

Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency and University North
in cooperation with
Faculty of Management University of Warsaw
Faculty of Law, Economics and Social Sciences Sale - Mohammed V University in Rabat
Polytechnic of Medimurje in Cakovec



Economic and Social Development

73rd International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development Development –
"Sustainable Tourism in Post-pandemic World"

Book of Proceedings

Editors:

Zoltan Baracscai, Dijana Vukovic, Jelena Janjusevic



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Dubrovnik, 21-22 October, 2021

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COMPETENCE OF EMPLOYEES IN TOURISM IN THE TRANSITION FROM THE ECONOMY OF SERVICE TO THE ECONOMY OF EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Experiences in tourism have a high value for consumers and demands for them are on the rise. Consumers in tourism are therefore willing to pay a high price for experiences. However, competition in the tourism market is also on the rise which requires innovation in new tourism experience products in order for the destination to remain competitive. That is why it is crucial for destinations to build and offer experiences in the right way. A tourist destination that recognizes the potentials of the experience economy will gain a competitive advantage and profit as opposed to those that do not offer the experience. An experience is the creation of a story, theme, or anything that can represent an experience, and it often varies from person to person. This paper lists some forms of influence on the tourist experience in the selected tourist destination, such as: arrangement and presentation of the destination, size and choice of tourist products, prices, product brands, staff employed in tourism, atmosphere within the destination, rituals, population and their legends and events. The economy of experience is the search for unique experiences that change life, experience and feelings beyond the ordinary, everyday ones.

Keywords: *experience, economics of experience, impact on experience, retail, sales result*

1. INTRODUCTION

The concept of the economy of experience, formed as an economic instrument for maximizing benefits, profits and increasing competitiveness, is based on experience. Thus, the experience is completely dependent on the perception of the same event by an individual, group or several persons. The experience evokes action and reaction in relation to the degree of involvement. The economics of experience in some form is associated with the character and work of the British philosopher and economist Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). A modern approach to the application of the concept of the economy of experience was set by George Katona. Furthermore, Holbrook and Hirschmann in 1982 associate experience as an emotional category with products and services. Somewhat later, in 1992, Gerhard Schulze introduced the term society of experience. Nevertheless, definition of the economics of experience that is used today, was given by B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore in 1999, which was adopted in tourism, and their interpretation is taken as a starting point for the application of the concept in practice. One of the significant theories was defined by Richard Florida, as a theory based on economic and regional development including elements that contribute to the synergy of development. In his work *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), Florida sets out a theory based on three decisive factors, better known by the acronym 3T, and the theory encompasses the

