

DMC AS A CREATOR OF MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES IN TOURIST DESTINATION

Scientific paper

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to integrate some concepts of the Experience Economy and transformational offerings into a conceptual framework of transmodern experience production within tourist destination development.

Methodology – We explain the relevance of a tourist experience and sensation, with the DMC space split into three components: the resource space, the activity space and the experience space. Such space gets a sociological connotation as the destination milieu and becomes a 'meta' level, whose complexity is illustrated as the kaleidoscopic structure of a tourist milieu.

Approach – Experiences are more than additional benefits and offered supplementary to the basic services. In order to design memorable experiences, DMC have to analyzed tourists' needs, all five senses should be engaged and should try to surprise the guests over and over. This allows DMC to achieve high emotionality of services and products but on the other hand they have to put more efforts in the design and maintenance of service experiences.

Findings – Managers in tourist agencies and DMC of the future will need additional skills as well as being critical and analytic, they will need to be creative and innovative; communication skills need to include narrative, story-telling and the use of non-verbal cues to create atmosphere. They will need to develop empathy with their customers and the curiosity to discover and celebrate local distinctiveness.

Originality – Tourism and especially DMC it seems can learn a lot from literature and performance studies as these disciplines provide insight into how meaningful and memorable experiences are structured. The DMC is the animator and the motivator at the tourist destination. That will ensure the quality of tourist offer of a destination and the quality of life of the domicile population.

Keywords DMC, memorable experiences, transmodern experience production, tourist destination development

INTRODUCTION

In the course of years, tourism followed the industrial pattern. Right after it began in its modern form, various tourist activities became subject to their own rules. Although mass tourism continues being the predominant form, current growth of alternative tourism forms indicates that there are different consumers' requirements, which can be met. With respect to this, tourism should again turn towards people, and place an individual in the centre of the tourism system. There is a growing awareness of the need to develop a better tourism, equally beneficial and available to all, with a higher degree of responsibility. Travellers are now motivated by the wish to get familiar with a culture different from their own, at a place which cannot be replaced by any other tourist destination. Hospitality, in the full sense of the word allows to the guest a certain degree of closeness with the host, with the cultural and natural environment. The essence of tourism is for the visitor to seek social contact which is sincere, even

close, in an environment which is unusual and attractive. Responsible sustainable tourism as a new paradigm of transmodern tourism¹ encourages questioning and critical spirit, and, as a great power of the future, tries to prevent that culture in tourism be completely swallowed by the empire of spectacle and easy consumerism. Responsibility and sustainability in tourism is a creative turning point, a new paradigm and creative code, which opposes infinite economic progress and obsession with material wealth and promotes the concept of quality of living as a benchmark of progress. Such creativity is expressed as the economy of knowledge which shifts the emphasis from material capital to non-material assets.

Such creative approach brings together rationalism and intuitive thinking. This is a more balanced approach – not as an illusion, but as the individualistic quest for happiness.

It relies on the evaluation of innovation and individual creation, in the quest for individual identity and the confirmation of one's own value through work, effort and attempt to surpass oneself, outside the principles of consumer satisfaction and by perfecting measures which enable the development of other tastes and passions, besides consumption.

A tourist destination should make it possible for tourists to be more than just observers and become true protagonists of their journey, by establishing social contact with the local population. The exchange, for a tourist transfers his spirit and culture, enables better mutual understanding. Closeness created in such a way meets the needs that can be named 'existential tourism'. Travel (and tourism in general) touch everyone and leave no-one indifferent, because everyone is faced with emotion, memories and intimacy in the process. Everyone carries emotions experienced during a trip, they enrich and determine oneself. In their quest for closeness, in selecting a destination and visiting a place, tourists want to see and know everything and feel a true bond. This makes it possible for a tourist to feel less of a stranger, and even feel a part of a destination. If people, society and culture are put in the centre, they cannot be discussed without considering their very essence. The 'human territory' is also a place where tourism takes place and people and their environment together make a tourist destination. One cannot exist without the other.²

This paper will show that tourism can really be a privileged experience, in which tourist can not only express their personality, but can change it and enrich it in an interaction with the locals they meet.³

¹ 'Transmodernism' was first used by the Spanish feminist and philosopher Rosa Maria Rodriguez Magda in her essay: *La Sonrisa Saturno: Hacia una teoria transmoderna* in 1989. Using Hegel's logic, she puts modernism, postmodernism and transmodernism into a triad position with the processes of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. The authors who advocate transmodernism, scientists, political activists, literats, successful entrepreneurs and spiritual leaders point out that it is not a linear process, but a 'passing to a new, higher level of consciousness'. From chaos, to a new society in which governments, civil society and workers in tourism should only recognize the deeper potentials of tourism.

