



UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

'Inter-services'

A qualitative phenomenological study of leadership perspectives on guest per-trip engagement within tourist attractions

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ABSTRACT

Tourist attractions are continuously innovating their attraction, products and services to entice visitors to attend. Therefore, looking at areas where attractions could innovate to improve and enhance the visitor's experience is welcomed. Understanding their customer journey is vital for getting a better outlook at opportunities of increased experience for the visitor in exchange for their currency. Using the customer journey model, there may be an opportunity of starting the relationship building with their guests much earlier than presently with their visitors. This relationship starts from the time the visitor purchases a ticket in-advance electronically to the time they arrive at the location. This area is called 'inter-services' and can be implemented in any customer journey model. There is an opportunity for attractions and consumers to build trust and a relationship with each other during this stage. Both parties would get the maximum opportunities of increased engagement, experiences and increased transactions which may not necessarily have taken place previously.

The aim of this dissertation is to find out tourist attractions views regarding 'inter-services' and if it is an important area for attractions to concentrate on when starting to build trust and relationships with their visitors in advance. This will be done by interviewing attractions in London, England, and finding out their views regarding this area. Each attraction interviewed is from a different area of the tourist attraction industry, from museum to concert halls which will give a general overview of what the current situation is regarding this idea of 'inter-services'. Interacting with dedicated tourism groups on LinkedIn will also give an overview of what the tourism industry feels about this area. A number of different case studies will be used. A number of different themes

will be explored such as technology, social media, human resources and marketing. The majority of attractions interviewed were aware of this area, however, all attractions currently had a very basic element of this in place. Overall the 'inter-services' in the tourist industry is in an infancy stage. Development depends on finance and a willingness to experiment with technology as a key factor in delivering this sort of service.

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DECLARATION

Throughout the dissertation process, all work has been undertaken by myself which includes data collection and research around this topic. I have also acknowledged any other authors throughout my dissertation which follows the University of Lincoln's plagiarism and ethical guidelines.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	4
DECLARATION	5
1 INTRODUCTION	10
2 THE MAIN POINTS	15
3 THE IDEA.....	19
3.1 Personal Level	20
3.1.1 Telephone.....	20
3.1.2 SMS	20
3.1.3 Emails.....	20
3.2 Impersonal Level.....	21
3.2.1 Websites	21
3.2.2 Social Media.....	21
4 METHODOLOGY	23
4.1 Selecting tourist attractions.....	24
4.2 Semi- structured interviews.....	25
4.3 Linked-in research.....	27
4.4 Public accessible information	27
4.5 Research question.....	27

4.6	Presenting findings	28
4.7	Importance and limitations	28
4.8	Ethics.....	30
4.9	Literature review design	31
5	FINDINGS.....	32
5.1	Customer profiling	33
5.1.1	Domestic visitors	34
5.1.2	Travel trade (individuals and groups).....	35
5.1.3	Overseas visitors (booking via attraction’s official website).....	35
5.2	Evaluation	36
5.3	Services	38
5.4	Technology and Social Media	41
5.4.1	Consumer and business interaction	41
5.4.2	Social Media.....	42
5.4.3	Reading Age	43
5.5	Human Resources	44
5.5.1	Front of House	44
5.5.2	Back of House	45
5.6	‘Inter-services’ concept feedback.....	46
6	LITERATURE REVIEW	48

6.1	Tourist attractions overview	48
6.2	Consider	49
6.2.1	Business Influence	50
6.2.2	Engagement.....	52
6.2.3	Technology	54
6.2.4	Proposed ‘inter-services’	56
6.3	Buy	57
6.4	Enjoy.....	58
6.4.1	Experience	59
6.4.2	Service.....	61
6.4.3	Co-producing	63
6.4.4	On-site technology	64
6.5	Evaluate.....	65
7	DISCUSSION.....	67
7.1	The awareness of ‘Inter-services’	67
7.2	Tailor-made packages	68
7.3	Engaging with overseas guests and third-party ticket agents.....	68
7.4	Reading Accessibility.....	69
7.5	Social Communication	70
7.6	Technology.....	71

8	CONCLUSION	76
9	RECOMMENDATIONS.....	79
10	REFERENCES LIST	80
11	BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	90
	Appendix 1 – Attractions Interviewed and Company Profile.....	94
	EDF Energy London Eye.....	94
	London SeaLife Aquarium	94
	The View at the Shard	95
	The Royal Albert Hall.....	95
	The National Maritime Museum.....	96
	Appendix 2 – Sample Interview Questions.....	97
	Appendix 3 - LinkedIn Research	98
	Appendix 4 – The Four Realms of an Experience	99

1 INTRODUCTION

"The past 20 years have seen a total change in the way the leisure experience is delivered and consumed" (LIW News, 1999 in (Williams and Buswell, 2003).

"The careful management of the tourist experience is an absolutely vital and complex requirement [I think an 'and' or a 'comma' is missing] service quality will continue to be a major component of the future shape of tourism provision" (Page et al, 2001 in Williams and Buswell, 2003).

Living in a society in which experiences are highly valuable, (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999) especially in the leisure and tourism industry, has been important in the way the industry has shaped and produced experiences for their visitors. Using the tourist attraction platform, it provides the perfect opportunity of delivering unique experiences to individuals (Scale, et al, Unknown).

"Without tourist attractions there would be no tourism" (Gunn, 1972, 24) and

"without tourism there would be no tourist attractions" (Lew, 1987).

It is believed that the leading factor in the success of tourist attractions is the satisfaction of their visitors (Prentice, 1993; Swarbrooke, 1995). Tourist attractions are constantly trying to find different and unique ways of entertaining and inspiring their visitors. The majority of attractions complete this to a high standard. However, competition between tourist attractions are ever aggressive and organisations are constantly trying to find ways of becoming diverse enough to engage more with their visitors and encourage them to choose their attractions over other competitors. This may include developing unique attractions to enhance existing ones, developing experiences such as added value goods and services to enhance the visitor's experience to encourage up-selling. Therefore

finding a different angle in engaging with the visitor could be a prime task which tourist attractions may want to do to become the standout attraction in their area. Scholars agree (Marshall and Brady, 2001; Nambisan, 2002; Thomke and von Hippel, 2002; Desouza and Awazu, 2005) that businesses need to appropriately engage with their customers for them to select their products and services to be more desirable within the marketplace.

This comes down to understanding the customer's journey process, which is unique to every business. There are four basic steps which can be adopted; (1) Consider - decision-making, (2) Buy - purchase, (3) Enjoy - the visit, and (4) Evaluate - post trip. This paper will be investigating a new stage which could be implemented between 'Buy' and 'Enjoy' called 'Inter-services'. This area is a neglected part of the process as a lot of attractions have not acknowledged that this area could be a valuable time in encouraging, engaging and the start of building relationships with the visitors prior to their arrival.

This stage could be important as it may add a different approach in how attractions build relationships and engagement with their visitors, who may have purchased tickets in advance, and is currently an under-used tool. Interestingly, this concept has been adopted for a while by airlines, hotels and cruise companies and is used in preparing guests, before they arrive, to make their experience as smooth and pleasurable for both the customer and organisation (operationally). Due to the nature of the topic this may be the first approach which is specifically concentrating on tourist attractions and understanding how organisations can engage with their visitors in relationship building between both parties in advance. Benefits for the tourist attractions may be at an

operational level and also understanding at what stage tourist attractions can utilise getting a clear message to the visitors in advance.

Attractions which have implemented this concept of 'inter-services' are the Warner Brothers - Harry Potter Studio Tour (HPST) (see Appendix 3, VAG7) and Blackpool Pleasure Beach (see Figure 4). These attractions have a very strong brand within the UK and do compete with other rival companies in their geographical facility. Using HPST as an example, the majority of visitors have a good understanding about the brand and product in advance, so any interaction between the attraction and the consumer would be enhanced, especially if the person who paid for the ticket receives the communication. Communications may involve using different forms of communication methods, email (see Figure 4), and implanting information such as how to get to the location, services and facilities available, contact information and any special events which may be targeted to each visitor. However, what makes these two attractions different is the approach and language used to entice and excite their visitors. Other sector organisations such as Eurostar, the Hilton Hotels, British Airways and Carnival Cruises have adopted this concept with benefits of managing their visitors for smoother operation.

Therefore the main objective is to investigate the thoughts of tourist attractions regarding this 'inter-service' stage to see if it has been acknowledged by the organisation and if they are implementing any sorts of pre-trip experience for their guests. During this investigation semi-structured interviews will be undertaken by several high-profile London tourist attractions that volunteered to take part in this investigation. These attractions have been carefully selected to represent the tourist attractions industry to get an overview of what each type of attraction does between these pre-trip stages. The

attractions chosen were based on criteria such as being an operational tourist attraction, high profiled, based in London, England and currently allow visitors to pre-purchase tickets in advance for part or for the whole experience.

As this area has not been investigated before academically, there is limited dedicated literature available, so, this paper will be a starting point for how tourist attractions can get closer to their visitors before arriving at their site. A trend from the interviews, which came across, was how new this concept was to tourist attractions as some were aware of other organisations doing this particular activity, but not fully using this in their attraction. This could be due to financial sensitivities, technology limitations and human resources.

The main aim of this dissertation is to understand how tourist attractions can get closer to their visitors prior to their arrival. This will be focusing on an area after a purchase of an advance ticket done electronically. This may include relationship management, specific targeted marketing and staff awareness.

This paper will be investigating how the implementation of 'inter-services', which will be explained in more detail (Chapter 3), added into the customer journey model (Chapter 2), may increase relationships between the visitor and attraction and encourage extra spend. The importance of using this concept will be underlined in building trust and relationships between the tourist attraction and the visitor prior to the visit. The methodology section (Chapter 4) will explain three methods which were used to gather information from tourist attractions and LinkedIn (Appendix 3)

The customer journey model will be used throughout the dissertation especially in the literature reviews (Chapter 6) and include findings (Chapter 5) from semi-structured interviews with tourist attractions and LinkedIn comments.

Due to the lack of academic literature around this topic, the literature review (Chapter 6) will be located at the end of the paper for a better understanding of particular areas where tourist attractions may want to concentrate to deliver this 'inter-services' stage and experience for their visitors. There will be a final discussion (Chapter 7) linking both the findings chapter and literature review to try to get an understanding of how tourist attractions can integrate this new stage into their customer journey.

2 THE MAIN POINTS

In the modern day, the 'experience economy' provides memorable and unique customer experiences is arguably the best way of gaining competitive advantage (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999). Due to this concept of 'experience economy', experience management has been widely discussed academically and implemented (Boswijk, et al, 2005; Nijs, 2003; Scott, et al, 2009). The leisure and tourism industry is a perfect field for creating 'extraordinary experiences', as Abraham (1986) calls it which means something that stands out from everyday life competing for individuals spare time and disposable income (in Morgan and Watson, 2007).

However, in the present day, tourist attractions are under pressure to create extra revenue from consumers visiting their location. This is due to substantial financial cuts to tourism in the public sector tourist attractions, such as museums (Evans, 2012) and heritage sites (English Heritage, 2013). Private enterprises are also constantly looking at different ways to increase revenue at their locations with a balance of creating value for the consumers. This is due to overwhelming competition such as existing and new attractions and also multipurpose venues that hold one-time events.

One of the main issues is the attention to detail and entertainment value that tourist attractions give to their customers, especially when booking tickets in advance. As the customer experience starts before the purchase process, it is important for attractions to understand and realise how to tap into these customers ahead of time, as this can encourage them to purchase a ticket from them rather than from their rival attractions. One way to do this is to understand the customer's journey. There are four basic parts to the customer journey;

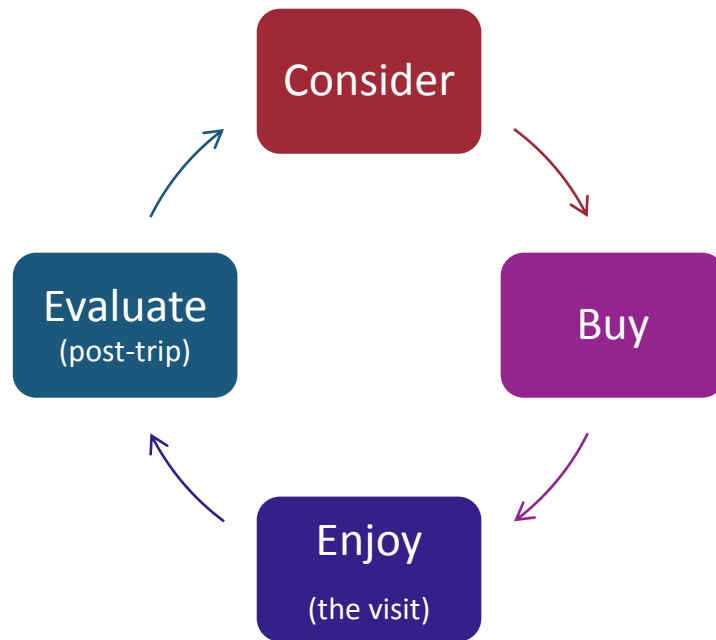


Figure 1: Basic customer journey model

The area which has been neglected by tourist attractions marketers is between the time when a visitor purchases a ticket in advance (buy) to the time they arrive at the location (enjoy). This area has not necessarily been investigated academically, which identifies a need to investigate a new stage called 'inter-services' which may enhance the overall visitor experience.

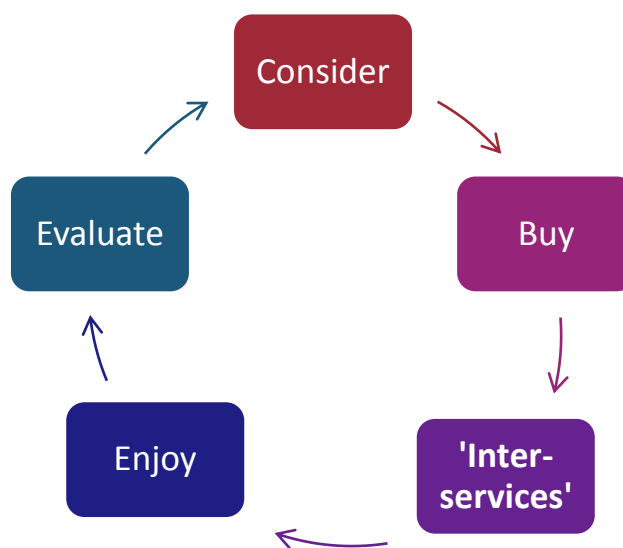


Figure 2: The implementation of 'inter-services' within the customer journey model

A definition of 'inter-services' can be explained as a period of time where tourist attractions can interact with pre-booked visitors in advance.

Tourist attractions interact by providing targeted information to the visitor so they are able to manage their day effectively, benefiting themselves and the tourist attraction operations.

Research done by Rawson et al, (2013) regarding the customer journey found out that if organisations are able to skilfully manage the entire experience reap large rewards such as enhanced customer satisfaction, reduced churn, increased revenue, and greater employee satisfaction. Other benefits may include an increase in brand loyalty, return business and additional revenues. In a sense, the attraction can up sell additional products and services which might not necessarily have taken place without this interaction.

This is a key time and an opportunity for tourist attraction marketers to begin relationship building with their visitors prior to the visit. Currently, airlines, hotels and cruise companies have adopted this idea which adds additional value to the consumers' product. An example of this could be giving customers additional information so that they can prepare their trip, up-selling opportunities, and/or educating guests on additional value options such as (1) how to get to a location, (2) where the nearest place to eat is and (3) specialist requirements such as disabled access, baby changing facilities and safety security information.

However, the difference between the above sectors and tourist attractions is the way they organise their ticketing. Except for hotels, airlines and cruises obtain individual

passenger details which enable them to contact each person individually. Meanwhile in the tourist attraction scenario, the card payer is the only person who would receive this touch point which can make it difficult to reach other members of the party. This is a challenge for tourist attractions to create ambassadors for their organisation who have not necessarily consumed the attractions' experience before. This could be a missed opportunity for tourist attractions to enhance their relationship with their visitors, build a brand which could be well respected whilst empowering their visitors to get involved with the company prior to the visit. Academics have neglected this area which has led to limited investigations into the benefits of 'inter-services' implemented by other sectors.

3 THE IDEA

So how can tourist attractions attempt to interact with their visitors during this period of time? Understanding who the consumers are is the key to delivering exceptional customer service. Undoubtedly, customers always have an experience; this may be good, bad or indifferent whichever way they purchase a product or service from an organisation (Berry et al, 2002). Knowing what their needs and wants are and providing them with solutions to meet their expectations is a common approach. However, identifying needs and wants that consumers have in their minds before they arrive could lead to additional revenues to the tourist attraction and may lead to an increase in brand loyalty and customer satisfaction.

An example of this approach is Virgin America. In 2013, Virgin America adopted, identifiers of how organisations are changing the way they think about engaging their customers by providing information in advance (Figure 3). Dan (2013) documented how Virgin America re-imagined their in-flight safety video. They adopted the view of going back to the company's roots of entertainment and created a very unique in-flight video. The video was presented intimately with popular music, choreographed dance, and a lot of humour. Virgin America released this video on a social channel for passengers to watch in advance before arriving on the aeroplane and within a couple of weeks, reached over 6 million views on YouTube (Dan, 2013). So what can we learn from this experience and implement this into tourist attractions?

The main idea is how tourist attractions connect with their visitors in advance. There are two ways to look at this;

- Personal level: reaching out by using telephone , SMS and email

- Impersonal level: using websites and social media

3.1 Personal Level

This could be experienced as providing a direct connection between the attraction and the visitor with the use of technology.

3.1.1 Telephone

This tool is normally used for confirming higher value purchases such as corporate bookings and specialist groups. It is also used for dealing with visitor's issues pre and post trip, when a visitor needs to talk to the attraction on a human level. Tourist attractions such as the EDF Energy London eye uses an automated function to give information to visitors informed them of unforeseen circumstances or attraction closures.

3.1.2 SMS

This can be used for sharing short bursts of information. This normally requires the user to enter text, set by the attraction e.g. "BIGC", followed by a numeral SMS short code. This can give the user opportunities of interacting with an attraction, creating a conversation which begins the journey of trust. There are two types of messaging that can be used; operational messages, reminding guests of the visit, queue time information to manage visitor flow, and Transactional campaigning which can be used as confirmation of tickets in advance and also sharing a special offers and also an opportunity for up-selling.

3.1.3 Emails

This can be used to provide confirmation of booking, links of file such as PDF to print tickets in the convenience for the bookers' home or work. Emails as also been used for

providing helpful hints, other services available to purchase or consume at the location and also tailor-made messages based on types of tickets purchased.

Figure 4 (below) is an active email which is sent by Blackpool Pleasure Beach to customers who have booked tickets in advance. This email is sent a day before their visit giving the visitor (the person who purchased a ticket) information which can be used on the day, up selling option, and making the visitor aware of other facilities and services available at on-site. Most importantly, this approach they have creates a 'we care' attitude, and, presenting information at the top of their email creates the impression that the company is generally excited to see the visitor at their attraction.

3.2 Impersonal Level

This could be experienced as providing an indirect connection channel between the attraction and the visitor, again, with the use of technology.

3.2.1 Websites

This could cover virtually every area of the actual visit which visitors can view in advance such as dedicated areas on the website for pre-trip information. It as a communication tool where visitors are able to contact attractions directly to get answers from frequently asked questions regarding a concern or issue they might have about their upcoming visit.

3.2.2 Social Media

Social media is very similar to SMS, but the main difference is having a two-way conversation between the visitor and the tourist attraction. This can address an individual's comment directly to them, but others can see the same comments which may help address overall issues, but done is an impersonal way. Information such as teaser messages getting the visitor excited and where they can interact in discussions and

comment is a very popular area and many tourist attractions now have established social media networks as part of their marketing and service plans.

Assumedly, some of these processes may already be established within tourist attractions but mainly in the form of email confirmations when visitors buy ticket electrically and have the ability to print tickets. Another level of communication may be necessary to engage their visitors even more.

4 METHODOLOGY

After reviewing the many different types of research methods, a qualitative approach will be the chosen method best suited to this project. The reason behind this choice was the ability to gather information in an interview format directly from tourist attractions. This method enables the interviewee to explain what actually is happening in their attraction and also presents stories and personal experiences. Other methods such as surveys and questionnaires may make it difficult to express the real meaning of the data. Specifically the naturalistic approach is a good way of understanding real meaning of human behaviour and relationships, which can be discovered and understood in the natural setting, where it occurs (Walsh, 2001). To every method there are limitations which will be explained later in this chapter.

Based on the leadership perspective angle, a more personal approach is needed in documenting people's experiences. Believing that the naturalistic approach is the ideal research method to use, as this method has the ability to obtain better, deeper and more meaningful experience, a semi structured interview approach will be used. Questions will be pre-planned in advance, part will be led by the interviewee, but in some cases, tailoring of the questions will be necessary to fit the circumstances.

There will be an opportunity to attend the 2013 Euro Attractions Show, in Paris, which is hosted by the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA). This is where an unofficial pilot study will be done to gain a better understanding of the types of questions and approach needed to capture the best possible answers when interviewing the tourist attractions selected for this project. Other opportunities will be interacting with suppliers and networking within the tourist attractions industry. This will

also gain a better understanding of what the current themes are and how this project would fit into this industry.

The data collection, observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews will give access to a wide variety of qualitative data which will be an ideal situation for this research. This research is based on leadership perspectives. A positivist or quantitative approach would bring limitations. As mentioned earlier, using surveys and questionnaires only show a small sample of the current problem and would not be able to measure such a detailed human-based idea with these methods.

Primary research will also be used as this is a brand-new area of study. Due to the lack of documentation around this topic by academics, discovered when investigating the literature review, a new approach will be needed to try and capture a foundation of our academic scholars to use for further studies. Three different approaches will be used to gain an overview on this topic of 'inter-services'; (1) undertake semi-structured interviews with specially selected tourist attractions based in London, England. (2) Using LinkedIn (social media platform) to get a general picture of professional views regarding specific issues on the topic (3) a review of publically available information such as tourist attraction websites, reports, and social media sites. The combination of these three areas, this will give a better understanding, positioning and current overview of what London tourist attractions are doing during the 'inter-services' period.

