What do we mean by Experience Production? - A suggested ecology for the diverse concepts of producing and analyzing tourism experiences.

Gelter, H.
Conference abstract for the 23rd Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality. The Values of Tourism, 2-4 October 2014, Copenhagen

This paper aims to conceptually explore the recent emerged field of research and education of “Experience Production” (EP) and its relation to similar areas such as the Experience Economy, Experience Design, Experience staging etc. The aim is to clarify the prevailing conceptual diversified taxonomy within tourism research and education in exploring and understanding the processes of economic offering of experiences. The research methodology is based on a conceptual analysis of the literature within tourism research and education addressing “experiences”. The conceptual analysis is also based on a pilot-study of the conceptual understanding of EP among students and tourism operators, as well as personal reflections of 12 years of education within the education program “Experience Production” at Luleå University of technology (LTU) Sweden.

The word “Experience Production” EP, did not exist in the English language in 2002 when the Master program of “upplevelseproduktion” started at LTU, which then was translated to the swenglish word “experience production”. Google search on the word EP in 2002 gave no hits while in April 2014 the words gave 174 000. However, already in 1970 Alvin Toffler used the word EP while in tourism research and in the emerged field of “Experience Economy” the word EP is still rarely used. Instead a diverse flora of analogous and homologous concepts and terms has emerged. These includes the contemporary popular concept of Experience Design as well as words such as Experience Staging, Experience Enhancing, Experience Creation, Experience Development, Experience Realization, Developing Meaningful Experience, Building Customer Experiences, Customer Experience Management and others. Similar meanings involve additional concepts such as Nature & Cultural Interpretation, Recreational Management, Planed Event Experiences and Tourism Product Development. Several theoretical concepts for EP have been suggested such as the Five Aspect Meal Model, Servunction/Experience-room/Experiencescape concept, The Experience Pyramid, Pine & Gilmore’s 4E-model and The Enactment Model, the Star Experience Model, the Total Experience Management-model and others. However, most scholar attention has been towards analyzing and categorizing aspects of the customer experience and experience typologies, and less attention towards the “production processes” of experience offerings.

This paper suggests a clearer conceptual dichotomy between “producing” experiences and “analyzing” Experiences within tourism and the Experience Economy. One way might be by exploring the concepts of Total Experience Management (TEMa) and Total Experience Measurement (TEMe). A research contribution from this conceptual analysis is that there is no consensus about the taxonomy of methods and processes for experience offerings, and that the different concepts such as design, production, creation, staging, development etc. both overlap and have distinct meanings and values. This paper therefore suggests an overall “ecology” for the different concepts of producing and analyzing tourism experiences.