MODULE 4

Developing Engaging Tourism Experiences

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MODULE 4: DEVELOPING ENGAGING TOURISM EXPERIENCES

1. Introduction

1.1. Target Group of the Module

Tourism students, educators and trainers of professionals, and tourism professionals.

1.2. Learning Objectives and Outcomes

1.2.1. Objectives

Main Objective: The primary objective of the module is to equip participants with the knowledge and skills needed to create memorable and engaging tourism experiences.

Sub-Aims:

- **Comprehensive Understanding:** Develop a holistic understanding of the components involved in developing engaging tourism experiences.
- **Narrative Craftsmanship:** Provide an examination of the components of storytelling within the context of tourism development and their contributions to the effectiveness and impact of crafted experiences.
- **Experiential Frameworks:** Explore effective frameworks for developing immersive and experiential tourism offerings.
- **Innovation:** Gain knowledge about the role of technology in enhancing tourism experiences for contemporary audiences.

1.2.2. Learning Outcomes

- **Understanding Tourist Experience Concepts:** Define and differentiate between various concepts related to tourist experiences, such as experiential tourism, sustainable tourism experiences, and regenerative tourism experiences. Analyse the elements that contribute to defining and shaping tourist experiences in diverse tourism contexts.
- **Exploring the Power of Experiences for Transformation:** Examine the theoretical foundations of the experience economy and its transformative potential. Identify and evaluate the key components that contribute to creating meaningful and transformative experiences for both visitors and hosts.
- **Mastering Engaging Experience Design:** Comprehend the holistic approach to experience design and its significance in crafting memorable tourism encounters. Understand the role of collaborative design (co-design) in enhancing engagement and satisfaction among tourists.
- **Applying Steps for Experience Design:** Break down the steps involved in experience design, including pre-experience preparation, on-site experience planning, and post-experience evaluation. Apply the principles of effective experience design through practical scenarios and case studies.
- **Innovations in Developing Engaging Tourism Experiences:** Explore contemporary innovations shaping the tourism industry, with a focus on technologies, sustainability practices, and cultural

integration. Assess the role of innovation culture in fostering creativity and experimentation for enhancing tourism experiences.

These learning outcomes aim to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of tourist experience concepts, the transformative potential of experiences, practical experience design skills, and insights into innovative trends in the tourism industry.

1.3. Methods Used During the Lesson

- Short intro to the topic
- Self-reflection and self-learning
- Guided discussions
- Practical exercises

1.4. Necessary Equipment and Materials

- A laptop / desktop
- A projector
- Handouts provided by the teacher / educator
- Short videos / animation video of the selected good practice

1.5. Structure of the Module

- **An ice-breaker activity**
- **Theoretical Part**
    - Introducing the different concepts
    - Introducing the realm of engaging tourism experiences
    - Steps for Holistic and Engaging Experience Design
- **Practical Part**
    - Experience Analysis

- Experience Development
- Experience Implementation

- **Evaluation of the module's topic**

1. 6. Timetable

ACTIVITIES	TIME
Ice-breaker activity	15 min.
Introducing the different concepts	10 min.
Introducing the realm of engaging tourism experiences	20 min.
Steps for Holistic and Engaging Experience Design	20 min.
Experience Analysis	15 min.
Experience Development	15 min.
Evaluation	5 min.
Total:	100 min.

1.7. Ice-breaker Activity

Instructions: Mr. Gutticcelli, a professional chef from a rural area in Italy would like to implement an engaging food experience to develop tourism in his region. He filled in the table below with his main ideas. You are a tourism experience designer. Using the information from the table, and your knowledge from the module, craft a compelling description of the engaging tourism experience that would meet the chef's ambitions. The description should include aspects linked to storytelling.

	[why / cultivate]	[how / co-create]	[what / craft]
purpose sensing convergence	**calling** What is the potential for healing & wholeness that we're sensing in this place? What is the wisdom that is needed? **People need to reconnect with the food that they eat everyday, the ingredients that end up in their plate, and the journey that each of these products has gone through.**	**community** What conversation is needed — what deeper connection to people, place and self? **We all crave a connection to craft, traditions, the region we are visiting, people that surround us, and ourselves. By creating their own food plate participants can reconnect with their creativity, with the region, its local producers, and with other participants.**	**contribution** What tangible offering would serve as a touchstone for the rest of the work? What constitutes excellence? **Just like a bouquet where you carefully pick, gather, and match the flowers yourself, this creative food plate would be the result of an immersive day, visiting and picking ingredients on local farms and orchards, then cooking, decorating, and savouring back at the workshop.**
practice designing for flow	**story** What is the story and strategy that can bring us together in vibrant (maybe even sacred) aliveness? **The experience will provide people with the opportunity to connect with the region, its traditions, residents, and products, in a multi-sensory experience, where they make their own creative plate of locaThe program would take the participants out through the area to visit three different**	**systems** How can we design for flow of relationship, learning & responsiveness? **The programme takes the participants out through the area to visit three different local producers, where they can learn about the products before they collect them. Then they would receive instructions aThe program would take the participants out through the area to visit three different local producers, where they can learn about the**	**structure** What is the lightest possible supportive structure to connect mastery to contribution? **The experience would require a workshop to gather the participants, a means of transport to get to the various visits, and website/social media to advertise the experience. I consider the creation of partnerships to support the development of the experience.**
passion inviting divergence	**meaning** What is my own unfolding story? What brings me alive? How can my own story be enriched by this project? **Developing this experience is a way for me to share the culinary history and traditions of the region, and perpetuate our producers' knowledge and know-how.**	**membership** What gives me a sense of belonging with people, with this place, and with my work? How can I grow more of that? **Crafting this experience is a way to feel part of the local community, of people who care for the land. Sharing their stories and traditions gives me a sense of belonging to this area.**	**mastery** What talents can I contribute? What would I love to learn? **Cooking is my passion and my strongest skill, sharing it with other people by teaching them to unleash their creativity like I do behind the stove is my biggest dream.**

stewardship
aligning with life; grounding in place

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Answer:

2. Theoretical Part

2.1. Introduction

This module focuses on the development of engaging tourism experiences, introducing you to the theoretical aspects of the development of engaging tourism experiences.

Authentic and memorable encounters are crucial in the current travel landscape and engaging tourism experiences have become a necessity to meet the changing demands of audiences. This approach to travel goes beyond the traditional sightseeing model, involving participants in the essence of a destination through hands-on activities, out-of-the-ordinary, immersive experiences and genuine interactions with locals and fellow travellers.

Throughout this module, we will explore the essential principles of narrative design, strategic planning, audience engagement, and innovative methodologies - tailored to provide you with the knowledge and skills needed to create tourism experiences that resonate with diverse audiences.

This module equips cultural professionals, artisans, guides, tourism SMEs or professionals from other sectors with the necessary knowledge to enter the tourism sector by developing a relevant tourism offer. Devling into the theoretical and practical aspects of creating immersive and compelling narratives, adding a valuable layer to your expertise and enhancing your ability to captivate audiences through engaging tourism experiences.

