

Please, give me service and a meaningful experience!
- A theoretical reflection on service quality and hostmanship in perspective to two emerging tourism regions – the Barents and the Adrian Sea region.

Gelter, Hans, Department of Arts, Communication and Learning, Luleå University of Technology

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the potential of shifting from providing services to produce experiences in emerging tourism destinations such as the Barents and the Adriatic Sea region. It is based on a theoretical reflection and personal experiences of service and hospitality in these areas.

Keywords: Tourism, Service Quality, Hostmanship, Experience production

BACKGROUND

Emerging tourism areas and new destinations have demanding challenges to find a competitive position on the world tourism map. Identifying and defining their tourist attractions as unique selling points, finding a brand and core value of the destination, as well as identifying markets and target groups, developing tourism infrastructure such as transportation, lodging etc., attracting investors and finding funding's for tourism development, and packing the tourism resources into attractive tourist products and experiences, are all part of these challenges involving both public and private stakeholders. Although a challenges to managing these “hard” dimensions of tourism development, even more difficult to manage are the “soft” dimensions, consisting of the human resources of a destination. These include among many dimensions, attitudes towards tourists among locals and tourism employees, service quality and hospitality, competence and education levels among tourist operators and employees, and their understanding of the complexity of the tourist experience. In a time where tourism is shifting focus from the traditional “tourist Gaze” and consuming places (Urry 1995, 2002) towards consuming experiences and even demanding personal transformations and personal growth through experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999), the human resources and “soft” dimensions of a destination will play an increasing significance in destination branding in addition to the “hard” tangible dimensions.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) in their paradigm shifting book “The Experience Economy” explained this development towards experiences as a new economic offering, but also predicted transformational experiences as a new economic offering (figure 1). Applying their model of progression of the economic value on tourism, we can regard “commodities” as the natural and cultural heritage resources of a destination, which *per se* usually have low market price and competitive position. For example the boreal forest of Scandinavia is basically the same as Russian and other boreal forests. In Scandinavia the forests are free to explore and experience through the “The Right of Public Access” (Swedish *Allemansrätten*) (Sandell 2007), which also includes nature reserves and national parks.

“Goods” can be regarded as tourism facilities such as hotels and resorts, which are still fairly similar globally in price and differentiation. “Services” are the tourist products and tourism offerings, such as snowmobiling through the forest, which can differentiate the Barents from other global destinations, but within the area, are moderately differentiated, mainly in service quality and hospitality management. However, stages experiences, according to Pine and Gilmore, will have both higher complete position and pricing (figure 1). Here customers become “guests” and service and hospitality transformed into personal “hostmanship” – (Swedish *Värdskap*) (Gunnarsson & Blohm 2008). This means more personalized experiences

then within the service sector. Even a higher level of economical offerings, not yet theoretically explored in a tourism context (Gelter 2011) are the offerings of personally guided transformations through transformative experiences, where guests are called “aspirant” and the seller “elictor” and the offering a guided transformation (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p170).

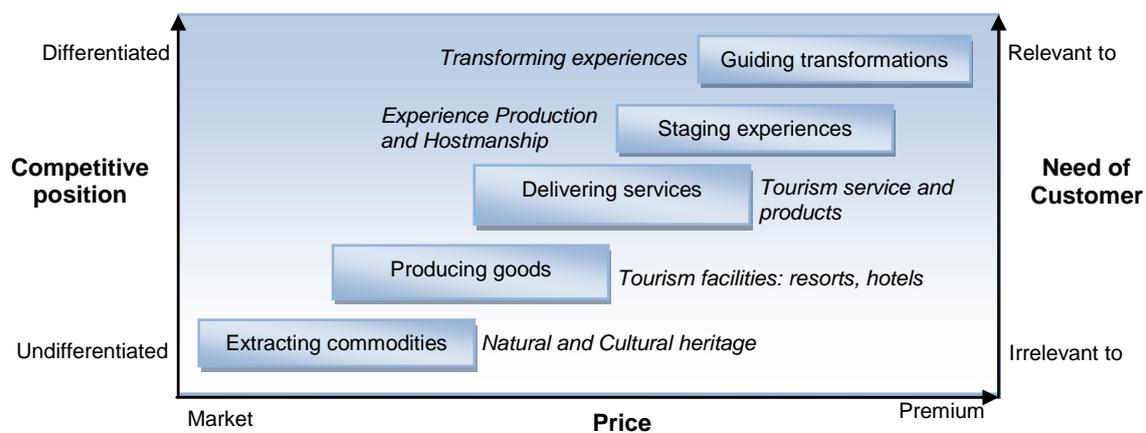


Figure 1. Progression of Economic Value applied on tourism (modified after Pine & Gilmore 1999, p. 22 and 166)

