

RESEARCH

**DEFINING TOMORROW'S  
TOURISM PRODUCT  
PACKAGING EXPERIENCES**

Research  
report  
2004-7

*Discover our true nature*

CANADIAN  
TOURISM  
COMMISSION



COMMISSION  
CANADIENNE  
DU TOURISME



---

# **Defining Tomorrow's Tourism Product: Packaging Experiences**

---

Sponsored by:

Travel Learning Connections  
The Canadian Tourism Commission  
Learning Thru Leisure Consulting  
Radisson Seven Seas Cruises

Prepared by:

Learning Thru Leisure Consulting

June 2004

**Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Main entry under title :

Defining tomorrow's tourism product : packaging experiences

Issued also in French under title: Définir le produit touristique de demain.

ISBN 0-662-38119-X

Cat. No. C86-197/2004E

1. Learning vacations – Canada.
2. Tourism – Canada – Marketing.
  - I. Learning Thru Leisure Consulting (Firm)
  - II. Canadian Tourism Commission.

G155.C3D43 2004

338.4'7917104648

C2004-980292-5

If you require additional copies, please visit our website at [www.canadatourism.com](http://www.canadatourism.com) or e-mail your order to the CTC Distribution Centre at: [distribution@ctc-cct.ca](mailto:distribution@ctc-cct.ca). Please quote #C50409E when ordering by e-mail.

***Defining Tomorrows Tourism Product: Packaging Experiences was prepared by:***

**Dr. Nancy Arsenault**, President, Learning Thru Leisure Consulting, with contributions from  
**Ms. Trace Gale**, Doctoral Candidate, West Virginia University: Recreation, Parks & Tourism Program

**Contributing Research Partners:**



Travel Learning Connections  
331 Main Street SW, Ronan MT  
58964-2708 USA

A pioneering firm and host of the annual international Educational Travel Conference, Travel Learning Connections provide highly customized educational programming, professional development and affinity-based networking forums for seasoned travel planners, as well as jumpstart training for newcomers to the field of non-profit/educational travel. [www.travelearning.com](http://www.travelearning.com)



Discover our true nature  
[www.travelcanada.ca](http://www.travelcanada.ca)

The Canadian Tourism Commission  
55 Metcalfe St., Suite 600  
Ottawa, ON K1P 6L5 Canada

Canada will be the premier four-season destination to connect with nature and to experience diverse cultures and communities. Canada's tourism industry will deliver world-class cultural and leisure experiences year round while preserving and sharing Canada's clean, safe, and natural environments. The industry will be guided by the values of respect, integrity, and empathy. [www.canadatourism.com](http://www.canadatourism.com)



Learning Thru Leisure Consulting  
772 Goldstream Avenue  
PO Box 27035, Victoria, BC  
V9B 5S4 Canada

A tourism consulting firm dedicated to sustainable tourism development and increasing the diversity and quality of innovative visitor experiences. LTL specializes in learning and experiential travel, heritage and cruise tourism, and niche market development. Service areas include: product & market development, business and strategic planning, evaluation, tourism training, and market research. [www.learningthruleisure.com](http://www.learningthruleisure.com)



RADISSON  
SEVEN SEAS CRUISES®

600 Corporate Drive, Suite 400  
Fort Lauderdale, FL  
33334, USA

Provides ultra-luxury cruise experiences that represent true value. In keeping with this philosophy, voyages feature many enhancements, benefits, or special events on a complimentary basis or at a minimal cost. The World Ocean & Cruise Liner Society has awarded the "Best Cruise Value" in the ultra-deluxe category to Radisson Seven Seas for 11 years in a row. [www.rssc.com](http://www.rssc.com)



---

## Executive Summary

A key innovation in today's business is experiences. In today's environment, of ever more sophisticated consumers, those who deliver memorable customer experiences consistently create superior value and competitive advantage.

*London School of Business*

Experiential, learning, and enrichment travel are terms emerging with increased frequency in the travel media as new travel opportunities are promoted and the factors influencing traveler's choices are reported. The demand is growing for travel that engages the senses, stimulates the mind, includes unique activities, and connects in personal ways with travelers on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level.

An opportunity is on the horizon for companies to diversify their tourism offer through building holistic, themed travel journeys, rather than merely packaging a series of attractions and special events. Responding to this demand are travel suppliers, tour operators, and travel planners interested in attracting new customers, repeat guests, and meeting the needs of niche and mainstream markets interested in experiential or learning travel. These companies are *experience providers* who sequence and stage carefully choreographed activities, personal encounters, and authentic experiences, designed to create long lasting memories, engaging travel, and increase customer loyalty.

Developing new and innovative experiential tourism products, which are affordable to customers and generate profits for tourism businesses, is essential. However information to guide and support companies with an interest in these types of tourism products is lacking.

The purpose of this study was to gather group travel information that would assist companies, on a business-to-business level, to better understand the types of visitor experiences that are in demand and gain insights that will assist in '*packaging experiences*.' This study also investigated how organizations create memorable traveler experiences and determined what travelers were willing to pay a premium for value-added benefits. In Feb 2004, focus groups were used to gather insights from travel planners, tour operators, travel suppliers, and destination marketing organizations, representing nine countries. Each organization packages, sells or promotes group travel to affinity groups and educational travelers – audiences that are predisposed to purchasing experiential and learning travel programs.

### **Key Discoveries**

The types of visitor experiences in demand included:

- Reaching into the community in ways that enable travelers to meet local people and participate in day-to-day community experiences. The three most popular vehicles were via kitchen parties, home visits, and farm visits;
- Experiential, hands-on, or interactive activities and 'no-cost, low-cost' activities that creative companies have included in their tours through innovative use of their core assets;
- Special access and behind-the-scenes tours that go beyond the traditional tourism offer, are unique and in some cases, not available to mass market travelers;
- Learning and discovery that is participatory, involves two-way communication and interaction with locals, and fosters personal growth. These opportunities were not perceived to be value added, rather it was a core expectation of travelers; and
- Travel that promotes shared experiences with family, friends and fellow travelers.

---

Discovering how companies set and manage the stage for memorable travel experiences provides interesting packaging insights. In creating memorable travel experiences, four key ingredients were identified:

- The importance, role, skill, resourcefulness, and networks of tour directors and tour guides. This emerged as the most important ingredient in facilitating memorable travel;
- Local resources specialists or subject matter experts, who travel with or temporarily join a group tour, are an integral element in sharing knowledge and connecting travelers to the local community;
- The element of surprise – both positive and negative, planned and spontaneous– has long-lasting implications for memorable travel experiences; and
- The need for free time, flexibility and spontaneity within a group tour itinerary. This allows for self-discovery and time to enjoy unplanned opportunities.

To ensure the visitor experience begins before the guest travels, and lasts well beyond the time together, companies use memorabilia to engage and remain connected with their travelers. Designed to foster long-term memories and customer loyalty the memory cues companies reported included: trip journals, special internet sites for photos and traveler communications, compact discs with trip photos, email lists, personalized souvenir videos, personal letters and certificates of recognition.

Paying attention to detail was the most prominent value-added feature companies offer their guests. Travelers want those ‘little extras’ and some companies are building their reputations on delivering it! The three value-added benefits of affinity travel included: gaining unique special access via alumni connections, the comfort of traveling with like-minded people who share a common bond, as well as connecting with alumni in the destinations visited.

What will travelers pay a premium for? A variety of elements emerged with no single one predominating. Among those discussed were: all-inclusive travel, exclusivity, special access, alumni or affinity travel, traveling with or meeting with experts and local resource specialists, learning experiences, small group size, going into the homes of locals, and comfortable accommodations.

### **Tour Development and Travel Packaging Implications**

The results of this study yielded:

- An eleven-item checklist for building memorable group tour experiences;
- A list of six essential ingredients in building memorable tour packages;
- A decision-making tool for tour planners to use to plan or assess the experiential potential of their tours; and
- A foundation of information on that could be used to conduct a consumer travel packaging study.

What customers want are products, communications, and marketing campaigns that dazzle the senses, touch their hearts, and stimulate their minds.

*Experiential Marketing (1999)*

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>1. Defining Tomorrow’s Tourism Product .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. What We Discovered! .....</b>	<b>3</b>
A) Types of Visitor Experiences in Demand .....	3
Reaching into the Community .....	3
Participatory, Hands-On, and Interactive Activities .....	6
Special Access, Behind-the-Scenes and Exclusivity .....	7
Learning and Discovery .....	8
Shared Experiences .....	9
B) Setting and Managing the Stage .....	10
The Importance of Tour Directors and Tour Guides .....	10
The Importance of Specialists & Local Resource People .....	11
The Element of Surprise! .....	11
Free-time, Flexibility and Spontaneity .....	12
C) Cues and Memorabilia .....	13
D) Value Added Features .....	15
Benefits of Affinity Travel .....	16
E) Pricing Insights.....	18
<b>3. Packaging Experiences.....</b>	<b>21</b>
A) Building Memorable Tourism Experiences.....	22
Packaging Experiences.....	23
A Checklist for Building Memorable Group Tour Experiences.....	24
B) Future Research .....	29
<b>Appendix I: Methodology .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Appendix II: Glossary of Terms .....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix III: List of Participating Companies.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Appendix IV: Unanticipated Insights .....</b>	<b>39</b>





---

# 1. Defining Tomorrow's Tourism Product

Experiential, learning, and enrichment travel are terms emerging with increased frequency in the travel media as new travel opportunities are promoted and the factors influencing traveler's choices are reported. Consider:

- The London School of Business published reports that d “a key innovation in today's business is experience. In today's environment of ever more sophisticated consumers – those who deliver memorable customer experiences consistently create superior value and competitive advantage.”<sup>i</sup>
- The World Tourism Organization (WTO) reports, “there is a shift from active holidays to holidays as an experience. The point is to achieve a complete participative experience that provides new knowledge and authentic experiences.”<sup>ii</sup>
- The Travel Industry Association (TIA) reports that the traveler's desire to experience history and culture is stronger than ever and that “Most agree that trips where they can learn something new are more memorable to them.”<sup>iii</sup>
- The Youth Tourism Consortium of Canada (YTCC) reports, “almost all independent youth travelers are experience-driven. They want to explore different cultures, increase their knowledge and experience excitement. They tend to plan flexible itineraries around informal, active and participatory activities.”<sup>iv</sup>
- The Canadian Travel Attitudes and Motivation Study (TAMS) revealed that, “overall, 7.2 %, (121 million travelers) in North America sought out a participatory hands-on learning experiences while on vacation during the past two years.<sup>v</sup>Menlo Consulting, at the 2003 *Educational Travel Conference* reported that affinity and group travelers were willing to pay a premium for knowledgeable guides, small group sizes, opportunities to travel with companions of similar interests, exclusive access to venues and events, a special interest focus and sponsorship by an affinity organization.<sup>vi</sup>
- The National Tour Association's (NTA) educational seminar (March 2003) identified experiences as the next generation of tourism products to grow tourism businesses.<sup>vii</sup>
- Interval International's consumer magazine (Spring 2003) profiled a new, high-end travel experience *Swimming with Sharks* at Orlando's Sea World. Participants learn facts about sharks, visit the food preparation room, touch a shark and dive, in a steel cage with Plexiglas window, into a shark encounter pool.<sup>viii</sup>
- The travel editor at the Ottawa Citizen (Sept 2003) wrote a full-page article profiling how experiential-travellers want to work as soldiers, learn to cook, dig for bones, as a new trend in vacations takes hold;<sup>ix</sup> and
- Cruise Line International Association's (Oct 2003) identified how cruise ships are expanding their on-board learning activities. “They're [guests] having fun and learning at the same time and choosing to take advantage of the many classes, workshops, and programs that are available onboard daily.”<sup>x</sup>

At the heart of this demand are people who are willing to pay to participate in travel that offers something different, engaging experiences that go beyond traditional goods and services. This presents opportunities for new travel programs, alliances and packages.

