

Conceptualizing Structured Experiences

Seeking Interdisciplinary Integration

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Abstract

While consensus exists around the importance of providing structured experiences, the industries interested in offering such experiences lack a common body of shared knowledge about how most effectively to do so. Potentially complementary research on structured experiences remains fragmented across multiple fields such as leisure, tourism, and marketing. The purpose of this paper, therefore, was first to review and then integrate this scattered literature into a structured experience framework in order to facilitate experience-related research with broader applicability for both commercial and public organizations interested in providing structured experiences.

Keywords: *co-production, leisure, tourism, marketing, experience economy*

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Introduction

Since Pine and Gilmore (2011) first published *The Experience Economy* in 1999, their work has received significant attention. As Rossman and Ellis (2012) note,

It seems everyone wants to provide experiences these days including retail businesses, tourism agencies, event planners, sport managers, leisure providers, marketers, arts managers, and museum curators. These seemingly diverse organizations share a common goal, an intention to provide experiences, preferably memorable experiences, and sometimes experiences that serve to transform people's lives. (p. 1)

In addition to leisure researchers' longstanding inquiry regarding structured experiences, experiences have begun to receive increased attention from diverse industries, including consumer behavior, marketing, and tourism. The flourishing of experience-related subfields such as customer experience management (Meyer & Schwager, 2007), experience management (Morgan, 2010; Schmitt & Rogers, 2008), experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999a), relationship marketing (Gronroos, 2004), and experience design (Newbery & Farnham, 2013) represent evidence of the continued interest and evolution of inquiry regarding experiences.

Rossman and Ellis (2012) and Pine and Gilmore (2011) both note the power of well-designed experiences. Rossman and Ellis suggest that the best experiences are engaging, coproduced affairs where participants become active agents rather than passive spectators. These types of experiences may offer opportunities for personal growth, increased life satisfaction, and authentic happiness. Pine and Gilmore (2011) propose that "goods and services are no longer enough to foster economic growth, create new jobs, and maintain economic prosperity" (p. ix). The provision of intentionally designed experiences, they argue, will allow organizations to avoid commoditization and create lasting value for customers. Whether at the individual or organizational level, intentionally designed structured experiences matter.

While support exists for the importance of participating in and providing structured experiences, the industries interested in offering such experiences lack a common body of shared knowledge about how to do so most effectively. Research about structured experiences remains disciplinarily fragmented. Although the terms *well-designed*, *memorable*, and *intentional experiences* have appeared so far in this paper, it is important to note that before cases can be made for what an intentionally designed or memorable experience looks like, preliminary work is needed to identify and conceptualize key elements and processes of structured experiences. Such a framework would then provide a foundation upon which research about the quality and outcomes of experiences could be built. The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to review and then integrate the scattered experience literature into a framework encompassing the elements and processes of structured experiences.

Defining Experiences

A note regarding the usage of the word *experience* is needed before proceeding further. Simply defining experiences can prove difficult because the word in English refers both to lived experiences as well as to the knowledge and expertise gained over time as a result of lived experiences (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Other languages, like German, have multiple words to describe lived experiences (*erlebnis*) and what one gains from these lived experiences (*erfahrung*) (Highmore, 2002). Consider the distinctive meanings of the phrases *experiencing work* and *work experience*. Experiencing work connotes the lived experience of engaging in work related tasks, while work experience is the cumulative outcome of working. Experience also means different

things in different disciplines, ranging from the purely objective experience in the life sciences to the lived and subjective experience in the social sciences (Carù & Cova, 2003; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

In this paper, the term *structured experiences* is used to describe both the objective, interactive encounters between participants and provider manipulated frameworks (i.e., *erlebnis*; e.g., dining at a restaurant, attending a concert, playing in a softball tournament) and the resulting subjective participant outcomes (i.e., *erfahrung*; e.g., feeling unhappy with the quality of food at a restaurant, being emotionally moved by a song at a concert, deciding to return again next year to play in the same softball tournament and win the whole thing) of experiences.

According to this conceptualization, any time a provider (e.g., amusement park, recreation center, fitness trainer, parent) intentionally manipulates some aspect of an experience (e.g., setting, rules, equipment), it would be considered a structured experience. An after-school program, a marathon, and a music festival are all structured experiences. Unstructured experiences, from this perspective, occur primarily when the participant is also the primary experience provider. Based upon this delineation, most experiences qualify as structured because almost all experiences are influenced or intentionally manipulated to some degree by an outside provider. For example, even the case of an individual taking a lunch break at a park could be labeled a structured experience because the local park and recreation department provided the design and maintenance of the experience setting. Most, if not all, experiences are structured to some degree or another. Therefore, the terms *structured experience* and *experience* are used interchangeably for the remainder of this paper.

While structured-experience encounters and outcomes are explicitly intertwined, the primary focus for this framework is on the elements and processes of experiences, as opposed to perceived experience outcomes or the qualitative nature of specific experience types (e.g., memorable experiences). The reasoning being the nature of structured experiences needs to be more clearly explained before the development and testing of propositions can occur regarding the facilitation of meaningful outcomes of structured experiences. Accordingly, this paper represents a foundational step toward eventually building an integrated literature related to the nature, design, facilitation, and outcomes of structured experiences.

