EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM: MAKING THAT EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL OR INTELLECTUAL CONNECTION

CTO 7th TOURISM HUMAN RESOURCES CONFERENCE

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The University of the West Indies, St Augustine Campus
Photo Credit: http://www.summitfdn.org/stories/steering-cruise-ship-tourism-toward-environmental-sustainability/
TRADITIONAL CARIBBEAN TOURISM MODEL

- Basic Caribbean ‘product’
  - Sun, Sea and Sand
  - Escape from a life of routine and stress into a life of ease and comfort
  - Coastal resorts

Photo Credit: http://www.tourism-review.com/caribbean-tourism-analysis-jamaica-records-growth-news1804
TRADITIONAL CARIBBEAN TOURISM MODEL

- Emergence of more than the traditional ‘product’
  - Adventure tourism
  - Ecotourism
  - Health tourism
  - Sport tourism
  - Festivals and culture
  - All-inclusive resorts

- Supported by the combined efforts of tour operators, travel agencies, accommodation etc.

- Integration of other sectors and amenities to support tourism attractions - agriculture, financial services, transportation, food, technical services and material products
TRENDS IN TOURISM DEMAND

- People are better educated and are interested in learning travel experiences.
- People are more exposed to information and the media.
- People are becoming career travellers, depending on an endless flow of new experiences, and looking for deeper experiences within the communities they visit.
- People are seeking genuine experiences rather than staged ones.
- The demand for well-being, health and fitness and stress management products is growing in developed economies.
- More global trade in consumer goods & services which raises the prospect of growing homogeneity of cultures & values.
- More heterogeneous and individualistic demands and expectations.
- Increase in multi-generational travel.
- People are seeking travels that involve volunteering, or that include a particular mission, for instance, learning a new language, exploring new culinary techniques etc.
Focus of Discussion

- What is experiential tourism?
- Why experiential tourism?
- How do you create this experience?
- How do you measure success?
EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

“Travel that engages travellers in a series of memorable events, that are related over time, are inherently personal, involve the senses, and make a connection on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level.” (Canadian Tourism Commission)

EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM

ENGAGEMENT
Immersing visitors in a series of memorable travel activities that involve all the senses

CONNECTION
Creation of personal meaning through direct experience

TRANSFORMATION
Changed attitudes and mindset arising out of the interaction between host and guests
TOURISTIC EXPERIENCES

- Getting emotionally affected
- Getting informed
- Getting practiced
- Getting transformed
HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

“A tourism product is what you *BUY*; a tourism experience is what you *REMEMBER*”

Source- Canadian Tourism Commission

Photo Credit- http://drinkster.blogspot.com/2013/06/nick-cave-barossa-ad-not-about-wine.html
The planning process for experiential tourism asks different questions from the traditional tourism packaging process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADITIONAL TOURISM PRODUCTS</th>
<th>EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What sector are we designing the package for e.g. cruise, adventure?</td>
<td>What makes our community special (e.g. people, places, stories, traditions)</td>
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<tr>
<td>What activities or amenities does our community have to offer?</td>
<td>What memories do we want our visitors to leave with?</td>
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<tr>
<td>What can visitors do when they arrive; where should they stay; what activities and events should be the focus of the invitation to visit?</td>
<td>What traveller interests are aligned with what we have to offer?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Which partners or suppliers will want to be part of the package?</td>
<td>Who do I need to collaborate with to craft a relevant, engaging visitor experience?</td>
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<td>How can the experience be personalised?</td>
<td>Which experiential programmes exist, or could be developed, to form the foundation of a package or elements of a package?</td>
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<td>What unique, authentic and local treasures can be celebrated, showcased or engaged in?</td>
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Adapted from: The Canadian Tourism Commission
THE EXPERIENTIAL ECONOMY-
FROM PRODUCTS TO
TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCES
The Progression of Economic Value

Greater differentiation - Higher yield

Undifferentiated - Lower yield

Price

1. Grapes - Commodity
2. Bottled wine - Goods
3. Wine tastings - Services
4. Meet the vintner, learn to pair wines with food - Experiences

Source: Nancy Arsenault, Celes Davar and Todd Lucier (2011)
WHY EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM?

- To respond to changing market trends.
- To add value to tourism offerings.
- As a means of differentiation by celebrating your unique sources of competitive advantage.
- To attract higher-end, more educated, more socially, culturally, and environmentally conscious travellers
- Identify and work with new collaborating partners
- To minimize risk and maximize returns from tourism by shifting the focus from infrastructural development to building capacity of people who can tell your ‘story’ and connect with tourists
- To increase length of stay and amount of visitor spending
- To promote low volume, high value tourism
- To strengthen and build communities
VISITOR EXPERIENCES IN DEMAND

- Reaching into the community
  - Meeting local people; kitchen parties, home visits, farm visits; community experiences
- Participatory, Hands-On and Interactive Activities
- Special Access, Behind-the-Scenes and Exclusivity
- Learning and Discovery
- Shared Experiences
DESIGNING TOURISM EXPERIENCES
To create such tourism experiences we must take a new look at the goods and services that have traditionally been part of our tourist industry and redesign them to allow opportunities for visitors to learn about our region and enjoy its character in a completely new way.

Source- Northern Ireland Tourism Board
Ideas for these experiences can be stimulated by nature, heritage, art, sport or whatever a local region has in its cultural locker. The important thing is that they are designed with the individual user in mind and that the activities involved are enhanced through direct contact with the place, its people and way of life.

Source- Northern Ireland Tourism Board

“The best experiences connect a region’s physical assets with the emotional interactions that travellers want to experience.”