Responding to this demand are ‘*experience providers*’ – travel suppliers, tour operators and travel planners. These companies are developing new, and refreshing existing products in ways that are designed to create long lasting memories with their niche market or mainstream travelers. The goal is to increase customer loyalty, create an emotional bond and provide reasons for them to want to return.

---

As the role of ‘experiences’ in delivering superior customer service is recognized and understood by the travel industry, everyone will benefit.

### **The Need for Current Information on Packaging the Visitor Experience**

An important step in capitalizing on current trends is to ensure that for companies have current, and relevant information on which to make business decisions. . To this end, this was conducted, at the business-to-business level to identify the types of visitor experiences that are in demand and gain insights that will assist companies to ‘*package experiences*’. Specifically, focus group participants were asked:

1. What types of visitor experiences are currently in demand?
2. How do organizations create memorable visitor experiences?
3. What do travelers perceive as ‘value-added’ and what are they willing to pay a premium for in a group tour?

### **Methodology**

Fifty-six individuals, representing 54 organizations, participated in one of five focus groups. Data was collected between February 5 to 7, 2004 in Washington DC. The study population included 8 tour operators, 19 travel planners, 11 travel suppliers, and 8 destination-marketing organizations from nine countries. Every organization has an interest in developing and delivering learning and experiential travel products to group and/or mainstream travelers. Complete details on the methodology and the focus group protocol are located in Appendix I. Key definitions are provided in Appendix II, and a list of participating companies in Appendix III.

---

## 2. What We Discovered!

**A visitor experience is something that is personally encountered, lived through, and affects you.  
It may involve observation or participation.  
It may be active or passive, planned or opportunistic, personal or shared.**

Travel planners, tour operators, travel suppliers, and destination marketing organizations that target affinity-group and educational traveler provided an array of useful and insightful information on: the types of visitor experiences in demand, how companies set the stage for memorable group travel experiences, the types of cues and memorabilia used; value added elements; and pricing insights. This study also revealed a number of supplier motivations and responsibilities associated with delivering memorable experiential travel (see Appendix IV).

These discoveries are designed to inform and enlighten companies involved or attracted to developing experiential and learning travel opportunities. These findings should not be generalized to the entire travel industry. Rather, they contribute to the growing body of knowledge about learning, enrichment, and experiential travel. They also lead to practical and strategic implications for product development, packaging, marketing, and tour delivery.

### A) Types of Visitor Experiences in Demand

Wide ranges of activity-related visitor experiences, currently in demand with travelers, were identified. This included reaching into the community, experiential activities, special access, behind-the-scenes opportunities, exclusivity, learning, and discovery, shared experiences, and accommodations. These activity-related visitor experiences represent important dimensions of building memorable, personally relevant travel.

#### Reaching into the Community

The most prominent type of visitor experiences in demand were those that facilitated opportunities for visitors to reach into the host community, meet and socialize with local people, participate in community activities, and engage in cultural exchanges. Many of these experiences do not represent typical observational tourist activities; rather they involve hands-on participation in day-to-day community activities.

*Travelers most vividly remember the people they encounter much more than buildings. People want to develop personal experiences with people in the communities they visit: visits, dinners, break bread together. (Travel Planner)*

*People want more than just visiting places nowadays and they love to have that cultural exchange and go in-depth, do something really unique that they feel they can come back and really talk about. A life-changing experience. (Travel Planner)*

---

**Meeting local people**, whether briefly or to spend time together, was an important element of the tour package. Pre-planned or spontaneous activities provide a unique connection to the community that may not be realized through merely visiting tourist attractions.

*The most popular parts of the cookie cutter tours, that are most of what we operate seem to be the opportunities they have, though limited, to actually interact with local people. (Travel Planner)*

*You can meet people in the Amazon by going on a bird walk and you go right through the community. (Tour Operator)*

*People coming to Hong Kong, once they find out about the program, it's called the Cultural Kaleidoscope – it's basically a meet the people program, a free program to meet a couple of hours with artisans that can teach the art of making tea, tai chi, learning how to distinguish jade, etc. (Travel Planner)*

**Kitchen parties, home visits, and farm visits** all provide travelers with personal contact with the local people, unique insights into their lives and livelihood, and an intimate way to experience a destination. It is the desire, while part of a group, to experience activities and events that closely resemble visiting friends and relatives. This theme generated a great deal of excitement and passion. It was a visitor experience that emerged consistently from the different countries represented in this study.

*The minute I can say to my clientele [in India] “ Oh, I know one of the women here who's having a feast in her house, come with me” and we go to her house and there they are with her family, she has the food spread out and these total strangers are celebrating with a private family. That's kind of the behind the scenes things that I'm talking about. It may be really behind the scenes or might be set up as disguised that way but it doesn't make any difference because they know they're getting special treatment. (Travel Planner)*

*People love to go to the countryside to see the pig farms or the cotton growers or the silk factories. Anything that relates to the very grass root, their basic lives [the locals]. Schools, kindergartens, hospitals, clinics, these things people would come back and say it's great, we have seen the great wall, the forbidden city, but what touched us most is visiting that farm or visiting the school and seeing the little library donated by the American volunteers. (Tour Operator)*

*Yes, for a large group we break up groups into several homes. In New Finland this is imperative because so much of the local culture is tied into the kitchen parties. (Tour Operator)*

*On our China trip it was very outstanding, we went to the home of a very prominent art dealer who lived in New York and in China and that was quite impressive for the people to see his home and to see how he operated with his art. His shop was also part of his home. (Travel Planner)*

*That also goes for Norway – even though Americans stay at hotels most, they love to stay at a local farm and get that unique experience, get a presentation from the family, get their family history – get someone to show them local art or traditions, that's very much in demand now. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

---

*People want to go into other people's homes. We get that all over. Whether it be the farm vacation in the south of Provence or meeting an Indian family, they're not interested in seeing their culture in performance, they want to go into their home and have tea with them. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

**Community experiences** provide another popular way to discover and understand people and cultures. The general consensus was however, that if visitors truly want authentic experiences, they need to get into the community and experience the 'here and now'! All agreed authenticity was important. As one travel supplier commented,

*Authenticity is often confused with how people lived in the past, but not with real authenticity, which is how people really live now. What they [the travel industry] call authentic is often made up. (Travel Supplier)*

This supplier went on to describe that when they meet people dressed in their day-to-day clothes and going about their daily activities, travel business don't think of this as authentic. But, if you dress people in a fur-trade costume from 100 years ago, then it's authentic.

*What I see is in the end, people are more moved by real authenticity [as opposed to contrived or re-creations of the past]. Real everyday life, meeting real people, seeing how they live now, that's what makes the strongest impression. (Travel supplier)*

*You know, if you're talking about authenticity in the sense that it's this kind of "fake" culture – you know, it's the iconic or the cliché culture. I don't think people want to see the cliché anymore. And going back, I think there was a demand for that several years ago. I think now people want what's really happening. What are the real traditions as opposed to the packaged up for the tourist experience? (Tour Operator)*

The ways in that companies try to package authentic experiences are varied and contingent on the communities they visit, the local networks they have established and the timing of their arrival.

*Our groups like to get a chance to talk with local people in their neighbourhoods, or in some informal type setting that's not controlled by the supplier, or by the place we're in ... although obviously, it has to be planned. And they like to visit places like schools, to see how kids are taught, and visit clinics, medical places, and go behind the scenes and see how real life is in the countries. (Travel Planner)*

*We have some of our best authentic experiences by teaching people how to blend. I mean ... real authentic experiences that we try to get our coordinators to do is to make the people feel comfortable in a neighbourhood or a part of the world so that they can do things on their own – go to a supermarket, show them how to use the money in a supermarket so that they can go back and shop, on their own. We try and show them places they can be as unobtrusive as possible. (Travel Planner)*

*In Wales you can have authentic experiences because something that happens in every town and every village, two or three times a week. The local male boy's choir will rehearse in the local school hall, the local village. ... One, two or twenty people who want to listen to them rehearse are welcome. If they [travelers] do, when they finish the rehearsal, we'll take them to the nearest pub and that's when they actually interact. And that is the one thing that they remember from their trip but it is authentic because its real people and they do it every week anyway. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

---

## Participatory, Hands-On, and Interactive Activities

Complementing the desire to meet people was a demand by travelers to engage in participatory, interactive, or hands-on activities. Travelers want more than merely observing things and listening to lecture, they get actively involved.

*We have seen a change in what the visitor is looking for. It is becoming a more interactive experience that people want – it's not just seeing a monument or visiting a cave or a temple – its get down, get dirty and get involved. ... We've had groups get off the bus and try to wash clothes with the washer men [in India] and that gives them a feeling of what it must be like to do this everyday. Rather than watch from a distance, that's the level of involvement people are looking that creates an experience. It's the sights, the sounds, the smells, and the entire package. (Tour Operator)*

*One specific type of experience that is very much in demand is hands on experiences. For example we specialize in garden tours, and we're being asked, very much more than we were ever asked for things like ... "Can you go out to the markets and buy flowers and have us learn to arrange them? Could we please go to someone's garden and actually work in the garden?" Those are the types of things that we're being asked. (Tour Operator)*

*One thing that we're finding is a lot of hands-on activities – cooking, photography, sketching. People want to do things when they travel. (Tour Operator)*

*I'd like to agree, we experience that when people contact us now, they don't just want to come and see our properties, they want to get really underneath the fabric of the property. They want to play croquet on the lawn. They want to do cream teas and hear about tea etiquette ... It's not just looking, it has to be participative. (Travel Supplier)*

*They can learn how to make the local crafts that they did 1000 years ago, they can go to a Viking farm and learn how the Vikings cooked or how they made the weapons or art or whatever. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

Creative travel suppliers are also **building in low-cost, no-cost unique experiences** that are generating demand! As one cruise operator commented,

*We have to unload the luggage by hand at the end of the cruise. Everyone gets involved! That's what everyone writes to us about, the teamwork and the fact that everyone is involved and everyone is there to say their personal 'good-byes'. (Travel Supplier)*

Alternatively, one tour operator discovered that by thinking of your assets from a non-traditional vantage point, you could create a unique visitor experience that other companies cannot easily replicate.