² Dimanche, F., Ferry, M. "Shaping tourism destinations: Back to the basics", *Tourism*, 2003.

³ Dimanche, F., Samdahl, D. "Leisure as Symbolic Consumption: A Conceptualization and Prospectus for Future Research", *Leisure Sciences*, 16, 1994.

We shall show how DMCs respect these tourists' motifs and promote services in tourism by enabling direct relations between visitors and locals. We shall also indicate how important it is that DMCs channel their creativity towards the attraction base and identify it as a tool which can be used to make a creative experience. Managing experiences and moods of tourists within a destination is of great importance. In his baggage, a guest brings expectations, and takes home memories. Irrespective of his aesthetic values, creativity based on attraction base, today includes the inception of different thinking and values, establishing an emotional attachment to a product, which leads towards responsible tourism. A successful destination communicates powerful emotion. Leisure industry went through various stages of development, providing entertainment, along with information and education. Today we can also speak of the 'process of creating emotion', which is achieved through enrichment, fulfilment, healing, self-healing, self-discovery, self-relating and the coping with new emotions is the result of a new stage of the society, often called the 'dream society'.⁴

Destination management company (DMC) and its role in managing a travel agency. The concept of destination management company – DMC, was created at the beginning of the 1970s in the USA. It emerged in order to describe the increasingly growing role of ground operators as logistics specialists at a tourist destination. Ten years later, destination management companies spring up all over the USA, thus extending their role in the MICE segment.⁵The Association of Destination Management Executives (ADME) was established in the mid-90s as an association gathering leaders and managers at DMCs. This association defined the destination management company as a professional service company which has a broad knowledge of the (geographical) region it operates in, the expertise and other means, all specialized in designing and creating activities, events, tours, transport and programme logistics.

Destination management companies usually operate in their own name and mostly offer complex tourist products (excursions, packages, events, meetings) or their professional service of creating (designing) and managing. They are different from other receptive agencies, which operate at the tourist destination in the name of the client who ordered such services and usually offer simple products and/or brokering services.

In accordance with the currently valid regulations in Croatia, each destination management company is a travel agency. In other words, destination management companies are the receptive travel agencies which apply and use somewhat different marketing strategies. The reason for that are not only the changes which occurred at the tourist market, but also the way in which they developed: by servicing first the business and only then the leisure segment of the tourism market.

Destination management companies offer a series of benefits for clients and subsequently for end users of their services. This includes first the knowledge and access to the best positions for the organization of a variety of contents, to various

⁴ Jensen, R. *The Dream Society - How the Coming Shift from Information to Imagination Will Transform Your Business*, McGraw-Hill, 1999.

⁵ Schaumann P. *The Guide to Successful Destination Management*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

service providers and belonging to social networks in the local community. By using the well-established contacts and purchasing power in negotiating with local service providers, DMCs will ensure the highest quality service in the most cost-effective way, or will ensure this service differently from the way in which it is usually done by the direct provider. Using their own and others' creative ideas, along with the knowledge of resources and networking with clients and service users, enables the maximum use of potentials of the destination in designing and realizing those services. This secures the highest degree of adjusting the service to the preferences of the client and giving appropriate instructions to the client and/or broker for 'shaping the expectations' in the service user (client).

Apart from providing a feeling of safety and professional guarantees, destination management companies are prepared to perform other services for the client and user, taking into consideration their wishes and disposable budget. In the end, instead of dealing with a number of contacts, the client has only one at the destination and pays in one place. The service user at the destination has at his disposal a relevant contact for the resolution of a myriad of problems of all kinds.