4.1 Selecting tourist attractions

A careful selection of attractions will be invited to participate and will need to fall into the following criteria;

- be an operational tourist attraction
- has the ability to sell pre-purchase tickets in advance, for part of or the entire experience
- high profiled, having over 1 million visitors a year
- located in London, England

The tourist attractions selected are from different spectrums of the tourism attraction industry and gives different types of experiences to the visitors. This diversity will give a better perspective of how different types of attractions deal with this 'inter-service' element of service in their organisation.

Sub criteria will also include; visitor numbers, clientele, purpose and different types of services provided and length of time at a location.

4.2 Semi- structured interviews

There will be two rounds of interviews scheduled with the aim of interviewing eight different tourist attractions. The interviews will take place during the month of November 2013. Two days will be dedicated to visiting tourist attractions and holding interviews. As mentioned, carefully selected attractions, in London, will be contacted via email inviting them to participate in this research. Targeted staff members such as Head of Marketing, Operational Managers and Customer Service Managers in these companies will have the opportunity to share their knowledge and procedures on how they engage their visitors before they arrive at their attraction. The reason for targeting these particular roles was due to the knowledge of the back office operations.

A majority of these roles have a management element which has the ability of implementing change and innovation within the organisation. Also understanding their views on customer service on a back office operational level is important too. This may give a better understanding of how 'inter-services' could be created as part of a service experience. The interviews will last around 30-45 minutes. The set of questions will be based on four areas; general information, pre-trip, the visit and post-trip to get a sense of how they interact with the visitors at each stage. The reasons behind a maximum time of 30 minutes is due to appealing to these members of staff who can be considered as very busy individuals within their organisation so using a shorter timeframe may encourage them to partake in this study.

According to Filck (2009), semi structured interviews are widely used, but when designing an interview there are four criteria that need to be met; non-direction, specificity, range and depth. Regarding this study, a non-direction approach will be taken, using semi-structured questions. As mentioned earlier, there are some strengths and limitations to doing qualitative research. The main benefits of this approach is; gaining information on personal experiences, life stories and feelings, useful for sensitive topics, gaining in-depth information, getting textual information about personal reactions to interviewees and getting personal stories and experiences (Hennink, et al, 2010). Information given can be rich and holistic, can offer borderless snapshot (to get a better understanding of a situation), and can help explain, illustrate and reinterpret quantitative data, (Tracy, 2012)

Limitations; one-to-one interviews do not allow feedback from others, no skills to establish rapport, using motivational probes, listen and react to interviewees, flexibility to

change topics in order to follow interviewees story, a lot of transcription is needed (Hennink, et al, 2010).

4.3 Linked-in research

The use of LinkedIn will also be used to gather general information about organisations and also pre-test questions generally with industry led groups. Two questions will be submitted into several dedicated professional tourist attraction groups (members only, which have a link to the industry) to find out what the general consensus is regarding pre-trip engagement and if it is a topic that has been understood, researched and practiced. Users will be invited to an open discussion and are encouraged to comment. After comments have been publicly blogged, the analysis of the types of information shared will be collated and used to get an overall picture of the industry.

4.4 Public accessible information

A general search of each attraction will be made using the Internet, attraction websites, social networks (such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram) and any publications such as reports on attractions will be collated to get a better understanding of the organisation and how they perceive themselves in the public domain. Answers given by tourist attractions are cross-referenced with publicly accessible information.

4.5 Research question

15 questions designed and based on gathering specific insights on the four areas 'general ', 'pre-trip', 'the actual visit', and 'post trip' will be used. This will get a better understanding of each area of the visitors' journey to fully understand how attractions are using resources and the full processes in what is important in providing exceptional guest visit life-cycle experiences.

4.6 Presenting findings

A factor analysis approach will be used when collating results. Keywords from interview transcripts will be highlighted and grouped into themes to create a foundation base of key areas which are important factors when considering this area of study.

Quotations will be used to highlight key facts from tourist attractions from the newly created themes, to gain a better understanding of what inter-services currently looks like in the current state. The word 'anonymous' will be used after some quotations within this research, this is due to corporate sensitivity.

In regards to the overall research benefits, this will contribute to a viewpoint of inter-services and if this level service is necessary to enhance the visitor's experience and if this benefits tourist attraction.

4.7 Importance and limitations

The main objective of this research is mainly aimed at Management and operations at tourist attractions and the research acknowledges the customers' view as important to the overall operations of providing exceptional experiences. The view of customers has purposely not been included in this study. A narrow approach will be applied to management which will give more of a foundation approach to this area. As mentioned earlier, this topic has not been academically covered. A similar study aimed at customers' views would require further investigation to get an overall picture about 'inter-services'.

There are a number of limitations which have been considered when approaching this research. The first limitation is possible rejection from tourist attractions that are not willing to partake in this study. This may be due to internal company policies restricting

information, competitors, and staffing restrictions. A teaser pilot study will be undertaken, but due to the time restraints official questions will not be covered. Unforeseen changes may include a limitation of the ability to interview eight tourist attractions due to their unwillingness to partake in research. This may limit a more diverse overview of what tourist attractions are currently doing in different areas. Another scenario is the sensitivity of information given by tourist attractions as companies interviewed may be competitors; this will lead to a different approach when presenting information in this report. 30 -45 minute timeslot will be booked for all attractions; however these interviews may take longer due to the willingness of the tourist attractions, so a timeslot of two hours will be allocated just for unforeseen circumstances occurring.

The second limitation is the lack of academic literature based on this concept of 'inter-services' in the tourism industry. This may make it difficult to analyse and compare previous works as this is a brand-new area which is being investigated. This is not necessarily a new concept within the airline, hotels and cruise industry; however, there is very limited documentation which has been written regarding this stage of service for tourist attractions. Due to time restraints, not all of the questions will be asked. Questions will be selected based on answers given and the level of knowledge based on this area. As this project is concentrated in London, there are tourist attractions elsewhere in the country who implemented this idea which unfortunately cannot be used due to their geographical position. One example is Blackpool Pleasure Beach (Blackpool, England) (Figure 4). The reasoning behind selecting London based tourist attractions as a dedicated location for this study is due to being able to physically interview tourist attractions, on a face-to-face level. An option was to use a telephone interview method,

but it would be very difficult to pick up emotions and expressions another risk is that the interviewee may not be fully engaged and could be involved in multitasking during the phone call.

4.8 Ethics

Consent was granted by the University of Lincoln ethics committee using an Ethical Approval Form for Human Research Projects. Lists of ethical areas were covered in the interviews and are listed below:

- Prior to the interview, participants were emailed the University of Lincoln's ethics procedure and had the opportunity to contact the interviewer if they had any questions or concerns. Consent was given verbally by participants at the time of interview.
- All participants have the right of privacy and confidentiality, which was highlighted at the time of interview.
- The participant has the right to withdraw from the research investigation at any point and also remain anonymous.
- Names of the tourist attractions would not be used when presenting findings to protect tourist attractions competitiveness and procedural advances.
- The interviews are digitally recorded and both the recording and written transcripts are digitally locked with passwords.
- Information given during the interview will not be used for personal gain within companies partaking in the interview or not.
- There will be a minimum risk factor when interviewing tourist attractions as this will be done on-site in offices.
- A non-bias approach will be used when reporting as names of tourist attractions will not be used in the final findings.

4.9 Literature review design

This literature review has been designed to combine different areas relevant to the foundations of the 'inter-services'. The visitor's journey from buying a ticket in advance and arriving at a tourist attraction has been neglected and there are no signs of academics leaning towards this particular area. Interestingly, airlines, hotels and cruise companies have implemented this idea, but again, literature to back up this practice has not been created or investigated which has resulted in the difficulty to gather solid information when creating this literature review. Designing this literature review is key to gaining an understanding of areas that may be interesting which are linked to this area of 'inter-services'.

Sources that will be used to search for background information will include topical books, the journals and general articles, located in the University of Lincoln's Library, topical and specialist's magazines such as; Euro Professional Attractions, Attractions Management and InterPark to get a better overview and understanding of the current attractions' industry and the Internet.

Academic areas such as visitor experiences, tourism services, customer interaction and value, technology, relationship marketing and employees will be used to create an overview of what 'inter-services' may look like. They will be grouped into three main areas which are the pre-trip, the visit, and post trip. This will give an overview of what the visitors' journey looks like. This will be a key area to gain a better understanding about 'inter-services' and may highlight areas for further investigation.

5 FINDINGS

During this section, a number of quotes in be named, this is due to attractions interviewed wanting to keep some information anonymous. Throughout this section, a four digit code will be linked to appendix 3 for further information.














As mentioned earlier Warner Bros. Studio Tour London - The Making of Harry Potter has conducted their own research about their customers and gives a good outline on how they achieve 'inter-services':

"...The Making of Harry Potter is in a fortunate position where all of our tickets are pre-sold. You can't walk up to the door. As a result we can give visitors information before they arrive - the right information (based on FAQs) at the right time to the right people (providing the booker is the visitor). By doing this it adds value to a visitor's journey in a number of ways. One surprising find from our research is that it de-stresses visitors because we have answered their questions or worries for them, without having to go through the information-gathering process them. Even a timely reminder to start looking or planning helps, so it's not last minute and rushed. Visitors arrive relaxed, which means their visit starts on the right foot" (Wong, 2014, Appendix 3, VAG7)

"...most people do check online about opening hours; how to get there, what bus and where to park, what kind of exhibits or shows there are, very often many people get teased by an add of a certain show or exhibit..." (Visser, 2013, Appendix 3, TPK3)

Upon analysing the transcripts from tourist attractions interviews, a number of different themes emerged. Only some of these themes will be analysed, in this chapter, due to their significance. This will give a general idea of what currently occurs in the tourist attraction industry and how the concept of ‘inter-services’ could be adapted.

Table 1: Findings categories table

	PER-TRIP	ACTUAL VISIT	POST-TRIP
Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM)			
Customer Profiling			
Enhancement of Experiences			
Evaluation			
Human Resources			
Marketing and Advertising			
Services			
Technology and Social Media			

5.1 Customer profiling

It is critical for tourist attractions to understand the types of visitors who want to consume their experiences. There are different demographics, psychographics and behavioural needs to be considered when describing and profiling visitors. Other considerations may include; locating customers, (finding out places where visitors are attracted to; physical locations or cyberspace), understanding their purchase process and connecting with the repeat customers. These are all areas tourist attractions need to understand if they want to attract and retain their visitors (Whole Brain Group, 2012). Understanding these consumers and targeting messages at the right time in the right tone can be very tricky if an attraction is not used to this process. Customer profiling can

be a vital area for start-up attractions. Interestingly, the Royal Albert Hall and the National Maritime Museum both commented on this area as they are established attractions which attract a certain type of clientele. This is an area both attractions are actively trying to resolve to change their public image and conception. The increase of competition in London is focusing them to re-think and re-imaging their attraction to reach out to a greater audience.

With reference to target marketing, several audience categories emerged which included; domestic visitors, overseas visitors, business to business, business to consumer, schools and trade.

5.1.1 Domestic visitors

This is a key area where the majority of the attractions concentrate on trying to build awareness of their attractions and also creating customer retention. The types of domestic visitors may include families, individuals and groups. All attractions did agree that these types of visitors were easy to target, as a majority of domestic visitors book their tickets in advance via the Internet or arrive with coupons. This leads to a collection of visitor data which can be used for tailoring specialist information to particular demographics.