*Passengers wanted to stand on the edge of the runway and watch the airplanes take off – so we did it. It was amazing [the feedback] physically seeing the aircraft isn't the same as an interactive personal experience. It was a non-traditional use of our aircraft and we never thought about people enjoying the experience outside the airplane! Now we package this experience for our visitors. (Tour Operator)*

---

*Talking of memories that comes to mind too, what we've done with the last two launches of our new ships, in the pre-inaugural cruise, is to invite those passengers that have sailed the most nights with us, to come on the "shakedown" cruise. This is when the ship is not quite ready. I cannot tell you the popularity. People are clamoring to be in this group ... they feel that they own the ship, they feel like part of the company. These are people who have done all the around the world cruises and everything. They love this. We had a picture out on deck with all of them in these white boiler suits holding tools and hammers with little caps on. I mean these very wealthy people. They love this! This is the memory of a lifetime that they were on these trips. We've done this twice now and believe me, we will do it the next time we have a new ship ... You're taking those people completely out of context and they absolutely love it. (Travel Supplier)*

### **Special Access, Behind-the-Scenes and Exclusivity**

Opportunities to gain special access to places, enjoy a behind-the-scenes tour, and exclusive experiences provide the cache of 'having done something regular traveler can't' "like going to the Sistine Chapel at night when no one else is there."

*I find that the visitor wants something unique and something special that they think they're getting with this tour and no one else is getting it ... like an experience in a private home that hardly anyone gets to experience, or study leaders who are real experts, PhDs in their field, and they can give some insight that no one else can do. (Travel Planner)*

*We specialize in performing arts and what I find is the most popular, most appreciated, and why we have the repeat business, is meeting the musicians, who perform, or the artists, private meetings. Another trend is talking about the architecture with specialists. (Travel Supplier)*

*We might bring in an Ambassador and their spouse, or go to museums after hours, normally inaccessible places or behind the scene places, i.e. walking into a factory through the back door. (Travel Supplier)*

*Anything that we can provide that's behind the scenes – particularly if it has some cache, maybe from the accommodations perspective or from a special meeting with the president of a country or of certain notoriety. (Travel Planner)*



---

## Learning and Discovery

Increasingly, companies are finding creative ways to introduce opportunities to learn as part of their tour. Dynamic learning experiences that involve meeting with specialists, expert lecturers or faculty, interpreters, and great storytellers offer more memorable travel because the two-way dialogue learning is more engaging and relevant. It also draws in the views and knowledge of other travelers. Static, mass-market methods for learning (e.g. watching a video, following message trails on computer screens, reading pamphlets or interpretive panels) were not mentioned.

*One of the things that we are doing that has been very popular is digital and photo workshops. These have been very popular because many are new users. Travelers get a general lecture and can bring their cameras. Throughout the cruise the lectures get more progressive. They have laptops on the ship and instruct users on how to use their cameras. We've had it for almost a year, have had to change it some and we've added additional levels – beginner, intermediate – there's no extra cost for this service. (Tour Operator)*

*We're seeing an increase in people wanting some kind of learning experience, but in an inter-generational way. They want to bring their family. They want to bring others, besides just their regular traveling companion, so that they can share on a broader base and, that also ties to active outdoor programs. We see that people still want a learning experience but they're inclined to have more active, more outdoor experiences than this sort of sedentary lecture, field trip, and entertainment excursion. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*Much of our tourism is nature based. We don't encourage people to get too up close and personal with the polar bears ... but what people are very much interested in of course, is not only the habitat, how we treat the habitat. They want to know about the migration of the animals, the natural, the way the animal lives ... You know, they're concerned about practices and I would also echo that people are interested in culture, how others live. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*In many cases they [culinary travelers] go to wine university and they spend two full mornings learning to do wine tasting so that leads to pairing up food and wine. So, when they're, done Wine 101 they take that home ... Many times they'll come back and sign up for a Burgundy course or they'll do an Alsace course or something like that. So, it's sort of a 101 tool in a 301 process. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*Our guests come to participate in activities in nature, mostly, but at the beginning of every tour, it's important for us to introduce them to the history and the culture present in Quebec, mostly via Quebec City because it's our gateway. And what comes regularly in most of the groups – people want to hear about politics. They want to know what's going on ... It's something that comes back every time, consistently. (Tour Operator)*

*I find in what we do, small ship cruising, we do talks on theoretical approaches in terms of the flora and the ecosystem of the St. Lawrence and then we have direct experiences when we visit on land. We give them plant identification and they get to see the ecosystem, how it works, different element, then we have a debriefing session. I think people enjoy this a lot because it has the double aspect of theory and practice (Travel Supplier)*

---

## Shared Experiences

The social dynamic associated with travel, getting to know people, creating new and strengthening old friendships or spending time with family is important. This study reinforced this factor as a demand generator.

*I'd like to say that family programs, there's definitely been an increase in demand for that, we've noticed it too. Especially the grandparent – grandchild connection. And I think the main visitor experiences that our clients are looking for are nature and wildlife viewing, encounters with local people and having lectures from their study leaders, either formal or informal. (Travel Planner)*

*I'd just like to go a little further on this relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, we have a Zodiac operation and they really enjoy that because I think the grandparents are saying that “we're young also, we can enjoy it” and we can both have the same type of experience and we're all proud of that, some of them have never done that before and some of them – you know, they live the experience together and it makes them feel good. (Travel Supplier)*

This trend in “togetherness” extends beyond this study group, as a recent study by Yesawich, Pepperdine, Brown, and Russell (YPB&R) confirmed. Their *National Leisure Travel Monitor*<sup>xi</sup> (November 2003) identified that 68% of active travelers indicated spending time with family as very or extremely important; 58% reported the same for spending time with friends. This trend is associated with the growing importance of family in the post 9/11 world and is expected to continue growing in popularity. In turn, this creates new packaging opportunities for companies that wish to design multi-household travel experiences for niche markets.

Another dynamic of shared visitor experiences are as a result of being in a small group.

*The other thing that I think they like a lot is just being in a small group and learning from each other. I think people want to get in an environment where they can just talk – there's no television, there's no newspapers and they just talk about themselves, their experiences, and that sharing and experience. (Travel Supplier)*

*I think one of the best, or the most memorable aspects of the trip is the community aspect, getting to know people. I think it's particularly true in smaller groups or in river cruises where it's still 100 people but every time you walk out of your cabin, you're forced into encounters with each other. What happens is a real bonding that goes on. I think some of the best memories are the memories people get of just interacting with each other, especially in an environment that is kind of fresh and as they're discovering together they're kind of bonding together. I think there's lasting friendships often formed as a result of that. (Tour Operator)*

---

## B) Setting and Managing the Stage

A second and very important element is related to what travel companies do to set and manage the stage and visitor expectations. Generally, these components are pre-planned and proactively managed, such as the role of the tour guide or tour director, resource specialists and optimizing free time. There are also elements of surprise, some positive and some negative, some planned and some opportunistic that impact the visitor experience and contribute to creating memories. As one travel supplier stated:

*We just set the stage. Shared life experiences help to create memories and friendships.  
(Travel Supplier)*

### The Importance of Tour Directors and Tour Guides

The importance of the tour director and tour guides cannot be overstated. These people are a critical element of any tour. Their knowledge, skill, and ability to balance group situations along with individual needs is essential to group travel. Tour directors and guides are credited with creating terrific visitor experiences and positive memories by their ability to manage spontaneity, find opportunities, take care of problems, ensure a good time for all, make travelers feel welcome and part of the group and create a dynamic that leads to friendships between strangers and connect travelers to the communities they visit.

*The group leader is everything for us. A group leader can make the worst itinerary work or the best itinerary fail. Every sentence on our evaluations somehow ties back to the leader. Guides must be engaging, skilled, culturally sensitive, they must effectively create cohesiveness, drive social engagement, show tenacity and savvy. (Tour Operator)*

*The effectiveness of the guide is critical. They make that personal connection with the visitor, find stories that will appeal more to women, men, children – funny, emotional stories. (Travel Supplier)*

*I'd like to add a little something. It's the personal relationship they [visitors] have with the guide and the people they meet. ... I think that's where they find the best value... And if they, for example, have the chance to sit at the same table as their guide once during the trip instead of having the guide sitting always with the bus driver or apart, it's a plus because they have a personal relationship with that person. ... If we have a park naturalist come for a special presentation, it's not always possible, but as much as we can or as much as they can, we try to keep them for a meal. (Tour Operator)*

*It is very important that you have the very well experienced tour director or tour manager, for the group because they can really make it or break it. Whether you provide it yourself or it is something that the tour company is providing it for you, it is essential, especially with the very experienced traveler. (Travel Supplier)*

---

## **The Importance of Specialists & Local Resource People**

The role of resource specialists and local resource people differs from tour guides and tour directors, yet these people are vitally important. They are subject matter or community experts be they a naturalist, interpreter, aboriginal elder, historian, curator, farmer, fisherman, land resource manager, chef, or a costume designer! The list of people that can add value to traditional and non-traditional travel activities through their stories, and knowledge is endless.

*I'll maybe have visitors from the country come speak to my groups – from government or education – guests want to learn about the culture, the government. (Tour Operator)*

*We specialize in performing arts. What I find is the most popular, most appreciated, and it is also why we have repeat business, is meeting the musician, who perform, or the artists in private meetings ... Another thing we find is that they really like to meet young musicians. Even if they're music lovers they traveled around the world – they could attend the competition of young musicians. (Travel Supplier)*

Including specialists on a tour may not be important to all group tours, but for alumni, affinity and nature based travel, these people are tremendously important in introducing and educating travelers. They also ensure safety, particularly in the outdoors. In fact, for educational travelers, including a resource specialist is not considered value added, but a core expectation of the tour being package.

*We find that the faculty leader is vitally important – but just as important is the local or aboriginal person – the tribes will start to interact with the travelers (Tour Operator)*

*We get our faculty as involved as possible. We find that if we have them look at the itinerary in the very early stages, it gets them excited.' (Travel Planner)*

## **The Element of Surprise!**

*The magic is in those unexpected, unplanned, spontaneous things of whatever kind and however small sometimes, that are the highlight of a trip ... It's those little extra things that are not anticipated, that really very often, are the ones that create the memories. (Travel Supplier)*

*We don't tell them everything because if it doesn't happen, then we don't disappoint eight people, we'd rather surprise them. (Travel Planner)*

The element of surprise was consistently mentioned in discussing how to create memorable experiences. Surprises can be pre-planned or opportunistic, for despite all the planning in the world, something is bound to go wrong. The beauty of surprise situations is that they create unique opportunities for human interaction, generate a special connection with the place, and build a common bond between travelers. They also can be the foundation of some of the best stories people tell when they return home.

---

However, not all surprises are planned! Tour operators agreed that “*Something is going to go wrong on every trip; it’s bound to happen.*” Even the best plans are only good until you cross the departure line.

