operation, natural environments or artificial esthetic designs (such as buildings with distinguishing features, natural landscapes, displays and presentations, and revitalized spaces) are deployed to encourage tourists to immerse themselves in specific environments or events. Escapist experiences stimulate people’s “desire to do or go” and require their active participation. Compared with entertainment and education experiences, escapist experiences require a greater degree of immersion and participation. Some CLI businesses provide tourists with experience programs that are distinct from routine life and encourage tourists to actively participate in escapist experiences with high degrees of immersion, achieving deeper tourist–brand identification. Such experiences for tourists include enjoying an herb-based aromatherapy session in a vanilla-scented environment, selecting fresh ingredients from a farm and participating in a cooking class, and experiencing and exploring Chinese garden-style lodging spaces, which differ from modern mainstream architecture. Arguments based on the experience economy have been integrated as an aspect of the Taiwanese government’s industry promotion. Moreover, they have been practically implemented by various CLI businesses and have yielded favorable operating results.

Studies related to the CLI in Taiwan have rarely explored the effects of experience or cultural elements on the transformation of the traditional craft industry [42]. Studies have used qualitative designs to explore elements of tourists’ experiences with different types of CLI businesses and the development of CLI in given areas [43–45]. A quantitative study has been conducted to examine the relationship between customer experience and customer behavioral intention [20]. Additionally, researchers have incorporated service design tools from an enterprise perspective to explore realms of experience [46] and investigate experience design strategies for different businesses [22].

Creating quality life experiences is a characteristic of CLI commodity values. In a review of relevant studies, this study identified a gradual increase in the demand for experience design or the balance between constituents, experience realms, and customer



experience. Relevant studies have tended toward focusing on specific industries. The results revealed the experience characteristics of different industries. To address the question of how to provide experiences catering to customer desire to increase customer loyalty, this study adopted an experience realm based on experience economy theory to explore elements that promote brand loyalty.

### 3. Materials and Methods

Few empirical studies have investigated the effects of brand loyalty and the realms of experience that shape the customer's perspective in CLI businesses. Exploratory research is suitable for examining complex, undertheorized phenomena [47].

Case studies are suitable for understanding the why and how of a problem at the exploratory stage. On the basis of a specific description of the case situation and problem statement, data are systematically collected and analyzed, facilitating an understanding of the phenomenon and context of the case [48]. In Taiwan's cultural and creative industry category, CLIs have particular features. Because of the scarcity of related studies, research on the elements associated with customer experiences offered by CLIs and their effect on brand loyalty remains at an exploratory stage. Therefore, case studies constitute a suitable approach for this research. To collect more robust research data, this study focused on the cases of two businesses that had won the "CLI Business Excellence" award. The similarities in their business models and customer attributes are conducive to establishing the theoretical foundation of this study [49].

This study used qualitative content analysis to obtain connotations, concepts, and topics from CLI customers' experiences. Content analysis is a documentary research method applied to describe and quantify phenomena [50]. Many studies have adopted qualitative content analysis to explore texts, including interview documents, newspapers, and diaries, from scientific and subjective perspectives. Content analysis enables researchers to test theoretical problems and enhances understanding of data [51]. During data analysis, forming concepts or variables on the basis of theory or related studies is useful for qualitative studies. The present study used the experience economy and brand loyalty theory as the structural theme of the content analysis to form the basis of theoretical knowledge. In the CLI, customer experience and brand loyalty constitute research topics that require theoretical support. Therefore, case-based content analysis is a suitable method [48].

#### 3.1. Research Sites

The research subject within this study is that of CLI businesses that focus on lifestyle design. This study invited two themed CLI businesses, namely The One Nanyuan Land of Retreat & Wellness (The One Nanyuan) and Gaeavilla Resort, to participate in this study on the performance of CLI businesses. The One Nanyuan and Gaeavilla Resort won the "Excellent CLI Business" award from the Taiwanese government.

Constructed in 1985, with a Chinese garden combining different styles (i.e., architectural styles of Jiangnan [China], Taiwanese Minnan culture, and the Baroque period), The One Nanyuan transformed into a hotel resort in 2008. The One Nanyuan was Taiwan's first cultural leisure park to win Japan's Good Design Award. Focusing on a lifestyle featuring East Asian esthetics, the business offers accommodation with East Asian interior design, catering services with East Asian utensils, and a garden tour provided by personal butlers. Customers can experience traditional Jiangnan-style and Hakka-style architecture, art exhibitions, and cuisine, such as Hakka flat noodles, rice vermicelli, and traditional desserts [52].

Having run an organic vanilla farm for three decades, the founders of Gaeavilla Resort gave it its famous vanilla flower-inspired esthetics. The herb farm in the Gaeavilla Resort is certified as the first leisure farm in Taiwan. Gaeavilla Resort exemplifies eco-friendly construction, complemented with an organic herb farm [53]. The business offers a tour of its vanilla herb farm, accommodations, private organic herbal remedy space featuring

organic cuisine, vanilla-based foodstuffs, daily necessities, and vanilla-related experiences and activities.

The two resorts selected in this study have the following similarities: (i) both resorts have their unique thematic styles. The Gaeavilla Resort features vanilla life esthetics, whereas The One Nanyuan features life esthetics based on neo-oriental literary culture. (ii) Both resorts provide similarly sized areas (3–4 hectares) for customer experience. (iii) Both resorts provide similar experiences, including high-quality accommodation, characteristic cuisines, guidance services, multiple experiential activities, and souvenirs. (iv) Both resorts target tourists with medium-to-high income levels, high education levels, and strong life experience intentions. (v) Both resorts charge similarly; for example, the accommodation costs between TWD 8000 and TWD 40,000, and the average meal costs between TWD 1000 and TWD 2000. The customers of both resorts have similar attributes. However, their different locations may attract different customer groups. Thus, the present study explored the common research results between the two resorts and analyzed the possible differences.