Interestingly, in the forewords of their updated edition of their book (2011, p. ix), Pine and Gilmore write “*Although the book has since been published in fifteen languages and purchased by more than three hundred thousand people world-wide, the book’s thesis has not sufficiently penetrated the minds of enough business leaders (and policy makers) to give full bloom to a truly new – and desperately needed – economic order.*” Therefore, new destinations such as the Barents and Adriatic Sea region have a possibility to find a competitive position within global tourism by adopting these new business concepts of experience production and guiding transformations.

The aim of this paper is to highlighting the “soft” dimensions of destination development in the perspective of the Experience Economy and Experience Production. The background to this paper was an assignment for a benchmarking trip to Montenegro and southern Italy within the ENPI CBC Kolarctic project *BART – Public-Private Partnership in Barents region Tourism*. The aim of the benchmarking trip was to learn about cross-border cooperation within a similar project in the Adriatic sea region, the project “*TUR.GREAT 2*”; “*InteGRATED actions to promote sustainable ToURist development*” by the European Union funded Adriatic IPA (Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance) Cross Border Cooperation 2007-2013 funding, with the aim of sustainable border-cross tourism development between southern Italy, Greece, Albania and Montenegro. The benchmarking trip revealed similar challenges and problems in both the Barents and Adriatic Sea area in regard to the “soft” dimensions of destination development.

METHOD

This paper is based on a theoretical reflection on some basic theory of service quality in relation to emerging theory of experience production, framed by my personal experiences of the service quality and experience production in the Barents and Adrian Sea area. Both areas are emerging tourism destinations with similar challenges regarding both hard and soft dimensions of destination development. This paper will not address the “hard” dimensions of attractions, infrastructure etc. in these regions, but focus on the potential of using the “soft” dimensions to gain competitive positions on the world tourism map.

Through benchmarking within the BART project and involvement in other tourism projects, I has gained extensive personal experiences of tourism and tourism offerings within the Barents area from Northern Norway to northwestern Russia (Kola Peninsula and White Sea area).The

Benchmarking trip to the Adrian Sea area included visits at Kotor, Bar, Cetinje, Podgorica, Sveti Stefan, Porto Montenegro Lake Skadar in Montenegro and visits to Bari and Mesagne in Southern Italy. My experiential platform also include experiences as a tour-leader on international destinations in Europe, Africa and Asia, my own business involvement as a tourism entrepreneur in Swedish Lapland, as well as being a chair and developer of the Bachelor program of Experience Production at the department of Arts, Communication and Education, Luleå university of technology, Sweden. A reliability weakness in my analysis is that benchmarking was not done in a systematic way according to theory, and empirical data were not collected systematically. This makes this paper more of a qualitative deductive analysis based on personal experiences that will framed with the theoretical models.

THEORETICAL REFLECTIONS

Tourism businesses within emerging destination such as the Barents and Adrian Sea area, can use several different strategies for tourism service and product development, but the main strategies for this would be:

1. **Copycating** – imitating others products and services.
2. **Benchmarking** – cooperating with Best-in-Practice and adaptation.
3. **Innovation** – creative development and productification of new products and services.

Of course there are many more options to improve or develop processes such as blueprinting, customer surveys, focus groups etc. (Kandampully *et al* 2001, Williams and Buswell 2003, and others), but I will here shortly reflect on these three main methods.

