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Interpretation and Total Experience Management (TEM) as innovative methods for sustainable nature based tourism - A benschmarking analysis.

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Introduction

At the 15th Nordic Symposium on Tourism and Hospitality in Savonlinna, Finland 2006, the conference theme was "Visions on Transmodern Tourism" which was introduced by the first keynote presentation "Transmodernity and Transmodern Tourism in the 21st Century" by Dr. Marc Luyckx Ghisi (2006). His core idea was that the emerging transmodernity could reorient the techno-scientific machinery towards survival of humanity (Mykletun et al. 2006). Luyckx Ghisi argued that tourism has to shift towards transmodernity and could thereby have an important impact in assisting societies and the citizens in the transition towards transmodernity. This proposal was however criticizes by some as lacking a critical reflection of the transmodern concept itself as well as lacking relevance for tourism by not having an empirical or conceptual clear approach (Mykletun et al. 2006). In the following 16th symposium in Helsingborg 2007 the symposium theme of Savonlinna and the proposal of Luyckx Ghisi could not be traced in the presented topics and papers probably reflecting the critics of Luyckx Ghisi´s suggestions.

The aim of this paper is therefore to present a first attempt to address the issue of how tourism could contribute to the transformation towards a transmodern society. By a conceptual analysis of transmodernity in the context of tourism and experience economy this paper will suggest methods for adapting a transmodern approach within nature-based tourism product development. To get an indication weather such transformation can be traced in tourism a benchmark of guided tours was conducted. The thesis of this paper is that the proposed contemporary transformation of society towards transmodernity leads to new values and consumption behaviours such as the importance of purpose, meaning, sustainability, and interconnectedness which demand new economical offerings such as proposed within the experience and transformation economy. These new economical offerings in turn need new production principles and methods that are distinct from economical offerings within a modern and post-modern framework.

The idea of transmodernity and sustainability in tourism

The concept of transmodernity was introduced by Rodriguez Magda (1989, 2001, 2004, 2007) and Luyckx Ghisi (1999, 2006, 2008) as a synthesis of modern and post-modern thinking from the critics of the prevailing modernity of the contemporary western society (se also Dussel 1993, Cole 2004, 2005). In transmodernity the new emerging paradigm is the mix on equal basis of rational and intuitive thinking (se also Pink 2006), a re-emerging acceptance and interest of spirituality, a global consciousness based on global networks of information technology, a celebration of "glocal" diversity and interconnectedness with greater tolerance for ethnic, racial and sexual differences, a shift in consumption, work and leisure patterns and values, and a socio-cultural shift in value and global ecological awareness and concern towards environmental sustainability and a desire to live more sustainable. The essence of

transmodernity means being for something – i.e. taking active action towards sustainability and interconnectedness.

This contemporary cultural paradigm shift has been addressed by many authors and given various labels and conceptual frameworks of present socio-cultural change (Toffler 1970, Elgin 1996, Ingelhart 1997, Jensen 1999, Brown 2001, 2006 Ray & Anderson 2000, Ritzer 2005, Florida 2000, 2005, the extensive writings of Peter Druckner 1993, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2006 and many others).

One of the key-values of transmodernity is the sustainability and interconnectedness with nature and other cultures which has interesting bearings on sustainable tourism and nature-based tourism. The discourse of sustainability in tourism in extensive and will not be addressed here. The prevailing framework of sustainability is based on the EES sustainability triangle of Environmental, Economic and Socio-cultural issues of sustainability. This framework has by the German Wuppertal Institute been extended to the "Prism of sustainability" or IEES-sustainability model (Spangenberg & Valentin 1999) to include a fourth dimension of Institutional sustainability (figure 1). In their model the Institutional sustainability dimension include not only organisations but also mechanisms and orientations within institutions for sustainability.

As sustainability in the broader sense to a high degree involves the behaviours and impacts of individuals these sustainability models are lacking the key actor – the human being. To be able to contribute to sustainability businesses, institutions and local and global societies must adapt to sustainable practices and values as well as cope with and adapt to the consequences of these practices and management plans. In the same way individuals must adapt values and behaviours for sustainability and accept consequences of such sustainable individual practices. This more holistic approach is expressed in The Agenda 21 (UN 1992) document which states that all human enterprises, individual, business and governmental should address global survival issues. Ignoring or taking the individual person for granted within the present sustainability models result in a sustainability discourse on a political and management level that exclude the pedagogical and educational discourses on a personal level.