*When something goes wrong, we fall into the only authentic cultural confrontations and experiences. You’re sitting out there and somebody comes [to help] and you’re actually talking to a mechanic ... you’re dealing with how people in a country deal with crisis. (Tour Operator)*

The key for turning unexpected and potentially negative events into positive outcomes was most often credited to the tour guide or director. Their skill in managing situations was pivotal to optimizing the unplanned opportunity and ensuring visitors leave happy.

*It is very important that you have a very well experienced tour director or tour manager for the group, because they can really make it or break it. (Travel Supplier)*

*As a planner, I have to work so closely with my operators and my suppliers because I need to have confidence in them ... Confident that they’re gonna be able to take advantage of that really unique opportunity that pops up unexpectedly. (Travel Supplier)*

In fact, well-trained effective staff can turn a surprise into a successful element of the tour.

*Coming back to this point a little bit, sometimes when things go wrong on a tour, the tour director is the most important person, and how he or she turns it around – has an impact on the entire success of the program. I remember once we had chartered a train in India and for 20 years the locomotive had never broken down. It happened to break down that day and you’re out in the desert so what do you do? We turned the whole thing around and made it look like it was staged because you had jeeps coming two hours later you could take them for the rest of the journey and they loved it. The whole thing was so fantastic it was done [on a later tour] for the World President’s Organization. (Tour Operator)*

Finally, the element of surprise can create powerful memories on a trip when it acts as a catalyst for taking the traveler out of their comfort zone. Two examples,

*Yeah, exactly. We had a group climbing Mount Kinabalu [Malaysia] and they were not able to do it. They were in their sixties and out of shape. The guide pushed them up twenty times and actually got them all up. They were so sore they couldn’t walk the rest of the trip and they all said they wouldn’t have missed it! (Travel Planner)*

*...going through the settlement in Capetown visiting a school. It’s a place they’re [the visitor] not so comfortable. (Tour Operator)*

### **Free-time, Flexibility and Spontaneity**

A key ingredient of setting the stage for engaging, meaningful visitor experiences is ensuring free time in the itinerary. Virtually all companies agreed that flexibility, time to take advantage of unexpected events in a community, and allowing people to discover things on their own were important in creating long-lasting memories for their travelers.

*I think the most meaningful experiences, and I spent 20 years actually leading tours, are the ones they discover for themselves. I mean, you can program the hell out of a trip, but when they go off on their own and they discover something they’re the ones they remember. (Tour Operator)*

---

*Building in flexibility, if you can arrange for an FIT either before or after the trip or a deviation of some kind to let them do something on their own. (Travel Planner)*

*And the other thing to encourage is free time, this is where most of the people get their memories. It's that, back to that self-discovery. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*It's so important ... to open up for flexibility and individuality by creating relationships and partnerships, for example, with the hotel you're staying at. That way if you have a guest or two that can't follow the main program for whatever reason, you can utilize these local resources to come up with alternatives that will create a good experience for them, rather than a bad memory. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

But remember that knowing your audience is essential because,

*Different things mean different things to people. One person's wonderful memory is going to be another person's nightmare. It's just drawing that balance between group activities and allowing that free time for individual memories to occur. (Tour Operator)*

### **C) Cues and Memorabilia**

The use of cues and memorabilia in recording and sustaining visitor memories was a technique used by travel planners, tour operators, and travel suppliers alike. The range of cues and memorabilia used by different organizations included: pre-trip items for tour guides or travelers, photo logs, travel journals, visitor profiles, personal letters, post-trip videos, Internet scrapbooks, and certificates.

**Connecting with travelers before they leave home** sets the stage for a holistic memorable experience. Beyond the traditional pre-trip planning information travelers expect, (itinerary, maps, links to Internet information) some companies hold pre-travel meetings.

*Before all of our joint trips we publish a book with the visitor profiles. It's a great icebreaker and memento. We mail it ahead to the tour director and it really helps them personalize the trip for us. (Travel Supplier)*

Tours that include activities where travelers contribute to communities can forecast the type of visitor involvement and make suggestions prior to the trip. For example,

*Libraries are a good vehicle – we ask our travelers to bring a certain book with them – and then we create a library for the locals. (Tour Operator)*

**Using themes as the basis for building a tour** is a technique used by many companies. However one heritage attraction took this concept a little further by describing their **tours as stories**; a method that complements the ideas presented in the *Experience Economy*<sup>xiii</sup> where business are described as the 'stage upon which experiences' take place.

*Speaking just from the perspective of an individual site, we build our whole product on this model. We set our programs to entertain, offer learning, and connect with people. They want to be entertained and make a connection with the local culture. We always focus on the visitor experience definition you've posted. We want our visitors to come away from our site being touched in some way. The people in our stories have their ups and downs – our guests are dealing with the same issues. Basically, people come away feeling like they touched people. We write our tours to be stories. (Travel Supplier)*

---

**The use of photos, trip journals and the Internet** is a simple, inexpensive way of recording memories and creating shared experiences. These tactics also provide useful materials for traditional and or electronic marketing activities.

*Our host keeps a log and we encourage our travelers to keep notes – we distribute the log at the end of the trip. (Travel Planner)*

*We like to have our travelers keep a log, we include photos. We also have a website where family and friends can come look for themselves after the trip. (Tour Operator)*

*We do a travel journal too. We do it in a slightly different way. We ask for a volunteer for each day – just to take care of one day. And then the tour host gets all of that information and puts it together – we have a reunion afterwards to which we invite all of the travelers and they get their journal. We also always take a group photograph and include that. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*We put scrapbooks of the trips up on the web. (Travel Planner)*

**Compact discs to store and distribute trip photos** are also used. One travel supplier described how her resource person enjoys taking photos while traveling with the group. For Christmas one year, he put the tour photos onto a CD and sent it to the travelers as a surprise Christmas gift. It was so positive that the company admits “we’ve been doing it now for three years and it’s getting to be a habit.” (Travel Supplier)

Another method is **creating an email list** amongst travelers so that people may share their digital photos so “for those that have pictures they want to send somebody – they can do it.” (Travel Planner)

**Souvenir videos** can also be a wonderful memento of a group tour. One travel supplier described how he collaborates with a company to create videos from snap shot photos then send the video to their travelers after the tour. The cost is budgeted into the price of the tour.

*We actually give disposable cameras to a number of the travelers and the passengers take the pictures and then we take those pictures back to the company and they create a slide video out of it, and it’s branded to our association, our university, so the memory goes beyond the destination and they remember they did it with us. (Travel Supplier)*

The use of personal **letters** creates yet another beneficial two-way exchange with travelers.

*I always send a personal letter to each of the travelers with a picture that was taken in various destinations with everybody. And they in turn write me back and send me pictures they have taken and we put them on our website so they can maintain those contacts with those people and we find that they do. (Travel Planner)*

Finally, some companies use **certificates of recognition** as a way to enhance the experience and offer a tangible memento of the trip.

*In public archaeology, we often give out certificates at the end of the day or week or whatever, and they like that recognition – it’s just a piece of paper but it works really well. (Travel Supplier)*

---

*“Yeah, we do it at the campus abroad programs, you get a graduation certificate at the end. It’s really fun because you have a whole little ceremony and everything and they get to come up and accept their certificate and it makes them feel special. They’re being recognized. (Travel Planner)*

## **D) Value Added Features**

When study participants were asked about what their travelers perceive as value added, a number of organizations mentioned:

- Opportunities for personal interaction with local people;
- Free time and/or independent travel options within a group tour package;
- Direct participation in unique, special activities; and
- Special entree to unique places and people that could not be accessed as an independent traveler.

Additionally, those ‘special extras’ were mentioned:

*Remember, value added too, is not just about more luxury. Value added is again about, seeing things that you can’t see and talking to people that you can’t talk to. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

*The most value-added thing is to make the unexpected happen. Examples would be, with regard to Germany, the green vault is closed, for public but at the last minute we found a way to get some senior people to open the green vault for a group to see because, normal people, other tourists cannot see. What they are getting, others are not getting, is more value added. It’s more egoistic thing – other than they might not understand ABC or D about the art inside the green vault, but they come back and dream about it: “I saw it, you did not see it.” (Destination Marketing Organization)*

The most significant new point raised was the importance of **paying attention to detail**. These details do not necessarily add costs to an itinerary and can be facilitated by well-trained staff and collaborating with excellent suppliers who are truly attuned to the importance of optimizing the visitor experience, ensuring they feel welcome, safe, comfortable, and in some cases, pampered. Knowing or observing what is valued by your travelers is key.

*As a tour operator, we’ve built our reputation on that little detail. They don’t know what we’re going to do but they know we always do a lot of little things during the program – and that’s why they come back, it’s word of mouth. (Tour Operator)*

*Attention to each individual participant with a high level of service; like running out at twelve midnight, if a guest is not feeling well, to get them medicine, or tracking down luggage with them, letting them know they can count on you to care for them. (Travel Planner)*

*That attention to detail extends from the moment they book the trip to the follow through at the end. Pre-trip docs, information, etc. that is nicely tied into branding and goes all the way through to the logs we send at the end of the tour with welcome home letter. (Tour Operator)*



---

*Value-added things can be included in the program at very nominal costs. And the dollar value may be 2 or 3 or 5 dollars, but the memories they bring back could be worth \$200. For example in India, you could have a parrot astrologer, where in the world are you going to have a parrot astrologer? This is a guy – you ask the parrot a question and he nods his head for you and it costs nothing but that memory has great value. (Tour Operator)*

*A simple little detail that works for us is when we have programs that are over Chinese New Year, we provide people with red envelopes and some dollar bills and that's what they give to the children. We make it easy and we make it simple for them – so that they have it and are not trying to find it when they're there. (Travel Planner)*

*Another thing, very simple, and I'm sure everybody does it, but on the safety form, you make a note of birthdays and if somebody has a birthday. They are surprised [when it is acknowledged in the group] ... we thought about it, it's a very simple thing, so now we do it for anniversaries too; anything they note, we note. (Travel Planner)*

*I can think of something, it's really silly, but I went on a trip to Peru and was on a riverboat. When I came back from an excursion, the cabin steward had done up the towels in a way that was just like this weird sculpture thin. For some reason I always think about that. (Travel Planner)*

### **Benefits of Affinity Travel**

Affinity travelers are people who share a common bond with people in an organization, institution, or activity. These special interest groups can be found in every community and be quite diverse in nature, for example: quilters, bird lovers, railway fanatics, church groups, photographers or painters. In the learning travel market, the predominant affinity groups are alumni organizations affiliated with educational institutions around the globe. Many offer travel programs to their alumni as a way of maintaining a contact, providing services to build affinity, and foster long-term relationships that increase the probability of philanthropic contributions.

At a business-to-business level, there are several incentives for affinity travel planners to collaborate with tour operators including leveraging their expertise in itinerary planning, negotiating with suppliers, and marketing. In return, travel planners provide tour operator with business marketed to a proprietary database of qualified potential buyers. Together, travel planners can enrich the tour created with operators' new ideas, guest experts, and lecturers from the affinity organization and interactive experiences or special access, enabled by alumni in the destinations they visit. Planners benefit from existing networks that operators have in communities, thus shortening the research and development time in building tours. This collaborative relationship between tour operators and affinity travel planners results in a plethora of value-added features for the traveler who purchases tours from their institutional alumni organization.

