

Abstract

The concept of experience economy has, during the last decade, been much debated within the academic field and likewise among companies and municipalities regarding business and city development. Additionally the concept is commonly referred to within the tourism industry, which more or less has been considered the epitome of the experience economy.

Two main positions, respectively the first and the second generation, are often point of departure for the understanding of experience economy. The first generation is related to the cultural serial reproduction of culture, which according to the theory is a copy-paste approach. Hereby cities lose their uniqueness, as they end up with the same attractions as other cities. Additionally this perspective is often criticised for its company centric perspective.

The second generation challenges this approach and argues that the understanding of the human being should be the focal point. Researchers argue that tourists want to co-create experiences with the companies. Thus experiences are not only presented to the tourists as finished products and staged scenes, but rather as a process which call for cooperation between the suppliers and the tourists. However the ongoing discussion has primarily been on a theoretical level and very few practical examples exist.

This thesis will examine the practical dimension of meaningful co-created experiences, with point of departure in the case of Lillebaelt Waters, Middelfart; a case in which the partners currently are working on attracting more tourists to the city of Middelfart. The thesis will emphasise the partners' perspective and their opportunities for co-creating experiences with the tourists. Moreover it will identify practical suggestions for co-creating experiences.

Primary and secondary empirical data, and both qualitative and quantitative methods, are used in order to examine the characteristics of the contemporary tourist. Information regarding these characteristics are essential for the partners to co-create meaningful experiences.

One of the findings in this thesis is that the contemporary tourists have become more post materialistic and emphasise social responsibility, sustainability, nature environments and time together with loved ones. This requires that the partners of Lillebaelt Waters find new and creative initiatives in order to co-create meaningful experiences.

Another finding is that the contemporary tourist has a fragmented behaviour, which demands that the partners of Lillebaelt Waters emphasise individual dialogue in order to understand individual needs.