Literature Review

Who Cares about Structured Experiences?

Dating to Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) five-phase outdoor recreation model (anticipation, travel to, on-site, travel back, and recollection), leisure researchers have sought to understand the structure, processes, and outcomes of structured experiences. Scholars and practitioners have spent considerable time and effort studying and writing about the design and implementation of leisure experiences. For example, the books on this topic include, but are not limited to, *Recreation Programming* (Rossman & Schlatter, 2015), now in its seventh edition; *Programming for Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services* (DeGraaf, Jordan, & Degraaf, 2010), now in its third edition; and *Leisure Program Planning and Delivery* (Russell & Jamieson, 2007). These efforts to articulate the professional practice of leisure experience design have produced important insights, including the management process of design delivery and the identification of manipulatable elements of leisure experiences. A more thorough review of these contributions will be provided later.

Like leisure scholars, tourism researchers have also shown interest in both the psychological and managerial aspects of experiences since the 1960s (Uriely, 2005). In Plog's (1974) founda-

tional work dealing with psychographic tourist types, he classifies tourists based upon a motivation continuum from psychocentric to allocentric. This continuum provides tourism managers with a framework to understand different tourist market segments' motivations to travel. Tourism experiences have largely been framed as individuals attempting to escape from day-to-day routines by seeking novel and authentic experiences (Cohen, 2010; MacCannell, 1973). While early tourism research focused on defining tourism experiences as distinct from everyday life and on presenting homogenized explanations of tourist behavior, postmodern research approaches have shifted to defining tourist experiences as overlapping with regular home and work experiences and to understanding the individualistic and subjective nature of the tourist experience (Uriely, 2005).

In contrast to leisure and tourism scholars' long-running interest in understanding structured experiences, a number of fields—including business management, marketing, and consumer behavior—are also recently interested in experiences. This awareness of experiences coalesced in *The Experience Economy* (Pine & Gilmore, 2011), first published in 1999. The authors argue that in order to avoid commodification and decreasing returns, businesses needed to find ways of "experientializing" (Pine & Gilmore, 2011, p. 23) their offerings.

Pine and Gilmore (2011) proposed that just as the service economy outpaced the manufacturing, the service industry is now being surpassed by the experience economy. In other words, the experiences companies provide are becoming more important than the goods and services they offer. To illustrate this shift, consider how much individuals are willing to pay for coffee beans, coffee grounds, and a cup of coffee at a restaurant versus a cup of coffee from a Starbucks store. Individuals are willing to pay more as manufacturing and service elements are added to the coffee beans, but the ultimate price point is reserved for high-end coffee experience like Starbucks offers. This is where purchasing coffee is more than buying a product; it includes purchasing the Starbucks experience. The purchasing experience has become as important as or more important than the coffee itself.

Pine, Gilmore, and other like-minded writers have spent substantial time considering structured experiences and what makes them meaningful, authentic, and how to stage and co-create them in both real and virtual settings (e.g., Boswijk, Peelen, Olthof, & Beddow, 2012; Gilmore & Pine, 2000, 2007; Pine & Korn, 2011). In the *Experience Economy*, however, Pine and Gilmore stopped short of exploring or proposing research questions that could be born out of their framework for providing experiences, and instead focused on the value proposition that comes from companies producing compelling consumer experiences. The reader of the book is well equipped with specific tools and rationale for providing experiences but not an operationalizable framework with testable hypotheses. Academics from a variety of fields, including tourism and marketing, have been actively conceptualizing and researching topics related to Pine and Gilmore's (2011) work. *The Tourism and Leisure Experience* (Morgan, Lugosi, & Ritchie, 2010), an edited book, represents one piece of evidence exploring the veracity of Pine and Gilmore's (1999) concepts as they pertain primarily to tourism experiences.

While the structured experience concept appears to resonate across multiple fields of research and practice, the literature on structured experiences lacks integration. The following review of the leisure, tourism, and marketing literatures will serve as a foundation for the development of an interdisciplinary relevant framework of structured experiences.

Structured Experiences: The Leisure Field's Perspective

Although the leisure field has spent considerable time addressing the conceptual nature of leisure experiences (e.g., Howe & Rancourt, 1990; Kivel, Johnson, Scraton, & Arai, 2009; Neul-

inger, 1974; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986), the focus of this paper is on structured leisure experiences, an area that has received perhaps less attention. Rossman and Schlatter (2015), however, have made valuable contributions to the conceptual understanding of the nature of structured experiences. Drawing upon the leisure science literature as well as symbolic interaction theory (Blumer, 1969), Rossman and Schlatter conceptualized structured leisure experiences as a process of co-production involving participants and providers:

To facilitate leisure experiences, the programmer must design an encounter. This requires situating an occasion of leisure by providing social order (form and structure) through normative structures that provide interactive social space. This space must . . . afford participants engaging opportunities to co-create experiences that result in recollections and memories of perceived freedom and intrinsic satisfaction (p. 34–35).

This conceptualization of co-produced leisure experiences is a combination of the social-psychological perspective in which the individual is the sole agent (e.g., Kelly, 2009) and Kivel et al.'s (2009) perspective in which external factors might influence the leisure experience.