### 3.2. Data Collection

Based on the research objectives of this study, data were collected on customers' experiences and on elements of loyalty from the perspective of customers. The data collection was divided into three streams: secondary data, observation of business operations, and semi-structured interviews. First, the researcher gathered documents relating to the development of the target objects, including books, the firms' websites, and social media. Moreover, the researcher collected information about the case companies, such as their business performance as reported in the media, facts about their awards, and service information and promotions announced on their official websites. This information was used for analyzing and testing the interview data.

Second, the researcher was given tours to participate in and observe the experiences designed by the target objects. The researcher observed the products, services, events, and spaces provided by the two case businesses at their respective sites. The main experiential areas were photographed and documented, and drawings were made of the services available in each case site. These materials were provided for interviewees as a reference to enable them to recall their experiences at the case sites.

Third, this study conducted interviews with customers who had visited the target objects. The interview participants included 20 customers who had visited Gaeavilla Resort or The One Nanyuan at least once in the two years preceding the study. The criteria with which to select participants within this study were based on gender, age and education, in line with the customer profile of the two study objects, as well as the participants being available to answer open-ended questions during a semi-structured interview.

This exploratory study analyzed the relationship between elements of the realms of experience and brand loyalty. To collect strong research evidence, the researcher collected two cases of information by performing semi-structured interviews that helped to establish the theoretical basis [49]. The researcher proposed relevant questions according to the interviewees' replies during the interview to compile meaningful data. The interview questions were designed by referring to literature on the experience economy and on brand loyalty. The interview questions included: (i) which realm of experience (i.e., entertainment, educational, esthetic, or escapist) do you perceive in the experience realms in the case site? (ii) Which experiential element relative to the realm of generated experience reflects these four experience realms? (iii) Which experiential elements relative to the realm of experience generated at the case site would increase customers' willingness to revisit the site or recommend it to others? Which experiential elements would increase customers' willingness to participate in events at the site and obtain brand information?

Because the interviews were long, purposive sampling should be proper for this study to effectively collect interviewees' opinions and identify empirical data [54]. Kensing and Jennings [55] held that, rather than the sample size, purposive sampling tends to focus on

selecting individuals who will actively assist with the research in question. Individuals visiting Gaeavilla Resort or The One Nanyuan, or those participating in activities held by either one of the two businesses, were first asked about their willingness to participate in this study. The researcher prioritized those aged  $\geq 20$  years with a tendency to answer the interview questions actively. Being presented with service processes illustrated by the researcher through on-site observations, the interviewee was requested to recall the service provided on site. Thereafter, the interviewee was requested to decide whether or not they could answer the interview questions based on the visit experience. Those who could do so were recruited. Because the research sites were not suitable for an interview, the participants were interviewed at different times and in different locations so that they could comfortably participate in an interview. The researcher interviewed 10 individuals visiting Gaeavilla Resort and another 10 visiting The One Nanyuan, totaling 20 participants. Each interview average took 40–60 min. These interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Coding was performed as per the research sites and participants. Gaeavilla Resort was coded as C1, with the interviewed visitors being assigned a code from C1-a to C1-j. Meanwhile, The One Nanyuan was coded as C2, with the interviewed visitors being assigned a code from C2-a to C2-j. Concerning demographic information, most participants were female (fifteen women and five men). By analyzing the relevant secondary data regarding participant characteristics, the researcher determined that in similar studies, most participants are female. These participants tend to be more willing to conduct an interview than are their male counterparts, which also meets the purposive sampling requirement of selecting those more willing to answer questions [56]. When the interview data repeated and there was no new information, the data were considered to be saturated. When no new themes emerged from the research data, following data analysis, the researcher determined that the interview data had achieved the theoretical saturation stage [57].

### 3.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed by referring to Dey [58], Elo and Kyngas [59] and Zhang and Wildemuth [60]. The interviews were transcribed and divided into smaller content-based units [58]. According to the transcripts, the relevance of each participant's answer to a question was determined for subsequent analysis and coding. Category codes were then confirmed. By referring to the theoretical bases derived from literature on the realms of experience and on brand loyalty, the researcher recognized and analyzed meaningful contents [58]. Later, attributes that appeared frequently in the transcripts were extracted so that the researcher could assess the coding consistency of each theme and ensure that the themes could fully represent the initial codes and reflect their relationships with the specified category [59]. The researcher repeatedly read the interview transcripts to determine each participant's actual concepts and assigned experience realm and brand loyalty variables to each theme.

To enhance the internal validity and reliability of the study, the researcher adopted triangulation that comprised multiple data collection methods (including participation observation at the research sites and secondary data sources). From the perspective of customers, this study discussed the design elements of the realms of experience and their relationship with brand loyalty through data collection and analysis. With interview data being the primary source, as well as on-site observation and secondary data being supplementary sources, the researcher analyzed the collected information by means of triangulation for enhanced research credibility [54].

## 4. Results

As presented in Table 1, the participants interviewed provided a well-balanced sample in terms of demographic characteristics to ensure the capture of a wide range of realized experiences. Table 1 shows the background information on the participants. The participants consisted of five males (25%) and fifteen females (75%). Most participants' ages ranged from 40 to 60 years or above (55%). In terms of the participants' educational background,



almost all participants held a master's degree (65%), bachelor's degree (15%) or associate degree (20%). Among the interviewees, 15 (75%) were visiting the resort for the first time, and 5 (25%) were revisiting the resort.

