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Addressing Gaps in Understanding the Tourist Experience: Towards an Integrated Perspective.

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Abstract.

Customer experience in general, is a complex construct, and difficult to define as it is characterised by the emotional and affective state of the customer (Zehrer, 2009). While it has attracted considerable attention in the literature (Gnoth et al. 2009; Atilgan et al. 2003; Aho, 2001,), it is widely accepted that the area of experience creation and design lacks a significant theoretical basis (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2000; Pullman and Gross, 2003; Stuart and Tax, 2004) and as yet a prescriptive focus for tourism enterprises (Gupta and Vajic, 2000). The provision of an attractive value proposition for tourism enterprises is dependent on the tourist experience (Zehrer, 2009); consequently, the lack of insight into the nature of this experience limits the enterprises' ability to develop an effective experience management strategy. Indeed, there is an imbalance in the experience literature as existing work in the area of experiential tourism services has dealt primarily with the characteristics of experiences (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2004; Gupta & Vajic, 2000; Carbone & Haeckel, 1994), or on the enhancers and inhibitors to experience delivery (Anderson et al., 2008) or on the benefits of experience delivery (Voss, 2004; Pullman & Gross, 2003) but with scant attention to how tourism providers can actually create and articulate the tourism experience concept, in particular, engaging with the reality of the tourist experience as perceived by the user (Gupta and Vajic, 2000). Therefore, this paper integrates a large volume of heterogeneous literature drawing from numerous disciplines to develop a working definition of tourist experience. A series of questions arising from the reviewed literature are presented to guide future empirical examination.

Introduction

Viewed through a tourism lens, it is found that the experience value of tourism is the overriding factor influencing visitors' motivation to buy a service (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters 2009). This line of reasoning is consistent with the experience and new service development literature, where there has been an emerging consensus that for organisations who want to become more competitive, it is not sufficient to invest money in the design of a service, the focus has to be on design and implementation of memorable personal experiences (Verma et al. 2002). Although the creation of memorable experiences has been acknowledged in academia and government circles as a key driver of competitiveness in tourism firms, research providing insight into an integrated model of tourism experience is scant. There has been extensive research on the tourist experience; however the components that constitute the tourist experience remain puzzling (Quan & Wang, 2004). Arnould and Price (1993) acknowledge the importance of studying the tourist experience rather than the tourist product itself. Indeed, experience is central to the tourism phenomenon and research, however "*it has defied a unifying definition and operationalization*" (Oh et al., 2007:120). Customer experience in general, is a complex construct and has attracted considerable attention in the literature (Gnoth et al. 2009; Atilgan et al. 2003; Aho, 2001,). However, there is wide acceptance that the experience concept requires further theoretical development (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2000; Pullman and Gross, 2003; Stuart and Tax, 2004). Indeed, numerous authors, (Zehrer 2009; Jennings et al. 2009; Knutson & Beck 2003) have argued that significant gaps exist in both academic and practitioner knowledge on the understanding of the nature and design of creating customer experiences.

Therefore in order to explicate the tourist experience concept, we argue that the general literature on the service experience should be mined to provide a more comprehensive and informed understanding of tourism experience. Further empirical research must be undertaken in order to enhance our understanding of the nature of the tourist experience concept. However, at present, much of the emphasis on the tourist experience construct is descriptive in nature; this means there is a lack of clarity in the prescriptive construal of the tourist experience concept.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore the nature of the tourist experience concept in an attempt to develop a clear definition of its meaning. The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. The literature on the tourist experience will be critically evaluated. Based on the foregoing analysis, an integrated understanding of the experience concept and its key dimensions will be presented. In the concluding section, observations are drawn and a working definition of the tourist experience concept is presented. This will develop a foundation to guide future research on the nature of tourism experience.

Therefore the objectives of this paper are:

1. To synthesise and analyse the literature pertaining to the tourist experience concept in order to evaluate progress toward articulating a tourist experience concept.
2. To develop a unified definition of the tourist experience concept.