2.2. Definitions

2.2.1. Defining the Tourist Experience

A tourist experience can be defined as an interaction between tourists and destinations, with destinations being the site of the experience and tourists being the actors of the experience (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003).

However, this concept presented by Stamboulis and Skayannis has since matured into a complex exchange involving destinations, tourists, and hosts, which is also closely linked to the concept of regenerative tourism principles. Modern tourism experiences can be broadly categorised into different types.

First, there is the **tourism destination as an experience.** These experiences are the summary of all sub-experiences of a destination and encompass unique and broader aspects of engagement, such as destination storytelling and marketing, which play a crucial role in shaping visitors' perceptions. Destination storytelling involves crafting narratives that showcase a location's history, culture, and distinctive features, creating a compelling and immersive experience for tourists. The tourism destination as an experience goes beyond the physicality of a place; it encapsulates the emotional and sensory connections formed during the visit, emphasising the importance of a holistic and memorable encounter.

The second type is the **individual tourism experience**. These are focused on personalised journeys and cater to specific interests. They represent touch points throughout the visitor’s journey in a tourism

destination (ex: an attraction or a meal in a theme park, specific accommodation, wine tasting as part of a guided tour, etc.).

Niche Tourism Experiences: This category highlights specialised and often offbeat adventures that cater to niche interests or passions. Niche experiences revolve around very specific themes and need to be promoted differently and in a very targeted way (ex: targeting bird specialists for a birdwatching retreat). These experiences appeal to a select audience seeking unique and in-depth engagements beyond mainstream tourism.

In essence, the evolution of tourism experiences reflects a shift from an unidirectional interaction between tourists and destinations to a multifaceted exchange involving all stakeholders. Today's tourists actively seek diverse, personalised, and specialised encounters, transforming tourism into a dynamic and enriching exchange between visitors, the locales they explore, and the communities that host them.

Understanding tourism experiences is crucial in today's travel landscape, where people actively seek unique and memorable encounters. These shifts have led to the creation of experiences that meet the new and evolving demands of travellers today and at the same time give businesses a competitive advantage by making them stand out. Despite the recognised importance of these experiences by experts and decision-makers, there is still some confusion about what exactly “tourism experience” means.

Experiences include every aspect, from economic growth to personal emotions. They start with booking and communication before

the actual experience and continue afterwards with the sharing of memories and photos on social media or sharing stories with friends and relatives. As technology continues to play a big role in shaping how we experience things, from the internet to virtual reality, organisations are placing more focus on creating meaningful experiences for travellers. This shift in focus from just the main activity to all the other things around it highlights the importance of collaboration between different businesses and groups to give tourists a complete and positive experience, including the connection with host communities.

2.2.2. Experiential Tourism

Experiential tourism is often regarded as a transformative approach to travel. It goes beyond conventional sightseeing to emphasise active engagement and personal connection with the destination. In contrast to traditional tourism, which primarily involves observing attractions, experiential tourism immerses travellers in the local culture, fostering authentic interactions and hands-on participation. This dynamic form of travel seeks to create lasting memories by providing unique, sensorial, and often adventurous encounters that go beyond the typical tourist experience. The following sections will cover the key aspects of experiential tourism, exploring its principles, benefits, and the pivotal role it plays in shaping the future of the travel industry.

2.2.3. Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism Experiences

Sustainable and regenerative tourism experiences have grown in recent years. These encompass the phases before, during, and after a journey and represent a holistic approach to tourism development.

Sustainable experiences are designed with a commitment to minimising negative environmental impacts and maximising positive contributions to host communities. Before the trip, sustainable tourism experiences focus on careful planning and considerate preparation, aiming to reduce ecological footprints and support local economies. During the journey, these experiences prioritise responsible practices that respect natural resources, wildlife, and cultural heritage. Additionally, regenerative tourism experiences take a long-term view, actively seeking to contribute to the restoration and improvement of destinations. They aspire to create a positive and enduring impact on host communities by fostering social and economic benefits. In essence, embracing sustainable and regenerative principles in tourism ensures that the industry becomes a force for positive change, benefiting both travellers and the communities they visit.

2.3. Experience Economy and Transformation

2.3.1. Introduction

The Experience Economy refers to an economic model where businesses and individuals emphasise the creation and delivery of memorable and engaging experiences as a key component of their value proposition. This concept was first introduced by authors Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore in their 1998 Harvard Business Review article titled *"Welcome to the Experience Economy."* In this model, experiences are considered a distinct economic offering, surpassing commodities, goods, and services in terms of consumer value. The authors argue that in the Experience Economy, businesses can stage experiences that are not only

enjoyable but also create a profound impact, forging lasting connections with customers. The concept has since become a guiding principle for various industries, encouraging them to prioritise the design and delivery of meaningful and transformative experiences.

In the competitive tourism industry, creating memorable experiences is crucial for the marketing success of every business. The pursuit of special and unforgettable memories is essential for achieving sustainable competitiveness (LaSalle & Britton 2003). Memorable experiences not only contribute significantly to a tourism organisation's competitive advantages but also foster long-term sustainability by building destination loyalty (Pizam 2010; Tung & Ritchie 2011; Chen and Rahman 2018). The ability to provide such distinctive experiences sets tourism businesses apart, creating a unique competitive edge (Morgan & Xu 2009; Kim et al. 2012). Beyond immediate benefits, these experiences result in repeat visits, customer loyalty, and positive word-of-mouth recommendations, solidifying a business's position in the industry (Berry et al. 2002; Chen & Rahman 2018).

2.3.2 The Power of Experiences for Transformation

In the era of the Experience Economy, the significance of encounters transcends mere transactions, evolving into powerful tools for transformation. This paradigm shift recognises that contemporary consumers, including both visitors and hosts within the tourism industry, increasingly seek more than just products or services – they crave meaningful and transformative experiences. At the core of this shift is the acknowledgement that the value of an experience goes beyond its

tangible elements; it lies in the emotional and transformative impact it imparts. A meaningful and transformative experience involves a deep connection, resonating with individuals on a personal level. It has the potential to inspire, challenge perspectives, and leave lasting impressions that extend far beyond the immediate encounter. Such experiences are characterised by authenticity, fostering genuine connections between visitors and hosts, enriching lives, and contributing to personal growth. Understanding and crafting these meaningful and transformative encounters become pivotal for both the tourism industry and those who partake in it.