When analysing communication techniques based on customer profiling, all attraction websites are presented in the English language. Many special events or activities are mainly shown on the English version site. However, the EDF Energy London eye and the National Maritime Museum were the only attractions that had a multilingual option on their website, but special offers such as limited time events were not shown.

Overall, the tourist attractions interviewed have a good understanding of how to capture domestic visitors and who they are, but the continuing challenge is attracting previous visitors to create retention and repeat visits. Targeting specific events and activities is an area which can be improved and has been acknowledged by the attractions.

5.1.2 Travel trade (individuals and groups)

All the attractions are linked with third-party companies who sell tickets on behalf of their attraction. This is known as a trade alliance and can be considered as a front point of contact for potential visitors. This form of service is normally used by overseas visitors. When trying to contact the visitors in advance who have purchased tickets from trade clients, all attractions agreed that this was a very difficult area to manage as they are not necessarily aware of who is coming to the attraction and of any demographic information until the visitor arrives at the location. This process is done by the visitor pre-purchasing a voucher in advance via the trade alliance website or face-to-face at a ticket office and bringing this to the tourist attraction that would then issue tickets on the day of their visit.

As the majority of attractions do have a good relationship with third-party operators, it is unclear how this communication and relationship is managed between both parties. So this is a very difficult area if attractions wanted to implement 'inter-services' experience for these types of visitors as it seems practically impossible to manage.

5.1.3 Overseas visitors (booking via attraction's official website)

Overseas visitors can also be a challenging area to implement 'inter-services'. This may be due to lack of investments in multilingual communications and knowing where visitors are coming from. The majority of the attractions interviewed mention that most overseas visitors mainly purchase tickets through travel trade organisations (as mentioned in the

previous section), or book tickets on the attraction's official website, but this action is done whilst visitors are based in the UK. Commonly, overseas visitors turn up at an attraction with pre-purchased tickets (see Appendix 3, TPK3). This doesn't really give an opportunity for attractions to create a pre-relationship with their overseas visitors.

From primary research it seems to be that attractions do not deem it necessary to prioritise overseas visitors as they do not see them as repeat business, therefore apart from the two attractions interviewed, their websites are only presented in English. It was surprising that there was no indication of any overall engagement or proper channels that would be dedicated to overseas visitors.

5.2 Evaluation

Evaluation of visitor feedback is another critical area for tourist attractions to learn more about, specifically how they are meeting their visitors' expectations based on their service levels. The understanding that not all visitors will have an outstanding experience will help get organisations prepare and manage how the attraction can deliver these experiences and expectations. This is especially important for the front-of-house staff. A concept called the "Zone of Tolerance" can be defined as providing a range within which visitors are willing to accept variations in service delivery (Nadiri and Hussain, 2005). This also can provide a diagnostic value by capturing the range of services which organisations meet customer's expectations (Teas and DeCarlo, 2004). An interesting comment came from LinkedIn explains a real situation which currently happens within some tourism attractions:

“...if all a visitor gets between bookings and arriving is a stony silence you could end up with a very disillusioned visitor whose expectation of a mediocre experience becomes a self-filling prophecy” Copper, 2013. (Appendix 3, VAG3)

All the tourist attractions interviewed have a formal evaluation processes in place. These attractions are capturing evaluations in many different forms including: online surveys, online feedback, mystery shopper and on-site surveys to get an overall picture of their visitors’ perspective of the overall experience. This also included the reporting of evaluations which is shared internally with other departments. This has given them a good advantage of common or recurring themes which could be addressed to enhance the customer experience.

The EDF Energy London eye, London SeaLife Aquarium, and the Shard have a concrete evaluation process in place. However, the Royal Albert Hall and National Maritime Museum are still exploring and implementing ways of collecting data to enhance their attraction as this has not been a priority for these attractions. This could be due to previous dependence on public finances and not previously acknowledging that they had to compete with other similar attractions.

With reference to ‘inter-services’, if tourist attractions want to get closer to visitors, they first need to interact with their visitors. This interaction could be done through a variety of mediums, e.g. ‘listening’ can be done prior to the visit through channels where the attractions give the visitors the opportunity to create a two-way conversation. Evaluating this process will enhance and iron-out any common issues and also bring up complex ones which may need a longer time to resolve.

5.3 Services

Customers are now demanding services to be delivered in a more timely and seamless way so, organisations often need to overcome functional boundaries to meet these challenges (Zemke and Woods, 1999). Functional boundaries are not easily overcome due to the differences of experts and status and often by the systems which are put into place by management (Zemke and Woods, 1999). Services can be considered as one of the most critical parts of the tourist attraction's vision and brand image. How the public perceives them can make a big difference in the way they are perceived by their competitors. All tourist attractions interviewed, agreed that services is at the heart of their attraction, but they do have a different view of how this is delivered.

There are a few areas mentioned earlier which will now be explained further: encouraging visitors to purchase, and up-selling limited addition experiences.

All attractions are aware of the concept of up-selling but have a different view on how they approach this when interacting with their visitors. For example, EDF Energy London Eye, London SeaLife Aquarium, and the Royal Albert Hall all have websites with the ability to up-sell when customers purchase tickets in advance.

The National Maritime Museum and The Shard are considering adding this element to their site, but this is not happening in the near future.

"As we are in an infancy of operation as a commercial organisation, given changes to funding etc., and introduction of charging places such as ROG, the Cutty Sark opening and temporary exhibitions at the Maritime Museum, we are very much in our infancy of ticketing and sells"(National Maritime Museum, 2013).

The others are considering adding that element, but due to technology restraints and being new to the market, this is an area which will progress and mature in coming years of operation.

“Pre-booking on our old box office system, which has just literally been replaced last week, is now live; was very tricky, very very timely, because of the logistics in time pressures involved in just running that system; was very high for the amount of output that we got from it and service provision it gave. The new system is much much less labour-intensive, a contemporary all singing-and-dancing system, we don't know but we are planning to do more pre-booking”(National Maritime Museum, 2013).

To get a better understanding of their clientele, attractions need to understand how to target products and services to them. This can be done by investing in technology which will allow them to tailor options to particular clientele. Interestingly, tourist attractions may need to learn more about the customers before trying to engage in technology.

However, the Royal Albert Hall identifies that up-selling is now important, but their approach between the attraction (staff and their attitudes towards the concept) and the visitors is vital when completing this task.

“There was a little bit of worry in that we don't want to be pushing things on them, well, I said, “you just ask them”. If they say no, that's it we don't push it, but sometimes people just may not actually know that you can do it. One phone call, you've got your parking, restaurants and ticket all sorted out for you. It just makes it easier for the customer, and they think, ‘wow’, that's good, very convenient and easy to do”(Anonymous).

Another interesting marketing concept is the use of 'bounce back offers'. This is normally used by tourist attractions to contact their visitors shortly after their visit to provide them with an exclusive limited time offer. The offer is mainly discounted to encourage them to visit again or even to purchase as gifts. This is a common element which is used by all attractions interviewed. There are various different versions of how they communicate with their visitors or members but they mainly use emails addresses which have been obtained when booking in advance or using a coupon. The majority of these offers are linked to post-trip surveys to encourage visitors to comment on the visit. An offer is often linked to the completion of the task alongside reminders of specialist events for visitors to consider such as seasonal limited-edition events or buying gift vouchers for others. This incentive is to motivate visitors to complete this task.

Tailor-made products have been widely used at all attractions. Using value-added options such as upgrading standard tickets to premium tickets is linked to extended benefits. These benefits, such as by-passing the main queues, enhancing experiences with adding food or drink to the purchase or adding an education element such as a tour, come at a premium rate. This type of up-selling is done by all attractions except the National Maritime Museum. Primarily, this type of up-grade is aimed towards repeat customers who want to enhance their experience, or even to impress their guests such as out of town friends or relatives.

All attractions agree that delivering exceptional customer service is an important area to concentrate on. With a very good understanding of how to utilise services within their locations, balancing their online and email communications expectations with actual visit experiences can be very difficult to manage as different elements such as weather

conditions, staffing, part of attractions closed and also their customers mind set at that time, can provide a difficult challenge when providing services to visitors which are meaningful and memorable.

5.4 Technology and Social Media

Unquestionably, the Internet has changed the way consumers and businesses interact with each other and there are no signs that this process will cease. Most of the tourist attractions mentioned technology and social media at several points during the interview. This is a very strong and important area for these tourist attractions. They believe this makes it much easier for consumers to get in contact with them, from the time they enquire about their attraction to the time they purchase a ticket. Undoubtedly, this is an area where the majority of tourist attractions are investing a lot of their time and finances to create an outstanding online presence and experience. This could be considered as 'beginning stages' of the 'inter-services'.

5.4.1 Consumer and business interaction

Technology has transformed the way businesses interact with the consumers especially in the tourism industry. There are a lot of examples of ways tourist attractions use technology to interact with their visitors such as; purchasing tickets in advance using the Internet, using ticket collection machines stationed at attractions for fast collection of pre-booked tickets, to using portable tills where consumers can book tickets directly with agents without standing in queues. The Internet is definitely the main point of contact by visitors, pre-and post-trip, which is agreed by all the attractions,

An overwhelming theme was the use of smart phone and tablet technology. As individuals are much more mobile, smart phone and tablet technology has transformed

the way information is accessed by consumers. Attractions know that the majority of their visitors use smart phones and tablets to get up-to-date information about their attractions no matter what the location of the visitor. These tourist attractions have seen an increased trend in the use of these devices. Tourist attractions are aware of this and have created dedicated mobile device web pages to view on a smart phone or tablet. The ability to book tickets directly on the device is another indicator that tourist attractions are actively involved and investing financially in developing the devices' site for customer access. Interestingly, the development of mobile apps was not mentioned by any of the attractions. This may be due to consumers not necessarily been interested in downloading an app onto the device and due to the cost implications when creating apps especially on four different operating systems, Apple, Android, BlackBerry, and Windows.

5.4.2 Social Media

Social media is another area that tourist attractions consider an important part of the overall communication strategy when dealing with their consumers. All of the attractions do have an official Facebook group and Twitter feeds where customers can interact in real time with the tourist attraction. As highlighted by the Royal Albert Hall, the attractions use social media to send out teaser messages to potential visitors to encourage them to visit their websites or purchase tickets. Another use is creating a two-way conversation with potential visitors or pre-booked visitors.

"We've got a number of different communication channels outside of our emails, so, social media is one of the biggest, which is super popular, but what we found is, they are coming to us after their visit" (Anonymous).

One of the interesting comments made by the Royal Albert Hall was how social media was used to raise complaints. When a consumer asks questions on a social platform and is answered by the attraction the comments are linked. The general public are able to review the question and answer. This has dramatically helped the way information has been shared, but can be a very time-consuming and a drain on resources if not managed properly.

Attractions are implementing social media links through their websites which gives a current live view of what is actually happening at an attraction. All attractions are trying to create a two-way communication process and the majority of the websites has an element of that.

According to Kloss, (Unknown) when two way communications is established, what really is going on is the development of trust between two individuals. All attractions are integrating social media at a basic level. The full potential exists to integrate social media into a website to create a seamless transition when communicating with consumers. All attractions are aware of this and are planning in the coming months of 2014 to increase their social media presence on their website and integrate more of a community conversational element. Except for Facebook and Twitter, other social media platforms such as; Google+, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube and Instagram were not mentioned during the interviews as being potentially used as part of the 'inter-services'.