Source- Northern Ireland Tourism Board
INGREDIENTS OF A WELL-CRAFTED EXPERIENCE

- Authentic local people and their stories are at the heart of any well-crafted experience.
- The experience is supported by positive cues.
- Multiple interactive methods and tools are used to assist in the learning process.
- Carefully thought out program themes and titles that intrigue visitors are very important.
- Using as many of the five (5) senses as possible will lead to better immersion and intensity for the traveller.
- Smaller groups will provide for better enrichment or hands-on learning.

Source: Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
INGREDIENTS OF A WELL-CRAFTED EXPERIENCE

- Experiences involve a shift from dependence on a guide’s knowledge, to facilitation by the interpreter or resource specialist so that travellers are more dependent on themselves for their own learning.

- Relevant takeaways (memorabilia) are provided during the experience. They are tangible reminders of the experience.

- Simple activities, carefully planned, that focus on one or two main activities for travellers to take part in, are best.

- Techniques that tap into the different learning styles and multiple intelligences provide for deeper learning and a much more engaged participant.

Source: Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
INGREDIENTS OF A WELL-CRAFTED EXPERIENCE

- Develop and enhance with WOW aspects - Integrate regional foods, a remarkable vista or place, talented storytellers, and interactive learning - together, they have a combined effect.

- Personalization or customization of the experience leaves traveller with a feeling of deep appreciation.

Source: Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
THE PROCESS OF CREATING A MEMORABLE VISITOR EXPERIENCE
- Step 1- Know your customers
- Step 2- Know your community and region
- Step 3- Think about the types of experience that makes sense for your business
- Step 4- Choose a theme or story
- Step 5- Plan the experience
- Step 6- Establish the flow with the itinerary
- Step 7- Select partners, suppliers, and experience providers
- Step 8- Think about market positioning
- Step 9- Set the selling price
- Step 10- Marketing and Communication
- Step 11- Prepare the team and pilot the experience
- Step 12- Develop and evaluate the experience.
MEASURING SUCCESS
## MEASURING SUCCESS

What does success look like?

What qualitative measures of success are you using? (e.g. Trip Advisor, customer experience feedback forms, post-visit contact etc.)

How are you extracting from the ‘words’ and tracking this information so it informs your product development and marketing?

What quantitative measures of success are you using? (E.g.
- Number of experiences sold,
- Number of participants,
- Profit margin and other financial measures,
- Market reach,
- Number of new experiences in the market annually,
- Number of partners developed,
- Hours of coaching required to bring an experience provider, to delivery, etc.

How are you celebrating success?

Adapted from: Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN PRACTICE
Many tourists are opting for Puducherry for its offbeat mix of spirituality, the experimental township of Auroville, French old-world charm, and beaches.

Visitors learn the Indian way of cooking at Sita Cultural Centre and have the opportunity to enrol in Ayurveda massage classes.

Close to Auroville, the Mohanam Cultural Centre offers cooking, classical dance and classical music classes geared towards the long-stay travellers.

EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN INDIA

- Half-day and 1 to 2-day ‘village university’ programmes where visitors can experience Tamil village lifestyle and culture, with guidance from professors from Pondicherry University are also arranged.

- A new trend which is seen, especially among the French, is for families who stay on for a year, enrolling their children at the Lycee Francais or the Study School, and attending classes.

The experience involves visiting the countryside around Cabanaconde with a local guide (6-8 hours) to get to know local people and their work in the fields.

The experience begins when you are picked up from your hotel by the local guide after breakfast. You will visit the fields around Cabanaconde and accompany the local people in their daily activities. The local people and guide can also tell you an amazing range of things about local customs, history and other details such as the properties of medicinal plants.

Source: http://www.lacasadesantiago.com/eng/experiential-tourism.php
Depending on the season you can observe and participate in the following activities:

- January-April: harvesting of green maize (choclo)
- May: main maize (corn) harvest
- June-July: irrigation, natural fertilization and preparation of the soil for planting
- August-September: the main planting season, with many ceremonies and festivities
- October-December: various activities to help the new maize plants grow

This is one of the best ways to discover and understand daily life in Peru.

Source: http://www.lacasadesantiago.com/eng/experiential-tourism.php
Belmont Estate is a unique and authentic 17th century plantation that offers guests an opportunity to participate in and observe the workings of a fully functional historic plantation.

The experience includes:

- An organic farm
- Gardens
- A heritage museum
- Cocoa processing facilities
- A restaurant featuring traditional Grenadian cuisine
- A goat dairy farm
- A produce shop
- A craft market

Source: belmontestate.net
IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNERS
MACRO LEVEL IMPLICATIONS

1. Tourism policy decisions
2. Communicating the destination’s message
3. Institutional arrangements
MICRO LEVEL IMPLICATIONS

- The importance, role, skill, resourcefulness and networks of tour directors and tour guides
- Need for local resources specialists or subject matter experts
- The element of surprise - both planned & spontaneous
- The need for free time, flexibility and spontaneity which allows for self-discovery and time to enjoy unplanned activities
TOBAGO BLUE FOOD FESTIVAL

Photo Credit- trinijunglejuice.com
GOAT RACING

Photo Credit - Reuters / Andrea da Silva
HOW CAN YOU ACHIEVE ENGAGEMENT, CONNECTION AND TRANSFORMATION?
SOURCES AND RESOURCES

The following are acknowledged as key sources of information for this presentation:

- Experiences- A toolkit for partners of the CTC (2nd Edition)- The Canadian Tourism Commission
- Measuring & Celebrating Success- Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
- Ingredients of a Well-Crafted Travel Experience- Nancy Arsenault (Tourism Cafe Canada), Celes Davar (Earth Rhythms) & Travel Manitoba (2012)
- Creating Experiences- A Toolkit for the NI Tourism Industry- Northern Ireland Tourism Board.