To get a such more holistic discourse of sustainability the Prism-model could be extended to include a personal dimension of sustainability as in the here suggested IEESP-sustainability model – the sustainability pyramid (figure 1). This model introduces into the sustainability discourse also educational, pedagogic and personal value issues.

The personal dimension of sustainability in this context includes issues of acquiring, accepting and retaining sustainable values and behaviours, i.e. the personal transformation to a sustainable living – and transmodernity. Introducing the personal dimension into sustainable tourism will have among other things the consequence of introducing learning and transformation issues in tourism beside the traditional tourism management approaches.

By introducing this personal transformation dimension according to Luyckx Ghisi´s suggestion in 2006, tourist experiences will have a clear goal i.e. the transformation towards sustainability. Such normative direction of tourism experience management may seem suspect and uncomfortable for both tourism operators and tourism researchers but is the foundation of

Tildenian interpretation (se below) and much of environmental education. Also within the analogous marketing management the goal is to change and transform the value and behaviours of presumptive customers towards specific consumption behaviours.
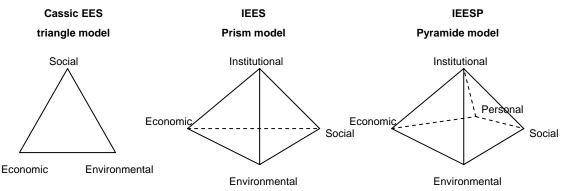

Figure 1. Three models for sustainability management.

In the context of staging experiences within the experience economy the proposed model of Pine and Gilmore (1999) with fours experiential realms of entertainment, education, estetics and escapism are in accordance with the introduction of such learning goals in tourism. Thus when tourism business transforms from pure service towards experiences the learning dimension has to be included to create meaning of experiences. Thus I here propose that "normative" learning goals of sustainability could be an important component of tourism experience production according to the Pine and Gilmore model of staging experience realms, especially within nature-based tourism.

In their model of the progression of economic value Pine and Gilmore (1999, p.166) introduces a fifth economical offering besides commodities, goods, services and experiences – the transformation offering. This fifth economic values is rarely discussed in the tourism context and has not yet been obtained a conceptual meaning within tourism. They propose the business of changing customers. Transformation is not to deliver a service or staging an experience but to guide a personal transformation. It's not about offering a tangible goods, intangible service or memorable experience, its about offering an effectual transformation. A service is delivered on demand, an experience is revealed over a specific time duration and an transformation is supposed to be sustained through time. Pine and Gilmore (1999, p.170) call the transformation seller an *elictor* to distinguish from an experience *stager* and service *provider*. The consumer they call an *aspirant* to distinguish it from an experience *guest* and service *client*. Finally the outcome from a transformation offering is a *trait,* a *sensation* from an experiences and *benefits* from services.

These distinctions between the offered economic values are by many authors mixed up intermixing service offers with experience products or analysing experience products in the context of service quality such as. SERQUAL and other service quality measurements. Pine and Gilmore (1999 p.165) clarify that experiences can be "attached" to goods and services like a sugar lining on a cake but this makes them not true staged experience offerings. They also warn that a commoditization of experiences decreases the customer value and lower

pricing – something we clearly see when specials interest tourism transforms into mass tourism.

In the transformation economy buyers seek to be guided toward some specific aim or purpose where the transformation elicits that intended effect. In this process the "aspirant" aspire to become someone or something different. Such transformations require a change in attitude, performance, characteristics, or some other fundamental dimension according to Pine and Gilmore. All such transformations are individual and thus cannot be commoditized. In addition such transformation must be sustainable through time. Finally in the transformation economy the customer is the product. This means that the exact form and content of the transformational offering has do be analysed (diagnosed) carefully and based on a close understanding of the aspirations of individual customers. In the transformation process the transformation elictor guide the aspirant through a series of experiences which are designed with certain purpose and goals. Pine and Gilmore apply their 4E experience realms also to the transformation offerings (1999 p.180) "*Entertainment experiences can alter our view of the world, while educational experiences can make us rethink how we fit into that world. Escapism experiences can boost our personal capabilities and characteristics to new levels, while esthetic experiences can imbue a sense of wonder, beauty and appreciation.*"