5.4.3 Reading Age

Interestingly, another area which was unexpected was adults' ability to complete basic reading tasks. The EDF Energy London eye and Maritime Museum mentioned this area as something which they were aware of and tailored campaigns carefully with this

knowledge. According to The National Literacy Trust (2013), 16%, or 5.2 million adults in England can be described as functionally illiterate which is a literacy level at or below an average 11 –year-old.

So, understanding how to create a system which is easy to use and easy to be understood by everybody is the key to the success of any web base system. However, understanding that reading ability is positively associated with self-esteem (Kiuru et al, 2012), may give clues on how tourist attractions present the information to empower their visitors to believe that the user is able to complete this task. This will be further discussed in section 6.4.3.

5.5 Human Resources

All attractions agreed that staffing is a critical part of delivering a service within tourist attractions; however different viewpoints were raised on how these were achieved. The activities performed by staff members are important to companies of all types and sizes as they have a relationship between the tasks to meet organisations' goals. This may include, direct costs incurred, indirect costs experienced, organisations impacts, and legal aspects (Caruth, et al, 2008). There are two types of staff levels which came across during the interviews which were front of house and back of house staffing.

5.5.1 Front of House

These members are consistently in direct and regular contact with customers throughout the day (CTAD, 1996). The front of house staff is responsible for delivering the overall experience based on the attractions brand and company values. Attractions have a lot of flexibility and leeway on how the staff interacts with their visitors. This comes down to recruiting staff that fits into the company's vision on how they want to be perceived by

the public. The roles are not necessarily suited just to people who like dealing with visitors generally but who can provide an additional 'wow factor' which comes through the staff member's personality and their understanding of people to achieve the company brand and values. An interesting role which was mentioned was a "guest ambassador", who would interact with visitors away from the attraction to encourage potential visitors to visit and make them aware about what the attraction is about and how it would benefit their visits in London. This is a very similar scheme to the London 2012 Olympic Games 'Game Makers' (Bulley and Lisle, 2013) who were located all around London and used their knowledge to help visitors manoeuvre around the capital. During the summer periods, two attractions created a task force to do with general assistance on site. These staff members had a different uniform to other staff members highlighting their different role. Their duties were not included in any of the operational roles on site which gave them the freedom to interact in different zoned areas.

5.5.2 Back of House

Back of House staff are people who work indirectly with customers, may not have regular direct customer interaction, but still play an important role in providing customer services (CTAD, 1996). The back of house staff was only mentioned by two attractions. They described how they prepare their visitors before arriving at the attraction by giving them information via telephone and email on how they could enhance their visitor experience. This is in the shape of up-selling; informing about added-value components. This could make the visitor's day easy to manage especially for families, people with disability or non-organised groups (school and coach groups) who may be celebrating an event, through to organised groups who do not necessarily know the location. Examples are:

mentioning local areas to eat, transportation hubs, any special events on at the attraction or locally. Stated by one attraction;

“We start delivering customer service from the time the customer books a ticket, everything we send them has to make sense, because customers don’t read it, if they read it they don’t follow it, and are always going to be confused, or they are going to have questions, we can’t blame the customer for anything, not reading or for not knowing. It is a tough job to think about what the most common issues are that customer experiences” (Anonymous).

5.6 ‘Inter-services’ concept feedback

When asked about their thoughts regarding ‘inter-services’ and if it was relevant to the tourist attractions, all attractions did agree that this was an important area and also a new area of exploration. “Engagement” was one of the key words which came out when interviewing attractions staff members (Appendix 2, PRE3).

“It is important, however, we are quite realistic in how much engagement there will be before a visit. I think we are very much the type of attraction that, once people are in the attraction, they want to post a photo of themselves, in the attraction, and wanna tell their friends and family that they've been. The pre visit is an opportunity for us, but probably not as big an opportunity than post” (Anonymous).

“Not just one method of communication is necessary, so if customers have smart phones, as an example, you can remind them about their visit, reminding where they need to be on that day, what time. If possible telling them how the day is looking, any potentially closures, or we experiencing a lot of queues, reminding

them to come earlier. That is going to be highly appreciated by customers”

(Anonymous).

6 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will give a general overview of potential areas in which ‘inter-services’ may be considered, as suggested, as an area within the customer’s journey (Figure 2). Academic areas such as marketing, management, technology, consumer experiences and services will identify key areas and themes of the current customer journey. In the discussion chapter, is where findings and literature review will be discussed to create an overall outlook of ‘inter-services’.

6.1 Tourist attractions overview

Tourist attractions can come in many different formulas. However, some of them can only be used for tourism purposes (Kušen, 2010). These attractions can be considered as a reason why tourists visit a tourism destination (Kušen, 2010). Defining what an attraction is has been academically discussed on many different levels and variations of definitions have been created;

‘An permanent resource, either natural or human-made, which is developed and managed for the primary purpose of attracting visitors’ (Hu and Wall, 2005, 619)

‘Permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education open to the public for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting tourists or day visitors as well as local residents’ (English Tourism Council, London (United Kingdom), 2000, 11).

What these definitions have in common is the interaction between a place, person, experience/education and entertainment (Leask, 2010; Middleton and Clarke, 2001; Pearce, 1991, 46), but what it comes down to is explained by Prebensen, at el (2013),

tourists visit a destination in order to fulfil a need or want an exchange for an experience. This is a very important outlook and essential that attractions understand their visitors when developing and delivering experiences. According to Otto and Ritchie, (1996) tourism is essentially a service industry, but more precisely, a combination of service industries. Tourism has been associated with the development of new technologies, the ability to refresh organisational structures and innovations but, it's the flexibilisation of the tourist product such as customisation (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003) which has kept this sector continuously experimenting and evolving in search of providing added value to their visitors.

As tourist tastes become more unique, differentiating them can be difficult as they can have a complex range of standards and direction (drive), the term 'conventional' is relative, (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). Throughout history, innovativeness has been a key player in the survival of the tourism industry (Hjalager, 2010) which we see today due to high competition and becoming more cost effective, this has led attractions to invest in innovation. One area of innovation is the understanding the visitors journey is an area where attractions have managed and strategised in delivering their products and services, customer journeys are unique in every product or service made by an organisation, however, there are common elements which visitors journeys share when marketers consider to ensure they reached the most valuable effects; Empathise with customers, Provide a high level of utility, and provide relevant context (Fisher, 2013).

6.2 Consider

Consider is where the journey begins for the consumer and can be influenced by many different brands and products from exposure to advertisements, literature, discounted

coupons, to an interaction with another individual or circumstance (Court et al, 2009; Edelman, 2010). Bughin et al, (2010) identifies consumers have always in-treasured opinions expressed directly to them, yet marketers spend millions on fancy advertising campaigns to entice consumers, however what makes up the consumer's mind is simply a form of word-of-mouth which comes absolutely free especially recommended from a trusted source. The funnel analogy suggests that consumers narrow the initial-consideration set as they reflect options, make decisions, and buy products (Court et al, 2009). Reflecting on that, how do businesses and organisations manage this element?

6.2.1 Business Influence

Advancements within the global economy have changed the balance between customers and suppliers (Teece, 2010). Customers have now more choices available due to improvements in communications, new computing technology and the establishment of open global trading, which has made alternative suppliers become more transparent (Teece, 2010). Therefore, businesses need to be more customers focused, especially with the advancements of technology which allows lower costs to provide information and customer solutions (Teece, 2010). These developments require businesses to rethink and re-evaluate the way they interact with their customers. Interestingly, the supply-side which drives logic in the industrial era has become no longer viable in today's marketplace (Teece, 2010).

These developments require businesses to re-think and re-evaluate the way they interact with their customers. A few companies have shown the ability to investigate new markets, quickly entering emerging markets and dramatically shifting customer choice patterns in established markets (Prahalad and Hamel, 2008). Interestingly, the supply-

side which drives logic in the industrial era has become no longer viable in today's marketplace (Teece, 2010).

This new environment has also augmented the way businesses consider how to address customer needs, and ways organisations capture value from providing new products and services (Teece, 2010). Management in organisations have a critical task of creating an organisation which captures and infuses products which have irresistible features or even better creating a product which customers haven't even imagine meeting their needs (Prahalad and Hamel, 2008). Understanding how visitors obtain information is an important element in making decisions about designing effective communications and managing marketing to the delivery of service (Srinivasan, 1990; Wilkie and Dickson, 1985). Nolan (1976) was one of the first academics to investigate the topic of information searching which has become a prominent topic within tourism literature. This is a critical topic due to its importance in the first step of information searching towards the purchase of a product or service (Murray, 1991). There is a wide agreement among academics (Gretzel and Yoo, 2008 and Sen and Lerman, 2007) that the advancements in technology especially the Internet and information services available to consumers have grown. A number of different studies have highlighted the use of travel information sources which could go beyond the pre-purchase evaluation stage (Fesenmaier et al, 1993; Messmer and Johnson, 1993). Another area where companies are learning is how to engage with their visitors

6.2.2 Engagement

This is an interesting and growing area for academics as a number of different papers have been released explaining engagement in various different forms for example; community building (Gravenkemper, 2007).

Gravenkemper (2007) proposed six principles of engagement which are based on community building but could be adapted to tourist attractions. (1) Communicate a compelling message, (2) Build a guiding coalition, (3) Create principle-based versus compliance-based guidelines for decisions and behaviours, (4) Identify early engagement indicators, (5) Generate continuous opportunities for dialogue at all levels and (6) Plan assimilation strategies for new members and new leaders. The two areas of interest are (1) Communicate a compelling message, and (5) Generate continuous opportunities for dialogue at all levels, which will be briefly explained.

Marketers consider today's consumers a web savvy, mobile enabled, data shifters who pounce on wherever brands or stores offer the best deals. Likewise the view on brand loyalty brand is disappearing (Spenner and Freman, 2012). Interestingly, companies are increasing their interaction with more information and outreach with the thought process of trying to better the chances to hold these increasingly distracted and disloyal customers (Spenner and Freman, 2012) attention. Regarding consumers, the increase volume of marketing messages is not empowering but more overwhelming (Spenner and Freman, 2012).

Capturing the hearts and minds of individuals can be considered a key success factor in engaging people. On the other hand, with so many alternative competitors competing for individual attention the time and energy communicating a compelling message is

becoming an essential principle in success. Gravenkemper (2007) when engaging with individuals, in regards to composing messages Kotter (1996) suggested that a simple message can be absorbed better by individuals instead of more complex messages.

For organisations, tailoring new messages is required to win in every part of the consumer journey offering a great revenue opportunity. Normally a general message which cuts across all stages may have to be replaced by addressing weaknesses in specific points with an initial consideration and actively evaluating the process (Court et al, 2009).