**Table 1.** Profile of the interviewed participants.

Code	Gender	Age Group	Educational Background	Numbers of Visits
C1-a	Male	40–49	Master	Once
C1-b	Female	50–59	Master	Once
C1-c	Female	50–59	Master	Once
C1-d	Male	40–49	Associate	Once
C1-e	Male	≥60	Master	More than once
C1-f	Female	30–39	Associate	Once
C1-g	Female	30–39	Associate	Once
C1-h	Female	30–39	Master	Once
C1-i	Female	30–39	Master	Once
C1-j	Female	20–29	Master	More than once
C2-a	Male	50–59	Associate	Once
C2-b	Female	50–59	Bachelor	Once
C2-c	Female	30–39	Master	Once
C2-d	Female	20–29	Master	Once
C2-e	Female	50–59	Bachelor	More than once
C2-f	Female	50–59	Master	Once
C2-g	Female	50–59	Bachelor	Once
C2-h	Male	≥60	Master	More than once
C2-i	Female	20–29	Master	More than once
C2-j	Female	20–29	Master	Once

#### 4.1. Realms of Experience

This study identified and organized the interviewees' perceptions about their experiences. To elaborate on the themes, related texts were drawn from the interview texts and documented. Furthermore, according to the characteristics of the experience realms proposed by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], the meanings of the smaller content-based units of the interview texts were examined, themes were respectively assigned to one of the four experience dimensions, and interviewee coding corresponding to the experience realms was conducted, as illustrated in Figure 1.

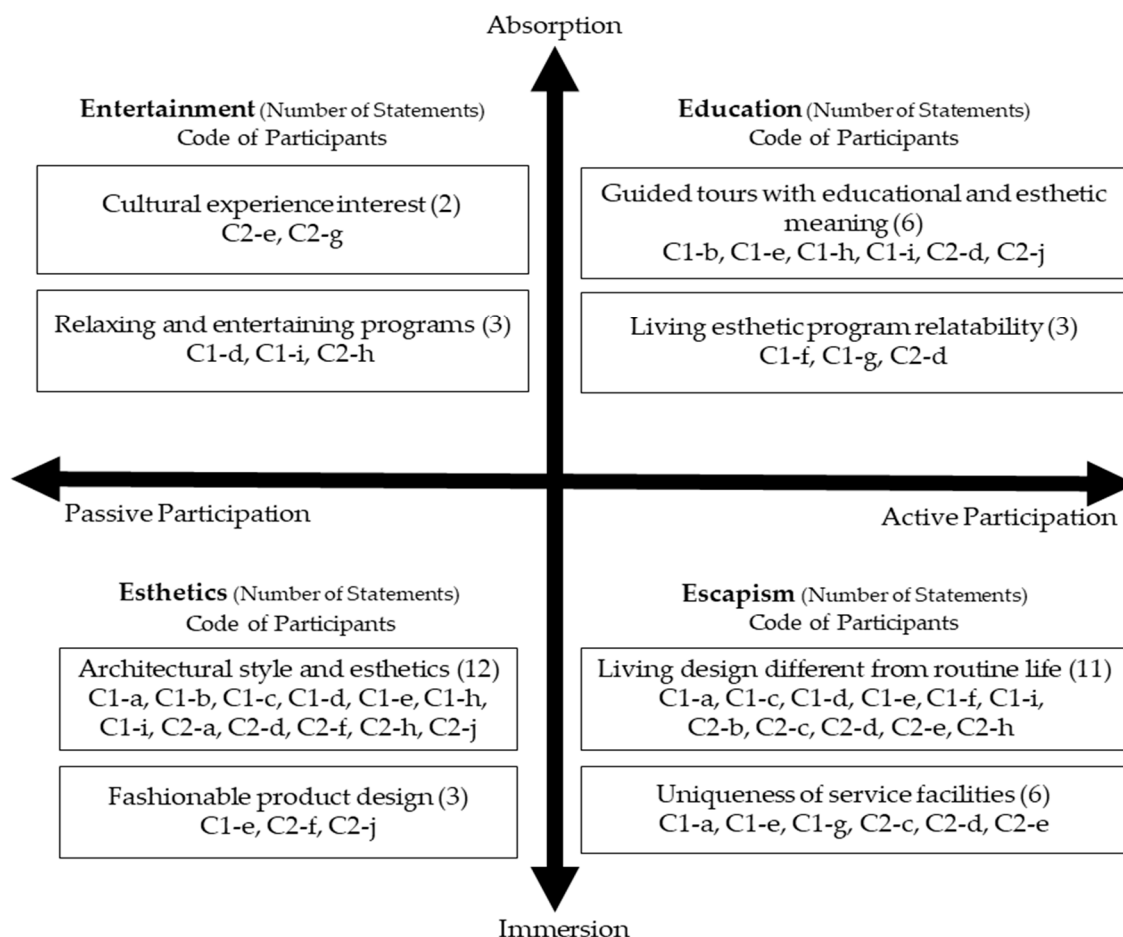
Referring to Figure 1, most experiential realms recorded were escapism (N = 17) and esthetics (N = 15), followed by education (N = 9) and entertainment (N = 5). The current qualitative analysis reveals that respondents experienced the CLI business within the construct of experience proposed by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], which demonstrates the suitability of this framework in helping to understand CLI business experiences. Although each of the four realms is reflected to a different degree, according to Pine and Gilmore [1,2], the four realms of experience are not mutually exclusive.

