The New Tour Guide: Choreographing and Co-creating Tourist Experiences

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Background: The Experience Economy
Guide as experience broker
(currently mainly through commentary)

Outline: the changing communication role of guides

1. Trends that are shaping guided tours and tour guiding

2. The new tour guide: from commentator to …
   - The guide as choreographer
   - The guide as co-creator

3. A typology of guided tours
   - Three types of tour experiences
   - Implications for tour guiding communication
   - Outcomes for tourists


**Trends (1): Information and communication technology**

- Internet and search engines
- Social media and user-generated content
- User-friendly interfaces
- Mobile technologies
- Wearable technologies
- Tourists becoming “cyborgs” – extension of human capabilities

![Image of wearable technology](image1)

**Trends (1 cont’d): Information and communication technology**

- Consumers can connect directly with destinations and providers
- Consumers can connect with other consumers
- Shifting of power to the consumer
- GPS-based and electronic tour guides
- Opportunity for context-aware systems (personalised, targeted)
- Augmented reality to enhance experience

- Buckley, Gretzel, Scott, Weaver, Becken (2015)
Trends (2):
Changing profiles and preferences of tourists

• Wealthy seniors (bb’s) – until post-2030
• Gen Y / Technology-savvy tourists
• Connecting with nature
• Health and wellness tourists
• “emerging markets”

Trends (3):
Social and environmental responsibility

• Tourists expecting corporate social responsibility
• Searching for meaning
• Opportunity to participate and actively contribute
The new tour guide: from one-way communicator to...

- “show and tell” is not enough
- script-based presentation is not enough

... the tour guide as choreographer
### A typology of guided tours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of tour experience</th>
<th>Examples of target markets</th>
<th>How tour group is perceived by the guide:</th>
<th>How tour guide is perceived by the tour group:</th>
<th>Tour guide’s communication style:</th>
<th>Potential for use of technology as part of the experience:</th>
<th>Communication skills required:</th>
<th>Outcomes for tourists:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional group tour</strong></td>
<td>MBRIC and other inexperienced travellers</td>
<td>Audience (passive and reactive)</td>
<td>Entertainer/presenter, guide in control</td>
<td>Commentary/script</td>
<td>To add value</td>
<td>Presentation skills (verbal and non-verbal)</td>
<td>Enjoyable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experience-focused group tour</strong></td>
<td>Experienced travellers e.g. baby-boomers</td>
<td>Actors (passive or active)</td>
<td>Choreographer, guide in control</td>
<td>Experience-brokering: especially encounters, understanding, and empathy</td>
<td>To add value</td>
<td>Presentation skills (verbal and non-verbal) plus Interpretation and Mediation skills</td>
<td>Enjoyable and Memorable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Customised / personalised tour</strong></td>
<td>Gen Y; Socially and environmentally responsible travellers</td>
<td>Co-creators (pro-active)</td>
<td>Co-creator, shared control</td>
<td>Variable – customised to groups, individuals and contexts</td>
<td>To add value and customise experiences</td>
<td>Presentation skills (verbal and non-verbal) plus Adaptability/improvisation skills</td>
<td>Enjoyable and Memorable and Meaningful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Guide as choreographer

- For seasoned travellers, e.g. baby-boomers
- Goes beyond physical access and information-giving
- Guide orchestrates experiences that engage and connect
- Connection with host communities and environment

Implications and challenges

- Requires interpretive guiding skills – e.g. use of multiple senses, techniques for involving individuals and groups
- Requires ability to broker understanding, empathy and action
- Cross-cultural sensitivity

Outcomes for tourists: enjoyable and memorable
Guide as co-creator

- For Gen Y and responsible travellers
- Opportunities for the group to value-add and customise tour
- Group has ownership/control of the tour
- Importance of personal reflection including post-tour

Implications and challenges

- Requires guide-group communication – especially listening – before, during and after the tour
- Emotional intelligence
- Adaptability and creativity
- Requires risk-taking on the part of the operator

Outcomes for tourists: enjoyable, memorable and meaningful
Love to hear your thoughts ....

Selected references: