

Abstract for the 2nd International Polar Tourism Research Network Conference

Tourism, People and Protected Areas in Polar Wilderness

**Disneyfication of the polar experiences – ice- and snow hotels, snow castles and igloo villages.**

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This paper is based on a survey of the recent trend of experience production in polar tourism, based on snow and ice construction to create a kind of disneyfied “winter wonder land”. Snow and ice constructions have been around as long as people have been living in polar areas. Most famous are the snow igloos of the Inuit people of western arctic. This snow igloo has become a major icon for the people of the far north and the Arctic, and is used in many different contexts such as brand names, product names, comic stripes and animated films, games, architectural design, art, toys and different events. A google search on the world *igloo* gave 4 220 000 hits and 1 250 000 picture hits, where only a small fraction is about the Inuit igloo. Igloos are now used as tourist attractions, mainly in ski resorts in central Europe where companies such as Iglu-Dorf (on six ski destinations), IglooBase, AlpenIglu, etc. have developed extensive igloo constructions to differentiate the winter experiences of ski resorts. In association to festivals and carnivals in the north, snow construction have been used since the first “House of Ice” in St Petersburg 1739, and the first snow castles in Montreal in 1883 and forward. The first “real” Icehotel was constructed in Jukkasjärvi, 1989, and today there are seven in Finland, four in Norway, one in Canada and at least 13 igloo hotels in central Europe. This trend of creating a “dream world of snow and ice” of the polar experience, instead of the “real experience”, is interesting in regard to Jensen’s prediction (1999) of the Dream Society and the new Experience Economy based on staged experience production.