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Title of paper: Interpretation and Total Experience Management (TEM) as innovative methods for sustainable nature based tourism - A benchmarking analysis.  
Suggested session: Advances in nature based tourism products

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Abstract – maximum 250 words

In the trans-modern society tourism has to transform into meaningful and learning experiences that contribute to a better and sustainable world. Integrating the methodology of natural interpretation and environmental education with developing theories of meaningful experience production, new innovative nature tourism products can be developed for global sustainability. Combining Maslow's pyramid of needs with TQM, I developed the concept of Total Experience Management (TEM), as a powerful tool for qualitative experience production. Combining interpretation and TEM, innovative nature experiences with meaningful bearings on sustainability can be produced according to Pine & Gilmore's model of the four experience realms of entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetics.

Based on the methods of interpretation and TEM I have developed a benchmarking tool which I tested on 15 nature and cultural based guided tours in Canada, Australia, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Sweden. Within two projects for developing guiding qualities we surveyed 115 entrepreneurs and tourism organisations in Finland, Sweden and Norway, about their view on "guide competence" and quality certification of guides. The benchmark study showed that interpretation as method is still rare and there are needs for quality improvements of the nature experience production in the light of TEM. The business survey indicated a need for certification and quality improvement of nature guides. However, when hiring a guide their education and reputation was more important than their certification. I thus conclude that the methods and skills of the nature guide could be a key factor for improving sustainable outcome of nature based tourism.

Key words:

Nature guiding, interpretation, experience production, innovative nature products