##### 4.1.1. Entertainment Realm

According to Pine II and Gilmore [1,2], an entertainment experience can be defined as a consumer's passive participation and absorption in the business offerings of an environment, such as watching or listening to events or performances. The entertainment realm is related to the need to enjoy. The results reveal that among the four realms of experience, the entertainment realm is rarely frequently reflected in the themed CLI businesses.

In this study, "cultural experience interest" and "relaxing and entertaining programs" were regarded as elements of the entertainment realm. Concerning cultural experience interest, the results indicate that incorporating local cultures with activity experiences, tours, and visits, and even accommodation services, tends to bring happiness to customers. For example, in The One Nanyuan, visitors enjoyed eating foods with local cultures, listening to vinyl records, using a traditional foot warmer called Tang Po Zi, and strolling in the

bamboo garden at nighttime with a traditional lamp. As participant C2-g said, “Because Tang Po Zi is a traditional [...] recreation, people now don’t use it. Instead, they use hand warmers, but we can use Tang Po Zi here”. Relaxing and entertaining programs refer to offerings provided by the CLI business that make people feel relaxed and happy, such as a tearoom, visiting a vanilla garden, enjoying a concert in the Kengo Kuma’s Wind Eaves Pavilion, etc.



**Figure 1.** Four realms of experience in CLI businesses.

The “cultural experience interest” element was observed mainly in The One Nanyuan, reflecting the interest of the management in converting oriental esthetics and cultural elements into modern life experience. The “relaxing and entertaining programs” element reflected the extended visiting and performance activities of both resorts. Compared with the entertainment experience mentioned by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], the results revealed that entertainment experience elements must be presented through culturally relevant elements and correspond to the thematic characteristics of the business to communicate the entertainment value to tourists.

#### 4.1.2. Educational Realm

An educational experience involves active participation in which customers will increase their knowledge, skill and ability by absorbing as well as actively participating in a business offering [1,2]. In this study, the most common educational activities include a guided tour of the vanilla garden, herb-food cooking events, and a guided tour of the architectural cultural esthetic.

Elements of the educational realm comprised “guided tours with educational and esthetic meaning” and “living esthetic program relatability”. With regard to a guided

tour with educational and esthetic meaning, the participants gained an experience in knowledge development during a guided tour. Abundant knowledge about vanilla and about architectural cultural esthetics was frequently mentioned by the interviewees.

“The butler tour guide told us about the origins of certain joints and buildings [...], and we have learned a lot from it.” (C2-j)

“It was an educational experience, as I am eager to learn new things. There are [in the garden] a lot of vanilla plants, which I like a lot. And I also get [to know] several vanilla varieties—[the experience was] a lesson full of knowledge.” (C1-b)

“The guide did talk about some uses of vanilla” (C1-i)

The element “living esthetic program relatability” refers to a demonstration event held by any CLI business that helps customers to broaden their knowledge, such as a demonstration inviting guests to engage in vanilla oil extraction and a cooking experience featuring vanilla cuisine. By preparing foods for and cooking vanilla dishes, the participants gained a deep understanding of the CLI business, as exemplified in this response:

“The vanilla extraction machine looks fabulous and it made the activity special” (C1-g)

The researcher found that some customers of Gaeavilla Resort per se are fond of vanilla life esthetics, prompting them to focus on gaining more knowledge from vanilla-related leisure services. In addition to vanilla planting lessons, these customers expect to learn about facilities and equipment related to vanilla application; that is to say, they would like to be more deeply engaged in an experience for greater educational value. The study results demonstrate that education-centered experiences often come with esthetic experiences and the additional value of learning.

Education elements were observed in both resorts. Commonality was identified in “guided tours with educational and esthetic meaning” and “living esthetic program relatability” elements. For example, the learning value of participating in guided tours often entails esthetic experience. Moreover, the living esthetics of the resorts affect the routine life of the tourists. Compared with the education element proposed by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], the education experience element in the present study connected the thematic CLI esthetic goal of attracting tourists to actively participating and becoming immersed in services or events provided by the businesses.

#### 4.1.3. Esthetic Realm

Esthetic experience represents passive participation and immersion in a sensual environment [1,2]. According to Oh et al. [15], in an esthetic experience, customers passively involve the environment with no interaction with or impact on the surroundings. In this study, some participants highlighted elements of the creative life business experience that contribute positively to immersion. The vanilla landscape of Gaeavilla Resort or the traditional architectural landscape of The One Nanyuan reflects the opportunity and has proven to be an important element for the themed CLI businesses. On the other hand, the product experience designed by the CLI business is another element with which to elicit customers' esthetic experience.

Elements of the esthetic realm comprised the spatial-design-related “architectural style and esthetics” and the “fashionable product design”. Most participants assessed the architectural and spatial design esthetics of garden-based leisure businesses (i.e., Gaeavilla Resort and The One Nanyuan) according to the perceived esthetics of the landscape design integrating the building exterior and nature, the uniqueness of the architectural styles, the decorations, and the layout. In the case of Gaeavilla Resort, the participants merged into the vanilla plants and the hotel building, which blends into the surrounding natural landscape, in which the provided facilities (vanilla garden, landscaping, outdoor spa, public space, and artwork in hotel rooms) gave them an impression of simplicity that combines natural and artistic beauty. One of the participants mentioned:

“The design of the room made me relax, where I can be alone without being bothered. Most importantly, the artwork inside and [the] outdoor spa gave me an impression of [an] extremely simple and natural esthetic design, which also helped me escape from the present [...] the room decoration was more like minimalism.” (C1-c)

The escapist and esthetic elements created by Gaeavilla Resort interacted with one another and, meanwhile, improved the quality of customers’ experiences. By contrast, the East Asian architectural culture and style of The One Nanyuan were major elements affecting esthetic experiences, as reported in the following statement:

“I [could sense] the strong esthetic style here, where the guide introduced each design element of the building” (C2-a)

Visitors to The One Nanyuan recognized the “fashionable product design” element more strongly than did their counterparts visiting Gaeavilla Resort. This element is often presented through culture-based creative design. In this study, the two research subjects developed their own products. The participants perceived the fashionable product design by gaining product experiences when attending activities and having meals. One of the participants mentioned:

“The tour began at 4:30 p.m. and ended around 5:30–6:00 p.m. when we were back. Because it was dark throughout the trip, we were each given a lantern. The scene when [everyone] was holding a lantern while walking was stunning; the vibe was great.” (C2-e)

Both resorts demonstrated esthetic elements. Esthetics originate from tourists’ sensory experiences of external and environmental spatial attractiveness [1,2]. In the esthetic experience element, “architectural style and esthetics” reflected the sensory pleasure resulting from the environmental space inside and outside the thematic CLI businesses. The “fashionable product design” extended the sensory experience from environmental spaces to product design.

#### 4.1.4. Escapist Realm

An escapist experience requires customers to be actively involved and strongly immersed in the surrounding environment, wherein customers are engrossed in a different time or location. The results show that escapism consists of two elements, namely “living design different from routine life” and “uniqueness of service facilities”. The element “living design different from routine life” refers to the isolation of the environment, the privacy of the space, and the quiet and relaxed atmosphere. In the context of CLI businesses, the results reveal that one’s sense of escapism depends on the location of experiential sites. Most attractions are concentrated within a specific cluster to form a completely different area in which visitors can escape their daily routine. However, CLI businesses with a themed lifestyle are commonly separate from the tourism cluster. In particular, customers’ perceptions of escapism were positively correlated with the differentiation between creative life experiences and their usual living spaces. One of the respondents mentioned:

“Our usual life is in a city with high walls. When we [are] there, we feel different from reality. [...] In daily life, we can’t experience such a garden living space” (C2-b)

“Uniqueness of service facilities” refers to facilities being different from people’s daily lives, which encourages customers to actively experience and immerse themselves in such environments. For example, in Gaeavilla Resort, while customers gazed at the herb gardens, herbal remedy pools, and herb-related room facilities, they felt relaxed and that they were different from their usual living environment, and they may have immersed themselves by participating in the business offerings. One of the respondents stated:

“When you walk into this resort, it doesn’t look like a regular hotel, but rather like home. The location of the resort is quite hidden, and when you go in, it seems

to be far away from the hustle and bustle of the city. [...] The hotel's bathtub, swimming pool, and herb-related room facilities [...] can make you completely relax and experience a different living environment than routine life" (C1-a)

Escapism elements were also observed in both resorts. Among them, tourists' escapism perceptions were the highest, indicating that escapism plays a greater role in thematic CLI. The "living design different from routine life" corresponded to experience economy theory [1,2]. The "uniqueness of service facilities" highlighted that CLI businesses must design unique service facilities that correspond to their themes to elicit active participation and immersion in tourists, thereby generating an escapism experience.

#### 4.2. Customer Experience and Brand Loyalty in CLI Businesses

As presented in Table 2, the results reveal that the four realms of experience had a distinct influence on brand loyalty. This study explored the experience elements leading to brand loyalty according to customers' perceptions. The said elements were obtained through a summary based on the data presented in Figure 1. Furthermore, brand loyalty implications, comprising intention to revisit and recommend and brand attachment, were determined. On the basis of the interview records, elements regarding customer experience were assigned to the corresponding brand loyalty dimensions, as presented in Figure 2.

**Table 2.** Summary of elements of the realms of experience corresponding to brand loyalty.

Realms of Experience		Dimensions of Brand Loyalty		
Theme	Subthemes	Revisit Intention	Recommendation	Attachment
Number of Statements (Code of Participants)				
Entertainment	Relaxing and entertaining programs	3 (C1-i, C1-h, C2-g) *		
Education	Living esthetic program relatability	5 (C1-f, C1-g, C1-i) * (C1-j, C2-h) **		
Esthetics	Architectural style and esthetics	7 (C1-a, C1-c, C1-i, C2-c, C2-j) * (C1-e, C2-h) **	3 (C1-c, C2-c) * (C2-h) **	
Escapism	Living design different from routine life	8 (C1-c, C2-b, C2-d, C2-j, C2-f, C2-g) * (C1-e, C2-e) **	4 (C1-c, C2-c) * (C1-e, C2-h) **	4 (C1-f, C1-g, C2-c, C2-d) *

Number of visits: \*—Once; \*\*—More than once.

Figure 2 shows a framework of experience realms and brand loyalty in CLI businesses. However, the impacts of the four realms of experience upon brand loyalty are reflected in specific characteristics of experience. In particular, both escapist and esthetic experiences were found to be the most mentioned elements that led to customers' loyalty. Overall, this study is supported by the experience economy theory by Pine and Gilmore [1,2], which describes how each experience influences a customer's brand loyalty.

According to the data analysis, customers' escapist experience had a particularly important influence on brand loyalty. Regarding the realms of escapist experience, the living design being different from routine life had an influence on revisit intention, recommendations, and attachment toward the target destination. The themed CLI businesses offer a unique lifestyle space that will attract customers to experience a different stay again and recommend the brand to their friends and family, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

"I want to experience different styles of accommodation" (C2-b)

"Maybe I'm older and I don't like to go to noisy places. The buildings in the park look very comfortable and when there are few people in the park, it is very comfortable to walk around" (C2-f)

"The yogic pavilion and the scenery of the larch pine in the garden [...] make people feel that the soul is united. Next time, I want to experience this program" (C1-c)



In addition, some respondents were looking forward to experiencing a wedding or participating in a wedding event in the target site, which may enhance customers' attachment to the brand. One of the respondents mentioned:

"I'm looking forward to experiencing a wedding at the Kengo Kuma's Wind Eaves Pavilion, [which] was beautiful and [special]" (C2-c)

Wedding programs are different from general tourism. In addition to designing differentiated leisure programs to enhance brand loyalty, CLI businesses with a themed lifestyle offer programs with special significance (such as weddings) that would lead to customers' attachment toward a brand.