2.3.3.Meaningful and Transformative Experiences (MTEs)

According to Smit and Melissen (2018), almost all experiences can be categorised based on their position on two dimensions:

- *"the duration of the experience (from short, one-off events, few seconds encounters, to situations that could last days, weeks or even months) ;*
- *the outcome of the experience (from a positive or negative memory to a radical sustained change in the person involved through learning or skill development)."*

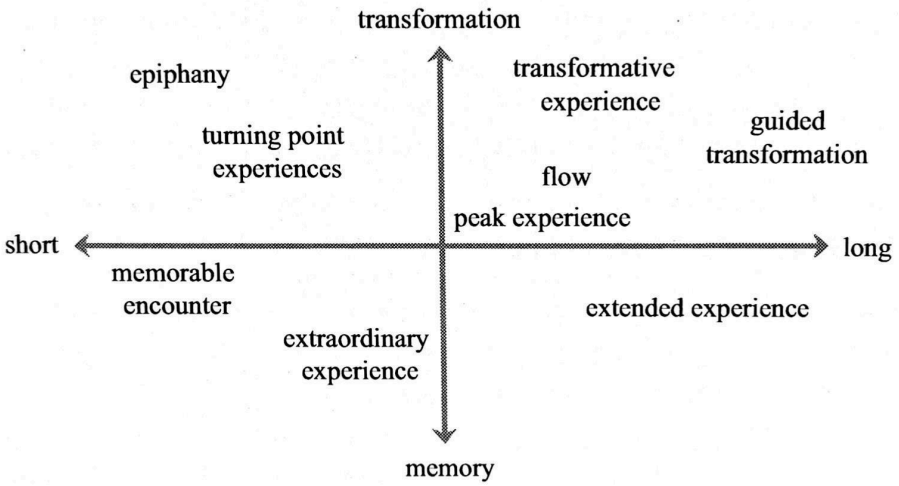

***Figure 1* – Four Categories of experiences**

Source: Smit and Melissen, 2018

2.3.4. Elements of MTEs

Tourism experiences become meaningful when they are crafted through a combination of elements that resonate with visitors on a personal level and make the experience memorable. A memorable experience is defined as "*a tourism experience remembered and recalled after the event has occurred*" (Kim et al. 2010). However, not every tourism experience is recorded by the visitor. *"Tourists tend to remember the experience when it evokes shared experiences, unexpected events, abundant service options, and notable services and when they feel it was worth it"* (Morgan, 2010). Here are key elements that can create an MTE:

- **Authenticity:** the genuine representation of local culture, traditions, and heritage creates a connection that goes beyond superficial encounters;
- **Personalisation:** tailoring experiences to align with the interests and preferences of individual visitors. Interactivity and engagement contribute significantly;

- **Active participation:** rather than passive observation enhances the overall impact of the experience;
- **A sense of place:** the ambience, characterised by unique and distinctive features of the physical environment, further enriches the meaningfulness of the encounter;
- **Refreshment:** the state of feeling renewed from experience is an important variable for creating an MTE;
- **Conclusion:** the way the experience concludes plays a key role in its memorability.

Memorable Tourism Experience Essence	
Ambience Dimension	
Environment	Tourist contact with physical, constructed, and business attractions
Cultural Dimension	
Culture	Tourist's cultural impressions when opposed to his own culture and experimentation
Interpersonal Relationship Dimension	
Tourist–Companionship	Contact between tourist and travel companions
Tourist–Tourists	Contact between tourist and other tourists
Tourist–Local Agents	Contact between tourist and local agents (residents, service providers)
Individual and Psychological Dimension	
Dream	Personal desire for the experience
Emotion	Emotional state generated from experience
Novelty	Novelty and surprise from the experience
Involvement	Tourist participation in activities
Refreshment	State of feeling rested and renewed
Meaningfulness	To feel great value or meaning
Hedonism	Feelings of pleasure
Knowledge	Known facts or information
Cost-benefit	Evaluation between the costs and tourists' efforts and what was offered for the experience
Outcomes	Behavior intentions Personal transformation Well-being Memory Co-creation Satisfaction
MTE Premise	Sense-making process and personal meaning to the experience

***Figure 2* – Memorable Experience Dimensions and Related Themes**

Source: Saurabh Kumar Dixit, 2020

The essence of Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) can be categorised around four main dimensions: Ambience, Culture, Interpersonal Relationships, and Individual/Psychological aspects. The aesthetic dimension includes the physical environment, while interactions with the local culture contribute to memorable experiences. Interpersonal relationships, often overlooked, play a crucial role, and psychological factors like novelty and emotions are key components. Additionally, personal value is essential in creating memorable experiences, and outcomes include personal transformations, well-being, place attachment, memory, and behavioural intentions. The chronological process of MTE, from pre-trip to post-trip, influences personal meanings and memory creation.

Type 1: Elements of a Destination MTE: Developing a meaningful tourism experience in destination management involves strategic planning to ensure sustainable development, preserve cultural heritage, and enhance visitor accessibility. Engaging local communities, promoting safety, and offering diversified experiences contribute to a positive visit. By integrating technology, organising events, and collaborating with stakeholders, destination managers can create well-rounded and unique tourism offerings. Providing educational resources, comprehensive tourist assistance, and monitoring the impact of tourism contribute to a balanced approach that benefits both visitors and the local community, fostering sustainable tourism practices and creating a memorable experience for tourists.

Best Practice Example (EN) : Breathe - A Faroe Islands Story.

Type 2: Elements of an Individual MTE: *"Experience is subjective and private (Trigo 2010); therefore, two individuals cannot live the same experience (Pine & Gilmore 1998)".*

It is true that while tourism businesses try to satisfy the demand of tourists, they can not predict what experiences tourists will create - which *"depends on tourists' mental awareness toward experiences, earlier experiences and general interest regime" (Sundbo and Sundbo 2018)*. Therefore, the tourism business can only deliver **experience propositions**. Despite this, one may design the experience in order to enhance it.

The memorability of an experience is influenced by several factors, according to Pine and Gilmore (2011). These elements include the multisensory nature of the experience, the level of personal meaningfulness it holds, whether and how it is shared, its complexity or simplicity, the intensity and duration of experiential elements, cultural considerations, and the influence of prior life experiences. In essence, the richness and impact of a memorable event are shaped by a combination of sensory, personal, social, cognitive, and cultural dimensions. Research about the central characteristics of memorable experiences centre around evoking emotions, stimulating the five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) and/or arousing positive emotions (happiness, fun, surprise, joy, contentment) as well as providing novelty for the tourist. These elements contribute to creating a meaningful experience for the tourist.

In sectors such as hospitality, a meaningful experience is characterised by personalised and authentic interactions that go beyond

conventional services. It involves tailoring offerings to individual preferences, fostering cultural immersion, and providing exceptional customer service that exceeds expectations. Engaging guests on a personal level, promoting sustainability, and offering local experiences contribute to creating a memorable stay. Furthermore, the overall experience is further enhanced by well-designed spaces, emotional connections, and a focus on ease and convenience. Finally, technology integration, flexibility, and a commitment to safety add layers of value, ensuring that guests not only enjoy their stay but also form a lasting connection with the destination and the hospitality provider.

Best Practice Example (EN): National Geographic Unique Lodges of the World: Fogo Island Inn

As for the museum sector, ensuring a meaningful tourism experience involves curated exhibits with informative content, engaging presentations, and a focus on visitor education. The active involvement of visitors through guided tours, workshops, and interactive displays, fosters a deeper understanding of the collections. Incorporating technology, ensuring accessibility, and collaborating with the community contribute to a more inclusive and enriching visit. For example, a history museum could utilise touch screens or virtual reality to allow visitors to explore historical events in a more immersive way. This not only educates but also provides a memorable and hands-on experience. Creating a comfortable environment, showcasing culturally significant artefacts, and using effective storytelling techniques also enhance the overall experience. A natural history museum, for instance, might organise themed tours that

connect different exhibits through a captivating narrative, providing context and fostering a deeper appreciation. Continuous improvement based on visitor feedback, innovative exhibits, and digital engagement beyond the visit contribute to a museum's success in providing meaningful and memorable experiences for tourists.