It is not a coincidence that Luyckx Ghisi´s *trans*modernity and Pine and Gilmore´s *trans*formation offering have the same foundation in the word *trans* – moving through or across something. Transmodernism goes beyond modernity; it transcend modernity in that it takes us *trans* – i.e. through modernity into another state of being. Transformation – changes or moves something or someone from one stage to another. Can this transformation economy of Pine and Gilmore be the conceptual approach that the application of transmodernity within tourism needs? Interestingly both the methodology of Tilden´s interpretation as well as the proposed conceptual production approach of Total Experience Management by the author (Gelter 2006, 2007) includes transformational goals for staging tourism experiences.

Natural and cultural resource interpretation
In late 1950 Freeman Tilden (1957) developed a set of principles for interpretation of cultural and natural resources that became a guiding doctrine for the interpretation profession of North America (Beck & Cable 1998). This Tildenian interpretation is to a large extent unknown within tourism research and tourism practice in Scandinavia (Gelter et al. 2007). Interpretation distinguishes itself from traditional guiding in being based on an active dialog and creative communication process between the interpreter and the guest to give the guests a good learning experience about the resources in focus. Traditional guiding on the other hand is most often the one-way transfer of information from guide to the guests. Tilden´s six basic principles (Tilden 1957) have through praxis and research been extended to 15 principles and become a high level systematic skill and profession (Beck & Cable 1998, Brochu & Merriman 2002, Brochu 2003, Knutson et al. 2003, Ward & Wilkinson 2006). Tilden´s original definition of Interpretation is still the base for the methodology: "*An educational activity which aims to reveal meanings and relationships through the use of original objects, by firsthand experience, and by illustrative media, rather than simply to communicate factual information.*"

Tilden´s original principles can be condensed into Tilden´s Interpretation Principles (TIP):
- Provoke the interest of the audience
- Relate to the everyday lives of the audience
- Reveal the main point through a unique ending viewpoint
- Address the whole – focus on illustrating a single theme
- Strive for message unity around the theme
- Evaluate your performance

The interpretation and the theme should be planned and preformed according to explicit learning, emotional and behavioural objectives.

This Tildenian Interpretation thus differ from the general understanding of interpretation by having a clear concept and methodology to fullfill explicit learning goals. In addressing the head (learning), heart (emotional) and hand (behavioural) the whole person should be involved in the learning experience. As interpretation includes having fun and taking place in esthetic places such as special nature or cultural setting or within a designed visitors centres or museums the similarity with Pine and Gilmore´s 4E experiences realms of entertainment, education, esthetics and escapism are striking. Also the transformational goals of Tildenian Interpretation to learn about, to get emotional involved with and to actively change your behaviours in relation to the interpretation goal and place are similar or identical to Pine and Gilmore´s transformational offering. Tilden wrote: "*Interpretation is an educational activity with aims to reveals meaning and relationships…*"

Environmental education versus interpretation
Environmental education (Palmer & Neal 1994, Jicklings 2006) has traditionally been regarded as the solution to environmental sustainability issues in transforming students towards sustainable values and practice (Van Matre 2004, Payne 2006). Environmental Education has however attract critics regarding its lack of specificity (Van Matre 2004, Payne 2006), being behaviourist (Robottom & Hart 1995) and having a negative world view emphasizing environmental problems without providing opportunity for individuals connection with nature to inspire a true engagement for environmental issues (Sobel 1996, Gelter 2000, 2002, Orr 2004, Payne 2006). Its transformational effect towards a sustainable society, despite its broad educational impact since Rachel Carlson´s *Silent Spring* is still unclear (Giliott 1996, Gelter 2002). Gigliotti (1996) agues that while the average citizenry is more aware of environmental issues, the average individual has still not made the lifestyle modifications necessary to address the growing ecological crisis. Ray and Anderson (2000) found that only 26% of Americans were "Cultural Creatives" with transmodern values while the level of "green concern" in the US was 85 %.