Literature Review

The tourism experience concept is prevalent in tourism literature; however like the 'experience' concept the central meaning remains elusive (Jennings et al., 2009) as it is implicitly assumed as opposed to defined (Jennings, 2006). Indeed there is a general consensus that the area of tourist experiences is 'under researched' within the tourism domain (Larsen, 2007; Stuart and Tax, 2004; Pullman and Gross, 2003; Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2000). The lack of understanding among academics has resulted in an unclear message being communicated to practitioners, and as the provision of an attractive value proposition for tourism enterprises is dependent on the tourist experience (Zehrer, 2009), the lack of insight into the nature of this experience limits the enterprise's ability to develop an effective experience management strategy. Based upon a critical review of the literature, five major themes emerged that synthesised the heterogeneous nature of the tourist experience concept. Therefore the following themes will be discussed; emotional elements, interaction, environment to experience, involvement, motivation to experience from a.) social science and b.) marketing management

approach, and experience embedded in long term memory (see table 1.). Although this list is not exhaustive, it provides ample scope for outlining the considerable gap that exists in the tourism experience literature on the nature of tourist experience creation. Figure 1 depicts the emerging themes from the literature reviewed and then Table 1 illustrates the range of writers and extensiveness of this review.

Figure 1. Emerging themes from the Literature.
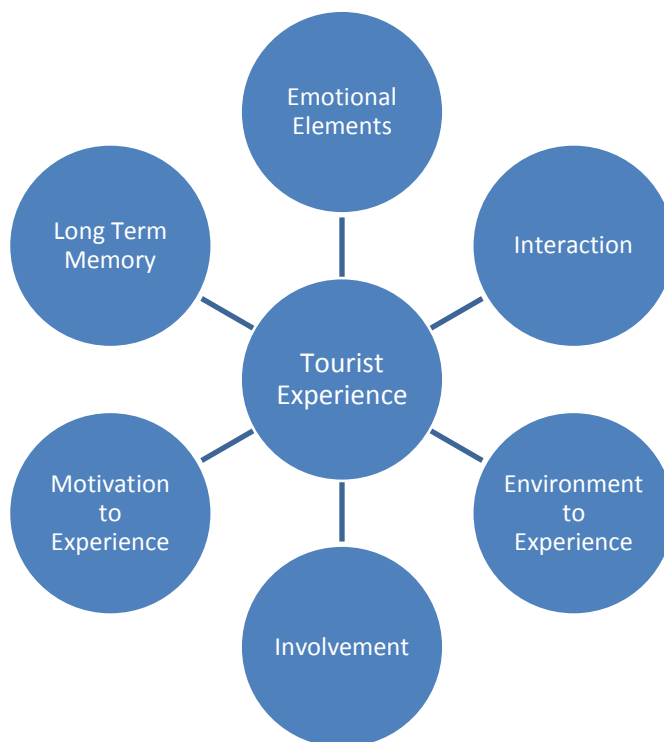
Emotional Elements: Holbrook and Hirschman (1982:132) note that an experience reflects the emotional outcome of an individual as it is the culmination of "*a steady flow of fantasies, feelings and fun*". Consumption of services can be driven by many different motives (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009), however, tourists usually consume services to stimulate emotions (Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982). Tourists by their very nature consume and therefore experience at all times during their journey (Mossberg, 2007). Jackson et al. (1996) used critical incident theory to record positive and negative tourism experiences and found that tourists are more likely to attribute the cause of positive experiences to themselves and more likely to attribute the cause of negative experiences to external factors. Clawson & Knetsch (1966) outlines five phases in the recreational travel experience namely; anticipation, travel to

site, on-site activity, travel from the site, and recollection of the trip, with each phase having a different capability to produce unique experiences. Hamitt (1980) found that mood states of participants varied among the diverse phases of experience proposed by Clawson & Knetsch. These studies highlight the importance of emotions as a crucial component of the tourist experience.