"There is no memorable experience without personal value, which means that tourists themselves give meaning to their experiences and, therefore, make them remarkable and memorable. This notion also confirms that the ultimate degree of MTE is self-transformation." (Saurabh Kumar Dixit, 2020)

Destination Attributes	**Individual Attributes**
Infrastructure	Sensory Engagement
Accessibility	Personal Meaningfulness
Local Culture/History	Social Interaction
Physiography	Cognitive Complexity
Activities and Events	Cultural Considerations
Destination Management	Prior Life Experiences
Quality of Service	Personal Value
Hospitality	Self-Transformation
Place Attachment	Personalised Interactions
Superstructure	Cultural Immersion

***Figure 3* – Tourism destination vs individual attributes as antecedents to a memorable tourism experience**

Source: Kim, 2014 and various authors

In this table, the left column lists the ten destination attributes proposed by Kim (2014) as antecedents to a memorable tourism experience. The right column corresponds to individual attributes that influence the memorability of a tourism experience, as discussed in the information provided earlier. The goal is to show the alignment between the destination-level factors and the individual-level factors that contribute to creating a meaningful and memorable tourism experience.

2.3.5. Transformational Aspects for Visitors and Hosts

Meaningful experiences have the potential to be transformative for both visitors and hosts. For visitors, these encounters can lead to a broader worldview, increased cultural sensitivity, and a deeper appreciation for diversity. Exposure to new perspectives and ways of life can challenge preconceptions and foster personal growth. Simultaneously, hosts benefit from this exchange by gaining insights into different cultures, building bridges of understanding, and often experiencing economic empowerment through sustainable tourism practices.

The transformative nature of these experiences lies in their ability to create a positive impact on individuals, fostering a sense of shared humanity and interconnectedness between visitors and hosts.

Improvement of well-being: Meaningful and engaging tourism experiences play a crucial role in influencing tourists' overall well-being. Research on wellness tourism underscores that diverse wellness tourism

experiences, encompassing educational, entertainment, esthetic, and escape elements, contribute significantly to make tourists feel happier and more fulfilled during their travels. Educational experiences directly impact the deeper, purpose-driven aspects of well-being, while entertainment, esthetic, and escape experiences enhance the positive and pleasurable emotions of tourists, reducing negative emotions and promoting holistic well-being. Importantly, studies emphasise that the satisfaction derived from these experiences acts as a virtuous circle, further enhancing the positive impact on well-being. This insight suggests that tourism planners and industry stakeholders should prioritise creating diverse and enriching experiences tailored to the preferences and needs of tourists. By recognising the distinct effects of various tourism dimensions on well-being, destination managers can design more targeted and effective strategies to foster positive emotions, personal growth, and overall satisfaction, thereby contributing to a more fulfilling and well-rounded tourist experience (Liu L, Zhou Y, & Sun X, 2023).

"Not every experience should be designed to be transformational, nor should every encounter or interface in tourism and hospitality be designed to be extraordinary. However, it can be beneficial to align them in such a way that they create extended experiences. Doing so requires a purposive design that starts with the choice for the specific experience and its intended impact on consumers" (Saurabh Kumar Dixit, 2020)

2.4. Engaging Experience Design

Experience design is not a process of predicting or controlling outcomes but it is about "*designing for experiences*". "*So the task of*

experience design is to design and organise frameworks, develop objects and situations and plan sequences of events which can contribute to interesting and relevant experiences on a physiological, emotional and cognitive level for the tourist (Jantzen et al. 2012)."

2.4.1. A Holistic Approach to Experience Design

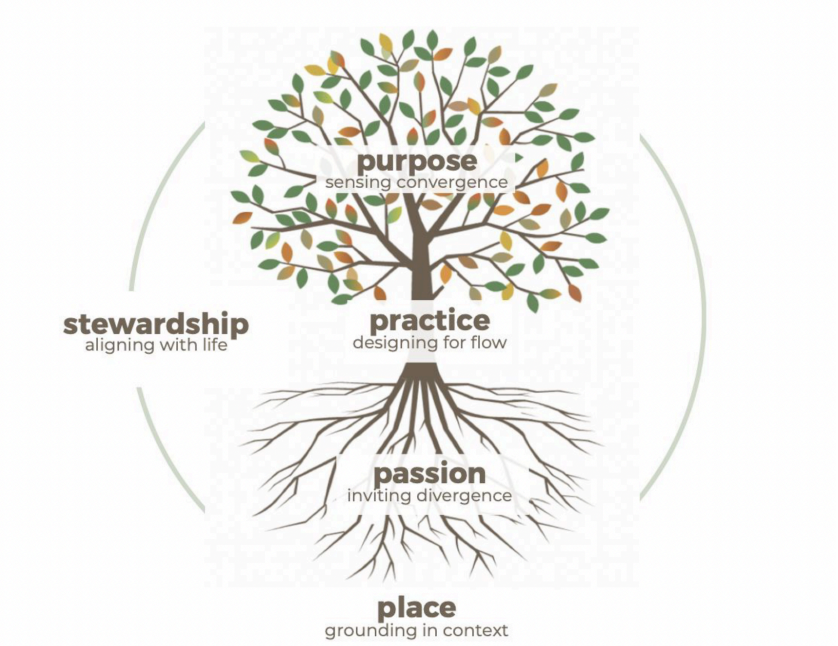

Figure 4 **– Life's universal design principles applied to human contexts**

Source: Michelle Holliday, 2022

Life's universal design principles can be listed as the four following items: Parts, Relationship, Whole, Life. They offer a framework for approaching design and understanding the interconnectedness and dynamic nature of the world around us. By using these principles in human contexts we get:

Parts > Passion or "Inviting Divergence": This principle suggests that focusing on individual contributions and passions can lead to a richer collective experience. Embracing diversity and divergence in perspectives and skills can enhance creativity and innovation.

Relationship > Practice or "Designing for Flow": Here, the relationship quality and the collaborative process are emphasised. "Designing for flow" implies creating environments and practices that facilitate smooth collaboration, creativity, and continuous learning.

Whole > Purpose or "Sensing Convergence": This principle highlights the importance of a shared purpose and the potential for collective wisdom and healing when individuals come together. "Sensing convergence" suggests an awareness of the shared goals and values that unite people.

Life > Stewardship or "Aligning with Life": This principle encourages aligning human endeavours with the natural, self-organising, and emergent processes of life. "Aligning with life" implies fostering sustainable practices and supporting the inherent dynamism of life.