Destination management companies stimulate the immediate providers of particular services to adapt to the needs of demand more expediently, and due to the excellent knowledge of local tourist resources, they encourage the creation of, and also create new tourist products. They actively respond to demand and launch new products using various distribution channels for their services and different forms of cooperation.

EXPERIENCE ECONOMY IN TOURISM

Globalisation and the hyper consumer society which equalizes and de-characterizes everything are the cause of the gradual departure from the concept of mass tourism and quest for unique destinations, authenticity, various identities and specific, recognisable products coloured by culture.

Sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists who study consumption agree that consumers use consumer goods and services to construct meaning. The purpose is to send a desirable picture to others, and for themselves, it is to define identity and acquire the feeling of advantage and satisfaction.⁶The quest for significance of an experience is the highest goal, because the postconsumer and post tourist try to shape their lives through the process of experimenting, which results in striking the balance within the framework of the fragmentary, the different, the independent, and disregarding all this, the important event.

⁶ Belk R.W. "Assessing the Effects of Visible Consumption Patterns on Impression Formation", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 5, 1978.; Belk R.W., Bahn K.D., Mayer R.N. (1982) "Developmental Recognition of Consumption Symbolism", *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9.; Olsen, B. "Bri Loyalty and Consumption Patterns". In: Sherry J.F. (ed) *Contemporary Marketing and Consumer Behaviour*. London: Sage. 245-281, 1994.; Featherstone M. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, London: Sage, 1997.

The concept of experience is of a relatively recent date, presented in two key papers: Schulze's analysis of cultural behaviour of different social strata in Nuremberg⁷ and in the Pine and Gilmore book.⁸ In these books, advantage is given to experience rather than services, and experience is taken as the key element of creation of value within an organization. Experience is not a new phenomenon and is mostly linked to entertainment, tourism, cultural activities, marketing, the Internet and similar.

These authors differentiate between four stages of economy which precede the economy of experience: agricultural economy, industrial economy, economy of services and the economy of knowledge. This idea was earlier presented in the works of Alvin Toffler⁹ and Daniel Bell.¹⁰ We cannot claim, however, that regarding the fact of development from agricultural economy to economy of experience, there are no remains of all other stages (industrial economy, economy of services) in today's economy. Authors emphasize that the economy of experience is not yet fully developed. In earlier stages of economic development the consumer required products and services that met his primary needs, mostly his existential needs, and later the need for knowledge and problem-solving and similar. Today, these are the needs of a higher order – for an interesting life, full of experience and amusing, in a pleasant way. Today's consumers seek far more than the mere product and/or service. They seek experience that the product or service will bring along, because it is memorable. Therefore, the experience of any sort can be encouraged by any kind of product/service: travel, music, film, food, an exhibition at a museum, an event. Experiences can be of different kinds. They provoke and can move all senses. Some experiences have a pronounced physical component (eg. learning traditional dances of the domicile country and participation in a dancing contest, and some are completely devoid of that component or are more on the passive side (a classical music concert). Some experiences can be mentally demanding (watching a film), while others are mentally less demanding (staying at a cosy family-run hotel). There are also experiences related to IT technology (GPS-guided travel), while others are unrelated to it (a bicycle ride in picturesque landscape).

EXPERIENCE AS A BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY IN TOURISM

Experience can really present a business opportunity, because each well-designed, managed, organized and marketed, and finally successfully sold experience is a good business opportunity. Pine and Gilmore¹¹ stress the importance of consumers in the very creation of an experience. Experience always emerges when the company involves and in a way engages consumers. This experience links together all involved consumers, but each of them can have a different sensation of this experience. This

⁷ Schulze, G. *Erlebnisgesellschaft: Kulturosoziologie der Gegenwart*, Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York, 1992.

⁸ Pine, B. J.II., Gilmore, J. H. *The Experience Economy – work is theatre and every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

⁹ Toffler, A. *The Third Wave*. New York: Bantam Books, 1980.