As noted in the introduction, attempts to identify the phases or structure of leisure experiences date back to Clawson and Knetsch's (1966) five-phase model. Some leisure researchers (e.g., Rossman & Schlatter, 2015) prefer a simpler, three-phase structure of leisure experiences: anticipation, participation, and reflection. As Rossman and Schlatter noted, most providers focus primarily on the participation phase without thinking intentionally about the anticipation and reflection phases of the experience. Recently, more researchers have paid attention to the anticipation and reflection phases. For example, in their book *Happy Money*, Dunn and Norton (2013) share examples from their own and others' research that suggest how anticipating an experience produces as much or more satisfaction than the actual participation phase.

Reflection-oriented researchers have examined the process of participant reintegration into everyday life after a long-term, structured leisure experience (Allison, Davis-Berman, & Berman, 2012) and the longevity of program impacts on participants after a leisure experience (Duerden, Witt, & Taniguchi, 2012). This concept is the focus of Allison's (2005) theory of post-expedition adjustment, which describes the process whereby individuals are changed by experiences and then are compelled to reintegrate their new selves into the same contexts where their former selves resided. While post-experience reflection and integration could be considered a primarily individualistic exercise, an increasingly interconnected world provides ample opportunities for experience providers to play a post-experience co-production role in participants' lives. This could be as simple as a provider sending a post-experience online survey link, which could facilitate additional reflection on the experience by the participant that would not have occurred otherwise.

Within the participation phase, experience managers have the most direct control over the leisure experience. They have the opportunity to manipulate various contextual elements in a way that will hopefully lead participants to have a leisure experience. Building on the work of Goffman (1961) and Denzin (1975), Rossman and Schlatter (2015) identified six elements of structured leisure experiences:

- Interacting People—the program participants
- Physical Setting—“one or more of the following sensory components: visual, aural, olfactory, tactile, and taste” (p. 44)
- Objects—“physical (e.g., basketball), social (e.g., other people in the experience), and sym-

bolic (e.g., social norms)” objects (p. 45)

- Structure (Rules and Program Format)—the “rules and program formats that guide interactions” (p. 46)
- Relationships—the relationships that participants bring with them into the experience (e.g., participating as a family)
- Animation—“how a program is set into motion and how the action is sustained throughout the [experience]” (p. 49)

These elements comprise the building blocks that providers can use to intentionally design and stage an experience. Rossman and Schlatter’s (2015) model does not, however, provide additional details regarding how to intentionally structure each experience element.

Fortunately, Ellis and Rossman’s (2008) model for staging recreation encounters offers some suggestions about how to intentionally design structured experiences. Drawing upon Pine and Gilmore’s (1999) work and principles from the customer service literature (e.g., Parsuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988), Ellis and Rossman identify two main categories of influencing factors: technical and artistic performance. Technical performance subcategories include technical skills, setting performance, and interpersonal performance. Artistic performance subcategories include multi-sensory staging, theme, and providing unanticipated value. Whereas the presence of technical performance factors provides the basis for customer satisfaction, attending to artistic performance factors creates the opportunity to delight guests. Their model proposes participant perceptions of technical and artistic factor performance influence the degree to which they engage in the co-creation process. Ellis and Rossman use the term “facilitating” rather than “providing” experiences to recognize, “the autonomy of the participant to help create the leisure experience as well as the freedom to do so” (p. 13). Furthermore, this acknowledges the essential role intrinsic motivation plays in the co-creation process as well as the overall quality of the experience. Therefore, the act of attending to both technical and artistic factors, as well as inviting co-creation, suggests facilitators of the experience are intentionally structuring the experience.

While the leisure science literature provides a wealth of information on the subjective and social-psychological aspects of leisure experiences, less attention has been devoted specifically to understanding the nature and processes of structured experiences. Fortunately, the strengths and weaknesses of the leisure literature, when it comes to understanding structured experiences, can be augmented through integration with research insights from other fields.

Structured Experiences: The Tourism Field’s Perspective

Gronroos (2006) suggested the nature of tourism changes the inherent relationship between the consumer and provider. It is the service provider that has the opportunity to engage the tourist instead of how it is typically thought of as the consumer engaging the provider. Thus, quality service providers must strive harder to provide a value-generating experience that appeals to the tourist’s physical, emotional, spiritual, or intellectual needs that is often held to a higher standard of satisfaction than normal (Prebensen, Chen, & Uysal, 2014). With the understanding of increased expectations for tourism experiences, researchers have examined this phenomenon from both managerial and social-psychological perspectives (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987). Within the social-psychological research, three dominant themes exist: defining tourism experiences, understanding tourist motivations and satisfaction, and investigating real-time tourism experiences (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987).