**Unique or special access** to the community, special venues, other educational institutions, and resource specialists were described as an important asset of alumni travel that few organizations can replicate (with the exception perhaps of Elderhostel or the Smithsonian Travel Program).

*I think that our travelers always seem to really appreciate when they know, something, even before the trip is planned in the schedule, that they couldn't do on their own, such as visiting an embassy or something that they couldn't get into without their connection to their institution. (Tour Operator)*

---

*I think in a way, we attract those kinds of travelers because in many cases, in many destinations, people can go on their own and do many of the things you can normally do as a tourist, but the reason they would travel with a university, outside the connection to the university, is they get a chance to do things they could not on their own. And that's why it's so important. (Tour Operator)*

**Sharing a common bond and the comfort of traveling with like-minded people** was also described as a unique asset of alumni or affinity travel. Travel planners at the institution use this platform to strengthen university or colleges relations.

*You have the comfort of knowing that these people relate to you. Whether it is because they love wildlife and they know that you have a similar love for that interest, or whether they can relate because of your institution or your location. (Travel Planner)*

*They're coming on a group trip because they're choosing a group experience, but not everyone is equally able to engage with the group. To help them have a better group experience and have it strengthening the affinity with us, a representative of ours, is the only way we've found that that works. Across the board, those trips are rated higher, trips where we aren't able to send the representative along, they ask 'what happened?' (Travel Planner)*

*I would have to agree with everyone ... the groups that we have still want to have the connection to the university so the host is a very important piece and they're making their decision first to travel as a group with our association. (Travel Planner)*

**Connecting with alumni at the destination** builds on the bond people have with their affinity organization and opens the doors for unique opportunities in communities where alumni reside.

*It is something that we set up because we have a local alumni who've got connections there and it's a tour led, that we sort of put together in house ... and we've found that a lot of people do stay in touch over the Internet afterward. (Travel Planner)*

*One of the activities that our alumni particularly enjoy is meeting with local alums in that area – because the University has a very large foreign base of students we have alumni everywhere and the internet has made it very easy to get in touch with them and have them join us for a dinner or cocktail parties. (Travel Planner)*

---

## E) Pricing Insights

When focus group participants were asked what value-added features groups travelers would pay a premium for, there was little consistency in the responses. Rather a robust discussion centred around the pros and cons, benefits and limitations of all-inclusive pricing in a highly competitive market. While there were proponents for both sides, mostly due to the need to advertise competitive prices, the general opinion was that, as much as possible, travelers prefer all inclusive group travel.

*Every time it's all-inclusive, and we don't always offer that, but every time it is, we get feedback that they were glad it was. (Travel Planner)*

*I think the spoiled traveler today is used to getting as much as possible for as little as possible and they're also very savvy... they shop around for the best values. But I think that the general feeling is that, when people are buying a trip, whether it is just an FIT or when their organization is part of a big group travel, they don't want to have to experience paying for any extras. The value package has to be as value-added as possible because you cannot come later on and nickel or dime them to death. Any kind of extras irritates them. (Travel Supplier)*

The all-inclusive pricing is a challenge shared by all.

*I always get into an argument with tour operators who don't want to do it [all inclusive pricing] because it makes the price point look too high and they're used to going head to head. And the alums, read what's included. 'Are shore excursions included?' It's so important, and it's an ongoing argument and sometimes I win and sometimes I don't. (Travel Planner)*

*Operators are in a catch-22 situation because if you include everything obviously the price goes up, sometimes tremendously. It very much depends on the actual client that comes on board ... If you include everything from the beginning, you're already going to exclude 90% of the people. They're not going to come because it's above a certain threshold they are willing to pay. (Tour Operator)*

*We sell dreams we don't sell products and when people come on a dream they, maybe you've experienced this, they just kind of throw themselves in your hands ... If you're selling shore excursions separately, then everyday they get jerked back to their credit card or their wallet and they go, "Aughh, now I have to make this business decision". Do I do this or don't do this? And we find that by including them, [the traveler] they don't have to face reality until they get off the boat. But for that period of time they've been with you they'll just experience that dream as you weave it for them and that's an added value – we include it. It's a premium product, it costs a little more but, the fact that it's included and they don't have to get constantly nailed back to the reality of money every single day is really a hidden added value. (Travel Supplier)*

No simple solution emerged from the discussion but one travel planner captured the challenge,

*Well, I can tell you that for our programs, that the traditional program is that everything is included. You don't have to, unless you're buying something very personal – but all meals, all lecture talks, everything, from start to finish. And for certain travelers, that's what they want, for other travelers, they might as well be in jail. (Travel Planner)*

---

## **Willing to Pay More**

Despite the challenge of all-inclusive pricing, there was a wide range of opinions about what travelers were willing to pay. To provide some insight, consider these comments:

*I think for our guests, it's the **all-included, no hassle, and small group**. I think that's what their willing to pay more for. And by small group I mean 45 people. (Travel Supplier)*

***Exclusivity is important**. We offer tiers of programs so the visitor can have basic to highly customized experiences and they pay a different amount for these. (Travel Supplier)*

*Especially for the performing arts, they [visitors] like to come and to meet other music lovers and especially for the women. They know that if they join a group they can talk about their experience and they won't feel like distant with the couple. They will talk about music, about their experience and they are willing to pay for that. And another thing, they are **willing to pay to have the first sitting**. And they have the reserved seats to attend the performance ... They will be willing to pay and ensure they have a really good ticket. (Travel Supplier)*

*Well, my experience as a supplier is that people are **willing to pay for special access**. I'm beginning to strongly suspect that my organization could actually charge a bit more without people actually seeing anything wrong with it. It's as long as you can guarantee that by buying into this, your group will get something that the ordinary FIT client or any sort of low budget group will not get ... but it has to be value for money. (Travel Supplier)*

*I think **the museums, the alumni associations, also bring an extra value-added** to the whole thing. (...) People will travel with their alumni association. They're not stupid people, they know that some of their money that they are paying for the trip is going to the alumni association, is going to the museum. But, they're willing, very happy to pay that because of the role you play and they have confidence in you. You bring that level of security to them that they know if they take a trip with you, you've felt out the tour operators, you've done everything. They're not going to be throwing their money away on a trip they're going to hate because they trust you and that's a very important value. (Tour Operator)*

***Faculty that have the expertise** – they'll pay more. (Tour Operator)*

***Curriculum development and the learning experience**. It's having the resource person as well as the authentic, local, oral storyteller. Very often these viewpoints diverge and travelers look at this as a positive – a way at getting to the truth. (Travel Planner)*

Other mentioned items, that can entice customers to pay more for included: small group size, going into the homes of locals, comfortable accommodations, convenience of a packaged tour, and traveling with or meeting specialists, faculty or experts.



---

### 3. Packaging Experiences

“Experiences are a key innovation in today’s business.”<sup>xiii</sup> They play an important role in building stronger, more personal relationships with employees, corporate customers, and consumers.<sup>xiv</sup> “What customers want are products, communications and marketing campaigns that dazzle the senses, touch their hearts and stimulate their minds.”<sup>xv</sup> From a destination perspective,

*The new model for a destination is a place where people visit for an extended period of time, where they engage in multiple activities, where there are activities for possibly a range of target customer groups and where people want to return, not just to repeat the experience, but in the anticipation of new things to see and do.*<sup>xvi</sup>

*(The Experience Profit Cycle, The London Business School 2003)*

Staging memorable customer experiences creates superior value and provides companies with a competitive edge. As businesses begin to recognize and understand the opportunity experiences represent as a distinct economic offer, they can evaluate the relevance of this type of travel product in delivering emotional, authentic experiences as an element of building and sustaining future growth.

#### **The Experience Economy**

The ‘experience economy’ is a term used to describe the business of selling experiences. Joseph Pine and James Gilmore (Strategic Horizons LLP), documented what they had been witnessing in the business world, first coined the term. In 1999, they published an innovative book titled *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage* that describes experiences as a fourth economic offer, one that is distinctly different from the traditional commodities, goods and services that drive economic growth. Using a theatrical analogy they describe ‘services’ as the stage used to create experiences and ‘goods’ as the props to that are used in plan and sequencing series of memorable events.

“Experiences are a fourth economic offer, one that is distinctly different from the traditional commodities, goods and services.”

Pine and Gilmore provide examples of how large companies such as Walt Disney welcome guests, engage visitors, and provide an endless array of interactive experiences. These are contrasted with small business like the ‘Geek Squad’; a computer installation and repair company that delivers their computer services with special costumed agents who drive old cars and carry badges to identify themselves upon arrival. Beyond providing their core computer service (and core revenue generating offer), they purposefully turn a non-eventful service call into a unique and memorable experience. Some of the benefits of delivering experiences are happy customers, repeat business, increased sales, enhanced brand identity, free marketing via word of mouth referrals and creating an emotional bond with your customers. Creating experiences for customers is gaining momentum and demonstrating its business value.

---

## **Experiences as a Distinct Offer**

Experiences are a distinct offer (Table 3.1). They are personal in nature, revealed over a period of time, memorable and tap the senses of the customer. They require a strategic level of new and sustained investment, staff and supplier's buy-in, a careful balance between creativity and business realities. Experiential product offers involve thinking of your business as a theatre, your environment as the stage, merchandise, buildings, transportation and attractions as props, and your staff and volunteers as actors charged with engaging the audience, is integral to delivering the consumer experience. Delivering quality experiences rarely occurs by accident. To be a viable component of a company's growth strategy, the role of experiences must be carefully thought out. To optimize the financial and human resource development a business should carefully identify and measure the desired returns on investment (e.g. financial, market reach, brand recognition, increased sales, free publicity, unique reputation).

**Table 3.1 Economic Distinctions**

<b>ECONOMIC OFFERING</b>	<b>COMMODITIES</b>	<b>GOODS</b>	<b>SERVICES</b>	<b>EXPERIENCES</b>
Economy	Agrarian	Industrial	Service	Experience
Economic Function	Extract	Make	Deliver	Stage
Nature of Offering	Fungible	Tangible	Intangible	Memorable
Key attributes	Natural	Standardized	Customized	Personal
Method of supply	Stored in bulk	Inventoried after production	Delivered on demand	Revealed over a duration
Seller	Trader	Manufacturer	Provider	Stager
Buyer	Market	User	Client	Guest
Factors of demand	Characteristics	Features	Benefits	Sensations

*Pine, J. & Gilmore, J. (1999). The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre & Every Business a Stage. Boston: Harvard Business School Press, p. 6.*

## **A) Building Memorable Tourism Experiences**

Tourism, by its very nature, is an experiential business. Visiting a destination for the first time is an experience, attending a special cultural event is an experience, and struggling to order food in a foreign language while leafing through a dictionary is an experience. In fact, one travel supplier pointed out that for younger travelers, the aesthetic element — just being there — may be sufficient, whereas with mature travelers, they are looking for something more.