¹⁰ Bell, D. *The Coming of Post-industrial Society: a Venture in Social Forecasting*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

¹¹ Pine, B. J.II., Gilmore, J. H. *The Experience Economy – work is theatre and every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

happens because each person, each consumer has his own interaction with this experience which depends on his or her emotions, interpretations, emotions, etc.

Pine and Gilmore¹² claim that the competitive advantage can be acquired only if a unique and unforgettable experience is offered to a consumer. This can be done only if work is treated like a performance and each job as a stage. As this paper will demonstrate, it comes from the metaphor of 'service as a drama'.¹³ Their approach led to the growing number of books on management which attempt to make the consumers' experience the central topic of strategic planning, marketing and logistics of an organization.¹⁴ The growth of experience marketing is also important because of the increased use of corporate service and events and sponsoring of sports and arts in order to associate brands with unforgettable experience which involves senses and emotions.

Added value as a concept in tourism is closely related to the experience and sensation of a holiday. Relying solely on the price and delivery of a product, i.e. on accommodation and transport of visitors, is completely out of place because there is a new differentiation of products, related to the experience that these products are capable of generating in a consumer. The experience and the sensation are the added value in tourism. Within the tourist destination, interestingly interpreted attractions which fit well in the tourist product of a destination enable the creation of added value. They become more than that: a good business opportunity. The essence of added value, the experience and sensation, are emotions which the experience provokes in the consumer. Products which have this effect, provoked in the consumer by experience and emotional state, are products with high added value, and their demand at the market is on the increase.

¹² Pine, B. J.II., Gilmore, J. H. *The Experience Economy – work is theatre and every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

¹³ Grove, S. J., Fisk, R. P. and Bitner, M.J. "Dramatizing the Service Experience: A Managerial Approach in Advances in Services Marketing and Management", 1992. in Swartz, T. A., Brown, S. i Bowen, D. (ed.) Greenwich, CT. JAI Press Inc. [in Gabott, M. i Hogg, G. *Contemporary Services Marketing: A Reader*. Dryden Press], 1997.

¹⁴ Schmitt, B. *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act and Relate to Your Company and Bris*. Free Press, 1999.; Shaw, C. *Revolutionize Your Customer Experience*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan. 2005.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TOURIST SPACE IN CREATING EXPERIENCE AND EMOTIONS

Space provides the basic physical framework for the stay of hosts and guests at the tourist destination. It encompasses the entire environment with the offer, transport and communication infrastructure which enables the social¹⁵ and the spatial mobility.¹⁶ The space in which the experience is offered and consumed is the *space of experience*.¹⁷

Within that space, and the circle of service suppliers and guests, resources, the same as products and services based on them, get enriched by experience.¹⁸ Experience is mostly limited to particular parts of the destination space.¹⁹ However, within the framework of value management for the consumer, or, rather, mood management, in a thick network of attractions, products and events²⁰ experience is stretched all over the entire destination.

In that way, it is possible, as identified by Pine and Gilmore,²¹ to create the continuous positive experience which is charged with energy and which has, due to these features, surpassed the classical dimensions of the existing geographic space, so that we can say that ambiance is one of the decisive elements. Areas of joint activity of spatial planning and product development are clearly visible. In that context it is of utmost importance that a DMC observes tourist attractions holistically, as a network of attractions in the space of a tourist destination and channels the movement of tourists between attractions, thus creating the chain of services within the destination's space, i.e. within the spatial resource. In order to avoid negative impressions which could impact upon the experience value of attractions, it is necessary to expand the experience chain to the entire space and create the destination milieu. The experience quality cannot be measured solely in the attraction locations, but on the entire territory where tourists move during a sojourn in a destination. This space can be denoted as the destination milieu. The real challenge for a tourist management company is to convert the spatial

¹⁵ Urry, J. "Connections, Environment and Planning". *Society and Space*, 22(4), 27-37, 2002.; Kesselring, S. "Pioneering Mobilities. New patterns of movement and motility in a mobile world. Environment and Planning". Special Issue. *Mobilities and Materialities* pp. 269-279, 2006.