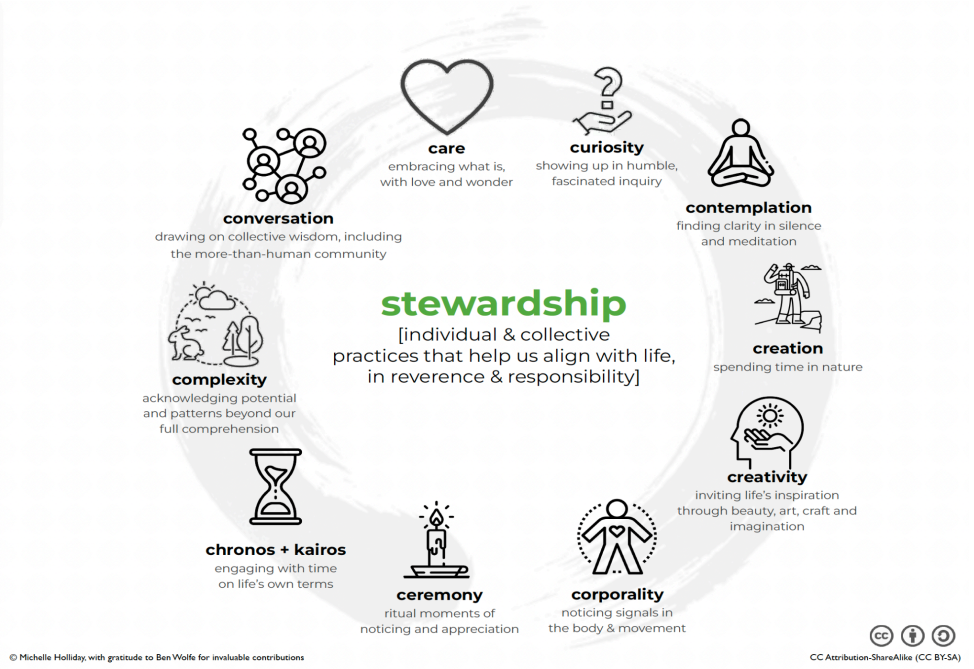

***Figure 5* – Practices of Stewardship**

Source: Michelle Holliday, 2022

These principles collectively suggest a holistic and interconnected view of human interactions, emphasising collaboration, diversity, purpose, and alignment with the natural order. They provide a framework for fostering a thriving and sustainable human experience.

2.4.2. The Role of Collaborative Design (Co-Design)

Co-design plays a crucial role in shaping and enhancing engaging tourism experiences by fostering collaborative input from various stakeholders. In the tourism sector, co-design involves bringing together tourists, local communities, businesses, and other relevant parties to collectively contribute to the design and development of tourism offerings. This collaborative approach ensures that the experiences are not only tailored to the needs and preferences of the visitors but also reflect the authentic character and cultural richness of the destination. Involving tourists in the design process promotes a sense of ownership and connection, as their perspectives contribute to the creation of memorable and meaningful experiences. Additionally, co-design facilitates the incorporation of diverse cultural elements, ensuring that the tourism offerings resonate with both the visitors and the local community, resulting in a more engaging and inclusive overall tourism experience.

Co-design through storytelling: *"Storytelling is a powerful tool for influencing the visitor experience of a destination, site or particular tourism product. It provides a framework for hosting the visitor experience, and as the visitor interacts with the offering they are actively*

co-creating their own experience with their local hosts and then taking away their own unique visitor experience as the product of tourism."

Co-design through storytelling is a powerful method for creating engaging tourism experiences that connect visitors with local communities. By bringing together locals, businesses, and tourists, this approach ensures a well-rounded representation of cultural narratives. Storytelling workshops serve as a platform to collect diverse stories, and collaborative sessions empower stakeholders to contribute ideas and cultural insights. These efforts result in the incorporation of identified themes into key tourism experiences, like guided tours. For instance, a city tour might include stories shared by locals, providing visitors with a more authentic understanding of the destination. The collaborative and narrative-focused approach not only enhances engagement but also makes the tourism experience more immersive and memorable, reflecting the cultural essence of the place. Importantly, this inclusive approach fosters sustainable and positive relationships between tourists and local communities, ensuring that the tourism experience contributes meaningfully to both parties.

This approach not only satisfies the interests of tourists but also respects and promotes the cultural heritage of the destination, fostering a more meaningful connection between visitors and the local community.

2.4.3. The Experience Design Process

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to creating memorable experiences. Managers must understand visitors' needs, expectations, and reasons for visiting. Understanding visitors' interests is crucial for

delivering personalised and relevant experiences. Personal relevance and alignment with visitors' interests increase the likelihood of creating memorable tourism experiences.

2.4.3.1. Before the Experience

Pre-experience design plays a pivotal role in crafting engaging tourism experiences by proactively involving tourists before they reach the destination. Providing a rich array of materials, information, videos, and interactive content not only serves to build anticipation but also immerses visitors in the essence of the upcoming experience. Engaging tourists through informative guides, virtual tours, and multimedia content enables them to familiarise themselves with the destination's cultural nuances, historical significance, and unique attractions. This preparatory engagement sparks curiosity and sets the stage for a more meaningful on-site experience. Moreover, personalised communication, such as tailored itineraries or travel tips, enhances the connection between the tourist and the destination, fostering a sense of involvement even before the journey begins. The effective use of pre-experience design not only heightens the overall anticipation but also contributes to a more informed, excited, and engaged tourist, setting the foundation for a memorable and immersive travel encounter (*See Module 5 Building your Brand Marketing Strategy : 2.2 Definitions - Defining the Brand and Marketing Strategy for more information please*).

2.4.3.2. Steps for Experience Planning

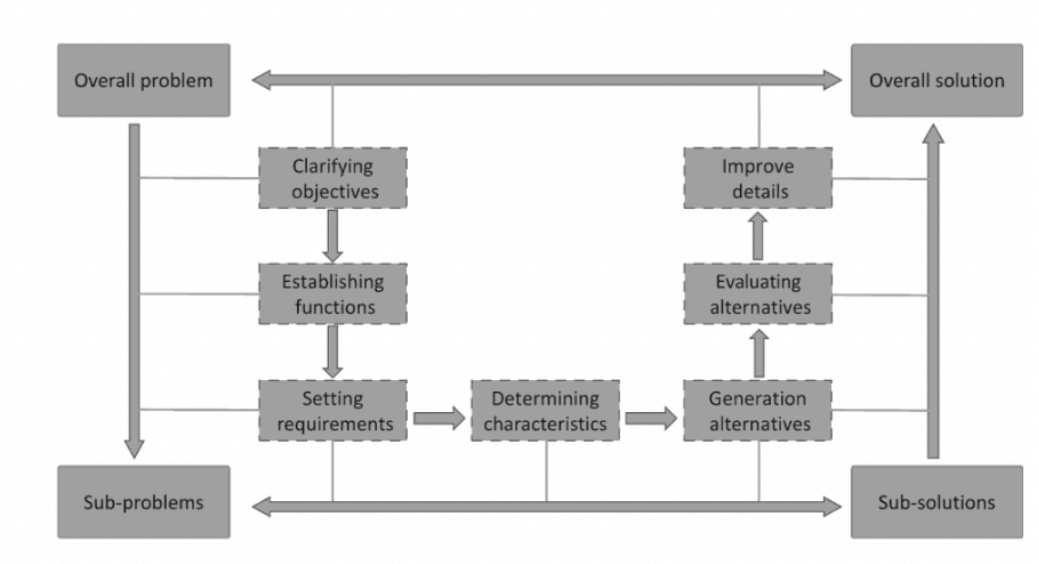

***Figure 6* - A generic model of the design process**

Source: Cross, 1994

The experience design process consists the following steps:

1. Clarifying Objectives

- What is the purpose of the tourism experience? How can it be holistic and regenerative?
- What are customer objectives? Which personas can represent the targeted demographics and their holistic aspirations?
- What are the objectives of the project in terms of meaningfulness and memorability?
- What stakeholders should be involved in the project?
- How can you ensure that the project encompasses common objectives of all stakeholders?