Knapp (2006) and Cable and Cadden (2006) discusses the differences between environmental education and interpretation and conclude that the foundation of interpretation and Environmental Education are almost identical with nearly similar principles and overlapping purposes. While Interpretation is based on the writings of Freeman Tilden and Enos Mills (1920) Environmental Education developed from the writings of John Dewey and pedagogic thoughts of Commenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Weaver. They thus shear a basic philosophy although the institutional differences are clearer. Within interpretation the interpreter or naturalists perform the program to volunteer audiences (tourists) for only a short time span while in environmental education educators or teachers presents curriculum-based

experiential education programs for a captive audience (students) with learning responsibilities. Cable and Cadden (2006) conclude as well as Knudson et al. (2003) that interpretation would benefit from integrating and applying educational theories and principles as well as assessing the learning process in their audience. At the same time environmental education could enhance their effectiveness by applying interpretation principles and approaches to help students make emotional connections and discover personal meaning associated with the learning experience.

Neither Tildenian Interpretation nor the principles of Environmental Education are utilized within traditional nature guiding or guide education (Grinder & McCoy 1985, Cohen 1985, Pond 1993, Noam 1999, SNF 2006, Gelter et al. 2007) although the European federation of Tourist Guide Associations (FEG) gives the following definition of the guide role "*the role of the tourist guide is to guide visitors from abroad or the home country in the language(s) of their choice, interpreting the natural and cultural heritage of the area of qualification*", and "*around the monuments, sites and museums of a city or region; to interpret in an inspiring and entertaining manner, ... the cultural and natural heritage and environment.*" (FEG 2007). Although stating that interpretation should be the base for guides FEG does not address transformation or learning goals which indicate that the term interpretation here is used in its broader sense and not as Tildenian Interpretation. Research on the contribution of the tourist guide to the guest experience (Cohen 1985, Geva & Goldman 1991, Pond 1993, Arnould & Price 1993 Larsson Mossberg 1994) has so far not addressed guiding in a transformational context.

Cohen (1985) set the guide in an intermediate position between the tourists and the visited society or nature of the destination leading to a multidimensional challenge for the guide. According to Cohen one such challenge for the guide is to switch between the inner social situation of the group and outer situations and problems outside the group. Another guiding dimension is the mediating between the tourist and the destination, activity or attraction directed towards the activity in question or towards communication inwards towards the group. According to Cohen the guide gets four leading aspects; (1) the instrumental leadership getting the group to indented place in right time, (2) the social component is the inner directed leadership, (3) the interaction component between the destination and the visitor and (4) the communicative role with language and dramaturgic skills. These guiding realms constitute the professional guide according to Cohen. He does not consider any learning goals or transformational task of the guide as in the Tildenian Interpretation.

In a similar way Pond (1993) sums up the context of a professional guide in five themes. First the guide is a leader with a professional responsibility for the group. Secondly the guide is an educator where the guide should facilitate the understanding of cultural and natural phenomena at the visited places. Third the guide is an ambassador for the destination where the hospitality and the representation of the destination should make the guests come back or positively mark the visit by word-of-mouth. Fourth the guide is a host and should establish an atmosphere where the visitors feel they are welcomed guests. Finally, the guide is a facilitator beinging flexible, having control and knowing when different aspects of the guide role are to be combined. Pond thus designate the guide being a educator but in a narrow sense of presenting knowledge of the visited destination and not transforming the guest towards specified objectives.

Extending the professional guide into the Experience Economy and the Transmodernity (Gelter 2007, Sletvold 2007) introduces the concept of the "Transmodern guide" where Tildenian cultural and nature interpretation is staged in a experience production context with explicit personal sustainability learning goals of the tourist experience.

Experience Production, the Transmodern Guide and Total Experience Management.
The study of the guest (customer) experience in a tourism or service context has attracted much interest (see special issues of Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism 2007, Vol 7 No 1, Larsen & Mossberg 2007) while the concept of "experience production" is still an emerging areas of research interest (Lindquist 2002, Ooi 2005, Berridge 2007, Boswijk et al. 2007, Ek et al. 2008).

The concept of experience production was introduced by Alvin Toffler (1970) using a confusing mix of terms in his attempt to predict the coming experience economy or in his words the "*cultural industry*" (p.227) or "*psyche-service industries*" (p.232), "*psycho-economics*" (p.152), "*post-service-economy*" (p.226) or "*experience industries*" (p.221) with the aim of "*the creation or staging of specialized "psychological experiences*" (p.227) and "*the psychologization of all production*" (p. 220).. This creation of "*experiential products*" (p.228), "*packaged experiences*" (p.232) or "*pre-programmed experiences*" (p.226) by "*experience makes*" (p.219), "*experience designers*" (p.232) or "*experiential engineers*" (p. 229) by the process of "*psychologization*" (p.220) or "*experiential production*" (p.227, 234, 453) was the future of "*experientialisms*" (p.235). Toffler even predicted that "*...the experience, in fact, soon go beyond theatre.*" (p.225) which is today supported by Boswijk et al. (2007).