According to Gravenkemper (2007), dialogue encourages and supports engagement. Kotter (1996) also dedicated a chapter to this in the 'Leader Change', and he emphasises the importance of creating opportunities for individuals at all levels to share their experiences. He goes on to explain that "two-way conversation is more powerful than one-way conversation" (Kotter, 1996). Rieger and Kamins (2006) states consumer engagement is an emotional connection between the organisation and the consumer.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) have categorised experience within two dimensions, the range from passive to active participation and from absorption to immersion, creating four quadrants where different experiences can be placed. Each individual experience can be clearly understood through the four realms in unique ways. Tourist attractions should develop and deliver experiences which encompass all four areas. Pine and Gilmore (1998, 102) argue that

'Generally, we find that the richest experiences-just as going to Disney World or gambling in a Las Vegas casino-encompass aspects of all four realms, forming a 'sweet spot' around the area where the spectament'.

It is then important for an attraction to become flexible and creative in the customisation of the products and services to meet as many of the wide and diverse of needs and tastes as possible (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). Companies are realising they must change their strategy to engage with their customers, but doing this requires new technologies to extract insights for personalisation, relevance, and the creation of amazing experiences both online and in-person, and importantly execute business processes so it is apparent to their customers (Wrede, 2013).

6.2.3 Technology

The main issue is that not one organisation owns these technologies, and it is unclear who should be responsible for buying and implementing them (Wrede, 2013). Regarding the term Information Communication Technology (ICTs), this has transformed, motivated, and created brand-new procedures and outreach within the tourism industry, with a new outlook on how to provide efficient customer services (Buhalis and O'Connor, 2005; Buhalis and Egger, 2008). ICT's began influencing the airline industry in the 1950s (Buhalis, 2004) and was adopted by other sub industries such as hotels, cruises and travel agents (Sahadev and Islam, 2005) who followed suit to enable travellers to access consistent and accurate information as well as to make reservations in less time, cost and inconvenience for both the consumer and business compare to conventional methods (O'Connor, 1999). In the mid-1990s, the emergence of the internet change the way bookings and reservations where made shifting the power to the consumer (Buhalis and Egger, 2008), e.g. websites such as Expedia.com, Hotels.com. ICT's has given empowerment to the consumer who is now able to customise and purchase tourism products and supports the globalisation of the tourism industry by providing tools for developing, managing and distributing offerings worldwide electronically (Buhalis and O'Connor, 2005). This new

powerful tool is providing a unique opportunity for organisations to maximize their performances and lower costs (Shon et al, 2003).

Combining both ITC's and tourism has become a powerful driving force, which has given a new vitality to tourism and provide a board of innovative platforms for information technology (Liu, 2011). This has led the development of ICT's and tourism which now goes hand in hand (Poon, 1993; Sheldon, 1997). ITC's and tourism is grouped into a term called e-Tourism, this is defined as a digitisation of all processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality and catering industries to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness (Buhalis, 2003). An example of a product is e-ticketing. When defining e-ticketing, a simple view is a combination of issuing and the delivery of tickets in a single operation (Sulaiman el at, 2008). Subsequently, e-tickets have been associated with the airline industry, majority of definitions available publicly are aimed towards airlines and their processes (Oxford University Press, 2014), which is not necessarily true in the current industry as tourism attractions have innovated to capturing this concept and implementing it into their attractions. Companies such as Gateway ticketing services and VGS ticketing can be sidered as market leaders in leading the innovation of ticketing for tourist attractions. One of the key benefits of e-ticketing is bringing more convenience to individuals who no longer have to worry about loss of tickets and can change itineraries much easier (IATA.org, 2014).

ICT's now playing a critical role for the competitiveness of tourism organisations and destinations (Buhalis 2003; O'Connor 1999; Sheldon 1997; Poon 1993), for example the airlines industry adopted the internet at an early, which gave it an opportunity to create

products such as low frills airlines and the ability to differentiate from their competition (Egger and Buhalis, 2008).

When defining ITCs, this does not only include hardware components and software, but groupware (email, video conferencing), network (interconnected systems of computer, terminals and devices) and intellectual capacity (humanware, the knowledge and expertise) to develop and maintain the equipment (Buhalis, 2003). The development in ICTs' has unquestionably transformed the way business is traditionally practice and the strategies (Porter, 2001) that have been a vital element in the development of tourism. However, Porter (2001) has identified that the integration of the internet has also led to a standardisation and homogenisation of products.

6.2.4 Proposed 'inter-services'

Whilst undertaking primary research, a report from Precedent, (2013) shared by a LinkedIn group member wrote an extensive report entitling The DREAM Day Out looked into the engagement cycle from the visitor perspective. The dream of is made up of five stages, desire- research- engage- attend and memories. This organisation has taken a proactive attempt in creating a model which can be used by tourist attractions to enhance the guest experience. This is very much aimed at digital promotions and how technology may be used to deliver these experiences.

To sum up this report, 200 attractions in the United Kingdom and Australia were contacted by the organisation to take part in this research which has been presented as case studies and also editor's tips on opportunities based on each of the five stages. The stage that is interesting which links very closely to this research is that engagement stage.

"To really understand what will push the buttons of your customers you need to engage with them, walk in their shoes and watch them using your website, app or social pages" (Precedent, 2013).

However, this report only concentrates on a general perspective on engaging provides baseline business objectives which can be consider when creating a new marketing structure. Majority of the information discusses about websites where visitors are able to purchase tickets in advance but limited information is presented about how tourist attractions can engage before visitors arrive ('inter-services' stage).

6.3 Buy

Regarding what customer value is, it is important to remember that people never buy products and services, they always buy the benefits they expect to derive from these products or services (Zemke and Woods, 1999, 5). It is not necessarily the customer service agent who is responsible for delivering these benefits; it is every department in the organisation playing its role, some more than the others (Zemke and Woods, 1999, 5).

According to Shin and Ellinger, (2013) many organisations are realising that improving customer service is the most viable means of differentiation from the competition. This includes competitive pricing, increasing product commoditisation and during a period of time of extreme uncertainty (Shin and Ellinger, 2013). Using the concept of service and turning it into a competitive advantage provides new perspectives and options for organisations to create value for both customers and shareholders (Lusch, 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004b). The effectiveness of customer relationship marketing strategies such as, loyalty programs, preferential treatment, financial reward packages and assigning dedicated personnel have been regularly assessed in the marketing literature (De Wulf et

al, 2001; Liu, 2007; Palmatier et al, 2006). Based on research, researchers have proposed that organisations can achieve differential advantages in the marketplace by implementing service guarantees (Hart, 1988; McCollough, 2010; Ostrom and Iacobucci, 1998; Rust and Chung, 2006; Wirtz and Kum, 2004).

6.4 Enjoy

There are free concepts which describe conditions which can influence the overall costs makes experience. Gupta and Vajic (1999) use the term “interaction” to describe the different elements which influences the overall customer experience. Bitner (1992) uses the term “servicescape” to describe the physical environment in which a service process takes place, whilst Mossberg (2007) employs the term “experience room” when describing the customer experiences.

It is argued by experience designers that well-designed experiences build loyalty, (Davenport and Beck, 2002; Gobé, 2001; Pine and Gilmore, 1998, 1999; Reichheld, 1996; Schmitt, 1999), but the relationship between the different service designs and loyalty behaviour warrants further investigation. Experiences are characteristically emotional and personal, on a management level many of these factors cannot be controlled such as personal interpretation, cultural background, prior experience, mood and other factors (Belk, 1975; Gardner, 1985; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Zuckerman, 1971).

A number of different academics agree that the service economy is starting to break off into different specialist areas, attention economy (Davenport and Beck, 2002), emotion economy (Gobé, 2001), entertainment economy (Wolf, 1999), experience economy (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 1999).

6.4.1 Experience

Several tourism marketing researchers have expressed a desire to enrich the literature on the foundations of tourism experiences (Ryan, 2000; Larsen and Mossberg, 2007; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Prebensen and Foss, 2011). An experience is not an abstract concept; it is as real an offering of any service, good, or commodity (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). In today's service industry, companies merely wrap experiences around their traditional offerings to sell them better (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), but defining what is an experience can be interpreted differently. Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) describes 'experience' as a designed, staged, organised, foreseen, calculated, priced and charged for occurrence. In general terms, an experience happens when a customer has any sensation or acquires knowledge from some level of interaction with the elements of a context created by a service provider (Pullman and Gross, 2004). Shaw and Ivens (2005, 6) defines customer experience as 'an interaction between an organisation and a customer. It is a blend of an organisation's physical performance, the senses stimulated and emotions evoked, each intuitively measured against customer expectation across all moments of contact'. Boswijk et,al (2005) and Moscardo (2008) 'highlight the complexity of the experience concept, noting that existing definitions vary on many dimensions, this can include the relative importance of the individual versus the setting in contributing to the experience. The extent to which expectations play a role in experiences and whether experience is seen as a continuous process or a specific instance bounded'. Interestingly, a number of different academics (Zehrer 2009; Knutson and Beck 2004) argued that there is a gap which exists in both academic and practitioner knowledge on the understanding of the nature and design of creating customer experiences. There is a wide acceptance by academics that the experience concept requires further theoretical development

(Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 1999; Pullman and Gross, 2003; Stuart and Tax, 2004). Service organisations understand the importance of the customer experience for customer satisfaction and loyalty. Many organisations especially tourist attractions are realising that delivering 'experience-centric services' in which the customer experience is at the core of the service offering (Morgan, et al, 2010) is a crucial part of understanding how to meet their customer needs and wants. Overall, the customer experience has attracted considerable interest within academic literature due to its complexity (Atilgan et al, 2003; Aho, 2001; Gnoth et al, 2009).

Recently, the concept of storytelling in various communications channels such as marketing to onsite theming is becoming an important area for tourist attractions to differentiate from their competition. Stories are such a common part of individual's lives, but sometimes can be overlooked as a central role of communication with each other and making sense of the world's events and the creation of memories (Dimmock, 2012). Boje (1995) defines a story as 'any written or oral performance interpreting past or anticipated events or experiences and that involves two or more people'. 'Human memory is story-based' (Schank, 1999, 12) is the first principle of storytelling behaviour. Information absorbed is indexed, stored, and retrieved in the form of stories. Stories can come in many different forms and are shared in different ways (Volker, et al, 2011). Detailed by Morgan and Dennehy (1997), there are five steps in creating a good story; (1) the setting, (2) a build-up, (3) the crisis, (4) learning, and (5) a new behaviour pattern or awareness. Regarding organisations, Boyce (1996) specifies that stories can be composed as formal organisational communications or a casual and everyday communication of the organisational members. Social network such as Facebook and Pinterest have used the story concept and implemented it into their network. This is where users are able to

create stories from captured personal experiences and share with other users. This has created a revolution of user generated content, global communities and increased the publishing power of consumers. These options have led the social platform such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter to move into the mainstream (Smith, 2009). One interesting fact relating to social media is, if Facebook users were considered as a country, they would be the world's third largest behind China and India (Divol et al, 2012).

6.4.2 Service

Customer service is all about meeting the needs and expectations of the customer, which can be demanded by the customer, but on other hand, organisations can also create needs and expectations. To do this organisation need to know what their customers want and expect, to do this they need to ask them (Zemke and Woods, 1999, 55). Listening and understanding what customers want and needs to be at the heart of every organisation. Understanding that the customer is in charge of your product or service, means only their voice is worth listening to (Zemke and Woods, 1999, 55). Service experience can be described as a subjective, cognitive and affective response from a customer interaction to a particular service (Verhoef et al, 2009). Designing and setting service experiences consumers has become an important component in developing better service experience (Dong and Siu, 2012).