Copycating

Copycating is simply to imitating, replicating or repeating an innovation or a pioneering process, or even just copying others products or way of working. Although copycating at first seems unethical and bad business practice, it appears to be the most applied, and in many cases the most successful strategy (Shenkar 2010). This is also my impression when looking at tourism offers in the Barents region. Looking at for example, at winter products, we can see that copycating appear to be a norm among activity businesses of the north, finding the same set of activities such as dog sledging, snowmobile driving, snows-shoe hiking etc. at almost every winter destination. Shenkar (2010 p.113) has developed a model for strategic copycating (where, what, who to imitate, when and how) that allow not only activities and products to be imitated, but also processes, practices and business models, either “as is” or as variations or adaptations. Extreme forms copycating are standards and certification labels such as camping and hotel star-labeling, converting products and processes within a business such as hotels, which basically become similar worldwide. The challenge of copycating is the **correspondence problem** – the challenge of converting a model into a copy that can be implemented and integrated to the own operational level while preserving the favorable outcome observed in the original (Shenkar 2010).

Looking at figure 1 we can see that the higher we move up the ladder of Pine and Gilmor’s economical progression, the harder the economic offerings will be able to copycat. This is because they are to a higher degree based on the “soft” dimensions and human resources of the provider and the personal involvement of the buyer. This scenario is similar to the model by Boswijk *et al.* (2007) for actor’s involvement in the experience production, figure 2. They envision experience production in three “generations” where the first generation is the traditional “staging” of experiences. Here the suppliers arrange, design and provide the experience to the guest, who is more or less passive consuming the experience. In the second generation there is a co-creation of the experience by the supplier and the guest, and in the third generation the supplier only provides the conditions and prerequisites for the experience that is self-directed by the guest. Service and hospitality has to be staged and can be regarded as first generation, and thus also easier to copycat. Experience Production of the second and third

generation will be more difficult to copy as a co-production such as in hostmanship depends of the human qualities of the provider. Thus, if a destination seeks competitive position on the world tourism map, it should strive to develop second and third generation of Experience Production, that will be distinctly differentiated from the general tourism service offerings. This seems to be the strategy in Swedish Lapland, where much effort (education, development projects etc.) are put on moving away from traditional tourism service provision to co-created hostmanship, while my impression is that in Norway and Finland are still geared towards traditional tourism service, while in Russia even basic service quality management has to be developed in many places.

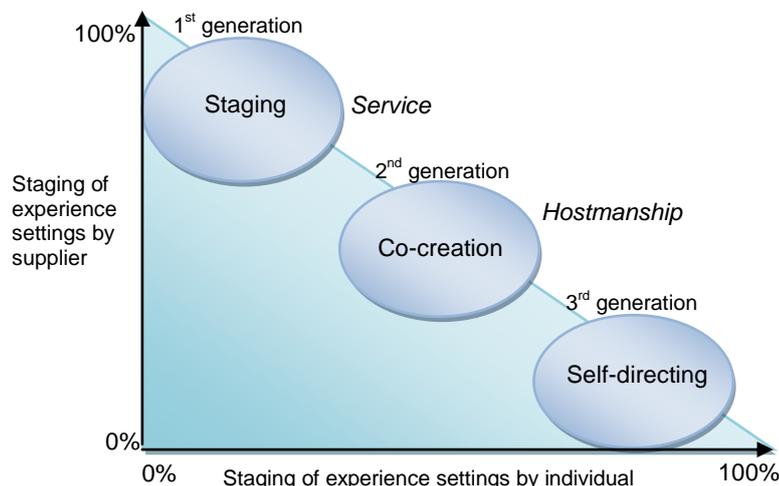


Figure 2. Actors in the creation of meaningful experiences applied to the tourism context, (modified after Boswijk et al 2007 p.10)

Benchmarking

The other way of developing products and services, which is similar to pure copycatting is benchmarking, a word that sometimes sloppily is used with the meaning “studying and copycatting” what others are doing. However, the theoretical framework for benchmarking is based on cooperation and reciprocal benefits between the *benchmarker* and the *benchmarke*, i.e. a co-creation (figure 2), also called *benchlearning* (Pyo 2001). Its aim is a learning process that is formalized to find performance gaps that are identified and measured, and a commitment made to operational processes to close the gap (Camp 1989). It is defined as “*the search for the industry best in practice that will lead to superior performance*” (Pyo 2001, p.1), or “*Benchmarking is the continuous measurement and improvement of an organisation’s performance against the best in order to obtain information about new working methods or practices in other organizations.*” (Ibid, p 8)