Interaction: Lee and Shafer (2002) note that interaction between a participant and his/her surroundings is an underlying facet when studying leisure (tourist) experiences. Indeed affect control theory (ACT) was developed by Heise (1979; 1999) highlighting that in order for tourists to interact meaningfully in a particular situation, they must have a reasonable understanding of what is happening at that moment in time. Similarly, Schmitt (1999) asserts that an experience is the result of living through or encountering a situation. Gupta and Vajic (2000) concur noting that participation with activities allows for experiences to emerge. Haeckel et al. (2003) refer to the 'total experience' as the feelings that customers take from their interactions with a firm. Furthermore, in the tourism context, memorabilia can be used not only to act as a physical reminder of the experience (which also has an impact on the experience being embedded in long term memory) but also it generates dialogue about the actual experience with others (Pine & Gilmore 1998; 1999). Indeed there is also an opportunity for the tourist to interact with others which provide an opportunity for social interaction and inclusion (White & White, 2009; Murphy, 2001). Indeed Williams (2006:482) notes that tourists use their consumption patterns to make a statement about their self identity. Goh and Litivin (2000) agree noting that customers may select particular tourism destinations that are compatible with their actual or ideal self concept. Hom Cary (2004) offers a different perspective outlining the 'serendipitous moment' which refers to instance of self-discovery and belonging whereby the experience can simultaneously produce and erase the tourist as a mere subject where one moves beyond being 'just a tourist'.

Environment to Experience: An experience is inherently personal (Mannell and Iso-Ahola, 1987; Pine & Gilmore 1998, 1999), it is in the 'eye of the beholder', therefore a tourism provider can only provide the environment to experience as opposed to providing the experience. Mossberg (2007) notes that the tourist provider cannot provide the experience for the tourist but only provide a set of circumstances or environment in which tourists can actually have an experience; therefore it is vital that a tourism provider knows how to provide circumstances that will enhance the experience of the tourist (Mossberg, 2007). Otto and Ritchie (1996) developed six fundamental dimensions of the tourist experience construct; a hedonic dimension, an interactive/social dimension, novelty seeking/escape dimension, a comfort dimension, a safety dimension, a stimulating/challenge seeking dimension. Although, combining all of these dimensions may seem daunting for the tourism provider, Otto and Ritchie believe that those seeking to provide a memorable experience must consider incorporating all of these dimensions.

Involvement: The level and form of tourist involvement can be differentiated into four dimensions across two axes namely, 'Passive Participant' to 'Active Participant' and from 'Absorption' to 'Immersion' as depicted by Pine & Gilmore (1999). Furthermore, Aho (2001) developed four core elements of the tourist experience namely; emotional experiences; learning; practical experiences; and transformational experiences. However, as tourist experiences transpire in short interrupted encounters rather than over an extended period, a precise understanding of the actual experience remains obscure (Ritchie & Hudson, 2009). Indeed, to add to the complexity a tourist may be more motivated by the "pre-experience" through powerful mental and emotional images of the expected experience rather than the physical characteristics of a destination (Oh et al., 2007). Indeed, Urry (2002) posits that tourism incorporates both landscapes and "*sensescapes*" which involves various senses as an important component of the tourist experience.

Motivation to Experience: In order to understand the relationship between motivation and tourist experiences, a range of variable must be considered including attitudes, goals and behaviour at one level and trying to achieve satisfaction at another (Urry, 1995). However, Prentice (2004)