The rise of the Internet as a communications tool especially in the travel and tourism industry, presents challenges for marketers, and tourism enterprises (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008). A number of different academic literature about tourism and the Internet have emerged since the late 1990s (Liu, 2005), not exclusively dealing with questions about marketing distribution, how the Internet can be used to enhance collaboration,

improved effectiveness within business management, reduce costs and research (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008). According to Zemke and Woods (1999), one of the major influences in what customers will purchase and what will bring them back is the belief that they receive a bundle of benefits such as place, time and possession, although services cost organisations, so since their value to the customer should outweigh their costs which helps to ensure profitability and growth.

Divol et al, (2012) raises an interesting point regarding the management and acknowledgement of social media. The author explains that businesses currently know what social media is, however majority of management have no idea how to harness the power of social media power extending products, drive sales and profits, brand recognition and engender loyalty. There are two examples of how powerful social media can be. Starting with Swedish theme park Liseberg, who created a viral campaign to encourage visitors to visit their attraction instead of vacation in Greece.

The campaign translates: "Some children are forced to go Crete in summer – Guaranteed cheerful kids in our park Liseberg".

Figure which was intended as a bit of humour for Swedes which turned into an international embarrassment, as it wasn't intended to stop visitors going to Greece on vacation which is what the advertisement assumed to Greece authorities (Keptalkinggreece.com, 2013). The viral campaign was taken down.

A company that has embraced social media is Coca-Cola with their instalments of face recognition Facebook access points called 'Facelook' (Daniells, 2011). These machines were installed in a theme park Israel for visitors to share their experiences on Facebook in

real time. Visitors would register the event prior to the trip through Facebook where there will be able to opt in to the app. As a result seconds of thousands of people used the face lock machines to share their experiences, which was an overwhelming success for Coca-Cola.

6.4.3 Co-producing

Co-producing (Ford and Dickson, 2012) is another area that tourist attractions are starting to use in their organisation. Using the consumer to work together with the tourist attraction to create an experience that is personal and tailor-made is the way forward. Other industries such as airlines, cruises and hotels have embraced this concept with beneficial results. There are a number of different academic writings about how organisations assess and respond to customer capabilities to co-produce (Bettencourt, 1997; Ford and Heaton, 2001; Larsson and Bowen, 1989; Mills and Morris, 1986; Nambisan, 2009), and not ignoring how to motivate the customer to perform their tasks in the co-producing process (Bateson, 2001; Bettencourt, 1997; Ford and Heaton, 2001; Larsson and Bowen, 1989; Mills and Morris, 1986; Nambisan, 2009). Having the confidence in the customer to perform the necessary tasks can be explained as a term called 'self-efficacy' (Bandura, 1997). This is defined as an individual belief in their capability performance a task, is one of the key elements of the Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory (Ford and Dickson, 2012). Organisations have the responsibility to ensure that the costs involved in the co-production has a successful impact throughout the whole stage; this means the development of strategies to ensure the customer can perform the task required. This has been designed in a way where organisations understand the customers' ability in performing these tasks, and also their motivations to complete the task fully (Ford and Dickson, 2012).

An example of how the Internet has revolutionised the way consumers and companies co-produce are airlines. According to Aldás-Manzano, et al, (2009) the Internet has offered a distribution channel that encourages customers to book a airline tickets rapidly, conveniently and having the ability to obtain substantial price savings. E-tickets are now commercial format which is used by both service providers and intermediate. (López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla, 2013) The process of booking tickets was completely carried out by an organisation with no consumer involvement throughout the process, however nowadays the consumer are giving opportunities to take part in a service provision (López-Bonilla and López-Bonilla, 2013). Regarding marketing, according to Bitner, et al, (2010) there is a lot of areas which needs attention when providing and creating services, rather than focusing on a physical good or transaction, service marketing strategy focuses on the delivery process, experience and intangibles to consumer. This process needs to focus on the customer throughout the whole company and functions. All company departments such as marketing, operations, human resources and sells need to work together to create an effective service marketing strategy and including three elements are vital for service marketing structure, the consumer, usage and relationship (Vargo and Lusch, 2004a).

6.4.4 On-site technology

There are two main reasons why organisations are putting in self-service applications such as Kiosk and ticket collection machines which are to reduce close and improve services. Interestingly self-service solutions are freeing up human resources from lower value activities which means that they can focus more on higher value, strategic activities which creates improvements in interaction between customers and management, for concentration on having the ability to develop staff talent management roles and services

(Schröder, 2007). According to Preda, et al, (2009) due to the improvements and the constant expansion of self-service technologies, the costs have come down which is making it more affordable for organisations to invest in. In fact, self-service technology typically shows a return within the first year of implementing. Due to the advancements of the Internet, now wireless Internet and better mobile connectivity, tech savvy consumers are constantly increasing their demands for convenience which shows opportunity of growth for self-service technology to be limitless. Employees agree that self-service technology is vital in the advancement of gathering information to help companies to be more effective in cutting time barriers to help them be more proactive and cost-effective. An example of how self-service has been used to enhance the visitor experience on site is from LEGOLAND, California who created a self-service kiosk where young visitors were able to print out mock driving licences as part of a ride experience (Copper, 2010).

6.5 Evaluate

Over the last few years, the web has fundamentally changed and shifted towards more user-driven-technology such as social networking, blogs and video sharing platforms (Smith, 2009). Through the Internet, individuals are able to make their thoughts and opinions easily accessible to other Internet users (Dellarocas, 2003). Blogging has become one of the most popular forms of social media and networking, where people are engaged to be part of the conversation (Thevenot, 2007) This is typically done by a conversation being published by one person as an article, and the reader giving comments. To measure the success of a blog, the amount of readers commenting to a particular comment can be captured the reader can also become involved by importing

posts where discussions have taken place (Thevenot, 2007). Online reviews can also offer consumers insight to a service experience without actually experiencing it. Negative reviews (Sen and Lerman, 2007) can be especially attractive to readers as research into the structure and content of online review suggests that complainants brought to reader closer to the experience by using highly descriptive language. This allows the reader to feel that they are reliving an experience on their own (Sparks and Browning, 2010).

The benefits of managing customer service includes; less stress between staff and customer, higher efficiencies, better morale with greater satisfaction, survival, and increase profits (Zemke and Woods, 1999, 56). It has been argued that an important issue in tourism is the lack of direct experience with a tourism product, meaning that the quality and benefits of a tourist product cannot be evaluated until the product has been consumed (Schmallegger and Carson, 2008).

This study that was done by Spenner and Freeman (2012) which found the best tools for measuring consumer your engagement efforts is in the form of “decision simplicity index”. This index is a gauge on how easy it is for the consumer to gather and understand/navigate through information about a particular brand, how much they trusted the information found, and the redline their options. The easier the brand makes the purchase decision journey the higher the decision-simplicity score will be. Brands scored over 86% have more of an influence in their decision-making by the consumer than others.

7 DISCUSSION

After interviewing the five tourist attraction representatives, regarding how they get closer to their visitors prior to the visit, a literature review was created in reflection of themes which came across from these interviews. These themes which were created can now start a foundation platform on 'inter-services' and how they can be implemented into the customer journey. Understanding how 'inter-services' can play a part in enhancing the visitors experience may interest attractions to import this model to gain competitive advantage and have a deeper overall customer journey model. This section will discuss findings and what they mean to tourist attractions.

7.1 The awareness of 'Inter-services'

One of the most interesting findings from this research was the awareness of 'inter-services' for these particular attractions interviewed. All of the attractions were aware of this area and also aware of other attractions outside of their geographical area who are providing this extra value service to their visitors. Surprisingly, the London attractions, although aware of the 'inter-services', have not implemented this into their current customer journey model. Reasons may include: financial restraints, the willingness of the attraction to implement the 'inter-services' at the current time, or just learning about this concept and how it can be implemented into their attraction.

As the majority of the attractions interviewed understood that it is important to start building relationships with their visitors at certain points of the customer journey, these attractions are still figuring out the best way of implementing this kind of model into the overall customer journey. Email was the most common way of communicating with their visitors at any stage of the customer journey. However, social media is creating and

dominating a new way of starting two-way conversations which is an interesting way of getting both attractions and potential visitors to be involved just as Gravenkemper (2007) indicated that dialogue encourages and supports engagement. This may lead into the co-producing stage where both parties can understand both viewpoints when completing this task such as booking a ticket in advance.

7.2 Tailor-made packages

All of the attractions interviewed are aware of this tailor-made opportunity and have started to implement and conduct this added value element to their attractions. From the attractions interviewed, The EDF Energy London eye is in the forefront of delivering tailor-made packages for their visitors. Examples of this include: fast tracking and adding a glass of champagne to the experience on the eye, chocolate tasting sessions and hiring out a capsule to entertain others. Other attractions are still in the process of creating additional value services which can be used as part of 'inter-services' in creating excitement and engagement especially to attract and retain repeat customers. Zemke and Woods (1999), mentioned that one of the major influences in what customers will purchase and what will bring them back is the belief that they receive a bundle of benefits such as place, time and possession, although services cost organisations, so since their value to the customer should outweigh their costs, this helps to ensure profitability and growth. This information can be presented during the 'inter-services' stage, as they may not be aware of these opportunities at the time of booking.

7.3 Engaging with overseas guests and third-party ticket agents

All attractions interact with international visitors, however, the general consensus is that majority of these visitors book with third-party ticket agents. As a result of this, the

tourist attractions do not have the opportunity to engage with these visitors before they arrive as they are unaware, in advance, of who is coming to the location and when. This is a common problem which all attractions are facing when collecting data about these particular visitors. The majority of these visitors come to London for seven days and normally organise their sightseeing day when they arrive in London and do not pre-booked in advance online. However, third-party ticket agents play an important role in all attractions as they are able to tap into international markets. This may be due to the UK tourist attractions not necessarily having the resources, finances and marketing budgets to do this exclusively. The next step is working together with third-party ticket agents in ways that they can communicate to these guests in advance. An example could be providing additional literature and/or collecting emails which can be directly imported into the database when purchasing a ticket. This information can offer other opportunities which visitors can take advantage of when they arrive on site. Building a relationship between the attraction and third-party agents could bring opportunities and results for data collection.

7.4 Reading Accessibility

Understanding that potential customers have varying understanding of reading English words and understanding the context of text, whether it is due to their cognitive ability or due to them reading a 'foreign' language, i.e. English, was a very interesting point raised in interview. Of those attractions which raised the point they identified that all of the literature, promotions and texts, which is available publicly available, needs to be accessible for everyone who interacts with their attraction so that the reader understands the messages which they are trying to put across. These attractions are

using a lot simpler English when promoting their attraction. This may include using one word headers and/or very brief sentences. Overall, an understanding of the visitors will give an attraction a better understanding of how to target campaigns and publications. In regards to 'inter-services', the acknowledgement of what style of language used to create messages which are easy to understand and aimed to their target market is important. This can present the attraction to their guests in a professional and well-respected brand in a virtual engaging environment which is necessary to excite them before they arrive at their location.

7.5 Social Communication

This is a growing area for tourist attractions who are trying to understand the best way of embracing this new way of communicating with pre-and-post-visitors. All of the attractions are linked to popular social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, but are still trying to understand how to further embrace the power of social communication to the benefit of their attraction.