Benchmarking does not differ from the principles of learning from the experience of others, but by its methodology, puts this learning experience into a structured framework. Successful benchmarking requires deep knowledge about one’s own processes, access to the processes of the *benchmarke*, and an ability to translate practices that work in another context into a process improvement on our own organization (Bergman & Klefsjö 2003). There are at least forty different models of benchmarking (Pyo 2001, p.11), but most are based on Deming’s (1982) four stages of: plan, do, check and act. Benchmarking differs from copying by the process of adaptation and by sharing ideas through three steps: performance comparison, gap identification and changed management processes (Watson 1992). There are four main types of benchmarking (Pyo 2001):

1. **Internal benchmarking** - communication and sharing between departments within the same organization (apply only to larger organizations and companies).
2. **Competitive benchmarking** – comparison with direct competitors only.

3. **Functional benchmarking** – comparative research carried out not only against competitors but also of those who are not in direct competition, but operate in similar fields and perform similar activities
4. **Generic Benchmarking** – comparisons against the world-class excellence from all industry groups performing similar activities or having similar problems.

For developing destinations the three later types would be strategic to perform to develop products and processes, although competitive benchmarking seems most appealing, but probably is the most difficult to perform, as information access among competitors may be a hindrance.

Criticism against benchmarking is that as with copycating it removes diversity and heterogeneity within the industry and the best practices becomes a kind of standardization (Pyo 2001). Thus if Russia, for example would benchmark Finish Lapland for their destination development, we would end up with fairly similar products on both destinations. This converges of products and business processes trough copycating and benchmarking within an industry such as tourism, can be avoided by either innovations, or by a process that I would call “**Inverted Benchmarking**” (Gelter *et al* in prep). The traditional benchmarking (and copycating) is based on a learning of how “to do”, which reduces the action potential for product and process development, while a benchmarking process focusing on “don’t do” – *i.e.* learning from bad examples and failures, will guide the developing process away from pitfalls without reducing the action potential, leaving a divergent potential for business development. It differs from traditional innovation concepts in that you identify competitors or similar business to learn from and don’t do their mistakes or bad performances. The idea emerged during a less successful guided tour in Montenegro were we asked “what can we learn from the benchmarking of this guided tour?” We could not identify any gaps between the visited *benchmark*, and the performances of guided tours at our home destinations, but rather “inverted-gaps” – don’t do that, don’t say that etc. At first we become upset about the bad performance of the guide, fitting in the You Tube competition “World’s worst Guide”. But then we realized that we from this bad experience could learn how to not perform a guided tour, without limiting us “how to do it”. Thus *Inverted Benchmarking* could be an “open way” of inspiring product and service development.

True **innovation** is aiming towards completely new processes or products without using present structures. Innovations can be defined in many ways, such as the “*development of new customers value through solutions that meet new needs, inarticulate needs, or old customer and market needs in new ways. This is accomplished through different or more effective products, processes, services, technologies or ideas that are readily available to the market*” (businessdictionary.com). Innovation differs from *invention* in that innovation refers to the use of a better and, as a result, novel idea or method, whereas invention refers more directly to the creation of the idea or method itself. Innovation also differs from *improvements* (as from benchmarking) in that innovation refers to the notion of doing something different rather than doing the same thing better. Innovation has become a political buzzword, but in my opinion trues creative innovations within tourism experiences are much rarer than copycating existing products. Good examples are the Icehotel (which has been extensively imitated), the Tree Hotel, Ice Dome Concert Hall, Santa Clause Village and the Northern light thermo glass igloos of Kakslauttanen in Sarriselkä. If a destination lacks highly attractive natural or cultural tourism attractions, copycating or benchmarking of others tourism products will not be god enough to attract global tourist attention. According to Pine & Gilmore (1999) even an ordinary tourist service or product can be transformed into an attractive and expensive offering when transformed into a meaningful experience or transformative product, figure 1. Thus copycating and benchmarking world class destinations such as Dubai and its high service quality and hostmanship will not help developing destinations such as the Barents or Adrian Sea area, even

if they manage to put a perfect “service” smile on their face on locals and employees. Rather these destinations should focus on Experience production and Hostmanship, or even attempt to developing transformative experiences (figure 3). The challenge for a destination is to develop products and services beyond expected service quality into meaningful experiences.