It can be easily argued that, from a visitor's perspective, all travel is an experience. Individual experiences however are not created by business and occur to a greater or lesser extent depending on the frequency and diversity a person travels. Creating experiences as a product to sell however, creates a business opportunity, which in the group tour business means consciously building, delivering and marketing individual experiential travel activities, single or multi-destination packaged travel.

*Creating outstanding and memorable experiences has become central, not just to the leisure and entertainment industries, but to an increasing number of businesses, as companies seek to build the emotional involvement that goes with them.*

*(The Experience Profit Cycle, The London Business School 2003)*

---

## Packaging Experiences

*I think it would make some sense to look at the travel industry as it relates to other similar industries ... which are blending entertainment and education. I think that the travel industry could benefit from looking hard at these other industries because they're all involved in it – they're all running their own travel programs. The churches are taking people on travel programs; even our little nature centre took people on a travel program down to the everglades. (Travel Supplier)*

In order for a business to strategically profit from the experience economy, they must understand the difference between goods, services and experiences and their customers must be offered the choice of spending their disposable income towards these differentiated offers. For example, the primary offer a hotel sells (their goods) is a temporary bed. People are buying a place to sleep. Optimizing room sales is essential to the business. Hotels adjust their market position, audience and price point of their goods by the quality of the rooms, amenities available, and services offered. Service offers may include a concierge, rolling your sheets back in the evening, room service, fax delivery to the room, or an on-site or on-call masseur, doctor or exercise advisor. These are traditional goods and services.

“Companies must understand the difference between goods, services and experiences, and offer their customers choice.”

A hotel that wants to build a visitor experiences for niche markets needs to examine their attributes differently, view their venue as the stage. First, must decide if they with package experiences themselves or collaborating with other business, remembering their brand image equity comes from brands associated with it. For example, a 2-night weekend package at an historic hotel or castle could include a heritage tour of the building by a staff member or a reputable, experienced local free-lance interpreter. An opportunity to tour the grounds with the head gardener or to go behind-the-scenes and discover how the chef at a five-star hotel spends his day could be added to the package and used to attract different niche markets. Either of these two packaged weekends would provide a very different visitor experience than that received by the person who merely reserves a room. It also requires planning, commands a higher price point, and should attract new audiences and prompt a percent of existing customers to enjoy the higher end offer. In creating packages that turn a hotel into an experience, requires consideration of capacity issues, niche marketing, and ensuring the health and safety regulations and insurance covers their guests for the more creative visitor experiences (e.g. visitors in the kitchen).

Pine and Gilmore identify four experiential realms:

- Entertaining experiences are primarily passive yet can be highly absorbing such as watching how the chef chops up vegetables, cracks eggs, flips dough in the air, then giving it a try;
- Educational experiences are informative, increase knowledge, skill, and engage the mind. They can be passive, such as reading interpretive panels at an historic site, or involve active participation such as cooking with a chef, or becoming an archaeologist for a day;
- Aesthetic experiences are passive but have the ability to totally immerse people in an experience. For example, walking the grounds of a castle resort, smelling the fresh flowers, listening to a waterfall, and feeling the breeze; and
- Escape experiences involve active participation and immerse people in an activity such as a spa weekend or visiting a variety of homes on a private garden tour and meeting the owners.

Individually, each of these experiences offers a type of value to the buyer. Companies who consciously integrate all four realms optimize the experiential dynamic.



---

While not mentioned in the Pine and Gilmore model, tourism business must also incorporate a fifth dimension – social experiences. This dimension of social experiences is an important element that emerged in this study, one that resonates with previous research, and deserves future consideration. Whether traveling in a group, with family and friends, or alone, businesses that find ways to make people feel ‘welcome’ and create opportunities for them to socialize and potentially, even develop new social bonds, will be further ahead of their colleagues who merely sell goods and provide services. The findings in this study strongly support social experiences as a key element to successfully creating memorable travel experiences.

“Tourism business must also incorporate a fifth dimension – social experiences.”

*In New Zealand our guests are impressed with how friendly and wonderful the local culture is. A highlight is overnighting with families, in B & Bs or on farm stays. This is particularly amazing for urban travelers. They all arrive knowing that New Zealand has beautiful country but they all leave talking about the people. (Destination Marketing Organization)*

The importance of building social experience into the responsibilities of the tour guide or tour director cannot be overstated. For unlike a dynamic retail experience, or single event, people choose to travel in a group for many reasons – one is social.

When creating group travel packages, the strength of the offer will be in its ability to completely engage a traveler in a tour that enables the travel planner or tour operator to increase the value offered, while simultaneously distinguishing themselves in the marketplace.

*The best way to market any offering (good, service, or experience) is with an experience so engaging that potential customers can't help but pay attention and pay-up.<sup>xviii</sup>*

*(Pine & Gilmore, Strategic Horizons LLP, 2002)*

### **A Checklist for Building Memorable Group Tour Experiences**

Experiential travel can be packaged and sold to independent and group travelers. Whether the travel offering is a one-hour event or a 10-day tour, businesses can consciously examine the visitor experience and assess the degree to which they want to involve the visitor in a series of memorable activities, revealed over a duration of time, that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and makes connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level. If a group tour company, for example, is merely booking hotels, acquiring tickets, and selecting attractions for their visitors to see as a regular tourist, an opportunity is being missed. Services only become engaging when they are layered with sensory phenomena that are carefully planned and thought out.

“Involve the visitor in a series of memorable activities, revealed over a duration of time, that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and makes connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level.”

---

Based on the findings from this study, a checklist was created to help companies evaluate their existing traveler activities and guide the creation of new visitor experiences.

- 1. Select a theme that will guide and harmonize the types of activities that will be included in the tour.**
  - For example, in Hong Kong there is a themed program called the '*Cultural Kaleidoscope*'. The primary objective of this program is to meet people, spend time with artisans that can teach the art of making tea, tai chi, learning how to distinguish jade, etc. This could be offered as a stand-alone program, or packaged as an introduction to a country/community and followed by visits to attractions and places associated with the people the traveler has met.
  - Select the destinations that will optimize the presentation of the themed experience.
  
- 2. Determine the types of experiences your company wants to create for travelers.**
  - Ask yourself, are there opportunities for to build in contact with local people, through engaging your travelers in the local community? Is there a special behind-the-scenes activity or access to a special unforgettable venue that would create wonderful memories for your travelers? Do you want your travelers to learn or discover something new, through a hands-on-experience?
  - How will you build in the element of surprise?
  - How will you build the social dynamic within the group and the people they meet? Can you find ways to get your travelers into a private home or special non-tourist activity?
  
- 3. Identify a range of activities, attractions, places and resource specialists that could be built into the tour at each destination you plan to visit.**
  - For example, attend two concerts, visit a school for the performing arts, meet with a violin maker in his shop, determine if you can access a 'green room' before a performance and meet the musicians or the conductor, or attend a rehearsal.
  - Think through how you can optimize the use of sight, sound, touch, hearing and feeling as sensory elements – how you will layer activities and services with sensory elements? How much can be done at no or low cost?
  
- 4. Determine the ideal group size (minimum and maximum) based on the experience you have created and in consideration of special venues or transportation limitations (if applicable). If required, adjust the activities to ensure a saleable price point.**
  
- 5. Identify appropriate travel suppliers that understand what you are trying to achieve for your visitors and whose image and affiliation with the tour will reflect positively on your company.**
  - Select accommodations, dining venues, attractions, and retail businesses that complement the theme and may expose travelers to less traveled, less-known places thus creating a sense of intimacy and the feeling of a unique experience.
  - Select knowledgeable and personable tour guides and tour directors that are resourceful and have good networks in the communities being visited.
  - Select local resource people, and those that will join the entire tour, for their knowledge, ability to entertain and communicate effectively with travelers.
  - Select transportation providers that are flexible and will support the activities and experiences being planned, not attempt to alter them due to 'traditional schedules or travel times'.

- 
- Affinity and alumni organizations should tap into their networks and resources in the communities visited to see if there are unique ways to add value to the tour that will differentiate your offer and create an experience few others will enjoy unless they travel with your organization. (E.g. use alumni to gain special access to unique venues, identify unadvertised opportunities, or visit the group).
- 6. Assess what is needed to set the stage, prepare the visitor, and ensure a harmonious link of activities to the theme. Also, determine what information the guides and specialists will need.**
    - For example, ensure the impression you want to make on your travelers is supported by the appropriate pre-trip and on-site information. The visual cues they see will enhance the images they will take away. The memorabilia available will special and remind them of their trip. Also consider if there are any negative aspects that will deter from the experience and determine how to remove them or work around this. Finally, examine your network of suppliers, retailers, hoteliers and restaurants and select those that will complement the theme and dynamic you are creating.
    - Review the sequencing of experiences and activities you have planned and determine if the tour continually builds on the theme and complementary visitor experiences.
  - 7. Evaluate and make decisions on the balance of planned vs. unstructured, active vs. passive activities on the tour.**
    - Ensure free time for impromptu-guided tours with the tour director or self-discovery. Consciously assess how this time can be used for the visitor experience (e.g. have contacts in communities you could phone up on short notice to add a spontaneous event into the itinerary, have a map and list of special places previous travelers have raved about, restaurants they liked and why! Include a few testimonials for the personal touch and a few photos from past travelers).
    - Consider the amount of physical activity required (e.g. walking, climbing, sitting) in consideration of the age and ability of your target audience. Avoid packing a tour so tight that there is no time for interaction with specialists, the people they meet and socializing at a special event or over a meal.
  - 8. Make choices about the use of memorabilia and cues that will be built into the tour to help create and sustain the memories, build customer loyalty and foster word of mouth promotion. Before, during and after the trip, select ways to connect personally with each visitor to gain testimonials, obtain or share photos and trip journals, or send personal and set the stage for the next invitation to participate.**
  - 9. Cost all elements of the tour, set the rates, and then critically assess if there will be any value added features included that will impact costs or will be offered on a ‘pay as you play’ basis.**
  - 10. Determine the core marketing messages and images that will attract mass or niche target markets (as appropriate). Use the experience to sell the tour and create the unique selling proposition against competitors.**
    - Promotions should be targeted to specific markets.
    - Companies should find ways to enhance word-of-mouth promotions from satisfied travelers
  - 11. Deliver a premium travel experience that provides value for money and an unforgettable experience!**

## **Essential Ingredients in Memorable Travel Packages**

Based on the findings of this study, there are six essential ingredients that should be incorporated into your ‘experiential recipe’ for success.

- Build theme-based itineraries that permit you to layer experiences, sequence events, select the right suppliers, and market to target audiences.
- Invest in, train, and retain excellent tour guides and tour directors. They are your front line representative and the person that they will associate with your company.
- Pay or suitably reward the specialists, local resource people or experts that provide the interpretation, tell the story, and share their knowledge, culture and insights with your travelers. Budget well enough so that you cover your costs of them join the group for a meal and have time for casual visiting with your travelers.
- Ensure free time in the itinerary for self-discovery and optimizing the element of surprise.
- Use cues and memorabilia to build a connection and emotional attachment with your travelers.
- Sell dreams and deliver experiences.