analysed various rational models of tourist motivations that are thought to shape the tourist's experience and discovered that the relationship between tourist's experience and motivations are extremely diverse. Therefore, in order to decipher the tourist experience concept, this paper will consider both the social science approach and the marketing/management approach to the tourist experience concept to gain clearer insight into the impact of motivation on the overall experience. The social science approach views the tourist experience as 'peak experience' whereas the marketing/management approach views it at the 'consumer experience' (Quan & Wang, 2004). Simplified, from the social science viewpoint, the tourist experience is an escape from the mundane every day life (Cohen 1972, 1979, Turner & Ash 1975), it is in sharp contrast to the daily experience of the tourist (Mossberg, 2007), although, to a certain extent everything has become an experience, even the conventional 4-S paradigm (sun, sea, sand, sex) represents an experience that is in contrast from every day life (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009). From the marketing/management lens, it is the consumption of the experience with the tourist as consumer (Otto & Ritchie, 1996; Oh et al., 2007; Mossberg 2007), as tourists are recognised as consumers as they are involved in various service exchange relationships (Mossberg, 2007) and experiences necessitate the involvement and participation of the tourist (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009). Although this means that individual tourists can react in a different way to the same events and stimuli (Graburn, 2001). Indeed, tourism service providers must aim to engage all five senses of the tourist to surprise them over and over again (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Synnott, 1993; Wang, 1996). Mosberg (2007) proposed a number of factors influencing the consumer experience within a tourism context and suggested that a theme or story about a tourist attraction or destination allowed for more meaningful experiences for tourists. This allows for a verbal and visual representation which is hopefully received as a positive experience for the tourist. Essentially, a tourist seeks out engaging experiences accompanied with the goods and/or service element of the offering (Oh et al., 2007).

However it must be noted that the tourist experience is a combination of the 'peak experience' which is escaping from the humdrum of everyday life (Quan & Wang, 2004) and the "supporting experiences" such as eating and sleeping (McCabe, 2002). These supporting experiences can enhance the peak experience; they can also fulfil any perceived deficiency in the peak experience. Indeed these peak and supporting experiences can be interchangeable (Mossberg, 2007). However, the belief that tourism is an escape from the mundane of everyday life has been

challenged by various scholars (Uriely, 2005), as experiences such as gazing at distant sights (Urry, 1990) and engaging in facets of other cultures are now currently available through various mediums in everyday life (Lash and Urry, 1994). In fact many tourist related experiences can be acquired without travelling to different destinations in the current era of mass media (Uriely, 2005). This further adds to the complexity of the tourist experience, as it can occur in an infinite range of places and is not limited to one specific place or encounter (O'Dell, 2005). This also has an impact on the pre-experience or motivations of the tourist, but the richness of our understanding of this impact is virtually unknown (Ryan & Glendon, 1998).

Long Term Memory: From a psychological approach Larsen (2007) has suggested that the tourist experience concept includes, expectations, events and memories, indeed the following definition is proffered; "a *tourist experience is a past personal travel-related event strong enough to have entered long-term memory"* (Larsen, 2007:15) meaning a more long term focus is required to understand the tourist experience. This is consistent with Mannell & Iso-Ahola (2009) outlining the relationship between the way a tourists think and feel at the time of the experience and how this is then recalled in the future. Indeed, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) describes the optimal experience as an escape from the ordinary where there is a sense of exhilaration and enjoyment that becomes a landmark in an individual's memory of what life should be like. Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009) approach the concept from a different lens stating that service delivery is critically important in the customer's service experience, highlighting particular interest in operational, organisational and personal characteristics. These can be divided into 'hardware' which is the service environment where the touristic performance is presented; 'humanware' refers to human resource management which includes the customers, the employees and the service performance; and 'software' which complements both hardware and humanware with technology and process management to ensure memorable experiences are proffered to tourists. However, the notion of the experience being embedded in long term memory as a prerequisite of experience may also be flawed. Indeed, the perception of the experience largely depends on how it is configured and reinforced in the future (Chase & Dasu, 2001). Crucial to this is how the experience resonates in the tourist's memory and how this can be built upon through future interactions (Pullman & Gross, 2003).