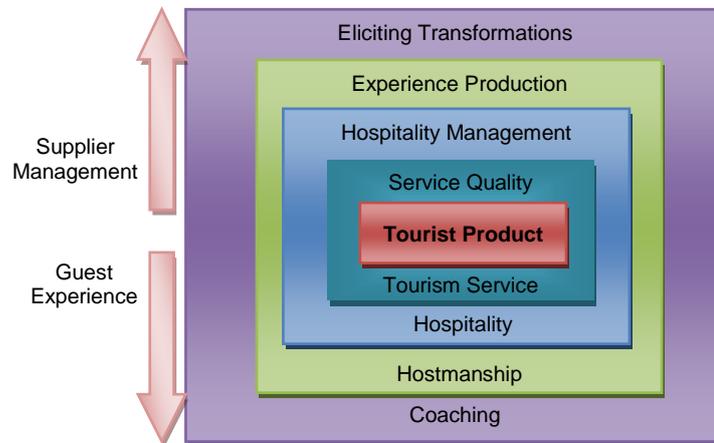


Figure 3. The relationships between different economical offerings and guest experiences.

Service quality

The most obvious contribution to the tourist experience besides the attractions *per se*, is the tourism services. And in my experience, service quality usually is of very varying quality in developing destinations such as the Barents area. I have even experiences “anti-service” at a hotel in Kandalaksha, where the hotel clerk for 5 minutes refused to pay attention to my request for a room, and then needed an additional 5-10 minutes discussion before a hotel room could be offered. The aims of tourism services are to fulfill different needs and expectations of the tourist, such as the need and expectation to obtain a room in a hotel. The extent such needs and expectations are fulfilled and the quality of the provided services determines the satisfaction of the tourist. High-quality tourism service is a major source of competitive advantage and major differentiating element in tourism positioning according to Payne (1993). The general scientific interest in services, design of services and service quality originated partly from the field of marketing in the 1070s and 1980s and was especially developed in the Nordic countries and the Nordic School of Service Management (Bergman & Klefsjö 2003), but has now become a major research area spanning most industries. In 1982 Christian Grönroos (1984) created one of the earliest models of service quality focusing on *technical* and *functional quality* where customer’s experiences of the service could be divided into **What-quality**, which is related to the result of the service; what has been provided, and it can be measured objectively. The other is **How-quality**, the way how the service has been delivered or provided. It is measures subjectively by the customers. Together they create an **image** (corporate quality) as a third and subjective dimension. This “total perceived quality” model of Grönroose (1984) is based on mainly external factors such as Marketing, Image, Word-of-Mouth, and previous experiences.

In contrast to the American school of service quality, with its product centered with “to-do lists” such as the 4P model (product, price, position and promotion), and the utilization of standardization techniques, the Scandinavian school had a more holistic and integrated approach based on building customer relationships, where personalized services based on personal relationships with the customers are an essential component of service delivery (Williams & Buswell 2003). Bergman and Klefsjö (2003, p. 24) defines quality as “*the quality of a product is its ability to satisfy, and preferably exceed, the needs and expectations of the customers.*” The concept of quality of goods and products has many dimensions, such as *reliability, performance, maintainability, environmental impact, appearance, flawlessness, safety, and durability* (Bergman & Klefsjö 2003, p. 32), while dimensions of service quality are (after Zeithaml et al. 1990, Bergman & Klefsjö 2003 , p.33):

- **Reliability** – consistency of performance, including punctuality and precision in terms of information and invoicing procedures, doing what you have promised to do
- **Credibility** – being able to trust the supplier
- **Access** – how easy it is to come into contact with the supplier
- **Communication** – ability to communicate in an understandable way for the customer
- **Responsiveness** – willingness to help the customer
- **Courtesy** – the suppliers behavior, i.e. politeness and kindness
- **Empathy** – the ability to understand the customer’s situation
- **Tangibles** – the physical environment in which the service is executed, the appearance of equipment and premises

I have many failure stories from the Barents and Adrian Sea area for each of these dimension, not be told here, so here we have an obvious development potential for both destination area for improvements. Bad service quality affect the image of a destination according to Grönroos (1984), so it is important that tourists are satisfied with their destination experience.