## **Memorable Tour Packaging**

Building on the discoveries in this study and past experience, Figure 1 presents eleven decision-continuums that were created to help tour planners develop memorable packages. These factors include relevance, activities, tour guide, level of engagement, type of experience, senses engaged, social element, learning, schedule, authenticity, and cues and memorabilia.

When developing a single event or a complete itinerary, planners can use these continuums as a tool to help them evaluate the degree to which certain activities will enhance the visitor experience and could be build into an itinerary. Experience potential can then be balanced with considerations of availability, seasonality, affordability, and group size to optimize the trip itinerary.

**Figure 1: Visitor Experience Packaging Continuum**

<b><u>Building Memorable Visitor Experiences</u></b>		
1. Interesting	Enjoyable	Personally Relevant
2. Planned Activities	Built in Surprises	Unanticipated Surprises/Events
3. Less Skilled, Networked Tour Guides & Resource People		Highly Skilled, Networked Tour Guides & Resource People
4. Passive Experiences	Active Experiences	Engaging Experiences
5. General Tourist Activities	Special Access & Opportunities	Exclusivity
6. Engaging Two Senses		Engaging all the Senses
7. Socializing with the Travel Group Only	Meeting Local People	Visit Homes & Farms
8. Presenting Information	Interactive Technologies	Hands on Learning Opportunities
9. Full Itinerary	Assisted Free Time	Time to Explore
10. Contrived Experiences		Authentic Experiences
11. No Special Cues or Memorabilia		Use of Cues & Memorabilia

For example, consider the potential for an itinerary that centres on an art tour and targets people with an interest in oil paintings and painting.

**Table 3.2 Artist and Gallery Tour**

VISITOR EXPERIENCE PACKAGING CONTINUUM: ART-RELATED AFFINITY TOUR EXAMPLE				
1.	Relevance	Interesting: Visiting A Museum	Enjoyable: Meeting the Gallery Owner	Personally relevant: Painting / Critique Session
2.	Activities	Planned: Visiting A Museum	Built in surprise: Surprise Visit from Artist	Unanticipated: Happen upon a restoration effort and have opportunity to help
3.	Tour Guide	Less skilled: Reads from a Program	Skilled: Expert on the Topic	Skilled with unique talent: One of the Artists, in person
4.	Level of Engagement	Passive: Observe art during the tour	Active: Asked to share impressions of exhibits during the tour, in discussion with other travelers	Engaging: Invited to create a piece of art which is then added to a special exhibit space within the museum
5.	Type of Experiences	General: Visit A Museum	Special: Custom tour	Exclusive: Tour plus meet the Painter
6.	Senses Engaged	Sight: Look at the Paintings	Sight, touch and smell: Touch the brushes, smell the paints	All senses: See the works, touch the brushed, smell the paints, feel the passion while listening to artists discuss their work.
7.	Social Element	Group only: Interacting with fellow travelers during a museum tour	Locals: Having coffee with one of the artists	Special, personal opportunity: Spending a weekend in an artists colony
8.	Learning	Presentation: Lecture on Art Restoration	Technology: Computer Simulation that allows user to virtually restore	Hands-on: Participate and contribute to a real art restoration project
9.	Schedule	Fully booked: Packaged tour of predetermined galleries with no options for deviation	Assisted free-time: Participants choose the galleries they want to visit from a list	Self-Discovery: Planned in the gallery tour itinerary for visitors to explore area on own
10.	Authenticity	Contrived: View a video of an artist at work.	Partially contrived/partially authentic: Watch a scheduled artist demonstration	Authentic and engaging: Stumble upon, or plan a trip to a street/promenade where artists are painting, inviting you to watch and ask questions.
11.	Cues & Memorabilia	Nothing special: Pre-mailing of itinerary	Pre-trip: Mail a silk scarf with a rendition on a famous artwork	Planned use: Pre-trip scarf, time in related venues for purchasing on tour, post-trip mailing with a set of paints and brushes

---

## B) Future Research

Experiences, as a defined economic offer, are relatively new despite the fact the origin of experiences as a business entity date back to Walt Disney and the creation of Disneyland. Experiences respond to our personal, passions, are recorded by our senses, and are stored in our hearts and our minds.<sup>xviii</sup> They represent an important opportunity for product development, marketing, and research.

As more and more tourism business begin to understand the type of product experiences offer and learn how to develop, market and deliver experiences, the interest and consumer demand will rise.

Understanding how to build experiential travel packages and individual experiences requires feedback from the customers on which ‘experiences’ they enjoyed the most. Why? Where did they spend additional dollars while travelling? What ‘memories’ did they take home? For marketing purposes, it is also important to know what prompted the purchase decision. Did the experience represent good value for their money? What stories have they told others? These are different than the satisfaction questions typically asked of travelers. It requires new research, new indicators.

Opportunities for future research include:

- A tour-packaging study that combines a range of experiential tour components and a set price would provide valuable information to the travel planners and tour operators who design itineraries.
- Developing a set of indicators that can be inserted into a larger study (e.g. the Travel Activities and Motivation Study) to gather information that specifically assists product development and packaging.

---

---

## Appendix I: Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate the types of visitor experiences that are in demand with travel planners and tour operators who package and sell group travel tours to educational travelers.

Specifically, this study investigated:

1. The types of visitor experiences that are currently in demand.
2. How organizations create memorable experiences for their travelers.
3. What travelers perceive as ‘value-added’ and what are they willing to pay a premium for in a group tour.

Data Collection: Five focus groups, maximum 12 participants per group.

Study Population: Annually, 300+ organizations interested in learning, enrichment, and educational travel gather at the international Educational Travel Conference (Washington DC) to network, attend seminars, and participate in a business forum designed to unite travel planners with tour operators, travel suppliers, and destination marketing organizations. This venue provided an ideal business-to-business environment for this inquiry.

Participants: All registered conference delegates received an invitation to participate, 92 accepted, 60 received a confirmation of participation, 32 were declined with a letter of explanation. Only one representative per company was allowed. Participants received an invitation prior to the conference, written confirmation of the time and location of their session. All participants prior to, or at the session completed consent forms.

Focus Groups: A total of five, 90-minute sessions were held 5 to 7 February 2004. Fifty-five individuals 53 from different organizations attended a focus group session. The final group of international participants represented:

- 15 Tour operators
- 19 Travel planners
- 11 Travel suppliers
- 8 Destination marketing organizations

Incentives:

- A draw, from all participants, for one of two free conference registrations for the 2005 Educational Travel Conference. (Provided by Travel Learning Connections)
- A draw, within each focus group, for the book “Collaborate to Compete” by Logan & Stokes (Donated by the Canadian Experiential Travel Network)



---

## Focus Group Protocol

Introduction to Question 1: There are endless ways to create innovative visitor experiences. Often it is a combination of experiences creates long-lasting memories for your travelers, a carefully choreographed series of engaging experiences that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and makes connection with your travelers on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level. So think about your travelers – or business partners who package group travel – and lets begin a discussion on:

### **What types of visitor experiences are currently in demand?**

#### **Potential Probes:**

##### *Travel Motivators to Anticipate (What they want to do):*

- Experiences with ‘bragging rights’
- Connecting with people and places
- Emotional or spiritual connections
- Opportunity to learn something new, or delve deeper into something you enjoy (e.g. history, architecture, wildlife)
- Meet and socialize with people
- Opportunity to escape, step off the daily treadmill
- Try something new, different people, tastes, smell, places
- Not having to worry about anything – security, comfort in knowing

##### *Types of experiences that can be “personally encountered, lived through, and engaged in experiences” that may emerge or can be used as probes.*

- Interactive- hands on engagement
- Attend special programs/community events
- Participate in research activities, field trips
- Walking tours, costumed interpreters
- Tour behind-the-scenes
- Observe wildlife, birds
- Meet with resource specialists
- Watch demonstrations
- View static displays, exhibits
- Volunteer to contribute to a special project
- Participate in workshops
- Listen to a lecture
- Welcome information briefing at a site/attraction
- Role playing
- Watching enactment, historical dramatizations
- Privileged access to special place
- Identifying plants/species
- Learn a new skill
- Watching film, video, multi-media presentation

---

**Question 2 Introduction:** We know that successful companies are masters at creating a strong bond with their customers. Creating outstanding and memorable experiences is part of their strategy. This in turn builds customer loyalty and enhances the probability of a repeat purchase. I'd like us to spend the next 25 minutes talking about:

**How does your organization create memorable visitor experiences?**

**Potential Probes:**

- Carefully choreograph together activities and events
- Use of themes
- Create opportunities to socialize – with fellow travelers? Meet and spend time with locals?
- Bring along, or hire locally, excellent resource specialists, interpreters, story-tellers
- Find ways to make personal connections with your guests
- Offer a balance opportunities to learn, be entertained, escape or just enjoy the beauty of aesthetic beauty of the places you visit
  - Education: actively engage the mind in ways that increase knowledge or skills (absorbed in an activity)
  - Entertainment: Watching a play, show, listening to an orchestra (mostly passive)
  - Escape: Becoming totally immersed in something – e.g. a motion simulator, a spa treatment,
  - Aesthetic: Time to enjoy being somewhere – smell the fresh air, listen to the sea, watch the people, feel the volcanic dust ....
- Build in and balancing both passive and active experiences into itineraries
- Encourage active participation
- Allow time for people to experience the sites/activities on their own (away from the group)
- Excellent service, amenities, activities

**Introduction to Question #3:** We hear a lot about the consumer wanting 'value added' when they travel but what exactly does this mean? For the remainder of this session, I'd like you to focus on two, intertwined questions:

**What do travelers perceive as 'value added'? What will travelers pay a premium for?**

**Potential Probes:**

- Special touches
- Outstanding, personalized service
- Personal contact – before and after
- Small groups
- Special access to facilities
- Attention to detail – what detail?
- Unique opportunities, not typically available to the general travelers
- Quality guides, escorts
- Certain standard of accommodation
- Flexibility in the itinerary
- Security, creature comforts
- Something new and different every time we travel with you (your organization)
- Authenticity, originality, maintained in the original state, heritage in tact
- Fulfilling dreams
- Sense of pride / giving back
- Fantastic interpretation
- Trust in the organization they travel

---

## Appendix II: Glossary of Terms

<b>Affinity group</b>	People linked by a common bond. For example, people who are members of an organization (e.g. Smithsonian Institution) have a history with an organization (e.g. alumni organizations), a common ethnic bond (e.g. the Ukrainian Friendship Society) or social bond (e.g. church, fitness groups, college buddies).
<b>Affinity travelers</b>	People who share a common bond to an organization, institution, or activity.
<b>Destination Marketing Organization (DMO)</b>	A company or entity responsible for increasing tourism to a destination and positioning its public image. DMOs exist on local, regional, state/provincial, and national levels.
<b>Educational travel</b>	Purposeful travel that is motivated by educational purposes; a desire to engage in opportunities to gain knowledge and insight into the people and places visited. Examples include: student exchanges, school day trips, second language training travel programs, conferences, professional development training and formal study tours. Transcends traditional market segments such as adventure travel, cultural travel, aboriginal, and nature travel.
<b>Experiences</b>	Events revealed over a duration of time that engage individuals in an inherently personal way.
<b>Experience providers</b>	Individuals, companies, or organizations that create holistic travel opportunities by sequencing and staging activities, personal encounters, and authentic experiences that are designed to create long lasting memories and customer loyalty with their travelers.
<b>Experiential marketing</b>	Focuses on the customer/visitor experience by providing them information on the actual consumer experiences or interactions with products for the purpose of driving the sale of that product. It's about creating the 'ah ha' with the consumer and when applied correctly, will lead to greater impact for the consumer, increased effectiveness for the advertiser, and even cost savings relative to traditional advertising or marketing techniques.
<b>Experiential travel</b>	Engages visitors in a series of memorable activities, revealed over a duration of time, that are inherently personal, engage the senses, and makes connections on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level.
<b>FIT</b>	An acronym generally used to describe any domestic or international travel that does not involve a package tour. Depending on the source, FIT could be used to describe a foreign independent traveller, fully independent traveler, or frequent independent traveler.
<b>Group Tour</b>	A packaged inclusive tour for members of an organization or people that travel together with a pre-set itinerary.
<b>Learning Travel</b>	A type of leisure travel that is personally enrichment and includes high-quality learning opportunities. The consumer is motivated by an interest in traveling and an interest in learning; experiences may be as short as a day or involve multi-destination travel. Transcends traditional market segments such as adventure travel, cultural travel, aboriginal, and nature travel.