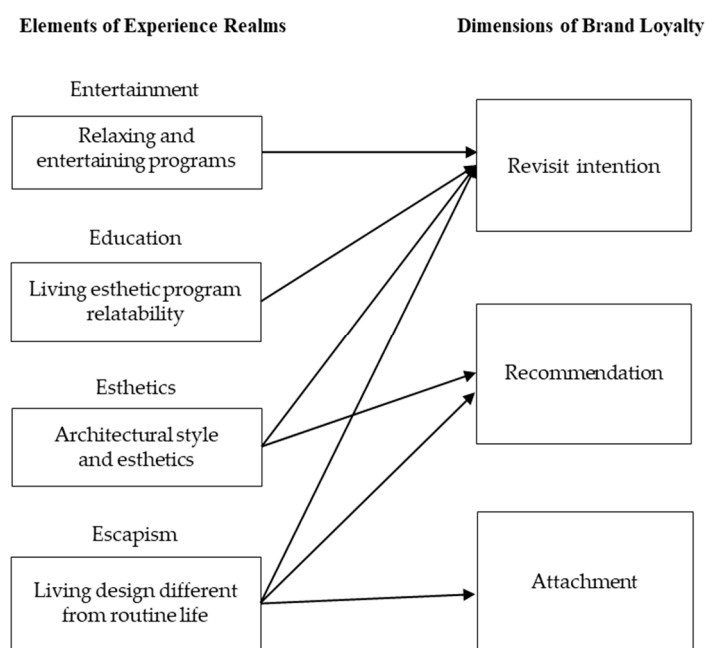
The results reveal that esthetic experience is another important element influencing customers' loyalty. Regarding the realms of esthetic experience, the subtheme of an architectural style and esthetics has an influence on revisit intention and recommendations. Customers who had special esthetic experiences within the themed CLI business settings during their tours were more likely to be loyal, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

"When some cultural or festival programs [are] provided by The One Nanyuan, I will be interested in coming here to experience it again". (C2-h)

"Next time, I hope to experience a concert at the Kengo Kuma's Wind Eaves Pavilion—that will be a great pleasure". (C2-c)

"Because I like minimalism and the facilities of the resort are beyond my imagination, I just think it's really great and I will recommend it to my friends to stay". (C1-c)

In educational experience, the subtheme of living esthetic program relatability has an influence on revisit intention. When customers found a real learning activity that could increase their knowledge or skill during their visits, thereby stimulating their curiosity to learn, they were more likely to look forward to something new in the future through revisiting. Some participants (N = 5) mentioned that the innovation within the themed experiential program, such as fragrance beauty, vanilla floral art, herb planting, horticultural therapies, cooking classes, relaxing tea sessions, etc., can enrich their knowledge of daily life, which will attract them to experience this brand again.



**Figure 2.** A framework of experience realms and brand loyalty.

The results reveal that the realm of entertainment experience is the least relevant for this study, with few participants ( $N = 3$ ) sharing entertainment experiences that led to their loyalty toward the visited brand. Respondents mentioned that relaxing and entertaining programs may encourage their revisit intention, such as new special meals, enjoying a concert in the Kengo Kuma's Wind Eaves Pavilion, watching a movie in the garden, etc.

The experience realms and brand loyalty cognition were analyzed using the number of visits. In regard to the subtheme "living design different from routine life" in escapism, the interviewees visiting the resort for the first time expected to experience different styles of spaces or accommodation environments ( $N = 6$ ), whereas those revisiting the resort expected innovative experiences of life design programs ( $N = 3$ ). The intention to recommend the resort to others was not affected by the number of visits. A small portion of the female interviewees visiting the resort for the first time ( $N = 4$ ) expected to experience wedding ceremony life design programs to create a special and unforgettable life experience.

The special architectural style and esthetics attracted the interviewees visiting the resort for the first time and strengthened their revisit intention ( $N = 5$ )—to pursue more profound experiences—and their recommendation intention ( $N = 2$ ). The interviewees revisiting the resort ( $N = 2$ ) tended to revisit the resort with their friends or loved ones to cocreate esthetic pleasure.

Education and entertainment experiences induced less brand loyalty intention. The results revealed that education and entertainment experiences elicited the interviewees' revisit intentions. A small portion of the interviewees visiting the resort for the first time ( $N = 3$ ) expected to experience interesting theme-related contents provided by the resort, such as tasting new featured cuisines. A few interviewees visiting the resort for the first time ( $N = 3$ ) exhibited revisit intention induced through the characteristics of living esthetics learning activities. Two of the interviewees revisiting the resort expected the resort to provide new education experience programs.

## 5. Discussion

This study aims to examine customers' experiences by means of the experience economy theory by Pine and Gilmore [1,2] and to identify elements of the four realms of experience that have an influence on brand loyalty within the themed CLI businesses. The results provide five primary findings that contribute to a better understanding of how customers experience the themed CLI businesses. The main elements in the realms of experience were presented through the subthemes of the experience. Furthermore, the results of the current study reveal that each realm of experience had a different impact on customers' brand loyalty.