Tourism experiences are different from everyday experiences because the associated emotions and memories are location-based (Noy, 2007; Vogt, 1976). A destination’s image is a cogni-

tive construct that subjectively describes various associations, knowledge, opinions, judgments, and emotions. These feelings and expectations about specific destinations are continually evolving as knowledge is gained and modified either from outside sources or actually visiting the location (Florek & Insch, 2013). Based on these expectations, tourists choose and then visit locations with place-specific experiences in mind (Stamboulis & Skayannis, 2003). For example, most tourists visiting Shakespeare's Globe Theatre envision, prior to traveling, a particular type of experience they will have at the location. This unique dimension of the tourism experience creates what Ritchie and Hudson (2009) described as "the central challenge facing tourism planners" (p. 111): designing encounters for tourists—including all that they bring intra- and interpersonally with them to the site—and the elements of the destination in order to produce meaningful tourist experiences.

Due to tourists' varied backgrounds and their diverse interpretations of a single tourist experience, creating uniform experiences for all participants is extremely difficult (Ryan, 2000). From a managerial perspective, the individualized nature of tourist experiences forces tourism providers to grapple with how to create a reproducible experience for a wide variety of unique individuals. Although tourism providers can attempt to influence tourist motivations and expectations, they usually have a greater ability to structure the elements associated with the tourism site. For this reason, much of the tourism research with regard to experience has focused on models about the environmental (i.e., contextual) side of the framework (Williams, 2006). The tourist exists as an agent of seeing, being, experiencing, culturally inventing, and knowing (Hollinshead, 1999). Thus, tourists interact with the experience framework that providers offer, but they do so on their own terms and create unique sets of meaning from their own experiences.

Whereas many researchers have examined numerous aspects related to both sides of the tourism experience (i.e., the tourist and the site), fewer researchers have attempted to develop holistic frameworks that encompass both tourist and site elements in one model (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010). Existing tourism frameworks tend to focus on singular aspects of the experience such as the phases of the tourism experience (e.g., Botterill & Crompton, 1996); the influential factors that shape the experience, including the tourist, the site, and the local population (Nickerson, 2006); and the necessary criteria and commonly occurring outcomes associated with meaningful tourism, including self-identity (Vogt, 1976), authenticity, and social interactions (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005). In order to address this gap in the literature, Cutler and Carmichael developed the tourist experience conceptual model of influences and outcomes. This model includes both site elements (e.g., physical, social, product, and service) and interpersonal tourist elements (e.g., motivation, satisfaction, knowledge, memory, perception, emotion, and self-identity). The cyclical interaction of these two realms—influential and personal—takes place in phases labeled anticipation, travel to site, on-site activity, return travel, and recollection. The model, though, does not account for the immediate conscious experience process.

Commonalities certainly exist in the conceptualization of structured experiences between the leisure and tourism literatures. Both sides recognize that experiences arise out of interactions between individuals and the setting's elements. Tourism literature appears to place more emphasis on the role of the travel destination in the resulting experience, perhaps because this is the context most easily manipulated by providers. Although Cutler and Carmichael's (2010) model definitely represents a step forward in the modeling of tourist experiences, the lack of frameworks accounting for both the tourist and the provider perspectives points to a need for further development of tourism experience models.

Structured Experiences: The Marketing Field's Perspective

Although structured experiences, specifically customer experiences, have received increased attention in the marketing literature over the last two decades, the conceptualization of experiences themselves remains underdeveloped (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). This increased attention to consumer experiences in marketing is partly attributable to a growing awareness that customers value both the utilitarian nature of products as well as the consumptive experience products provide (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) first noted the experiential aspect of consumption in the consumer behavior literature. Abrahams (1986) expounded on experiential consumption by discussing the differences between ordinary experiences and extraordinary experiences.

Carbone and Haeckel (1994) defined *consumer* or *customer experiences* as “the aggregate and cumulative customer perception created during the process of learning about, acquiring, using, maintaining, and (sometimes) disposing of a product or service” (p. 18). From this perspective, experiences are the take-away impressions that customers glean from the various cues they encounter from the product, service, environment, and so on that are associated with their consumptive experience (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994). Accordingly, the consumer experience must be conceptualized holistically as something more than simply the purchasing experience. Arnould and Price (1993), drawing upon mixed-methods data from an in-depth examination of white-water rafting as a consumptive experience, proposed the following model of consumer experiences:

1. **Anticipated consumption**—searching, planning, daydreaming, budgeting, and fantasizing about future purchases.
2. **Purchase experience**—choice and payment of purchase, bundling product, service encounter, and atmospherics.
3. **Consumption experiences**—sensory experiences, satiation, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, arousal or flow, and transformation.
4. **Remembered consumption**—reliving past experiences, often in nostalgic ways, by telling stories, comparing old and new times, talking with old friends, playing “what if,” daydreaming, and sorting through memorabilia and other mementos (as cited in Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013, p. 30).

While much of the research activity in this area has focused on extraordinary experiences that produce distinct and powerful emotional responses and long-lasting memories, Carù and Cova (2003) stated that ordinary experiences matter and should not be overlooked. During all experiences, including ordinary experiences, providers must remember economics, perceived value, and willingness to pay as factors that influence the customer's experience. Price, for example, is one factor that individuals may consider before pursuing the experience (Jacoby, Chestnut, Weigl, & Fisher, 1976).