Table 1. Overview of literature on aspects of the tourist experience

Theme	Study
Emotional Elements	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009); Mossberg (2007); Oh et al. (2007); Pullman & Gross (2003); Aho (2001); Graburn (2001); Pine & Gilmore (1998); Otto & Ritchie (1996); Jackson et al. (1996); Holbrook & Hirschmann (1982); Hamitt (1980); Clawson & Knetsch (1966);
Interaction	White & White (2009); Williams (2006); Hom Cary (2004); Haeckel et al. (2003); Lee and Shafer (2002); Murphy 2001; Goh and Litivin (2000); Gupta and Vajic (2000); Heise (1999; 1979); Pine & Gilmore (1999; 1998); Schmitt (1999); Otto and Ritchie (1996);
Environment to Experience	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, (2009); Mossberg (2007); Oh et al. (2007); Pine & Gilmore (1998, 1999); Otto and Ritchie (1996) ; Mannell and Iso-Ahola, (1987);
Involvement	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009); Ritchie & Hudson, (2009); Larsen (2007); Mossberg (2007); Oh et al. (2007); Urry (2002); Aho (2001); Pine & Gilmore (1999,1998);
Motivation to Experience	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009); Oh et al., (2007); Mossberg (2007); O'Dell, (2005); Uriely, (2005); Quan & Wang (2004); Prentice (2004); McCabe 2002; Graburn, (2001); Pine & Gilmore (1998); Ryan & Glendon, (1998); Otto & Ritchie (1996); Wang, (1996); Urry, (1995); Lash and Urry, (1994); Synnott, (1993); Urry, (1990); Cohen (1979); Turner & Ash (1975); Cohen (1972);
Long term memory	Brunner-Sperdin & Peters 2009; Mannell & Iso-Ahola (2009); Larsen (2007); Pullman & Gross, (2003); Chase & Dasu, (2001); Csikszentmihalyi (1990)

The Tourism Experience Gap

Based upon the forgoing, although there is substantial research alluding to the rudiments of the tourism experience concept, there is still a major research gap. A key characteristic of many of the studies reviewed is that the tourist experience is a dynamic process (Lee & Shafer, 2002). There is general acceptance that the tourist experience is critically important, however the disparity amongst academics has resulted in a 'fuzzy' understanding of the concept. This highlights a significant gap in the academic literature with a consequent inability to offer prescriptive advice to the tourism industry on the core meaning of the experience concept in a clear cohesive manner. It is our view that a number of key gaps arise from the reviewed literature:

1. Although there is a wealth of research pertaining to the tourist experience, there is still ambiguity concerning its central meaning (Jennings et al., 2009). This lack of understanding may be due to the reliance of academics on the tourism literature, without fully endorsing the advances made on the understanding of the 'experience' concept from other disciplines, for instance retailing literature (Verhoef et al, 2009) and new service development literature (Berry & Carbone, 2007; Gentile et al., 2007)

2. The relationship between emotions and involvement from pre-experience to experience through to post-experience remains unresolved in the literature (Lee & Shafer, 2002). This knowledge deficit has ramifications for both practitioners and researchers. Indeed, the lack of clarity means that there is a major gap between what academics are prescribing and what practitioners are practicing. Failure to understand the linkage between emotions and involvement and its affect on the tourist experience from beginning to end may have a decisive impact on its overall success.

There is extensive research pertaining to the tourist experience concept and a number of key themes have been discussed in this paper. This is an aspect of tourism research that remains an elusive yet salient area for theoretical development. Therefore we must encompass the general services literature in further development of understanding of tourism experience. The aim is to develop an integrated definition of the tourist experience concept in order to guide future empirical research.

Informing the conceptualisation of the tourist experience from the services literature.

In order to understand and capture the complexity of the tourist experience concept a review of literature from multiple disciplines is required as attention must be given to the nature of 'experience' itself. Therefore the following themes emerged from the literature: *importance, personal, touch points, and experience clues* and are further critiqued in this section in order to gain a more rigorous understanding of the experience concept which can make a key contribution to an integrated perspective of the tourist experience concept.