First, escapism is the most important realm of experience in the themed CLI businesses. The findings reveal that escapist experience is the most perceived by the participants, compared with esthetic, educational and entertainment experience. The results show that each of the four realms of experience is reflected to a different degree. This finding is supported by a previous study conducted by Oh et al. [15], which found that the four realms of experience were not of equal importance to tourists' assessments of B&B tourism. This study is partially consistent with other works which suggest that escapist experience is an important element affecting customers' experiences in tourism sectors [3,5,15,17].

This study identified "living design different from routine life" and "uniqueness of service facilities" as important elements which facilitate escapist experiences. According to Pine and Gilmore [1,2,13], tourists may search for a journey in which they are completely immersed in a destination and experience a new self that departs from their routine life. Participants enjoyed distinct lifestyle activities, such as staying in gardens with cypress wood or organic herbs, which embarked from their normal routines of life. Escapist experiences require one to greatly involve themselves and actively participate, compared with other experiences [1,2,15]. The uniqueness of service facilities (e.g., herbal remedy pools, herb maze, hot tea spa, cypress wood garden, Kengo Kuma's Wind Eaves Pavilion)

helps customers to actively participate and immerse themselves in the offerings of the CLI businesses.

Second, the result reveals that esthetic design generates increased escapist experience value. According to Oh et al. [15], esthetic or escapist experiences result when tourists immerse themselves in the business offerings of an environment. This study extends the literature on esthetic or escapist experiences by examining CLI businesses. The results show that the escapist experiences gained in Gaeavilla Resort and The One Nanyuan were correlated with the esthetic characteristics of the site in question. The architectural aesthetics and the isolated, private impression created by the surrounding environment attracted customers to actively interact with and immerse themselves in the site in question. When esthetic experience design can prompt visitors to actively, rather than passively, interact with and immerse themselves in the site, the resultant esthetic experiences are extended to the escapist realm. A CLI business should smartly incorporate its brand spirit into the esthetic sensory experiences created for individuals visiting a building or space. Therefore, customers can be emotionally triggered. Moreover, businesses should devise service and experience solutions. For example, customers immersed themselves in the tea tasting experience designed by The One Nanyuan as well as the aromatherapy, spa, and yoga classes (using vanilla essential oil) designed by Gaeavilla Resort, allowing them to enjoy such a lifestyle.

The “fashionable product design” esthetic element extends beyond the esthetic experience mentioned in the literature for its association with the environment and space or particular events. According to the literature, esthetic experiences refer to passive participation and immersion in an event or environment which stimulates a “desire to be there” among people and may derive from natural or artificial stimulation, such as beauty in a viticultural landscape or rural architecture [3,5] or the physical environment of a cruise ship [17]. According to the definition of CLI, product and space are the sources from which customers derive their perceptual aesthetics, because product experiences are often inserted into the aesthetics of the environment and space. For example, when staying and dining in The One Nanyuan, customers can also use tea sets, tableware, and souvenirs developed by this business, and, when staying and dining in Gaeavilla Resort, they can access vanilla-based foodstuff and daily necessities designed by this business. Accordingly, the designs of products are another source of beauty experienced by customers through events or the environments and spaces provided by CLI businesses, and sensory pleasures derived from product designs are thus meaningful in terms of CLI-related esthetic experiences.

Third, creative design incorporates traditional culture into modern lifestyles to create entertainment experience value. Although the participants did not focus on entertainment experiences when visiting Gaeavilla Resort and The One Nanyuan, the services on site were combined with traditional or local cultures through creative design, whereby customers perceived the entertainment value derived from theme-based life aesthetics that enhanced service experience pleasantness. For example, The One Nanyuan created a trip imitating an old East Asian lifestyle. Customers were first offered traditional lanterns with a modern design to take a stroll in its garden before having supper in the restaurant. In addition to appreciating East Asian life aesthetics, customers could experience the modernization of traditional culture. In this study the perceived entertainment experience echoed what Pine and Gilmore [1,2] held; that is to say, customers tend to passively gain pleasure from an experience through their senses.

Fourth, incorporating education into aesthetics prompts customers to learn. The perceived educational experiences in this study were mostly accompanied by esthetic ones. The research sites feature an abundance of ecosystems (e.g., vanilla plants) and architectural culture, which could be utilized by the two businesses—in addition to the guided tours provided by personnel who are professional, kind and humorous—to prompt their customers to actively learn. Throughout the process, the guides were like actors; hence, CLI businesses should train their employees how to act [13]. This was in line with the study of

Chang [22], who found the guide played a crucial role in the educational experience from enterprise perspectives.

In related literature, Pine and Gilmore [1,2] suggested that integrating education and entertainment to produce edutainment is a common approach. Radder and Han [21] empirically studied museum visitors' experiences, demonstrating that their experiences involved edutainment. The results of this study revealed that educational experiences were produced in relation to esthetic experiences. For instance, immersion in the beauty of natural ecology in a vanilla herb farm or sensing the beauty of traditional architecture met tourists' expectations regarding living esthetics through active learning. This finding differs from those of other studies for its emphasis on the value of the educational experiences offered by CLI businesses, which successfully combine esthetics with education.

Fifth, the elements of escapist and esthetic experiences have more significant effects on brand loyalty. The perceived experience elements accurately reflected the participants' brand loyalty in relation to the CLI business. This study found that each of the four realms of experience had a different effect on brand loyalty. Furthermore, the escapist and esthetic experiences of customers exerted a particularly significant influence on revisit intention. The influence of elements related to escapist and esthetic experiences was also more effective than those of other elements. This finding is partially supported by studies investigating the effects of escapist experience upon revisit intention [4,5]. This study is also consistent with other works suggesting that esthetic experiences are the most influential element affecting customer loyalty in cruise ship experiences [10].