Customer satisfaction is the ultimate measurement of quality according to Bergman & Klevsjö (2003). Customer satisfaction has traditionally been studied within market research, and recently also become interesting for product developers as it in general is much more, up to five times according to Söderlund (2001), expensive to gain new customers than to keep satisfied customers that return to the product. This means that it is five times more expensive to get new visitors to a destination than to get a satisfied visitor to return. The degree of customer satisfaction is according to traditional theory closely related to how well the customer’s need and expectations are fulfilled, but to delight the customer we need also to exceed their expectations (Bergman & Klevsjö 2003). To succeed with this we need to understand customer needs which by Bergman and Klevsjö (2003) are divided into three groups: **Basic needs** that are so obvious that the customer would not mention them when asked. But if not fulfilled, the customer will be dissatisfied. **Expected needs** are those the customer is fully aware of and will be able to mention them when asked. They are important and customers expect to have them fulfilled. The most interesting needs are **Excitement needs** that again are unconscious and the customers are not aware of that they can be fulfilled, and thus cannot state these if asked. By identifying these excitement needs and satisfying them, the product has **added value** to the customer. By finding such needs, a company can gain considerable competitive edge over its competitors, and win loyal customers.

By satisfying basic needs we create **must-be quality** and by fulfilling expected needs we achieve **expected quality**. When finding and satisfying excitement needs we create **attractive quality** creating a surprise element. These quality dimensions were introduced by the Japanese Noriaki Kano, called the **Kano model** (Kano et al 1984, Kano 1995, 2001). In order to identify the quality dimensions that provide surprise effects and fulfill excitement needs, we need detailed knowledge about our customer’s habits and desires. This is why identifying not only markets, but also market segments are important for destination development, such as the four segments of “global traveler” of WHOPS; DINKS, Active Family and cooperate meetings that are well studied in each market (Visit Sweden). But we can’t ask the customers about their needs, as they can’t express their unspoken needs. In order to succeed we need to tailor-make the customer’s specific desire in such way that every customer is to have a unique treatment and unique offer – a **“Learning Relationship”** (Bergman & Klevsjö 2003, p 310). This approaches coproduction in figure 2, but as traditional service design is mainly concerned with the staging of a “service encounter”, with the aim of fulfilling needs and expectations, it is distinguished from experience production (figure 1) in several ways (discussed below).

To measure customers’ opinion about perceived service quality”, i.e. to measure the experience of quality, Parasuraman et al. (1988) constructed the **SERVQUAL** (SERVice QUALity)

framework, a measurement consisting of a scale with nine dimensions of service (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, competence, courtesy, credibility, security, access, communication), later (Parasuraman et al. 1991) reduced it to five dimensions of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and tangibles measured on a five-grade scale. It has only to a limited degree been applied in tourism research (Kvist 2005) and there is some dispute about the validity of the SERVQUAL instrument (ibid.). Other problems with these satisfaction approaches are the fact that customers are not necessarily aware of exactly what they require (Witt and Muhlemann 1994) and the recent “*critical turn*” in tourism research (Franklin and Crang 2001), where the tourist is now regarded as a creative interactive and co-creator of the experience (figure 2) rather than a passive receiver of a product or service with its qualities (Boswijk et al. 2007). Another need-based concept commonly used in management is Maslow’s “Hierarchy of Needs”, a psychological model that attempts to describe how people’s needs guide behavior (Maslow 1943, 1954). Here human needs are classified into five basic needs of physiological, safety, belongingness and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs. The suggestion is that the basic needs at the base of the pyramid have to be satisfied before the other needs higher up can be satisfied, thus in planning a experience product, the provider has to identify the needs of each level (Gelter 2006, 2008, 2011). We can attribute the lower steps of Maslow’s hierarchy to service and hospitality fulfilling basic and expected needs, and the high steps to experience production and hostmanship fulfilling excitement needs.

Hospitality and Hostmanship (*värdskap*)

To increase the attractive quality of a tourism product or service, one way is to increase the quality of hospitality. **Hospitality** is a term usually referred to the service provided in the tourism sector of ‘hotel and catering’, i.e., the ‘hospitality industry’, and as an academic subject, has many definitions. A definition in a narrow sense could be “*The provision of food and/or drink and/or accommodation in a service context*” (Lashley and Morrison 2000, p.3), while in a broader sense it includes a social, private and commercial domain, to be “*essentially a relationship based on host and guest. To be effective, hospitality requires the guest to feel that the host is being hospitable through feelings of generosity, a desire to please, and a genuine regard for the guest as an individual.*” (Ibid, p. 15). **Hospitableness** is the trait possessed by hospitable people that can be defined as including general virtues such as benevolence, public-spiritedness, compassion, affectedness (Telfer 2000). The hospitality literature discusses whether hospitableness also can apply to the commercial host (Telfer 2000) or through hospitality management only “show of staged hospitality” (Lashley and Morrison 2000), i.e. can employees at a large hotel chain show real hospitableness?