The conceptualisation of experience production, i.e. the design and staging of experiences within the experience economy (Schulze 1992, Pine & Gilmore 1999, Richards 2001, Andersson & Andersson 2007) is proposed (Boswijk el al. 2007) to currently transform from the first generation where businesses stage the experience according to the proposed theatrical settings of Pine and Gilmore (1999). This business-oriented experience production is now developing into the second phase of a business – customer co-production and further into the third generation of self-directed production of experiences (Boswijk el al. 2007). Here the business only provides the platform and tools for the self-produced experiences. This proposed shift in the process of experience production influences not only experience production methods and analysis of experiences but certainly also the guests apparent experience qualities. Thus when comparing experiences and their quality we need taxonomies not only based on the activities and outcomes of the experiences but also based on the production processes as well as on the transformational goals if any of the experience production. Such experience taxonomies are still lacking within the literature (Gelter 2006).

The term "experience production" seem to be controversial as some prefer "experience staging" (Pine & Gilmore 1999, Richards 2001 and others), "experience design" (Ek et al. 2008) "experience creation", "experience facilitation", "experience enhancement", etc. (Berridge 2007). Following Toffler (1970) this paper will use the term "experience production" as the word design can associate to a superficial styling of a experience setting and the word staging in a similar way can associate to be limited to the material aspects of the experience, i.e., the stage, the scene, the costumes etc.

By comparing the concept of experience production with an education context (figure 3) Gelter (2006, 2007) introduces transformational goals into the staging and design of experiences as well as giving the experience an educational dimension according to Pine and Gilmore educational experience realm (1999, p.32). In this context the experience is not just an isolated event (as often conceptualised) but a transformational process. As in Tildenian Interpretation and many educational pedagogic methods narrative design and story telling is proposed to be a key method to give meaning to experiences in experience production (Pine & Gilmore 1999, Mossberg & Nilsen Johansen 2006, Strömberg 2007, Gelter 2007). To be meaningful the narration in story telling has to have a transformational message – a learning outcome. The narrative integration in experience production was a key dimension in Pine and Gilmore theatrical business staging as well as being the key method within Tildenian Interpretation. Thus experiences without a meaning are mere pastime or meaningless entertainment.
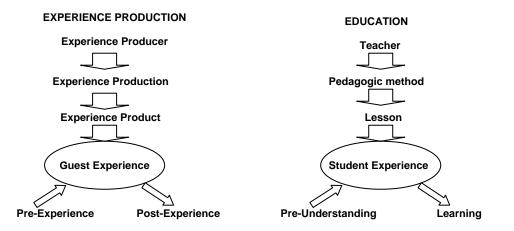
EXPERIENCE PRODUCTION

Experience Producer

Experience Production

Experience Product

Guest Experience

Pre-Experience   Post-Experience

EDUCATION

Teacher

Pedagogic method

Lesson

Student Experience

Pre-Understanding   Learning

Figure 2. Comparison between Experience production and Education (After Gelter 2006, 2007)

To incorporate the multidimensional aspects of experience production (Tarssanen & Kylänen 2005, Kylänen 2006) with the pedagogic dimensions (Gelter 2007) and Maslow´s pyramid on human needs (Maslow 1978), Tildenian Interpretation, Pine and Gilmores theatrical staging of business experiences and the holistic process management of TQM (Lakhe 2005, Bergman & Klevsjö 2007) the *Total Experience Management TEM-model* for experience production was developed (Gelter 2006, Gelter 2007), see figure 3. In the TEM-process the guests needs (Maslow 1978) and dreams (Jensen 1999) are managed and harmonized towards the theme, goals, design and staging of the experience and transformation in a process that includes the pre-experience and post-experience management as critical components

This TEM–model for experience production could be a first attempt to conceptualise a methodology within experience production that address the transformational dimension of experience production and thus can be developed for a conceptual approach of transmodernity within tourism.