2. Establishing Functions

- What are the holistic functions of the experience?

- How can the design of the overall experience create a seamless and holistic customer journey?
- What are the different customer touchpoints (elements customers go through during the experience)?
- Relate each touchpoint to the overall holistic functions of the experience. How can these touchpoints be interconnected?
- How can this experience be transformational and contribute to the holistic journey of the customer?

3. Setting Requirements

- Considering the holistic objectives and functions that were set for this experience, what performance requirements should be defined?
- What solutions could be set to meet these requirements? These solutions can be related to customer personas or operational, technical, spatial, financial, and legal specifications.

4. Determining Characteristics of the End Product

- Link persona and holistic objectives to engineering characteristics such as sound, smell, and spatial design, to ensure a holistic sensory experience.
- How can these individual design objectives be connected to achieve a holistic and memorable experience?

5. Generating Alternatives

- Use your creativity to generate alternatives, considering both new and existing solutions with a holistic lens. List possible solutions and

identify successful combinations that enhance the overall holistic experience based on objectives and requirements.

6. Evaluating Alternatives

- Review the design process with a focus on ensuring a consistent and interconnected experience.
- Reflect on decisions with relevant stakeholders, considering the holistic impact on various aspects of the experience.
- Ensure design alternatives meet criteria consistently and contribute to an overall holistic outcome.

7. Improve Details

- Focus on effective and efficient implementation, addressing details related to materials, technologies, staff selection, and training with a holistic perspective.
- Incorporate improvements based on customer and community feedback after the experience, ensuring a continuous enhancement of the holistic journey.

Conclusion

This model emphasises a holistic and interconnected approach to experience planning, aiming for a consistent impact on consumers. By shifting the focus from controlling individual reactions to sensory experiences to achieving a shared positive outcome, businesses can create more meaningful and memorable tourism and hospitality experiences. Consistent application of these methods aids in developing effective solutions for the right problems, fostering a sustainable and holistic experience even after the design has been implemented.

2.4.3.3. Improving the Key Experience

Planning and applying storytelling in experience design

Storytelling can significantly enhance the creation of engaging tourism experiences, especially by incorporating collaborative narratives into the design process. Here's how this can be achieved:

1. Stakeholder Involvement: Begin by involving a diverse group of stakeholders, including local communities, tourists, tour operators, and cultural experts. Gather insights into the unique stories, traditions, and historical narratives of the destination.

2. Storytelling Workshops: Conduct storytelling workshops or sessions where participants can share personal or community stories related to the destination. Encourage open dialogue to uncover the most compelling and authentic narratives.

3. Identifying Key Themes: Work collaboratively to identify key themes or elements from the stories that resonate with both locals and potential tourists. These themes could include cultural traditions, historical events, or natural wonders.

4. Designing Experiences: Utilise the identified themes to co-design tourism experiences. This may involve creating guided tours, interactive exhibits, or immersive activities that bring the stories to life. Ensure that the experiences align with the values and aspirations of the local community.

5. Interactive Storytelling Platforms: Integrate interactive storytelling platforms, such as mobile apps or multimedia installations, that allow tourists to actively engage with the stories during their visit. This

could include audio guides, augmented reality, or virtual reality experiences.

6. Community Empowerment: Empower the local community to actively participate in the delivery of these experiences. This can involve training locals as storytellers or guides, fostering a sense of pride and ownership in sharing their cultural narratives.

7. Feedback Loops: Establish feedback loops to continuously refine and adapt the storytelling experiences based on the responses and preferences of both tourists and the local community. This iterative process ensures ongoing improvement and relevance.

8. Cultural Sensitivity: Maintain cultural sensitivity throughout the co-design process to avoid misrepresentation or appropriation of local stories. Respectful collaboration ensures that the narratives are shared in a meaningful and authentic way.

By incorporating co-design through storytelling, tourism experiences can become more engaging, immersive, and culturally rich. This collaborative approach not only satisfies the interests of tourists but also respects and promotes the cultural heritage of the destination, fostering a deeper and more meaningful connection between visitors and the local community.

2.4.3.4. After the Experience

MTEs are characterised by long-lasting vivid memories. Visitors seek compelling and memorable experiences rather than a set of services just meeting their expectations. This is why redefining the post-visit

connection between tourists and experiences is crucial to enhancing the memorability of an experience.

An important part of extending the engagement beyond physical presence is to offer visitors a dynamic means to relive and share their experiences long after departure and encourage ongoing interaction with the hosts or destination.

Community engagement initiatives encourage this ongoing interaction, fostering a sense of connection through social media platforms, online forums, or virtual events. This could involve inviting tourists to join virtual discussions with locals about the destination's culture or participate in virtual workshops that further deepen their understanding. Additionally, feedback mechanisms allow tourists to share insights, ensuring continuous improvement and relevance. This is also a way to extend co-design after the experience.

Here are some other innovative ideas that can enhance the post-visit connection between tourists and destinations:

- Designing online challenges or games inspired by the destination can also foster continued engagement and learning. This could involve solving puzzles related to historical landmarks or participating in virtual scavenger hunts.
- Sending tourists curated culinary exploration kits featuring local ingredients and recipes encountered during their visit. This hands-on experience brings a taste of the destination into their homes, connecting them with the local culture.

- Developing personalised travel apps that continue to provide insights, recommendations, and updates based on the tourist's preferences. These apps can serve as ongoing travel companions, keeping the destination alive in the tourist's mind.
- Creating a time capsule experience where tourists can contribute digital memories, messages, or photos to be opened or shared at a later date. This adds an element of anticipation and connection to the ongoing story of the destination.

These innovative ideas go beyond traditional souvenirs, fostering sustained engagement and ensuring that the tourist experience continues to evolve and resonate long after the visit concludes *(See Module 5 Building your Brand Marketing Strategy : 2.6. Building Customer Loyalty for more information please).*

2.4.4. Innovations for Developing Engaging Tourism Experiences

Innovation stands as a key driver in the evolution of captivating tourism experiences, with its impact extending across various dimensions. Adopting an innovation culture within tourism organisations provides the necessary groundwork for the successful implementation of groundbreaking strategies. It can also help foster sustainability, regeneration and accessibility.

An example of such innovation is the integration of gamification techniques, which involves incorporating game design elements into non-gaming scenarios. Gamification proves to be a dynamic tool in destination marketing and management, offering diverse applications. For instance, gamified loyalty programmes can incentivise repeat visits

through reward systems, while interactive wayfinding experiences, like treasure hunts, promote sustainable exploration and discovery within a destination. Immersive learning experiences, employing quizzes and interactive exhibits, serve to educate tourists about the rich history and culture of a locale. Furthermore, the application of advanced information and communication technologies, exemplified by smart destination or business management, enables real-time monitoring and decision-making, ensuring destinations and businesses remain adaptable to changing conditions. The infusion of augmented reality through gamification apps adds an extra layer, enriching learning, engagement, and interaction for tourists.