¹⁶ Diewitz, U., Klippel, P. and Verron, H. "Der Verkehr droht die Mobilität zu ersticken", *Internationales Verkehrswesen*, 3, 1998.; Becker, U., Gerike, R. *Ziele von und fuer Verkehr* (Wozu dient eigentlich unser Verkehr, und wie soll er aussehen?), Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der TU Dresden, 2000.

¹⁷ Lorentzen, A., Hansen, C.J., Lassen, C.I. "Small cities in the experience economy; an evolutionary approach /International conference: Regions in Focus?" in *Conference abstract volume* (p. 39) University of Lisbon, Portugal. Seaford, UK: Regional Studies Association, April 2nd -5th, 2007.

¹⁸ Bieger, T., Wittmer, A. "Integrierte strategische Planung von Attraktionspunkten", in Pechlaner H., Bieger T., Weiermair K. (eds), *Attraktions-Management. Fuehrung und Steuerung von Attraktionspunkten*, Wien, Linde, 2006.

¹⁹ Zouoni, G., Kouremenos, A. "Do tourism providers know their visitors? An investigation of tourism experience at a destination", *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 8, 4, 282-297, 2008.

²⁰ Lange, S. Hertrei, M., Pechlaner, H. "From mobility space toward experience space. Increasing the experience value in tourism destinations". Paper presented at the *Consumer Behavior in Tourism Symposium* 2008. Bruneck, Italy, 13.12.2008.,

²¹ Pine, B. J.II., Gilmore, J. H. *The Experience Economy – work is theatre and every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999.

resource into the experience resource.²² Thus, the experience chain will have a specific effect. It shows that an experience should be comprised of an uninterrupted chain of emotional sensations, without the negative impressions that could cut this chain. Based on such a string of uninterrupted emotional moments, the mental system produces the so-called 'state of mind'.²³

A tourist destination and a DMC in the process of creating a tourist milieu should draw from all resources they have at their disposal, with the purpose of physical shaping the milieu, i.e. shaping its offer. Furthermore, after the milieu is shaped physically, work on impression-making begins, i.e., on the creation of prerequisites for positive emotional reactions to this tourist milieu.

This presupposes the enrichment of the offer with the elements which directly impact upon the very emotional structure of tourists and encourage the emotions which will certainly lead to satisfaction.

A destination and the DMC which create an emotional structure, i.e. the emotional tourist milieu enable the tourist which visits it and stays at that place, to feel and express his own satisfaction. A tourist destination serves as a medium which meets the social and psychological needs of a tourist. That is why the elements of the tourist space, most of all the cultural landscape of a destination, are suitable for the improvement, enhancement and preservation of the quality of living of an individual, because of the focus on the consumption of the tourist destination. The overall experience of the entirety is an element of the landscape visited by tourist, i.e. the tourist milieu²⁴ is capable of producing a change in the awareness which impacts upon the quality of life.

In the context of a tourist destination, emotions offer to the tourist navigation through a destination, i.e. a dynamic experience of experiencing its offer, and, finally, they serve as a criterion for its evaluation. If the destination milieu impacts the tourist proactively, and does the same to his emotional consumption experience during the stay, it ensures that the pleasure of that tourist, i.e. his positive emotional reaction which, if there is a sufficient intellectual stimulus, can result in the knowledge that rounds off the necessary experience and generates a new visit and a new profit. If travel is considered an emotional necessity, then the decisions about travel are taken on the basis of the emotional value of travel, i.e. the assessment to what extent the trip will be in line with the lifestyle and whether it will make possible a kind of creative, physical or spiritual development. When speaking of emotions in this context, one cannot speak of a string of specific affective states, but the state which has the strongest link with emotions is

²² Lange, S. Herntrei, M., Pechlaner, H. "From mobility space toward experience space. Increasing the experience value in tourism destinations". *Paper presented at the Consumer Behavior in Tourism Symposium* 2008. Bruneck, Italy, 13.12.2008.

²³ Groetsch, K. "Psychologische Aspekte von Erlebniswelten". in H.H. Hinterhuber, H. Pechlaner i K. Matzler (ed.) *IndustrieErlebnisWelten – Vom Stört zur Destination* (pp 69-85). Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 2001.

²⁴ Michalko, G., Ratz, T. The Role of the Tourist Milieu in the Social Construction of the Tourist Experience. In XVI Congress of Sociology: *The Quality of Social Existence in a Globalising World*, CD-ROM. Madrid: International Sociological Association, 2006.

the mood. According to Bagozzi and Cohen,²⁵ mood can hardly be told apart from emotions. However, mood lasts longer (from a few hours to a few days) and has a lower intensity than emotion. Moods are usually not related to specific stimuli. Moods differ from emotions with respect to their manifestation in memory; they can be provoked and maintained, without an individual being aware of his emotional state, what provoked it and how it will impact upon his activities. Some authors define emotions as 'mental state of readiness which appears through the cognitive assessment of an event or thought'.²⁶ Based on this definition, what remains is to conclude that an event or thought can produce emotions which one relates to this event. Therefore, DMCs need to establish a relationship between an event and an emotion which then creates a kind of mood, based upon which an experience is formed. When such an idea is transposed into the context of behaviour of tourists as consumers, it is clear how strongly a DMC as a creator of a product/service can participate in the creation of a tourist's emotions-moods.

The scope of tourists' communication with the local population, their knowledge of the place, the intensity of their involvement in the activities a destination offers and their sociocultural attitudes, all this together influences upon their experience of the social elements of a tourist milieu. Different interpretations of tourists with a variety of cultural experiences will influence upon the very milieu, as well. Emphasizing targeted and market-specific elements in market communication can change the existing milieu of a destination in the long term.²⁷ A tourist milieu can be understood as a 'meta' level of a destination as a tourist product. 'It contains abstract elements of visible reality, although every element of the milieu can be individually perceived in the course of consuming a place in a usual way, and only the elusive totality of all elements can create attraction for a visitor'.²⁸ It consists of the physical environment of a destination and inherited values, visible and invisible elements of the tourist offer, and human features, such as the behaviour of the local population and of other visitors, the expression of religious feelings, or the relationship between tourists and hosts.

One of the main premises of the author of the milieu concept is that the tourist milieu in general is not limited to a single destination and that, owing to the comparable geographic location or cultural history, the DMC can unite larger regions under the umbrella of its offer, putting emphasis on the similar features of the milieu.

²⁵ Bagozzi, F. *Generazione in ecstasy, Droghe, miti e musica della generazione techno*, Torino, Edizioni Gruppo Abele, 1997.; Cohen, E. "Pilgrimage and Tourism: Convergence and Divergence", Pp. 47-61 in A. Morinis (ed) *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. 1992.

²⁶ Meriläinen, K. "The Structural Definition of Emotion and Experiences – a Consumer Behavioural Approach". in Kylanen, M. (ed), *Articles on Experiences*. Rovaniemi: Lapli Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry; University of Lapli Press, 2006.

²⁷ Butler, R.W. "Tartan Mythology: The Traditional Tourist Image of Scot", in Ringer, R. (ed.), *Destinations. Cultural Liscapes of Tourism*, London, Routledge, 1998. Butler 1998.

²⁸ Michalko, G., Ratz, T. The Role of the Tourist Milieu in the Social Construction of the Tourist Experience. In XVI Congress of Sociology: *The Quality of Social Existence in a Globalising World*, CD-ROM. Madrid: International Sociological Association, 2006.

TOOLS FOR SHAPING EXPERIENCE AND SENSATION: STORYTELLING AND THE SCHEHERAZADE STRATEGY

By departing from mass tourism and turning towards special interest tourism and all-year operation, a DMC is mostly differentiated by specially designed products made of various unforgettable activities, or experiences. These experiences are what the customers will take home, what they will tell others, recommend to them, and pay top price for. Involving local people, using the five senses and stressing feelings are the key ingredients for developing a good experience, built around a theme and orchestrated through storytelling. Likewise, the activities of learning with experts, in which a tourist participates actively, contribute to the attainment of the desired degree of an experience. Surprise adds to making it more memorable and including the element of surprise is a good idea. It should not, however, look staged, and if possible should be in line with the story which is being told. Customers like taking things home and remembering their experiences. It is also useful to include souvenirs which are easy to remember if customers themselves took part in their manufacturing, especially if it is something authentically local.