Benchmarking guided tours
To test weather a transformational approach in general and transformation towards sustainability in particular, interpretation or TEM-approach can be traced within guided tourism experiences a first empirical attempt of analysing guided tours using the methodology

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of benchmarking (Pyo 2001, Watson 2007) was conducted. The method of benchmarking was use in stead of traditional comparative study as the aim of benchmarking is to improve a business performance (Pyo 2001). Benschmarking is based on finding the industry best practice, identifying performance gaps and the continuous learning and improving process to obtain information about new working methods or practices in other organisations or businesses (Pyo 2001, p.8). Benchmarking is not just comparing and copying but rather sharing ideas and learning from best practice globally, learning from the experiences of others and put this into a structural framework of development. There are several approaches of benschmarking and here the competitive benschmarking approach is adopted which refers to a comparison with direct competitors within a specific context, in this case nature and or culture based guided tours.

In this study 19 commercial guided tour are benchmarked to each other and to a hypothetical interpretation tour based on the TEM-model and the concept of the "transmodern guide" outlined by Gelter (2007). The benchmarking is focused on the experience production methods only – not the guest experience *per se*.
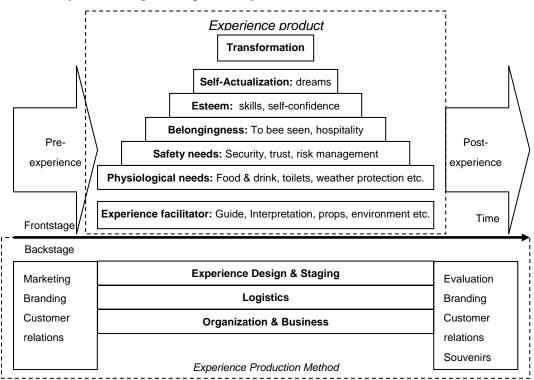

Figure 3. Total Experience Management model adapted after Gelter 2006, 2007.

To secure top quality tour operators and best practice the tours (see Appendix 2) were primarily non-randomly chosen from included or optional conference tours in association to international tourism conferences (occurring in Canada 2, Australia 1, Iceland 1, Norway 1, Finland 1; Sweden 1; tour no. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20) or provided in association to tourism courses (tour 18, 19). The rest (tour 1, 2, 3, 10, 11) where chosen non-randomly for their high potential of transmodern transformation experience potential. The tours were visited 2006-2008 by the "under-cover" technique by the author – although in most cases the tour operator/guide was aware of the author interest in tourism research. During the tour basic notes where made and after the tour a reflective evaluation was made in regard to

the theory of interpretation and TEM-model of experience production. Using 13 criteria (Appendix 1) the 20 guided tours (Appendix 2) are compared in Table 1.

The benchmark shows that interpretation, experience production and transformation as method is still rare among the visited "best practice" cases. This indicates that there still is room for improvements of business performance in tourism experience production. Of the maximum score of 32 the average score was low, 8,4 ± 5,0 S.D. (Median=6) and only five tours score 10 or more (figure 4). These were Monkey Mia Dolphin interaction, (no 2), Carakamia dusk tour (no 6), Sami experience (no 12), cultural boat tour (19) and Moose garden (no 20). The first two are conducted by Australian parks rangers which may be trained in interpretation according to Australian Interpretation programs (such as TQ Outback Interpretation Manual).

Table 1 Benchmarked of guided tours. The sum is the total score where every entry is one point. Maximum score is 32. For ratings se appendix 1.

Guided Tour	Theme	Story Telling	Interpretation	Props	Objectives:	Uniform/Dress	Production	Experience Realms	TEM- temporal	TEM Maslow	TEM senses	Memorablia	Transformation	Sum
1	1	1	1	1	1,2,3,4	1	2	1,2,3,4	1,2,3	1,2,3,4	1,2,3,4,6	1,2	1	29
2	0	1	0	0	1,2,4	1	2,3	1,2,3,4	2	2,4	1,2	1	0	17
3	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	3,4	0	2	1	0	0	7
4	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3,4	0	2	1	0	0	6
5	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	1	1	0	0	4
6	1	0	0	0	1, 4	1	1	2,4	0	1	1,2	0	0	10
7	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	4
8	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1,4	0	1	1	0	0	6
9	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	1	1	0	0	4
10	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	0	0	3
11	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1,4	0	0	1	0	0	4
12	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	2,4	0	0	1,2,3,4.5	1	0	13
13	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,4	0	0	1	0	0	4
14	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	1	0	0	3
15	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	0	1,5	0	0	6
16	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1.2	0	0	1	0	0	7
17	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	1,5	0	0	6
18	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	1	0	0	4
19	1	1	0	1	1,2	1	1,2	2,3,4	2	1,2,3	1,2,3,4,5	2	0	21
20	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	2, 4	2	0	1, 2, 3, 5	2	0	11