The present qualitative study, through interviews, discovered that escapist experiences exerted greater effects on brand loyalty. In addition to revisit intention, escapism contributed to participants' willingness to recommend as well as their brand attachment. Experience-triggered brand loyalty was inspired by specific elements, such as the "living design different from routine life" of escapist experience and "the architectural style and esthetics" of esthetic experience. These elements could help CLI businesses to design an optimal experience realm that strengthens brand loyalty.

## 6. Conclusions

This study prioritized the escapist and esthetic realms of experience for customers of CLI businesses dedicated to lifestyle design, followed by the educational and entertainment realms. Elements of the realms of experience exerted different effects on brand loyalty. Overall, this study proposes that CLI business offerings are experienced according to the realm of experience; furthermore, this study demonstrates that different realms of experience affect brand loyalty differently, which is a critical insight for CLI businesses designing customer experiences. Rooted in these findings, there are several implications for CLI researchers and practitioners.

### 6.1. Implications

Regarding the theoretical implications, first, this study suggested elements of the four experience realms, i.e., entertainment, education, esthetic and escapism, proposed by Pine and Gilmore [1,2] and determined elements of the realms of experience that are vital to the aforementioned CLI businesses. Specifically, customers regarded escapist and esthetic experiences as necessary elements for a CLI business. Moreover, regarding the elements associated with customer experience, the fashionable product design identified in this study extends beyond esthetic experiences mentioned in the literature for its association with specific events or the environment and space. The notion of sensory pleasures obtained by tourists from product designs serves as a reference for future research on the association between product design-related experiences and brand loyalty. Regarding educational experiences, this study revealed that such experiences are formed alongside esthetic experiences and are correlated with tourists' life esthetics; these experiences can be generated through education event programs, the design of which must not be limited to simple knowledge and skill acquisition. These aspects characterize the design of educational

experiences offered by themed creative life businesses. Future studies could examine the characteristics of educational experiences provided by other CLI businesses.

Second, this study empirically proved that in CLI businesses, brand loyalty is mainly affected by elements of the realms of experience that carry marketing connotations. Elements that stimulated brand loyalty in customers were mainly related to escapist and esthetic realms and were loosely related to educational and entertainment experiences. Oh et al. [15] developed an experience measurement scale, thereby consolidating experience economy theory and contributing to the construction of a more rigorous knowledge system for this theory. Through employing a qualitative research method, this study enabled the strengthening of the intellectual basis of a theoretical framework for experience economy and brand loyalty in the context of diversified CLI businesses. The framework serves as a basis for future studies investigating the relationship between customer experience-related elements and brand loyalty in terms of travel experiences at specific destinations, thereby improving the travel experience design of CLIs.

In terms of managerial implications, the present study proposed elements of the realms of experience for CLI businesses that prioritize lifestyle design to identify their strengths and resources. Therefore, through a theme-based experience realm design, CLI businesses can create excellent experiences for customers and strengthen their brand loyalty for sustainable development. Given the critical nature of escapism and esthetics in customers' experiences at the sites of themed CLI businesses, a focus must be placed on the characteristics of such experience through videos or articles on digital media, official websites, and social media. Therefore, before their experiences on-site, tourists can imagine the experiences that await them and psychologically prepare for their immersion and participation in such experiences.

Regarding the four experience realms and brand loyalty, the research results revealed that tourists who had visited a site one or multiple times expected innovative product services, experience activities, and spatial esthetics and expressed their intention to revisit with friends or loved ones. Accordingly, the researcher recommends that Gaeavilla Resort and The One Nanyuan design tourism products and modulated tourism experience packages to enable tourists to co-create values among themselves, specifically those related to escapism and esthetics. A portion of the interviewees who visited the sites for the first time tended to pursue gratification through personal leisure and relaxation as well as through influential personal learning and growth. These preferences correspond to entertainment and education experiences. The resorts are advised to utilize their diverse environmental spaces and design various tourist programs, such as meals combined with a specific entertainment service or themed learning programs, to attract tourists and to satisfy customers' individualized life experience needs.

In terms of policy-related implications, themed CLI businesses generally have more distinctive lifestyle design features. The results of the current study suggest the crucial roles of escapist and esthetic experiences. Authorities must provide guidance for CLI business operators to improve their experience-related technologies in terms of escapist and esthetic experiences according to their business themes, thereby elevating the performance of their experiential management. In terms of esthetic experience, CLI operators excel in environment and space design esthetics. By contrast, this study focused on CLIs' experiential characteristics through elaborating on product design esthetics, and the association between product design and brand loyalty in terms of brand loyalty intention was not demonstrated. According to the results, the experiential value of CLI product design esthetics remains to be observed and improved in practice. Authorities can assist operators in promoting the value of their product design among tourists, thereby encouraging tourists to repurchase and recommend them and triggering their attachment to brand products.

## 6.2. Limitations and Future Research

The generalizability of our findings is limited by the fact that the two CLI businesses were engaged in a variety of industries. Future studies should involve various CLI



businesses. Moreover, the interview data were collected from 20 respondents and were subjected to descriptive analysis, meaning that the results are limited to this CLI business context. Therefore, future research should quantitatively explore the relationship between elements of the realms of experience and brand loyalty and address both the universality and particularity of the CLI experience.

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**Institutional Review Board Statement:** The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and approved by National Cheng Kung University Human Research Ethics Committee, Taiwan (No.108-284, approval date: 14 October 2019) for studies involving humans.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all key informants involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Data are not publicly available.

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