synergy of technology, talent, and tolerance. The main focus is on accumulating and attracting human resources, ie a workforce that is educated and motivated. In this way, it is ensured that human resources with their knowledge and skills, along with innovation, achieve a positive trend of economic growth. Furthermore, it is important to highlight the theory put forward by B. Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore in *The Experience Economy* (1999). They found that society as a whole at this stage of development is no longer satisfied with the manifestation of goods, products and services as the ultimate form of measure of individual satisfaction. Such a situation arises from the appearance of structural changes in the elements of demand and changes in expectations, motives and perceptions of satisfaction. Pine and Gilmore explained how economic evolution began with the agrarian economy and cited the celebration of a child's birthday and the preparation of a birthday cake as examples. At the very beginning, in the agrarian economy, mothers made birthday cakes starting from scratch. They went to buy agricultural products, such as flour, sugar, butter, and eggs, and used them to make cakes. Furthermore, in an industrial economy, mothers would buy pre-mixed ingredients and pay a dollar or two for them. Later, with the development of the service economy, parents were overworked and did not have time to prepare cakes, so they ordered cakes from a bakery or grocery store for \$ 10 or \$ 15, meaning they cost ten times more than ready-mixed ingredients. Since the 1990s, parents no longer throw parties or buy cakes. Instead, they spend \$ 100 or more to host the whole event at a designated venue such as children's playrooms, restaurants, etc., which often include a free birthday cake as part of the package. Thus, history traces the development of an agrarian economy in which almost nothing was spent, through an industrial and service economy with which consumption grows to reach an economy of experience where costs reach the highest level, but also offer not only material goods like cake, but many more activities and opportunities to gain unique experiences. Economists have historically equated experience with service, which of course is not true. Experience and service are just as different as service is different from goods. Today, there is no doubt that consumers want many more experiences and more and more companies are responding by explicitly designing and promoting them¹. The economics of experience is the creation of new value (economic and social) where experience is an integral and starting point of a product or service, not just an upgrade or added value. If the socio-economic trends are analyzed today, ie recorded changes in the form of the demographic picture of society, better education and higher living standards, a change in the structure of demand for tourism products and services can be noticed. There is a transition from the economy of services to the economy of experience, and the increasingly frequent purchase of things and services is replaced by the purchase of experience. Such a purchase represents a specific exchange of value for money that is characteristic of traditional understandings of the economy of experience. In today's service economy, and this applies primarily to tourism product manufacturers and tourism service providers who strive to incorporate experiences into their core tourism products in order to better place them in the global tourism market. Experiences create strong emotional connections that serve as a powerful tool for creating destination recognition and differentiating the destination and the experience it offers in the tourism market. The complexity of the concept of the economy of experience and its elements requires a closer determination and it has already been mentioned that the economy of experience represents the fourth level in the development of the economy.

2. EXPERIENCE AND ELEMENTS OF THE ECONOMY OF EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM

The experience in tourism is extremely difficult and demanding to define because the term itself is complex and quite abstract. Today we live in a period marked by the economy of experience,

¹ Banić, B. (2019.): Turizam i ekonomija doživljaja, <https://repozitorij.efst.unist.hr/islandora/object/efst%3A2718/datastream/PDF/view> (accessed: 22.09.2020.)

and a real tourist experience delights and amazes, which means that it creates a more lasting memory, that differs from its competition, encompasses innovation and is unique. The definition that a tourist experience is a set of interconnected and intertwined emotional components linked to an appropriate destination tourist arrangement in a way that gives the consumer/tourist an unusual experience is often used (Vranešević, 2016: 9, url, accessed 22.09.2021). The basic components of every tourist experience include (ibid): transport to the destination, landscape, climate, population in the destination, accommodation, food and drink, and entertainment. The concept of a tourist experience in its broadest sense encompasses everything that happens before, during and after the trip, and a very important part is even the preparatory phase, in which the future tourist is practically and psychologically preparing for the upcoming trip. During the trip itself, the following experiences are most common (Dujmović, 2014: 90-91):

- experiences generated by the means of transport, ie just moving through space
- experiences related to landscape observation
- experiences related to social contacts, ie meetings, acquaintances and conversations.

Tourists must not be observers but participants in the tourist experience. Modern tourists are more experienced and demanding than ever. The most important item in the offer of a tourist destination today is the quality and scope of tourist content and the education of cultural and tourist workers. Destinations with great potential for event development use events as a means of encouraging travel in areas outside major tourist centers. In this way, the development of tourism in underdeveloped areas is encouraged. Events can attract and retain visitors for a longer period of time in the destination, but also improve the experience of staying in the destination. They also provide a significant incentive for public and private investment in a tourist destination and serve as a generator of development and attractiveness of the tourist destination.