Importance: The 'experience' concept is prevalent in academic literature, therefore in order to explicate the tourist experience concept, it is necessary to combine the most salient themes from the services literature for a more rigorous understanding of the tourist experience concept. There has been some recent significant work on the nature of customer experience within the retail context, in particular an important study by Verhoef et al. (2009). The authors take an holistic perspective of customer experience, acknowledging that it must encompass not only the factors such as service interface and price which are under the control of the organisation, but also the 'uncontrollables' such as influence of other consumers. Although interaction and social inclusion are deemed important in tourism (White & White 2009; Otto & Ritchie 1996; Murphy, 2001), it is essential to emphasise that this might not always be positive. Indeed interaction with others could totally enhance the tourist experience or have a completely negative impact. Recent research highlights a paradigm shift resulting in the concept of consumption being developed

into an holistic experience (Verhoef, 2009), which involves the person as opposed to the customer (LaSalle and Britton, 2003) whereby creating added value is not just the selling of a memorable experience to the customer but enabling the person to live and breathe every moment of the relationship with a company in way that meets or even exceeds their expectations (Gentile *et al.* 2007*)*. This is consistent with Csikszentmihalyi (1990) and Larsen (2007) with the tourist having exhilarating experiences that can be easily recalled from memory. However, an offering must also provide a strong sensorial component focusing on sight, sound, touch, taste and smell so as to provoke aesthetical pleasure, excitement and satisfaction (Gentile et al., 2007). The sensorial component is seen by many as a key component in the construct of an experience (Schmitt, 1999; Gentile et al., 2007; Tavassoli, 1998).

Personal: An experience is inherently personal and can engage or involve an individual at different levels namely, rational, emotional, sensorial, physical and also spiritual (Schmitt, 1999). This provides an interesting insight into the experience concept and poses the question of how the level of involvement can impact on the tourist experience. Although, emotions (Oh et al. 2007; Mossberg 2007; Pullman & Gross 2003) and involvement (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters 2009; Pine & Gilmore 1998; 1999) are prevalent themes in the tourism literature, there is a significant gap in relationship between them. Fundamentally, customers always have an experience, it is inherent (Berry & Carbone 2007), and these experiences can be positive, negative or indifferent, whenever they purchase a product or service (Berry *et al.* 2002). From a behavioural science perspective, perception of the experience is reality meaning that the most important thing is how the consumer interprets the interaction with the organisation (Chase & Dasu, 2001). The critical point here is to establish the determinants of this perception and develop a strategy to change it, resulting in a more positive experience for the tourist.

Touch Points: Services provide for many more customer "touch points" than that of manufactured goods, these can essentially be seen as discrete sub experiences which are the individual part experiences that form the overall experience for the customer (Berry et al. 2006). Indeed, it is these touch points or sets of interactions between the customer and any part of an

organization that formulates the customer experience (Gentile et al., 2007; Addis & Holbrook, 2001; LaSalle & Britton, 2003). Indeed Carú and Cova (2003, 2007) highlight that companies do not actually sell experiences but in fact provide 'artifacts' and 'contexts' which are conducive to experience allowing the individual to co-create their own unique experiences, a view also held by Parahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), this allows the person to co-create their experience which is entirely unique with the company. This adds to the multi layered complexity of the tourist experiences which is not sufficiently dealt with in the tourism literature.

Experience Clues: Experience 'clues' can enhance an experience by influencing the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of a customer, these clues are embedded in the service delivery allowing the consumer to organise and process them to formulate their own unique experience (Berry et al., 2006). A trigger or experience clue is anything that can be perceived or sensed by an individual and carries a message suggesting something to the consumer (Berry et al., 2002). Clues are organised into a set of impressions for an individual and can be either rational or emotional (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994). It is the combination of clues and messages that create the customer experience (Berry & Carbone, 2007) allowing an organisation to coordinate a series of clues that meet or exceed the expectations of an individual. Clues generally fall into three main categories; functional clues, mechanic clues, and humanic clues (Haeckel et al. 2003). The overall experience is based on customers perception of the technical quality of the offering (functional clues), the sensory presentation of the offering (mechanic clues) and the behaviour or appearance of the service providers (humanic clues)(Berry et al., 2002). Delivering various clue categories must be synergetic rather than being additive allowing for synthesis of information pertaining to a cohesive and compelling storey to be delivered (Berry & Carbone, 2007). Indeed, experience clues may provide valuable insight into how a tourist provider can create clues to provide an environment for the tourist to experience; this can also be true for a particular destination. Although the need to provide an environment to allow the tourist to experience is alluded to (Mossberg 2007; Oh et al. 2007), the need for greater understanding of the impact of clues needs to be further developed. From a practitioner perspective how, '*au fait*' are tourism providers with the impact of clues being interpreted by tourists in particular destinations? Clues interpreted by potential tourists in marketing campaigns may also have a significant impact on