While traditional hospitality usually lies within the first generation experience production (figure 2) where the host is “performing” (sometimes in a scripted way) for the guest, the Swedish concept of **Hostmanship** (Swedish: *Värdskap*) is based on a true co-creation (second generation experience production), and where the private domain of genuine hospitableness is part of the business domain, and the host show genuine concern for the guests happiness, invites the guest not only to the business of the host, but invites the guest to share the life experiences of the host. Hostmanship is defined as the “*art of getting people to feel welcome – too us as persons, to our business and to our places*” (Gunnarsson. and Blohm 2008). In contrast to (staged) hospitality, hostmanship is a private value and attitude, a way of living, a proudness of one self, one’s business and place, and how you see and value your guests. This can be exemplified by my taxi transfer from Dubrovnik Airport to Kotor, where the taxi driver said not a word during the almost three hour drive, leaving me in a vacuum of questions about where we were and saw and an insecure feeling, while there are many examples of proud taxi drivers in Swedish Lapland, that proudly explain and promote their destination. Also the dedicated local buss guide in Montenegro did not have the knowledge and values of proudness to get us feel welcome to the destination and places we passed or visited. In contrast, a local

guide at Lake Skadar provided a genuine hostmanship during a wine testing excursion, while the wine farmer we visited had difficulties to summon even a basic enthusiasm for our visit, leaving a feeling of pure “business” of our visit.

According to Gunnarsson and Blohm (2008) hostmanship is based on six values, the value to **serve** and contribute to another person, a **holistic view** to be able to see yourself with the eyes of your guest, **responsibility** to act on every problem that appears, to trust and let lose your **consideration** to guests and coworkers, the values of **dialogue**, to listen and rather understand than be understood, and finally **knowledge** – to know your guests habits and culture, to meet the guest in his or her conditions. In a larger business, it’s a management concept of value your employees and make them proud, “*When I feel I am worth something, I can be hostable*”. This management issues was very obvious in souvenir shops in Kotor, Montenegro, where in one employed young girls had problems with basic service quality and hospitality, apparently by a very angry shop owner/manager. In contrast, next door the staffs had fun, were happy and provided not just good service and hospitality but genuine hostmanship. Such value building by the management is expressed by the Fish! Concept developed by Johnny Yokoyama, owner of the now World Famous Pike Place Fish in Seattle, USA (Lundin et al 2000). He realized that by having fun and play at work, he created not just a great work place for this employees with a lot of energy, but also created an attraction of entertainment. He invited his employees to join a work culture with four messages (figure 4): **Choose your attitude** – You can always choose how to feel about your work; **Have Fun** – Joy and happiness creates energy, play at work; **Make Their Day** –Share your joy and engage your customers in the play; and **Be There** – focus on your customers, put all your attention on them. However, “having fun” must be genuine! I have tested a Swedish rafting company where their business idea was to be the “funniest rafters in Sweden” and released a cascade of scripted jokes during the rafting experience, which completely destroyed the total experience.

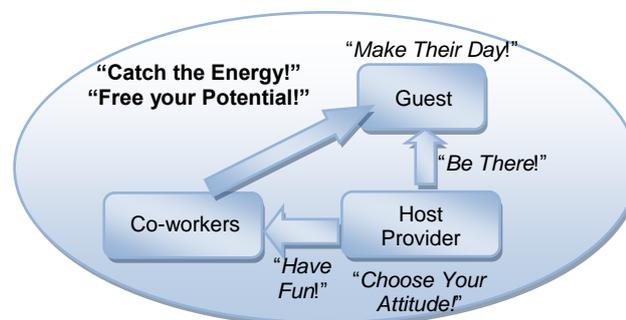


Figure 4. The Fish! Concept of Pike Place Fish, Seattle, based on four core values of; Choose your attitude, Have fun, Be There and Make their day.