Various research subdomains related to consumer experiences include “consumer, product and service, off-line and online, consumption, and brand experiences” (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013, p. 29). Research related to these subdomains has produced a number of additional applicable models, including the pleasure-arousal-dominance (PAD) emotional state model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) and the thoughts, emotions, activities, values (TEAV) model (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1986). The PAD model has been used to understand the emotions produced by the elements or atmospherics of the physical environment where purchasing and consumption occurs

(Babin & Attaway, 2000). The TEAV model suggests that interactions between the environment and an individual's thoughts, emotions, activities, and values craft the consumer experience.

The increased focus on consumer experiences in marketing literature has in part contributed to the development of experiential marketing. Schmitt (1999b) proposed that organizations could employ five different strategic experiential modules (SEMs) to provide customers with experiential marketing encounters. These include sensory, affective, creative- cognitive, physical, and social-identity experiences. Additional related sub-concepts have also been developed, such as brand experiences, which Brakus, Schmitt, and Zarantonello (2009) defined as "subjective internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments" (p. 53). A variety of industries have embraced experiential marketing, from those traditionally associated with experiences, like the hospitality and tourism industries, to those more product oriented, like electronic and automotive companies (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013).

The experiential marketing literature defines structured experiences primarily in terms of how individuals respond to product stimuli. This is exhibited in Schmitt's (1999b) SEMs framework. Measurement work has operationalized this perspective of experiences in the Brand-Experience Scale (Brakus et al., 2009), which focuses on four (sensory, affective, intellectual, behavioral) of the original five SEMs suggested by Schmitt (1999b).

Relationship marketing represents another experience-related marketing sub-domain and is defined as an integrative process requiring three key elements: communication, interaction, and relationship value (Williams & Chinn, 2010). As marketing has evolved over recent years, there has been an increased recognition of service-oriented approaches in which "intangibility, exchange processes and relationships are central" (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, p. 2). Furthermore, consumers should be acknowledged as active participants and co-producers in the marketing process. As Williams and Chinn note, "Net-generation' consumers have been immersed in technology and two-way communications since birth and expect businesses to engage with them and embrace relationships" (p. 422). With this perspective in mind, marketers must recognize the resources (i.e., monetary, emotional, or knowledge) consumers bring into each potential experience and work with them to create the best possible outcomes (Fuller, Muhlbacher, Matzler, & Jawecki, 2009; Ple' & Cáceres, 2010). If providers do not recognize consumers' desire to co-create the purchasing experiences, this may lead to frustration on both sides resulting in the "co-destruction" of the experience.

Mangold and Faulds (2009) noted social media has become an additional component of the relationship marketing that companies have less control over. Web 2.0 (tools and technologies such as blogs, social networks, and content communities such as YouTube) has significantly affected the way businesses connect with customers (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Today's consumers are actively using Web 2.0 technologies to engage in increasing levels of collaboration and interactivity with organizations (Tapscott, 2009). Strategic relationship and social-media marketing practices that strengthen these interactive behaviors have the potential to provide significant competitive advantages (Williams & Chinn, 2010). Furthermore, Rothschild (2011), from a survey of 383 venue management professionals, found that 52% of sport and entertainment venues with a defined social media strategy reported a perceived revenue increase, and only 19% of those without a social media strategy reported an increase.

Despite the proliferation of experience-related research in marketing literature, the generalizability of this work remains weak. As Schmitt and Zarantonello (2013) note,

While prior research on experience in marketing has provided some frameworks and insights . . . there has been little integration of findings. Instead, each area has been associated with different research traditions (e.g., the retail, service, or brand literatures) as well as frameworks and methodologies. As a result, experience issues have been researched rather narrowly within each area. In the future, it will be important to conceptually link findings and to identify general principles that are common to all experiences in commercial contexts, thus generalizing from findings in specific domains such as retailing or online, or [from] brand and consumption experiences to overarching principles of experience. (pp. 36–37)

This paper echoes Schmitt and Zarantonello's call to "identify general principles" of experiences and experience staging across multiple domains, from retail to recreation. Toward this end, the following synthesis of the reviewed perspectives and models is offered.

Synthesizing Perspectives on Structured Experiences

The complex nature of experiences has led to multiple conceptualizations from various fields, and this paper focuses on three in particular: leisure, tourism, and marketing. Researchers from each of these areas of study have an inherent interest in understanding the experiences of individuals within leisure, tourism, and consumer contexts. Table 1 provides an overview of key concepts from each field.

All three fields recognize the dual nature (i.e., participant and provider) of experiences. To varying degrees, researchers within each field have attempted to further define the participant factors (e.g., values, relationships, etc.) and provider factors (e.g., leisure objects, products, services, etc.) that combine to ultimately produce structured experiences. Unfortunately, little coordination or collaboration has occurred across or, at times, even within these fields, which has led to the current fractured perspective of experiences.

A Unifying Concept of Structured Experiences

Schmitt and Zarantonello's (2013) preciously cited comment deserves reiteration here: "It will be important to conceptually link findings and to identify general principles that are common to all experiences in commercial contexts" (p. 37). This paper suggests that linking experience findings and principles should occur across all fields that have a central focus on structured experiences across diverse contexts.

Framework Overview

Based on the reviewed literature, the structured experience (SE) framework and associated propositions are introduced in the following sections. The framework specifically focuses on identifying and explaining the elements and processes associated with structured experiences or, in other words, with experiences in which an individual or organization intentionally designs an encounter with the hopes of producing desired outcomes. The SE framework consists of two main components: the experience co-creation process and the experience phases—anticipation, participation, and reflection (Figure 1).

Table 1*Key Structured Experience Concepts from Leisure, Tourism, and Marketing*

Concepts	Leisure	Tourism	Marketing
Nature of Structured Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be defined by time, activity, and personal perception perspectives (Howe & Rancourt, 1990) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to escape from day-to-day routines by seeking novel and authentic away from home experiences (Cohen, 2010; MacCannell, 1973) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences involved with learning about, purchasing, consuming, and disposing of a product (Carbone & Haeckel, 1994)
Elements and Processes of Structured Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-phase perspective of leisure experiences (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966) • Six elements of situated activity systems (Rossman & Schlatter, 2015) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phases of the tourism experience (Botterill & Crompton, 1996) • Authenticity (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005) • Tourist motivations (Plog, 1974) • Influential factors including the tourist, the site, and the local population (Nickerson, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic experiential modules (SEMs; Schmitt, 1999b)
Models of Structured Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A technology for staging recreation encounters and emotional and motivational states (Ellis & Rossman, 2008) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Tourist Experience Conceptual Model of Influences and Outcomes (Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-phase model of extraordinary consumer experiences (Arnould & Price, 1993) • Pleasure-Arousal-Dominance (PAD) Emotional State Model (Mehrabian & Russell, 1974) • Thoughts, Emotions, Activities, Values (TEAV) Model (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1986)

Co-creation process. The first component of the framework details the co-creation process, iteratively at work within each experience phase. As Rossman and Schlatter (2015) noted, structured experiences are never an individual affair but rather a co-created production. Consumers today are empowered, networked, active, and informed, and their *interaction* with the provider (e.g., agency, business, etc.) becoming the “locus of value creation” (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004, p. 5). It is this interaction that embodies co-creation that can happen before, during, or after an experience offering. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy, co-creation is about the “joint creation of value by the company and the customer. It is not the firm trying to please the customer” (p. 8). Furthermore, co-creation may involve joint-problem definition and solving, the customer co-constructing the service experience, continuous dialogue, and personalized experiences with products (e.g., LEGOs—same product, different experience). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) proposed the building blocks of co-creation to be the following: dialogue, access, risk-benefits, and transparency. Accordingly, in the SE framework, participant-provider interactions produce experience outcomes.

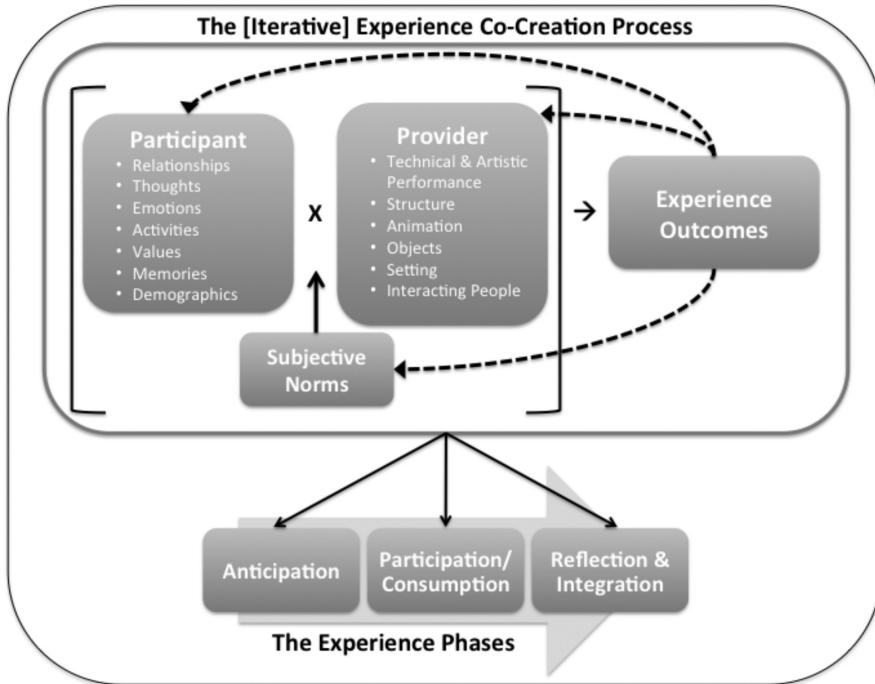


Figure 1. The Structured Experience (SE) Framework

Participants in SE framework bring their relationships (Rossman & Schlatter, 2015), thoughts, emotions, activities, values (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1986), memories of past similar experiences, and their personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity, personality, etc.) into the co-creation process. The provider intentionally manipulates specific elements, including those related to conceptualizations of technical and artistic performance (Ellis & Rossman, 2008; Parsuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1988; Pine & Gilmore, 2011) and Rossman and Schlatter's situated activity system model (e.g., setting, leisure objects, animation, relationships, interacting people, and structure). The nature of the participant-provider interaction and the subjective nature of participants' perceptions of experiences (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986) are what make experiences such complex phenomena.

Feedback loops. The framework suggests the outcomes of each interaction influence future interactions through three different feedback loops. The first feedback loop involves participants themselves. Each perceived experience, both positive and negative, has the potential to influence participants' relationships, thoughts, emotions, activities, beliefs, and memories they will bring to subsequent provider interactions. The second feedback loop deals with providers. Providers often, through various evaluation efforts, attempt to understand participants' perceived experiences. The most effective providers continually modify experience elements based upon participant feedback in order to maintain or improve their offerings. The final feedback loop addresses participants' social networks. As participants share their perceived experiences with important others the feedback they in turn receive may further moderate future interactions.

This third feedback loop deserves additional consideration. In the SE framework this loop is identified as subjective norms. Ajzen (1991) defined subjective norms as "the perceived social

pressure to perform or not to perform [a specific] behavior” (p. 188). A participant’s perceptions of their peers’ attitudes and opinions about the provided experience have the potential to influence the co-creation process. Accordingly, individuals would be expected to more positively perceive and subsequently more likely reengage with experiences positively viewed by important others in their lives. While subjective norms have always influenced the co-creation process within structured experiences, the increasing salience of various social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs) has enlarged the ability of subjective norms to impact the participant-provider interaction within structured experiences. Although social media is often portrayed as the domain of youth and emerging adults, the demographic profile of users has expanded dramatically in the last 10 years. A 2014 Pew Research Center study of Internet use in the United States found that 74% of adult Internet users use social media (Duggan, Ellison, Lampe, Lenhart, & Madden, 2015). This includes 65% of 50- to 64-year-olds who are Internet users, and almost half of people 65 years and older use the Internet (Duggan et al., 2015). While it is true that new platforms such as Instagram and Pinterest draw mainly younger users, 71% of all Internet users are on Facebook (Duggan et al., 2015). Subsequently, social media is increasingly becoming the primary conveyer of subjective norms for many individuals.

It is now generally accepted that social media has fundamentally changed consumer behavior (Qualman, 2013). Consumers now rely more on what their online peers think about products, services, and experiences than what the providers of the products, services, and experiences say about them (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Tourism research has shown that social media plays an influential role during all phases of the tourist experience (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2012). Therefore, in order to more fully understand the experience co-creation process, the influence of subject norms, particularly those expressed through social media, must be taken into account across all experience phases. Therefore, the framework’s first two propositions are as follows:

Proposition 1: Outcomes resulting from each experience influence future participant provider interactions through three different feedback loops—participants, providers, and social networks.

Proposition 2: The participant-provider interaction is moderated by subjective norms, especially those conveyed through social media channels and/or communication with important others, related to the experience.

Phases. The participant-provider interaction occurs not only during the participation phase but also across all phases of a structured experience. Although researchers have proposed experience models with five phases (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; Cutler & Carmichael, 2010) and four phases (Arnould & Price, 1993), Rossman and Schlatter (2015) propose a model with three phases—anticipation, participation, and reflection. To broaden the applicability of the SE framework the phases are slightly modified as follows: anticipation, participation/consumption, and reflection and integration. The participation/consumption phase takes into account the marketing perspective of experiences as consumptive affairs. The coupling of reflection and integration into one phase acknowledges the important role reflection plays in allowing individuals to integrate the outcomes of experiences into their everyday lives. Accordingly,

Proposition 3: The experience co-creation process is iterative and nested within phases, and the resulting outcomes from each interaction influences future interactions.

Outcomes. Finally, the framework is not constrained to experiences that only produce certain types of outcomes. The SE framework provides a starting point for research to investigate

specific approaches within each stage of the framework to more efficiently produce meaningful structured experiences. Pine and Gilmore's (2011) ideas around theme-ing, sensitizing, customizing, and mixing in memorabilia as well as Ellis and Rossman's (2008) technical and artistic elements provide potential guidance for researchers and practitioners regarding approaches for designing and staging structured experiences. Therefore,

Proposition 4: The SE framework describes the elements and processes associated with structured experience independent of the outcomes they produce.

Summary. Although experiences have received significant scholarly and practical attention, the diverse fields interested in this topic have produced a fragmented literature (Schmitt & Zarantonello, 2013). The SE framework, based on a synthesized literature review across multiple disciplines, will hopefully provide common ground for scholars and professionals interested in understanding and providing structured experiences. The SE framework provides a conceptualization that incorporates a variety of disciplinary perspectives regarding experiences. The framework also encompasses the dynamic nature of experiences as a latent construct resulting from reciprocal and iterative interactions between participants and providers.

Limitations

Although this paper provides attempts to synthesize elements and processes found in providing structured experiences in a framework, it likely does not explain *all* experiences for *all* people. It is also limited to knowledge and perspectives from the recreation, tourism, and marketing fields. It is important to remember, though, that the purpose of the framework is to serve as a starting point for research on structured experiences and will evolve as research continues to progress.

Research Implications

The framework can guide scholars regarding potentially fruitful research pursuits related to understanding the design, implementation, and evaluation of structured experiences. This section addresses a number of potential experience-related research streams. This is not meant to represent an exhaustive list of all possibilities but rather preliminary suggestions, some of which are explicitly connected to the previously discussed framework propositions.