their expectations or their "*pre-experience*" (Oh et al. 2007) which may not mirror their actual experience resulting in either an extremely positive or extremely negative experience. The fundamental point is that neither academics nor practitioners have addressed the issue of design, implementation or review of experience clues for a particular tourism enterprise or destination which could be one of the key components of the overall tourist experience.

Towards an Integrated Definition of Tourist Experience:

Therefore, we define the tourist experience as any ***interaction*** with part of an organisation (Gentile et al., 2007) which is influenced by both the level of ***involvement*** of the individual at different levels which can be rational, emotional, sensorial, physical or spiritual (Schmitt, 1999) and also the **motivation** of the individual which can be depicted as an escape from the mundane every day life (Cohen 1972) or the consumption of the experience with the tourist as consumer (Oh et al., 2007). A tourist organisation can unleash ***experience clues*** that trigger rational and emotional responses from individuals (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994). The ***environment*** also impacts on the experience as it too affects the emotional response of individuals (Mossberg, 2007). Culmination of customer involvement and experience clues manipulate the customer's interaction with a company thus creating the experience. Co-ordinating and processing these variables allow the individual to "***think***", "***feel***" and "***act***" during the experience (Berry et al, 2002), which can then be embedded in **long-term memory** (Larsen, 2007).

These key elements used to define the tourist experience are depicted in figure 2.

Figure 2. Key Components of the Tourist Experience Concept

Concluding Comment

The term *tourist* itself is difficult to clearly define as it means different things to different people (Richardson & Fluker, 2004), in turn an *experience* is also an extremely complex process (Anderick et al., 2006). The term *tourist experience* is particularly prevalent in the literature; however scholars have consistently failed to define the inter-related nature of its meaning (Jennings et al., 2009). Although a working definition is presented in this paper, it is a first attempt and is only a starting point on the path to understanding the complexity of the dynamics occurring during the tourist experience. It raises many more questions, for instance how does a participant emotions change during the course of the experience? Indeed, how does the level of emotional involvement from pre-experience through to post-experience impact on the perceived overall experience of the tourist? Furthermore, are tourism providers attempting to sell the

experience as opposed to providing an environment to experience? If this is the case how does this impact on the pre-experience through to post experience? Involvement is also a core element of the tourist experience concept; however, does the level of involvement fluctuate during the course of the experience? and if so do all tourists have a similar experience if their level of involvement oscillates at different times? Furthermore, the relationship between the level of involvement and emotions and its impact on the experience also needs to be addressed. The notion of the experience being embedded in long term memory as a prerequisite to experience is also flawed. Will a positive experience be *embedded* differently to a negative experience? Also, can a tourist have a positive experience without having it embedded into long term memory? The development of experience clues has also raised a fundamental question as to their impact on pre-experience and also how they impact on other variables.

Although calling for further research has become somewhat of a cliché in academia, the need to maximise our tourism potential in the current economic environment cannot be overstated. The need to incorporate a multi-discipline approach to combine the most salient themes from the services literature is deemed necessary for a more rigorous understanding of the tourist experience concept. Therefore, further theoretical and empirical research is required in order for our tourist's to enjoy more quality memorable experiences.

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