Quality of hospitality and hostmanship and the performance of the staff is a business management issue, and its values must be communicated to empower their staff to deliver such standards in their daily work. This can be illustrated by the Disney’s 10-point staff code to all employees based on Walt Disney’s legacy of creating happiness through imagination, attention to details, and an appreciation of people’s needs and desires. Staffs are employed by a process of casting to test if the share these basic values of Disney: (Williams & Buswell 2003, p 128):

1. We-re committed to quality
2. We’re friendly, helpful and courteous
3. We smile
4. We are a team
5. We’re positive
6. We never say ‘no’
7. We’re impeccable
8. We’re on stage and we know our role in the show
9. We’re professional and efficient

10. We striver to be the best.

A combination of the values of Disney, the Fish! Concept and the Swedish Hostmanship would probably by itself create great experiences for the guests, and thus contribute to a competitive edge of a business and destination.

Conclusions – the importance of creating meaningful experience

I have here argued that for developing destinations to find an international competitive edge, good service quality and good attractions will not be enough. The new paradigm of the experience economy and the “critical turn” towards co-creation in tourism, indicate that competence of experience production that give guests not only unique, but rather meaningful experiences will be a critical prerequisite to succeed as a destination (Boswijk et al 2007). This is supported by Schmitt (2003) who coined the concept of **Customer experience management (CME)** as a process of strategically managing a customer’s entire experience. The previous satisfaction paradigm of service design in service quality management is “outcome-oriented, while the experience paradigm is “process-oriented” (Schmitt 2003). Cooper et al. (1994) suggested that the future of tourism will not lie in mass tourism with standardized and packaged tourism services but will become much more customized and integrated with emphasis on meeting individual needs and expectation by responsiveness and reliability. Traditionally destination marketing and market communication have been focused on the **unique selling points (USP)**, which is a sales driven product-centered and outcome focused view. But today’s consumers are not function-driven, but rather value and emotion driven, more interested in how an offering informs (transforms), entertain, and contribute to personal branding and self-fulfillment. Schmitt suggests replacing USP with ESP, **experiential selling paradigm** with an experiential positioning and experiential value promise (EVP), and where brand experience and experiential communication are important concepts (Schmitt 2003). I have myself tried to combine the experience staging of Pine and Gilmore, Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, the Servunction model for the servicescape, and other concepts into a theoretical framework for experience production I call TEM, **Total Experience Management** (Gelter 2006, 2010, 2011). Having done (informal) benchmarking around the world, my feeling is that most tourism businesses still are within the framework of delivering service (figure 5), although claim to be experience products, and even fewer have entered the business of transformative experiences. I therefore think that public stakeholders in destination development, such as the formal educational system, have an important task to open up the new concepts and economic offerings of experience production and transformative tourism. By this, new emerging destinations have the opportunity to find a position on the competitive global tourism map.

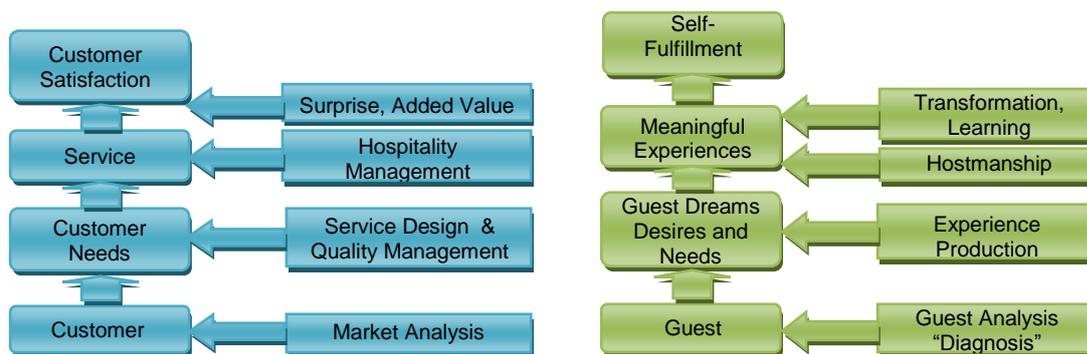


Figure 5. Summary of the difference between service management and experience management

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