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The Alta Sami experience score high as it is a authentic self expressive experience with high interaction with the Sami culture. The Cultural boat tour is in the same way a highly authentic tour with high interpretation qualities as is the moose garden experience. Non, however uses Tildenian Interpretation or have a transformational or transmodern approach indicating a substantial gap between practice and theory in these tours. The reliability of this conclusion is

however week as only a limited number of guided tours where analysed as well as the limited methodology of the benchmarking analysis by the under-cover personal experience analysis. This study therefore needs to be extended to include surveys of both the experience providers as well as the experiences of the guests. This study may however, be valid in attracting the attention to the quality issues of experience production in relation to recent theoretical development within tourism experience production and towards the issue of sustainable tourism within the Transmodern concept..
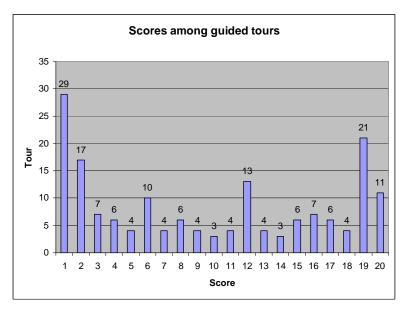

Figure 4. Benchmarking scores among the 20 analysed guided tours.

Conclusions

This paper shows that there is a possible way to develop a conceptual framework for Pine and Gilmore´s transformation offering in a context of transmodernity. Such framework is here suggested to be based on the Tildenian Interpretation methodology with sustainability objectives extended with the addition of the suggested Total Experience Management concept of experience production. In this suggested TEM-based transmodern tourism the guide gets the central function as a co-producer together with the guest or aspirant of the tourism transformation experience. With such transformational objectives in the guiding and interpretation of cultural and natural resources this new "transmodern guide" concept could transform tourism into a new level incorporating all four experiences realms of Pine and Gilmore in the experience production. In this context transmodern tourism need to be researched both regarding new innovative production concepts, product offerings and the apparent tourism experience that will be the outcome of such transformational experiences. As suggested by Pine and Gilmore the transformation offering economy opens a whole new innovative business within tourism transforming tourism *per se* beyond service offerings and superficial experiences of gazing at nature and culture.

APPENDIX 1

The 13 criteria used in the benchmark study:

1. Promotional Theme; 0=No, 1=Yes. The product is marked and promoted in a thematic catching pitch according to the methodology of Tildenian Interpretation. This could mean instead of "seal safari" the guided tour could be marked as "Experience the singing seals"
2. Story Telling. 0=No, 1=Yes. The information and facts of the guided tour are presented in a coherent narrative story instead of providing pure facts or short independent stories.
3. Interpretation; 0=No, 1=Yes. Conducted according to the TIP methodology developed by Tilden.
4. Props; 0=No, 1=Yes. In the form of pictures, other media, artefacts, actors used to strengthen the theme and message.
5. Interpretative objectives; 0=non, 1=logical, 2=emotional, 3=action, 4=sustainability, expressed in the communication and program of the guided tour.
6. The guide wears a uniform (with name tag) or is dressed according to the interpretation theme; 0=No, 1=Yes. This is one aspect and indicator of the professionalism of the guided tour.
7. The Experience production is according to: 1=provider (first generation),2=Co-production (second generation) 3=self-production (third generation).
8. Experience realms according to Pine and Gilmore; 1=Entertainment, 2=Education, 3=Estetics, 4=Escapism as subjectively interpreted by the author during the guided tour.
9. Temporal TEM in the explicit management of : 0=non, 1=pre-experience, 2=during experience, 3=post-experience. By managed experience the author subjectively percept the staging and dramaturgy of the experience phase.
10. TEM based on Maslow´s pyramid of needs : 0=non 1=physiological, 2=safety, 3=social, 4=esteem, 5=self-actualization, 6= transformation, where the author subjectively percept the staging and dramaturgy of each level.
11. TEM based on the management (dramaturgy and harmony) of the senses; : 1=vision, 2=auditory, 3=smell, 4= taste, 5=touch
12. Providing of memorablia; 0=no, 1=to buy, 2=included, in the form of included gifts or souvenirs or the possibility to buy souvenirs in connection to the experience that support the theme of the guided tour.
13. Indication of 0= non, 1=transformational, 2 = transmodern sustainability components of the experience production.