A DMC knows that today, for selling a tourist destination and its competitiveness at a global market, in the public space satiated with information, in order for its tourist offer to reach its target group, almost every information is presented in the form of a story. The image of a tourist destination cannot be left to chance, but becomes the object of a narrative construction.

Each personal memory of a tourist, each character feature, each experience, thus becomes an atom of a coherent narrative which is reflected in the brand of a tourist destination. Commercials are watched and brands are experienced. The tourist is converted into a mirror-man who only reflects things and does not live within them and through them. He is thus made even more alienated and lonely. In such way, a DMC becomes the stylist, the director and the narrator for itself. For a DMC that means that by putting the concept of heritage in the context of a tourist destination, it means a lot more than just 'having a story'. From the very beginning, using the destination management and marketing strategy, special fabulation is built and given identity – a mirror in which different groups of tourists will recognize themselves in the search for added value and emotional experience. Through the system of presentation of tourist attractions and animation, heritage gets a function of the narrative segment, and the techniques such animation increasingly uses are from the field of pedagogy and therapeutical work.

In creating an experience, a DMC can use the tools of 'storytelling' or the 'Scheherazade Strategy'²⁹ which integrates four functions:

1. Presenting the natural and cultural heritage through the story which should construct the narrative identity of a place (the storyline),

²⁹ Christian Salmon, a writer and research fellow at the Research centre for art and language (CNRS) in Paris, in his books: *Storytelling or I'm telling you a story*, Clio, Belgrade, 2011. and *The Scheherazade Strategy*, Clio, Belgrade, 2011. deals in detail with the storytelling machinery in the service of big capital and political life.

2. Placing the story into a desired time, managing the pace and the narrative tension in the entire course of its duration (*timing*),
3. Framing the message of the destination, i.e. stressing the tourist attractions as the main factor of attractiveness for tourists,
4. Creating a network on the Internet and in the field, i.e. a hybrid and contagious environment which will attract attention and structure the desirable market niche for a tourist (networking).

A story enables focus on and awareness of the relationship between the place and the theme, and the experience of a 'story' can be the focal point of the development of a place. All too frequently, the 'message' is put in the forefront of the intended communication, and attractions have to be based on provoking 'change in thinking pattern or attitude' in a visitor. The 'story' is much more than the mere access to information, it enables visitors to identify with the place and the story which is offered in that place exclusively, so that the story has a goal and purpose and is not a purpose unto itself. In that context, marketing messages are through the story directed at feelings/sensations and experiences which certain activities at a destination will provoke, and not on the physical features of the destination itself. The elements of the milieu considerably contribute to the overall feeling of happiness in visitors, and are perceived as influential and impressive elements of their holiday experience.

The brain must interpret tangible physical products and commodities as well as intangible information goods and service encounters before we can 'see' them with our brain. If we strip the physical appearance of commodities, products and services what remains are complex, interrelated signs and symbol networks, stories that can be blended to create new thoughts and actions. The amount of new stories projected could be a measure to distinguish between ordinary and memorable commercially staged experiences, between commodities at one end of the spectrum and transformations on the other end. The most effective way according to the literary mind theory³⁰ seems to let people actively choose the situation they want to be in. Every individual will have different stories in his mind and not all new stories will connect easily with the ones already present. Rather than trying to compose a fixed story in the hope it will activate many spatial stories in many people, so DMC should design environments that support people in personal story-making. By allowing people to choose, the chance they activate a larger part of the existing stories in their mind is increased, and thereby the chance that the experience is more meaningful and memorable to tourists.