3. REMEMBERED VALUE OF A TOURIST DESTINATION

The economy of experience in tourism is actually a remembered value of tourists about a tourist destination that begins with the consumer's knowledge, and which the consumer recognizes when arriving into the life, culture and history of the tourist destination. By arriving and staying in a tourist destination, the consumer in tourism adopts basic knowledge about the way and lifestyle of the domicile population and historical and cultural values of the tourist destination. The stored value of a tourist destination directly depends on the delivered integrated tourist product. The performance of a tourist destination depends on the functional, aesthetic and other features of the integrated tourist product and its quality. The natural, cultural, historical and traditional values of a tourist destination are the basis of the remembered values of the tourist destination. A tourist destination can offer its consumers in tourism a unique experience of natural beauty, cultural tangible and intangible heritage and history. Natural and cultural heritage sites are key resources of sustainability at the level of a tourist destination and their value in the delivery of experiences is irreplaceable (Vuković, 2017: 146). The unique quality of the locality and its values form a large part of the tourist attractiveness, remembered values by consumers in tourism, but also the foundation of the future development of the tourist destination. However, tourist destinations also have less tangible features such as cultural, social, recreational and economic aspects of the use of destination space that the consumer perceives and accepts as the basic structure of the destination. Stories and legends based on the values of the destination heritage are especially interesting to consumers in tourism, especially if they are transmitted by the domicile population of the destination. These stories are what consumers in tourism take home with them and continue to retell in their environment.

Memorable value for the consumer in tourism is a complex category and one of the fundamental value of sustainable marketing at the destination level, but also a mean to achieve profit, the degree of consumer satisfaction in tourism and the degree of loyalty. The conspicuous competition and high demands of modern tourists have imposed the need for continuous improvement of the quality of the integrated tourist product and protection of destination values in order to achieve the remembered value of the tourist destination. The remembered value of a tourist destination is achieved through the process of creating and delivering value to consumers in tourism and the systematic protection of destination values. Upon returning to the place of residence, the consumer in tourism sorts out the impressions, compares what is seen and experienced with what he expected before departure. This balance between what is expected and what is experienced can be more or less positive or negative, which affects the degree of consumer satisfaction in tourism. Individual positive or negative experiences can be remembered for a long time, even throughout their lives. Returning from the trip is accompanied by a number of different activities such as retelling travel experiences, giving souvenirs and telling stories and legends learned in the destination, viewing pictures and/or watching videos, preparing personal dishes from the visited destination act post festum. It can be concluded that understanding the nature of consumer experience in tourism as it provides the potential to create high quality for tourism consumers and a memorable experience which is the essence of successful tourism experience delivery management, is of great value for tourism destination management and all tourism stakeholders (Ritchie et al., 2011: 419). However, experientially valuable memory cannot be the result of mechanical animation of consumers in tourism, but the unveiling of desires and fantasies and the fulfillment of needs for entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetics (Buhalis, 2006: 45). Memories of travel experiences are built into the tourist experience frame and become pieces of the mosaic that are integral parts of the puzzle of overall life satisfaction. Unforgettable events are remembered precisely because they are unforeseen and unencumbered by experiences (Abraham, 1986, according to Kozak and Andre, 2006: 269) which is partly contrary to the theory of disconfirmation. The potential of modern tourist destinations lies in the fact that stakeholders are looking for ways to incorporate an unexpected experience into an integrated tourism product.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The scientific method used for the purpose of collecting primary data was a survey and the respondents gave their answers anonymously. The research was conducted on an intentional sample by random selection during the summer season at selected destinations in Istria: Brijuni, Rovinj and Poreč, Labin, Brtonigla, Svetvinčenat, Motovun and Hum. According to the authors of this paper, the selected destinations are successful cultural and tourist destinations created on the basis of history, culture, forgotten legends and myths, a true event. The survey involved 554 respondents who spent their vacation in these destinations. The survey questionnaire consists of 30 questions, open and closed, which include three parts:

- general data/socio-demographic variables (gender, age, employment status, marital status, monthly income, level of education, etc.);
- questions related to the topic of experience economics and
- issues related to the topic of cultural tourism itself.

The goals of this research are to determine and establish the main motive for going on a trip to Istria, to define the role and importance of acquiring a new personalized experience through a unique experience that the tourist will experience, which is the economy of experience. Additional goals of this research are to try to understand the value of the economy of experience and the opportunities that are provided with it for the development of the entire tourism of the Istrian County, but also the country.