Collectively, these innovative approaches contribute to the creation of memorable and distinctive tourism experiences, bolstering the competitiveness of destinations in the global tourism landscape.

Accessible Tourism

Accessible tourism is a *"form of tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders that enables people with access requirements, including mobility, vision, hearing and cognitive dimensions of access, to function independently and with equity and dignity through the delivery of universally designed tourism products, services and environments"* (Buhalis and Darcy, 2011).

For tourism professionals seeking to develop accessible tourism experiences, adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach is essential. Firstly, it is crucial to gain a thorough understanding of the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities (PwD) by engaging with

disability organisations (such as the World Health Organization (WHO), or the Disabled People's International (DPI)), consulting accessibility guidelines, and participating in training programs. Embracing universal design principles ensures that services and facilities are usable by all, regardless of their abilities. Collaborating with local authorities, disability advocates, and technology experts is key to leveraging innovations and creating a digital ecosystem that fosters accessibility. This includes developing user-friendly websites and mobile applications, providing real-time information, and employing virtual tools such as augmented reality for navigation. One can establish partnerships with accessible transportation providers and accommodation facilities enhancing the overall travel experience for PwD. Moreover, the incorporation of accessible amenities, such as ramps, tactile pathways, and assistive technologies, into existing infrastructures demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity. Finally, regularly seeking feedback from PwD and adapting services based on their input is crucial for continuous improvement.

By embracing these strategies and committing to the principles of accessible tourism, professionals can not only enhance the inclusivity of their offerings but also contribute to the growth of this vital and underserved market segment.

3. Practical Part

3.1.Introduction

	[why / cultivate]	[how / co-create]	[what / craft]
purpose sensing convergence	**calling** What is the potential for healing & wholeness that we're sensing in this place? What is the wisdom that is needed?	**community** What conversation is needed — what deeper connection to people, place and self?	**contribution** What tangible offering would serve as a touchstone for the rest of the work? What constitutes excellence?
practice designing for flow	**story** What is the story and strategy that can bring us together in vibrant (maybe even sacred) aliveness?	**systems** How can we design for flow of relationship, learning & responsiveness?	**structure** What is the lightest possible supportive structure to connect mastery to contribution?
passion inviting divergence	**meaning** What is my own unfolding story? What brings me alive? How can my own story be enriched by this project?	**membership** What gives me a sense of belonging with people, with this place, and with my work? How can I grow more of that?	**mastery** What talents can I contribute? What would I love to learn?

stewardship
aligning with life;
grounding in place

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***Figure 7* – Framework: The DNA of Thrivability**

Source: Michelle Holliday, 2022

When applied to the tourism ecosystem, this framework can be used to create engaging and memorable tourism experiences with regenerative benefits for both the visitor and the host. Following is a dive into each section of the table:

1. Purpose

Calling: Before designing a tourism experience, deeply understand the unique characteristics and potential of the destination. Identify what makes it special and how it can contribute to the well-being of visitors. For example, if a location has natural healing properties, such as hot springs, design experiences that highlight wellness and rejuvenation.

Community: Engage with the local community to understand their stories, traditions, and perspectives. Collaborate on co-creating experiences that respect and reflect the community's identity. This could involve cultural exchanges, community-led tours, or participation in local events.

Contribution: Define the purpose of the tourism experience by identifying what tangible offerings will serve as touchstones for excellence. For instance, if the destination is known for its cuisine, design culinary experiences that showcase local flavours, involve local producers, and promote sustainable practices.

2. Practice

Story: Craft a compelling narrative that ties together the various elements of the tourism experience. This could involve creating a thematic storyline for a guided tour, developing a narrative-driven marketing campaign, or incorporating storytelling elements into the overall experience design.

Systems: Design systems that facilitate the flow of relationships, learning, and responsiveness. For example, implement a robust booking and communication system that allows participants to easily interact, share feedback, and customise their experience based on preferences.

Structure: Create a supportive structure that connects individual mastery to contribution. Develop a framework that allows local guides or artisans to showcase their expertise, ensuring that their contributions align with the overall purpose and narrative of the tourism experience.

3. Passion

Meaning: Explore the personal stories of participants and connect them to the broader narrative of the destination. This could involve incorporating personalisation options, such as custom itineraries or themed experiences, allowing participants to find personal meaning in their journey.

Membership: Foster a sense of belonging by integrating community-building elements. This might include organising group activities, facilitating interactions among participants, or creating exclusive memberships that provide additional benefits and a sense of exclusivity.

Mastery: Encourage participants to contribute their talents and continuously learn throughout the experience. This could involve workshops, skill-sharing sessions, or immersive activities that allow participants to actively engage and contribute their unique skills.

In applying this framework, one can create tourism experiences that are not only engaging but also deeply meaningful and memorable, fostering connections between participants, the destination, and the local community. The focus on purpose, responsive systems, and individual passions ensures a well-rounded and adaptive approach to experience design.

3.2. Introducing a Good Practice

Example 1-Instructions: Here is an example of an engaging tourism experience we selected as a best practice. Using the framework from the module, and with the information gathered in the description of the

practice, students should fill in the table provided in the handout material number 1.

Depending on your key focus and interest you can either choose to work on an individual tourism experience or a destination tourism experience.

Practice Type 1: Tourism Destination Experience

Video: Breathe - A Faroe Islands Story.

Practice Type 2: Individual Experience

Video: Tree to Table Experience at Ottercreek Woodworks Inc. | Experience Oxford County

Example 2

Example 2-Instructions: Below is the description of a tourism experience project in Albania. Using the Experience Design Steps (p.24-31) and other information provided in the module, detail the necessary steps to implement this fictional project and ensure the experience is engaging.

Harmony Haven A Community-Crafted Retreat in Albania

Imagine a place where tourism isn't just about destinations but a shared journey with a community. "Harmony Haven" is not your typical retreat; it's an immersive community-based project that harmonises travellers with a local Albanian community, fostering meaningful connections, and leaving a positive impact.

Harmony Haven was born out of a calling to create a space of community co-creation. Tourists can live and engage in conversations with the local community, understanding their values, traditions, and aspirations. Together, they cultivate an experience that respects and

celebrates the richness of their culture. Every aspect is crafted to ensure a symbiotic relationship where both travellers and the community contribute to each other's growth.

The Experience: Participants embark on a transformative journey, participating in local traditions, and actively contributing to sustainable agriculture projects and cultural heritage preservation. The experience will include hands-on workshops, traditional cooking classes, artisan craft sessions, and an immersive olive oil production experience, showcasing Albania's rich culinary and craftsmanship traditions. The retreat also incorporates local traditions through folk music and dance performances, participation in festivals, and a homestay experience for a deeper cultural exchange.

Harmony Haven redefines tourism by co-creating an authentic and meaningful journey that not only rejuvenates travellers but also actively contributes to the well-being and vibrancy of Albania's communities.