Research questions related to propositions 1 and 2. Specific research questions could be asked related to each feedback loop as well as the salience of influence of each loop in relation to their others. The issue of salience may also be influenced by demographic factors like age and ethnicity. Scholars should work to gain a deeper understanding of the moderating influence of subjective norms on participant-provider interactions. Research is needed to better understand how subjective norms and the channels whereby they are communicated influence the experience co-creation process. This influence extends to both how participants view experiences and how providers adapt the design of their experiences as a result of salient subjective norms.

Research related to proposition 3. Research is needed to better understand the nature of the participant and provider interaction in each stage and how these interactions influence the following experience stages. Understanding how these interactions change between phases could help providers to better communicate with participants and ultimately offer an enhanced or more customized experience.

Research related to proposition 4. Perhaps one of the most exciting areas of future research related to the proposed framework deals with understanding the nature of specific types of experiences. While the SE framework is designed to encompass any type of structured experi-

ence regardless of the outcomes it produces, it also provides researchers a framework of elements and processes to examine when it comes to specific experiences—be they negative, positive, or neutral. Researchers who want to know what makes an experience memorable or meaningful hopefully now have a stronger theoretical foundation from which to launch their inquiry.

Other potential research questions. Additional questions include what are the most influential participant elements (e.g., relationships, thoughts, emotions) when it comes to perceiving an experience as positive or meaningful? What role do demographic elements like culture and ethnicity play in the experience co-creation process? Is there any difference between the effectiveness of virtual encounters versus real encounters across different experience phases? What is the optimal blend of virtual and real experiences (Pine & Korn, 2011)? What are the most effective strategies to transition someone from the reflection and integration phase back into the anticipation phase? Do other participant, provider, and perception elements deserve consideration for inclusion in the SE framework?

Practical Implications

The holistic nature of the SE framework can provide direction for professionals as they think about the phases, components, and processes they need to consider when designing experiences. The framework can also serve as a tool for providers to refer to when analyzing the different parts of an experience and their effect on the consumer's experience. In a way it can be used as a type of logic model to dissect the various contributions of different consumer-provider interaction that contribute to the final experience. In using the framework, professionals would first think about the outcomes they hope to achieve through the experience. With outcomes in mind they would then determine which of the elements under their control they need to enact at each experience phase to bring about the desired outcomes. The SE framework reminds professionals to not overlook the influence they can have at the anticipation and reflection phases of the participant experience. Professionals can shape how participants anticipate the experience through promotional materials, pre-experience specific messaging (e.g., tweets about upcoming experience), and even pre-experience materials to build anticipation (e.g., passing out recreation league jerseys *before* the first day). During the participation phase the framework continues to highlight the co-creative nature of experiences. Providers should carefully consider the elements they contribute and the elements consumers bring with them as they co-produce an experience. Awareness of consumers' relationships, thoughts, emotions, and other experience elements will help providers think about what the experience looks like from not only their perspective but their end users' as well.

Once participants finish the experience it is easy for providers to move on to the next event or experience and overlook the opportunity to build loyalty by continuing to connect with participants. Beyond providing memorabilia (e.g., team photo, certificate) professionals can consider other ways to provoke participant interaction and reflection (e.g., set up a group Facebook page). Additionally, professionals should be aware of the subjective norms, especially those expressed through social media, about their provided experiences and make necessary modifications. The design and provision of structured experience is a continuous, co-creation process that requires intentional and responsive intervention both within and across all experience phases.

Conclusions

The proposed SE framework provides a cross-disciplinary framework for professionals and researchers interested in providing and understanding structured experiences. As Ellis and Ross-

man (2008) note, “The expanding set of industries that are related to traditional park, recreation, and tourism curricula share a common purpose: all are fundamentally in the business of staging quality experiences that are valued by guests, participants, clients, patients, or students” (p. 16). In a similar vein, the SE framework suggests participants experience the same common phases, elements, and processes within experiences facilitated by any organization, be it a community-based youth program or a Fortune 500 company and that, accordingly, experience research and practice can and should provide cross-disciplinary insights.

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Table 1
Key Structured Experience Concepts from Leisure, Tourism, and Marketing

Concepts	Leisure	Tourism	
Nature of Structured Experiences	<div>□ Can be defined by time, activity, and personal perception perspectives (Howe & Rancourt, 1990)</div>	<div>□ Attempts to escape from day-to-day routines by seeking novel and authentic away from home experiences (Cohen, 2010; MacCannell, 1973)</div>	<div>□ E v a c d p H</div>
Elements and Processes of Structured Experience	<div>□ Multi-phase perspective of leisure experiences (Clawson & Knetsch, 1966)</div>	<div>□ Phases of the tourism experience (Botterill & Crompton, 1996)</div> <div>□ Authenticity (Hayllar & Griffin, 2005)</div> <div>□ Tourist motivations (Plog, 1974)</div> <div>□ Influential factors including the tourist, the site, and the local population (Nickerson, 2006)</div>	<div>□ S n S</div>
	<div>□ Six elements of situated activity systems (Rossman & Schlatter, 2011)</div>		