Furthermore, the goal is to realize the value of cultural tourism and cultural and historical heritage in providing a unique experience to tourists, expanding the tourist offer and in the development of tourism at the national level. This is a realization that many countries have already recognized and greatly strengthened their cultural offer and cultural tourism. In accordance with the above, the hypotheses are defined:

- H1: In modern tourism, the main motive for going on a trip has become the acquisition of a new experience, and therefore it is necessary to offer tourists "something different", or a unique and personalized experience.
- H2: The remembered value of a tourist destination is the result of a fulfilled need for entertainment, education and escapism.

Table 1: Socio-demographic variables/general data

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF THE RESPONDENTS	NUMBER	PERCENTAGE (%)
1 GENDER		
Female	383	69 %
Male	171	31 %
2. AGE		
Respondents are 37 years of age in average.		
3. WORKING STATUS		
Employed	435	78,6 %
Unemployed	36	6,6 %
Student	38	7 %
Secondary pupil	12	2,2 %
Retired	21	5,7 %
4. MARRIAGE SATUS		
Single	118	21,4 %
In relationship	174	31,4 %
Married	262	47,2 %
5. MONTHLY INCOME		
less than 4.000,00 kn	94	17 %
from 4.001,00 to 6.000,00 kn	157	28,4 %
from 6.001,00 to 8.000,00 kn	170	30,6 %
over 8.001,00 kn	133	24 %
6. Are there children under 18 in the family?		
yes	205	37,1 %
no	349	62,9 %
7. EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		
secondary school	227	41%
undergraduate study programme	131	23,6 %
graduate study programme	196	35,4 %
8. How do you prefer to travel?		
by car	448	81,7 %
by plane	71	12,7 %
by ship	0	0
by train	12	2,2 %
Alternatives (bicycle, walking)	23	3,5 %
9. When do you mostly go on trip?		
Spring	44	7,9 %
Summer	460	83 %
Autumn	27	4,8 %
Winter	23	4,4 %
10. What kind of accomodation do you prefer?		
Hotels	176	31,9 %
Hostels	14	2,6 %
Private accomodation	302	54,6%
Camping	45	8,3 %
other	17	2,6 %

(Source: Author)

From the total of 554 respondents participated in the research, 383 or 69% of them were female. The average age of the respondents is 27 years of age. When it comes to employment status, 435 respondents or 78.6% are employed. There are 47.2% of married respondents and total of 30.6% of respondents have a monthly income between HRK 6,001.00 - 8,000.00. From the total amount of the respondents there are 31,9% of them who while on holidays, mostly choose accomodation in a hotel. There are 35.4% of respondents with university degree.

Table 2: Motive for the trip is to gain new experience

	N	Arithmetic mean	SD	Minimum – maximum	Cronbach Alpha
Assessment of gaining new experience					
Adoption of basic knowledge about the way and style of life of the domicile population	554	4,91	1,2	1 – 5	
Heritage sites	554	3,95	1,3	1 – 5	0,902
Stories and legends	554	4,22	1,3	1 – 5	
Retelling the experience	554	3,87	1,2	1 – 5	
Memories through pictures and videos	554	4,08	1,3	1 – 5	

Note: assessments are given by 1 - 5 (1 – completely uninteresting, 5 – very interesting) Likert scale

SD – standard deviation

The internal reliability coefficient Cronbach's alpha for the assessment scale of the way of gaining new experiences is 0.907. This means that it is a good assessment tool, where the adoption of basic knowledge about the way of life of the domicile population is rated by arithmetic mean 4.91 (standard deviations 1.2), heritage sites, which include natural beauty, cultural tangible and intangible heritage was rated with an average score of 3.95 (ST 1.3). Stories and legends, according to respondents, were rated with an average score of 4.22 (standard deviations of 1.3), which indicates the fact that tourists and stories attract the attention of consumers in tourism. Istria was one of the first destinations in Croatia to offer its tourists an experience with lighted candles, sea views, the sounds of crackling fire in the fireplace, healthy, homemade breakfast, morning tea in beautiful porcelain cups, a romantic dinner or relaxation in a fragrant bath with a glass of wine. These are all rituals that are retold upon return from vacation and are rated with an average rating of 3.87, or a reminder of videos and images with an average rating of 4.08. This speaks in favor of the fact that the tourist product is actually a unique emotional experience delivered to the modern tourist. The experience must be able to generate striking impressions through positive features. Positive characteristics are those that create an experience in the minds of the participants. Impressions are conclusions about experience that support the topic and are remembered.