4. Evaluation of the module's topic

Here are some questions for a self-study regarding the creation of engaging tourism experiences.

Part 1: Read the statements and mark: True/False

1. True/False: Regenerative tourism experiences encompass only the during-journey phase.

2. True/False: Storytelling in the design of destination tourism experiences disregards the need for emotional or intellectual engagement to enhance the visitor experience.

3. True/False: Experiential tourism, unlike traditional tourism, does not necessarily prioritise authentic interactions with the local culture but rather emphasises passive observation of attractions.

4. True/False: Sustainable tourism experiences focus on minimising negative environmental impacts and may not always explicitly address maximising positive contributions to host communities.

5. True/False: The individual tourism experience encompasses touch points throughout the visitor's journey but does not necessarily entail personalised journeys or cater to specific interests.

6. True/False: Innovative methodologies in tourism development subtly advocate for traditional approaches, downplaying the importance of technology and unconventional methods.

7. True/False: Audience engagement in tourism is merely about attracting visitors and does not play a significant role in creating meaningful connections that resonate on a personal level with individuals.

8. True/False: Niche tourism experiences are designed for a specific audience, catering to unique and specialised interests beyond mainstream tourism.

Part 2: Read the statements and mark: True/False

1. True/False: In the Experience Economy, businesses prioritise the creation and delivery of memorable experiences as a key component of their value proposition.

2. True/False: Memorable experiences in the tourism industry contribute significantly to a business's competitive advantages and foster long-term sustainability by building destination loyalty.

3. True/False: The Power of Experiences for Transformation recognizes that consumers in the Experience Economy primarily seek products and services rather than meaningful and transformative experiences.

4. True/False: According to Smit and Melissen (2018), the duration and outcome of almost all experiences can be categorised based on two dimensions: the intensity of emotions and the level of personal meaningfulness.

5. True/False: Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) are characterised by factors such as authenticity, personalisation, active participation, a sense of place, refreshment, and the way the experience concludes.

6. True/False: Best practices for creating Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) involve strategic planning for sustainable development,

preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing visitor accessibility in destination management.

7. True/False: The transformative nature of meaningful experiences in tourism lies in their ability to create a positive impact on visitors only, with minimal benefits for the hosts.

8. True/False: According to research on wellness tourism, diverse wellness experiences contribute significantly to tourists' overall well-being, impacting purpose-driven aspects and promoting holistic well-being.

Part 3

1. What are the four life's universal design principles applied to human contexts in the context of engaging experience design?

a. Aesthetics, Creativity, Imagination, Innovation

b. Parts, Relationship, Whole, Life

c. Efficiency, Simplicity, Consistency, Flexibility

d. Individuality, Collaboration, Purpose, Sustainability

2. What does the principle "Relationship > Practice" in engaging experience design emphasis?

a. Focusing on individual contributions and passions

b. Creating environments and practices that facilitate smooth collaboration, creativity, and continuous learning

c. Highlighting the importance of a shared purpose

d. Encouraging alignment with the natural, self-organising, and emergent processes of life

3. What is the role of Co-design in shaping and enhancing engaging tourism experiences?

a. Co-design is not relevant in tourism experiences.

b. Co-design involves bringing together tourists, local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders to collectively contribute to the design and development of tourism offerings.

c. Co-design is limited to involving only tourists in the design process.

d. Co-design focuses on controlling outcomes in tourism experiences.

4. How can storytelling be used in co-design for engaging tourism experiences?

a. Storytelling is not relevant in co-design.

b. Storytelling can be used to exclude tourists from the design process.

c. Storytelling workshops can collect diverse stories, and collaborative sessions can empower stakeholders to contribute ideas and cultural insights.

d. Storytelling is only effective for marketing, not design.

5. What is a key step in the Experience Design Process before the actual experience takes place?

a. Evaluating Alternatives

b. Improving Details

c. Pre-experience design

d. Generating Alternatives

6. What is an example of innovation mentioned in the context of developing engaging tourism experiences?

a. Traditional souvenir shops

b. Gamification techniques

c. Ignoring technology advancements

d. Avoiding collaborations with local communities

7. What is the definition of accessible tourism?

a. Tourism focused on exclusive experiences

b. Tourism without considering the needs of people with disabilities

c. Tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders, enabling people with access requirements to function independently and with equity

d. Tourism that prioritises the needs of only one specific group

ANSWER KEY

Part 1

1. False: Regenerative tourism experiences encompass phases before, during, and after a journey, representing a holistic approach.

2. False: Narrative design in tourism involves weaving emotional and intellectual engagement, creating a more immersive visitor experience.

3. False: Experiential tourism prioritises authentic interactions with the local culture, emphasising active engagement over passive observation.

4. True: Sustainable tourism experiences focus on minimising negative environmental impacts and may not always explicitly address maximising positive contributions to host communities.

5. False: The individual tourism experience does entail personalised journeys and caters to specific interests, representing touch points throughout the visitor's journey.

6. True: Innovative methodologies in tourism development advocate for embracing technology and unconventional methods to enhance the visitor experience.

7. False: Audience engagement in tourism is not limited to attracting visitors; it plays a significant role in creating meaningful connections on a personal level with individuals.

8. True: Niche tourism experiences are designed for a specific audience, catering to unique and specialised interests beyond mainstream tourism.

Part 2

1. True: In the Experience Economy, businesses prioritise the creation and delivery of memorable experiences as a key component of their value proposition.

2. True: Memorable experiences in the tourism industry contribute significantly to a business's competitive advantages and foster long-term sustainability by building destination loyalty.

3. False: The Power of Experiences for Transformation recognizes that contemporary consumers in the Experience Economy increasingly seek more than just products or services – they crave meaningful and transformative experiences.

4. False: According to Smit and Melissen (2018), the duration and outcome of almost all experiences can be categorised based on two dimensions: the duration of the experience and the outcome of the experience.

5. True: Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTEs) are characterised by factors such as authenticity, personalization, active participation, a sense of place, refreshment, and the way the experience concludes.

6. True: Best practices for creating Memorable Tourism Experiences (MTE) involve strategic planning for sustainable development, preserving cultural heritage, and enhancing visitor accessibility in destination management.

7. False: The transformative nature of meaningful experiences in tourism lies in their ability to create a positive impact on visitors only, with minimal benefits for the hosts.

8. True: According to research on wellness tourism, diverse wellness experiences contribute significantly to tourists' overall well-being, impacting purpose-driven aspects and promoting holistic well-being.

Part 3

1. b. Parts, Relationship, Whole, Life

2. b. Creating environments and practices that facilitate smooth collaboration, creativity, and continuous learning

3. b. Co-design involves bringing together tourists, local communities, businesses, and other stakeholders to collectively contribute to the design and development of tourism offerings.

4. c. Storytelling workshops can collect diverse stories, and collaborative sessions can empower stakeholders to contribute ideas and cultural insights.

5. c. Pre-experience design

6. b. To foster sustained engagement and learning

7. b. Gamification techniques

8. c. Tourism that involves collaborative processes between stakeholders, enabling people with access requirements to function independently and with equity

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