Well-designed interactive narratives carefully balance these two aspects, but when most people think about interactive narratives they think about electronic text (hypertext) or computer games only. Depending on the way you walk through a museum, a different story is conveyed to you. The same holds for theme parks and shop layouts. For Example: "At 18:00 the doors of an exotic fish restaurant open. The captain and the chef de cuisine welcome the guest on board their submarine. Today, swordfish is on the menu. When you walk into the fish restaurant you see that the inside looks like a boat with a large steer in the middle. Through the displays on the wall, concealed as windows you see a view of the ocean. At 19:00 the boat departs, the

³⁰ Turner, M. *The Literary Mind: The Origins of Thought and Language*, Oxford University Press, 1996.

images on the display start to change and it seems as if the restaurant starts to move. The captain and his crew inform the restaurant guests that they need to switch off their mobile phones because the boat is starting to dive. Slowly, the sea level on the images on the display starts to rise and lights in the restaurant flicker for a moment. The sounds of engines are heard in the background...”.³¹

The ambient narrative concept connects business and technology, we believe, with the deep linguistic nature of themed environments and environments where people can actively participate in the experience. It provides technologists with a framework for the design and implementation of a system architecture for ambient intelligent environments that support co-creation. For DMC the concept of ambient narratives can provide a terminology as well as rules and guidelines for the design of the customer interface (touch points).

Ambient narratives are dramatic stories instead of literary stories. Dramatic stories like movies have properties of enactment, intensification and unity of action, whereas literary stories like novels have properties of description, extensification and episodic structure.³² Especially in tourist destinations ambient narratives are performed, enacted in real time and the architecture, interior design and ambient media must work in concert with each other to create an aesthetically pleasing, immersive experience (intensification). And because the goal of ambient narratives is to improve everyday life performances, all incidents should be causally related to a central action (unity of action). Tourism and especially DMC it seems can learn a lot from literature and performance studies as these disciplines provide insight into how meaningful and memorable experiences are structured.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, advantage is given to the neglected physical (geographical) aspect of a tourist destination, as a functional area which enables the attainment of a quality integral tourist experience and sensation. At that, the base tourist destination is of special significance. It consists of one or more places in the vicinity and the personal functional space. In it, a true tourist 'metabolism' of a place takes place, along with the operation of a DMC.

We explain the relevance of a tourist experience and sensation, with the DMC space split into three components: the resource space, the activity space and the experience space. Such space gets a sociological connotation as the destination milieu and becomes a 'meta' level, whose complexity is illustrated as the kaleidoscopic structure of a tourist milieu.

³¹ Van Doorn, M. and De Vries, A.P. *Co-creation in Ambient Narratives*, in *Ambient Intelligence for Everyday Life (AmI-Life'05)*, Lecture Notes in Computer Science 3964, 2006.

³² Greene, B. *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory*, Vintage, 2000.

This paper proves that the development of tourism can be sustainable in the long term only if own inimitable competitive advantages were previously well communicated previously. In that sense, the entire tourist destination, the same as the DMC as the experience creator, taking into account all strategic potentials it has at its disposal, should: a) create and b) communicate and c) sustain the level of its unique competitive advantage, in the long term.

Since there are no two identically attractive tourist destinations with respect to their creative potential and/or the structure of its resource-attraction base, with an identically composed structure of the so-called tourist chain of values, or with the same range of tourist experience or sensation offered on that base, the differentiation through experience is an acceptable way of shaping a destination's comparative advantage.

Finally, in the light of the fact that examples of other countries indicate that it is easier to succeed at the international market if business is done in a focused, organized and gradual way, the role of DMCs is important in the development of experience tourism. The DMC should support the development of all tourist products which will guarantee that strong competitive advantages get built fast and with the least effort, providing to potential visitors the most impressive experience and/or sensation.

At the same time, the market position of a tourist destination at the global market can be defined as a perception of the existing system of disposable tourist experiences (and the related consumer benefits) which potential and/or real visitors have of it, and in comparison with other, competing tourist destinations. In that sense, the first step towards the efficient market positioning of a destination concerns the defining of the system of disposable tourist experiences which will be sufficiently attractive to potential visitors in order to choose this, and not a competing destination. That is why the role of DMCs is important in the development and promotion of a destination, because, it is through the implementation of tourist attractions, with the use of special technology, as presented in the paper, an unforgettable experience and sensation get created and can bring about the surge of sincere emotion and joy of living.

We can therefore conclude that the DMC is the animator and the motivator at the tourist destination, which helps that the local population fits its everyday occupations, passions and talents into the activity and operation of tourism and presents its lifestyle and work style in this way. That will ensure the quality of tourist offer of a destination and the quality of life of the domicile population.

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