<b>Learning Vacations</b>	Leisure travel that enable visitors to experience the cultural, historical and natural wonders of an area by participating in a series of pre-planned activities with a learning component, led by resource specialists, and complemented by an array of entertaining, socially satisfying, and personally rewarding visitor and leisure activities.
<b>Packaged Tour</b>	A travel product that bundles several elements together, at a single cost, for sale as a unit. Tours typically involve a host or guide (E.g.: air fare, hotel accommodations, meals, vouchers to attractions). May be purchased as part of a group tour or by independent travelers.
<b>Resource Specialists</b>	Individuals who accompany tours, or are hired within local communities, who provide expertise in specific areas, related to the travel activities (e.g. an archaeologist, an elder from an aboriginal community, a kayaking instructor, an historian, etc.)
<b>Tour Guide / Tour Director</b>	A person employed by the tour organization and escorting a group. Their range of responsibilities vary but may include: coordinating and overseeing travel logistics, delivering core program elements, providing subject matter and area expertise.
<b>Tour Host</b>	Representative of an affinity organization that provides support to the travel director or tour guide.
<b>Tour Operator</b>	A person or organization that buys and packages individual travel services (e.g. accommodations, travel, attractions, events) and combines them into a package.
<b>Travel package</b>	Bundles of two or more elements, sold at a single price, where the component costs are not identified. The cost of the ‘package’ is less than the cost of the individual components. (E.g.: hotel accommodations and green fees).
<b>Travel Planner</b>	A person who plans travel activities on behalf of an organization. Their range of activities may vary and could include: selecting travel components in an itinerary, selecting travel suppliers, destinations. They may package tours themselves or more likely, be the lead contact with a tour operator. Travel planners generally have a very good knowledge of the travelers, their interests, demographics and past experiences.
<b>Travel Supplier</b>	A company that provides one or more travel components directly to the public or via a tour package (e.g. hotels, transportation, attractions, travel insurance)
<b>Visitor Experience</b>	A visitor experience is something that is personally encountered, lived through, and affects you. It may involve observation or participation. It may be active or passive, planned or opportunistic, personal or shared.

## Appendix III: List of Participating Companies

A total of 54 companies, in nine countries, participated in this research project.

TRAVEL PLANNERS (18)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ University of Arizona Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ Classical Pursuits</li> <li>▪ Elderhostel</li> <li>▪ Harvard Museum Of Natural History</li> <li>▪ Auburn University</li> <li>▪ Indiana University Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ University Of Texas Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ U.S. Naval Academy Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ Appalachian Mountain Club</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Crow Canyon Archaeological Center</li> <li>▪ MIT Alumni Travel Program</li> <li>▪ University Of Illinois Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ World Wildlife Fund</li> <li>▪ Duke University</li> <li>▪ Notre Dame Alumni Association</li> <li>▪ Philadelphia Zoo</li> <li>▪ Alumni Association Of Mills College</li> <li>▪ Washington &amp; Lee University</li> </ul>
TOUR OPERATORS (17)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Zegrahm Expeditions</li> <li>▪ Mesoamerican Ecotourism Alliance</li> <li>▪ Asia Transpacific Journeys</li> <li>▪ Pionair Classic Adventures</li> <li>▪ Routes To Learning Canada</li> <li>▪ Horizontes Nature Tours Costa Rica</li> <li>▪ Norwegian Coastal Voyage</li> <li>▪ Orion Worldwide Travel</li> <li>▪ China Advocates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Travel Corporation India</li> <li>▪ Classic Escapes</li> <li>▪ The British Connection</li> <li>▪ S.N. Tourisme Culturel</li> <li>▪ ENF Canada</li> <li>▪ Discover Europe</li> <li>▪ Learning Through Travel</li> <li>▪ AHI International</li> </ul>
TRAVEL SUPPLIERS (11)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Radisson Seven Seas (USA)</li> <li>▪ Archeo-Quebec</li> <li>▪ English Heritage</li> <li>▪ Virtuocard</li> <li>▪ Vista Group International</li> <li>▪ Écomertours Nord-sud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ecuadorverde Ecological Tourism Network</li> <li>▪ Parks Canada</li> <li>▪ Laura: A Creole Plantation</li> <li>▪ American West Steamboat Company</li> <li>▪ Oceanwide Expeditions</li> </ul>
DESTINATION MARKETING ORGANIZATIONS (8)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Norwegian Tourist Board</li> <li>▪ Britain</li> <li>▪ Saxony Tourism</li> <li>▪ Wales Tourist Board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tourisme Québec</li> <li>▪ Travel Manitoba</li> <li>▪ Hong Kong Tourism Board</li> <li>▪ Tourism New Zealand</li> </ul>

*Note: Companies self-identified themselves into one of four categories.*

---

---

## Appendix IV: Unanticipated Insights

This study investigated the types of visitor experiences in demand, how companies create memorable travel experiences and the value added elements on a group tour. During the process of this inquiry, many companies shared the motivations of their company or the responsibility they feel as a travel provider. As this was a consistent a summary of these two findings has been included.

### 1. Supplier Motivations

In creating group travel itineraries, a number of tour operators and travel suppliers identified their motivations and aspirations for the guests traveling with their organization. Six quotations provide a sampling of what was shared.

#### Travel Suppliers

*We want them [visitors] to be changed and to motivate their future behaviour.*

*We want our visitors to come away from our site being touched in some way.*

*Letting people interact with the children, letting them [travelers] know beforehand what is needed in the school.*

#### Tour Operators

*Our goal is to promote lifelong learning.*

*We feel volunteerism is really important. For example, visiting a school in Cuba and letting people interact with the children – letting them know beforehand what is needed in the school.*

*It is important for us to introduce them to the history and the culture present in Quebec, mostly via Quebec City because it's our gateway ... People want to hear about politics. They want to know what's going on.*

*What we're trying to do is use visitation as a tool. We can change the world with what we do, with who and how people work together. We track social and economic value, how much affects local, how protected areas benefit and the different social standards and indicator.*

### 2. Supplier Responsibilities

Travel suppliers, tour operators and travel planners alike also share a sense of responsibility, for example:

*I think more and more the clients have to get prepared as well and they have a responsibility towards that. We have to, as a tour operator, suggest readings. We have to give them the tools to prepare themselves. (Tour Operator)*

*I think that as an alumni association, we should do a better job of trying to connect our travelers with some of our Alumni that live in the country we're visiting because I don't think that anyone else could offer that. To actually meet up with people that graduated from our university. I do it sometimes, but I need to do a better job of always looking." (Travel Planner)*



---

---

## References

- <sup>i</sup> Voss, C. (July, 2003). *The experience profit cycle*. (pp. 2). A research report published by the London Business School, Centre for Operations and Technology Management.
- <sup>ii</sup> Klancnik, R. (2002). *A year after “11-s” climbing towards recovery*. The World Tourism Organization.
- <sup>iii</sup> Travel Industry Association of America. (2003). *The historic/cultural traveler. 2003 Edition*. A research report sponsored by Smithsonian Magazine and prepared by the research department of TIA: Washington, DC.
- <sup>iv</sup> Youth Tourism Consortium of Canada (March, 2004). *Youth Tourism in Canada*. A research report published by YTCC and available from STYA, the Student Youth Travel Association <www.syta.org>
- <sup>v</sup> Lang Research Inc. (Dec 2001). *Travel activities & motivation survey: Interest in hands-on learning experiences while on vacation*. Profile data prepared on behalf of the TAMS partnership and available from the Canadian Tourism Commission: Ottawa <www.canadatourism.com>
- <sup>vi</sup> Menlo Consulting (2003). *Travelers have alternatives: Shape up or shake out*. A research presentation at the 2003 Educational Travel Conference, Washington, DC.
- <sup>vii</sup> Veneto, J. (March 2003). *Experiences – the next generation of travel products*. An educational seminar presented at the National Tourism Association Spring Meeting, Victoria BC. Canada.
- <sup>viii</sup> McDaniel, M. (Spring 2003). Swimming with sharks. *Interval World*. (pp. 20 – 22).
- <sup>ix</sup> Robin, Laura. (6 Sept 2003). At-ten-shun! You’re in the Army Now. Ottawa Citizen. The Citizen’s Weekly Travel Section.
- <sup>x</sup> Cruise Lines International Association (7 Oct 2003). *Cruises offer a sea-going education*. Press release. New York, NY.
- <sup>xi</sup> YPB&R (November 2003). *Togethering: The new vacation trend in family vacations*. A corporate eNewsletter publication.
- <sup>xii</sup> Pine, J. & Gilmore J. (1999). *The experience economy: Work is theatre & every business a stage*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Voss, C. (July, 2003). *The experience profit cycle*. (pp. 2). A research report published by the London Business School, Centre for Operations and Technology Management.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Carlson-Nelson, M. (1999). A testimonial provided for the book *The experience economy* by Pine and Gilmore. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- <sup>xv</sup> Schmitt, B.H. (1999). *Experiential marketing*. Free Press: New York. p. 22.
- <sup>xvi</sup> Voss, C. (July, 2003). *The experience profit cycle*. (pp. 12). A research report published by the London Business School, Centre for Operations and Technology Management.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Pine, J. & Gilmore J. (2002). *The experience IS the marketing*. <amazon.com eDoc: BrownHerron Publishing>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Whytock, K. (2003). *Experiences – The why of travel*. A presentation delivered at the Nova Scotia Tourism Product Development Seminar: Truro, NS.