Table following on the next page

Table 3: Measures of arithmetic mean and dispersion, and the coefficient of internal reliability (Cronbach Alpha) of the scale of expectations regarding the elements of the tourist offer and their role in creating the economy of experience

	N	Arithmetic mean	SD	Minimum – maximum	Cronbach Alpha
Beauty of the landscape	554	4,61	0,9	1 – 5	0,974
Kindness of employees in tourism	554	4,30	0,9	1 – 5	
Historical and cultural heritage	554	4,53	1	1 – 5	
Kindness of population	554	4,11	1	1 – 5	
Local gastronomy	554	4,10	1	1 – 5	
Traffic availability	554	4,07	1	1 – 5	
Value for money	554	4,06	1	1 – 5	
Manifestations	554	4,05	1	1 – 5	
Tourist information before arrival	554	4,01	1	1 – 5	
Cultural contents	554	4,78	1	1 – 5	
Parking	554	3,96	1	1 – 5	
Tourist signalization in the destination	554	3,94	1	1 – 5	
Events	554	4,91	1,1	1 – 5	
Facilities for children	554	3,87	1,1	1 – 5	
Offers of excursion	554	4,82	1,1	1 – 5	
Accommodation	554	3,82	1,1	1 – 5	
Climate	554	3,65	1,1	1 – 5	
Sport facilities	554	3,62	1,2	1 – 5	

*Note: assessments are given by 1 - 5 (1 – extremely low expectations, 5 – extremely high expectations) Likert scale
SD – standard deviation
(Source: author's research)*

The creators of the experience must remove anything that diminishes, opposes, or distracts from the theme of the experience. Inconsistent, unplanned visual and other features can leave a customer confused or lost. Such characteristics create unpleasant experiences that should be noticed and removed as soon as possible, and replaced by these characteristics with positive ones that will create a pleasant experience. According to the above, experiences can be defined as an event that engages each tourist in an individual, personal way. While elements of the tourist offer are external factors for the tourist, the experience on the other hand is in personal nature. It exists in the minds of tourists that is stimulated on an emotional, physical intellectual level and the elements of the tourist offer that tourists rate with a high value are: the beauty of the landscape - arithmetic mean 4.61; historical and cultural heritage - 4.53; excursion offers - 4.82, kindness of tourism employees - 4.30; courtesy of the population - 4.11; and events and manifestations - 4.05. The internal reliability coefficient of Cronbach alpha for the assessment scale of the way of gaining new experiences is 0.974, which means that it is a acceptable assessment tool and can reliably determine the role and importance of elements in building a tourist destination experience. The results of the research differentiate different motives and expectations related to the tourist destination, and the consequence is different perceptions of experiences related to the destination. The experience arises from the interaction between the individual tourist and the set event, i.e. it depends on the state of consciousness of the consumer.

5. CONCLUSION

Every tourist destination can provide unforgettable tourist experiences if its history, customs and way of life of the local population are translated into stories. Thus, the economy of experience is actually the creation of a new economic and social value whose fundamental part of a tourist product or service is experience. Today, the main motive for travel is the desire to acquire a unique, unforgettable experience that encourages the consumer to plan the trip again in the future. When developing their own offer, tourist destinations follow socio-economic trends and changes of tourist demand, and increasingly in their tourist offer they are moving from the economy of services to the economy of experience. Tourism is impossible today if tourists do not experience, enjoy something new and actively participate in the events of the destination.

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