APPENDIX 2

The 20 guided tours analysed in the benchmark study:

1. *Theoretical reference tour (Gelter 2007) Mythological forest tour (1h, 10 guests, 1 guide)*
2. Guided wild dolphin interaction experience, Monkey Mia Reserve, Australia – (1h, ca 50 guests, 5 guides/rangers)
3. See the origin of the Mermaid Myth (Dongos) Dongo safari Monkey Mia, Australia - (3h, 20 guests, 2 guides)
4. Monkey Mia Magic Sunset Sailing tour, Australia (3h, 14 guest, 2 guides)
5. Carmac Island sea lion safari day trip, Fremantle, Australia (7h, 8 guests 1 guide/captain)
6. Carakamia Sancuary Guided Dusk tour - noctual animals, Australia (3h, 18 guests 1 guide)
7. Pinguiluit National Park Crater tour, Nunavik, Canada (3h, 14 guests, 4 Guides/rangers, 1 native)
8. Whale Watching Clayquot Sound, Tofino, Vancouver Island, Canada (5h, 18 guests 1 guide)
9. Sea Kayaking on the Indian Arm, Vancouver, Canada (4h, 42 guests 4 guides)
10. Boat Beluga Safari, Solovetsky Islands, Russia (3h, 12 guests, 2 guides)
11. Walking Beluga Safari, Solovetsky Islands, Russia (5h, 2 guests, 1 guide)
12. Sami Experience ,Alta, Norway (2h, 4 guests, 2 guides)

13. Bird safari tour, Gjesvaer, North Cape, Norway (3h, 20 guests 1 guide + 1 skipper)
14. Seal and bird safari, Vatnsnes peninsular, Iceland (1h, 16 guests 1 guide)
15. Olavinlinna Castle guided tour, Savonlinna, Finland (1h, 25 guests 1 guide)
16. Old Visby town guided tour, Visby, Gotland, Sweden (2h, 18 guests 1 guide)
17. fossil safari, Visby, Gotland Sweden (4h, 18 guests 1 guide)
18. Forest Museum Interpretation tour, Storforsen , Sweden (2h, 12 guests 1 guide)
19. Cultural boat tour to Fingermanholmen, Piteå, Sweden (6h, 30 guests, 3 guides)
20. Moose garden, Östersund, Sweden (2h 20 guests, 1 guide)

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Abstract

In the trans-modern society tourism has to transform into meaningful and learning experiences that contribute to a better and sustainable world. Integrating the methodology of natural interpretation and environmental education with developing theories of meaningful experience production, new innovative nature tourism products can be developed for glocal sustainability. Combining Marslow´s pyramid of needs with TQM, I developed the concept of Total Experience Management (TEM), as a powerful tool for qualitative experience production. Combining interpretation and TEM, innovative nature experiences with meaningful bearings on sustainability can be produced according to Pine & Gilmore´s model of the four experience realms of entertainment, education, escapism and aesthetics.
Based on the methods of interpretation and TEM I have developed a benchmarking tool which I tested on 15 nature and cultural based guided tours in Canada, Australia, Finland, Norway, Iceland and Sweden. Within two projects for developing guiding qualities we surveyed 115 entrepreneurs and tourism organisations in Finland, Sweden and Norway, about their view on "guide competence" and quality certification of guides. The benchmark study showed that interpretation as method is still rare and there are needs for quality improvements of the nature experience production in the light of TEM. The business survey indicated a need for certification and quality improvement of nature guides. However, when hiring a guide their education and reputation was more important then their certification. I thus conclude that the methods and skills of the nature guide could be a key factor for improving sustainable outcome of nature based tourism.

Key words:
Nature guiding, interpretation, experience production, innovative nature products