Newer social media sites which provide more visual communication opportunities, such as Instagram and Pinterest, can be both managed directly by the tourist attractions. An up-and-coming platform called Snapchat is similar to texting on a mobile phone but uses photos and videos attached with the caption. These messages cannot be saved onto a device as there is a time limit to view them. If any negative comments are made the attractions have no control over this detrimental messaging, unlike Facebook and Twitter where negative comments can be removed.

These platforms can be integrated as part of the 'inter-services' stage, where attractions can send direct messages to potential and existing visitors about opportunities which are

available at their attraction. This can be advantageous to visitors who are planning to visit in advance. Feeds from these sites can be integrated into the overall attraction's website which can be linked to any emails sent by the attraction to pre-booked guests. This can show a realistic view of what is currently happening at their attraction so bedding excitement and engagement to these visitors.

7.6 Technology

Technology and tourism have a beneficial partnership. Tourist attractions have embraced technology to enhance the visitor's experience as well as managing a smooth operational transition between transactions and the purchased experience. As mentioned by the National Maritime Museum, they have invested in a new ticketing administrated system to give them, more flexibility on how they sell tickets, the types of opportunities and events they are able to sell to the general public and how they can communicate with their public.

The onset of mobile devices was definitely an interesting area for tourist attractions as more of their visitors use mobile devices to obtain information about their attraction and also book events and tickets directly on these devices. This has prompted attractions to develop web-based mobile device sites which are dedicated to these devices and present information on websites in an easy-to-use interface rather than trying to access the main site on a mobile device which can take longer to access and can create a negative experience for the user.

SMS usage is an opportunity which only two of the tourist attractions interviewed maybe considering implementing as part of their communications strategy. Using this technology as part of the 'inter-services' is beneficial as the ticketholder can be sent, up-to-date and

targeted messages before they arrive on site. This can be used by algorithms systems which are used similar to dating websites, Amazon online store and Google search engine. These sites use computers to predict suggestions based on users details and purchase types. This is an interesting concept which can be integrated into 'inter-services'. The benefits of using this system includes: fewer resources to manage, more very tailored and personal experience to guests and a very flexible system.

So what does this mean? For tourist attractions to implement 'inter-services' into their customer journey model, a basic understanding of their customers is needed to implement this idea. As fore-mentioned, creating a customer profile for each person when customers are booking tickets in advance and using that information to excite and engage with their visitors, can be easier said than done. Stamboulis and Skayannis (2003) describes 'experience' as a designed, staged, organised, foreseen, calculated, priced and charged for occurrence. If tourist attractions can predict and suggest what a visitor might need for their visit to go as smoothly as possible, this might lead to increased revenue for the attraction and an enhanced experience for the visitor. This may be all that is needed to convert these visitors into ambassadors for the attraction. Attention to detail is also important when delivering 'inter-services'. Using a style of language, and one that the consumer can relate to, may encourage them to consume more services than originally purchased and gives the tourist attraction an opportunity to tap into the guest's revenue to create the best experience possible for them. The 'inter-services' delivered will be unique to each tourist attraction and the delivered journey can be tailor-made for the individual customer.

As mentioned earlier, all the attractions interviewed are aware of this 'inter-services' stage but have not as yet implemented this concept into their own attraction. This is a very interesting area and worthy of discussion.

The important question is; "If the attraction knows that it is important to interact with their visitors to build a relationship and trust between both parties, why wouldn't they?"

The first point to be considered is, "Is 'inter-services' necessary?" Spenner and Freman, (2012) mentioned how consumers are increasingly distracted and disloyal, so this is a challenge for attractions to try and use 'inter-services' to manage their visitors, increase engagement and involvement and increase loyalty. There are different factors which influence this question and the concept of 'inter-services'. Due to increased competition in the marketplace, attractions need to find different and unique ways of getting visitors to visit their attraction and, importantly, convert them from the visitor to being an ambassador after they have completed the experience. These people are able to share their experiences with others to convince them to visit the same attraction. This technically is free advertising for the attraction. However, the majority of attractions have an external unique selling point (USP). Examples can include attractions such as the Royal Albert Hall circular building through to Europe's tallest building-The View from The Shard. These are external factors which are always there. Internal USPs such as how the attraction treats a visitor can be more powerful than the external USP and can lead to increased revenues and attraction awareness which may not necessarily have taken place if an attraction communicated with their guests prior to the visit. An enhanced internal USP could be achieved by implementing the 'inter-services'. Furthermore, is it important to build a relationship and trust with their visitors if they know that those clients are only

consuming the experience for one-time use. This is mainly tailored to international visitors, but again, converting these visitors into ambassadors can be as powerful as third-party ticket agents.

Core areas of customer involvement such as customer relationship marketing, marketing, and advertising are not the areas which will provide a concrete base in the implementation of 'inter-services'. The enhancement of the experience comes by using vital customer details and collecting relevant information to empower the attraction to select products and services which may be tailored to the individual. For example, if an individual books a family ticket which includes a child under five, then communication should include information about baby changing-room facilities, child-friendly restaurants and any specialist events which are aimed at children. Another example is special events such as Valentine's Day. This can be an ideal way for the attraction to inform the guest prior to the visit about what they could do to pre-organise a surprise at the venue.

During the interviews, there were a number of different areas which were not mentioned at any stage, by any of the attractions, which may be beneficial for the understanding of implementing 'inter-services'.

- Multilingual communications emails and webpages.
- Dedicated attractions App for portable devices.
- Ways of building relationships with international guests.
- A detailed area of how collecting data could be used.
- Other technology and devices such as algorithms and upcoming social networks such as Instagram and Pinterest.
- The mentioned of the overall customer journey within their attraction.

Limitations and areas which could have been improved are the uptake of attractions to this project. The original investigation required eight attraction to be interviewed to get an overview of what 'inter-services' may look like in certain areas of the attractions industry. Out of twenty approached, unfortunately only five were willing to partake in this research which unfortunately limited the comparability of similar attractions. Having the opportunity of interviewing attractions for a longer period of time would have been more informative as this may have given a deeper understanding of the various approaches the attractions have in getting closer to their visitors.

If attractions are wanting to implement this concept of 'inter-services' into their customer journey, the main thing that needs to be understood is the requirement of the collection of visitor's data and that advance planning is needed to create a database in which all content is usable. Finding a balance between meeting customers' expectations and providing the actual experience is very important as, if this is not maintained, this can create and provide a negative outlook towards the attraction.

8 CONCLUSION

During this paper, an attempt has been made to investigate how tourist attractions can become closer to their visitors prior to the visit. This has led to a number of different themes which can be considered for the implementation of 'inter-services'. The investigation began with, an overview of the main points behind 'inter-services' and showed how this can be implemented as part of the pre-booking process. To enhance the visitor experience, the organisation can also take advantage of communicating additional elements and up-sell products and services that visitors would not have necessarily been aware of or considered at the time of booking and prior to their visit.

An exploration of how organisations include services within the overall basic customer journey was undertaken. An example was used from Virgin America and of how they integrated edutainment to a pre-flight video. Virgin America understood the need to impact their customers even before the flight began, which has given them an opportunity to show everyone what the company is about in a fun and engaging way.

Five further areas, which could be used in 'inter-services' communications, were discussed. These are email, telephone, SMS, website communications, and social media. These are common communication tools used by tourist attractions but not yet explored in relation to 'inter-services'.

To build on the exploration, a semi-structured interview approach was used to interview five London attractions to find out more about their awareness of 'inter-services'. The use of LinkedIn and public accessible information was also used to gather different views within the attraction industry. After analysing the data, several different themes came

across which included customer profiling, social media and technology, and human resources (Table 1). Within customer profiling, three main areas about how tourist attractions interact with each type of visitor were examined; domestic, travel trade, and overseas visitors. Social media could be the next dimension of engagement for tourist attractions.

Social media is becoming an important part of attractions communications. However, the attractions are still trying to enhance this power and find out how to use social media effectively as part of the overall communication strategy. Evidence of this can be found on the attractions official webpages which can be found in (10.1 Appendix 1). In regards to the literature review there is not any dedicated research based on this particular area of the customer journey. However, Precedent, (2013) is currently the only organisation which has focused on a general level of research which is very close to the concept of 'inter-services'. By using the concept of the customer journey as the basis, the literature review is an insight on how 'inter-services' may fit in and become ripe for future investigation.

Reasons why the findings are useful to understand the concept of 'inter-services' is that attractions want to create different experiences to attract people. Using this concept would bring a sense of dedicated engagement between the visitor and attraction, with a sense of the attraction showing "we care" attitude towards a guest. It is interesting how digital communications and engagement can play a very crucial part, of not necessarily, when inviting guests to visit an attraction but to ensure that they have a rewarding and satisfactory experience which they can share with their friends and families. Making anyone genuinely feel that they are the important person, can lead to gaining brand

loyalty as well as trust between both parties. Understanding that tourist attractions are heading down this direction is promising, but there is still a way to go for a total immersion of this type of experience targeted to their visitors.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of different angles which can be used for further study regarding 'inter-services' which are listed below. Many of these would play an interesting part in the overall 'inter-services' stage and worth further investigation.

- The consumer's viewpoint on 'inter-services'
- The use of algorithms to suggest products and services to visitors, similarly done by dating websites and online stores such as Amazon.co.uk
- Concentration on third-party ticket issuers
- The integration of multilingual languages as part of 'inter-services'
- The delivery of 'inter-services' versus the actual experience on site
- Ways of implementing 'inter-services' international and disabled visitors
- The development of dedicated attraction apps for devices to be used during the 'inter-services' stage.

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APPENDIX 1 – Attractions Interviewed and Company Profile

EDF Energy London Eye

The London eye is the world's largest cantilevered observation wheel which is 135m. This was constructed and designed by Marks Barfield Architects and was opened in 2000. With a team of 180, the attraction has 85 awards for national and international tourism, outstanding architectural quality and engineering achievement.

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Type of the attraction	Observation wheel
Visitor numbers	Undisclosed
Clientele	Individuals, groups and trade and corporate clients
Types of experience	30-minute rotation Entry to 4D cinema experience
Opening date	9 March 2000 (14 Years ago)

WEBSITES SUMMARY					
Web address		http://www.londoneye.com/			
Multilingual	Book tickets in advance	Contact details	Visitor information	Social media links	Up selling opportunities
French, German, Italian, Spanish	Yes	Dedicated telephone numbers for corporate, disabled bookings. Post, Online form	Yes, located on Home page as a tab	Located at the bottom of each page icons to share pages. Facebook, Twitter and Flickr used.	Yes, Throughout the whole website.

London SeaLife Aquarium

The London SEA LIFE Aquarium is home to one of Europe's largest collections of global marine life. See thousands of sea creatures in over 2 million litres of water; See more than 40 sharks from 12 different species. Visit 14 themed zones over 3 floors. Interact with the animals at our interactive public feeding, diving displays and touch pools (London SeaLife Aquarium, 2014)

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Type of the attraction	Aquarium
Visitor numbers	Undisclosed
Clientele	Individuals, groups and trade and corporate clients
Types of experience	14 themed zones over 3 floors
Opening date	March 1997 (17 Years ago)

WEBSITES SUMMARY					
Web address		http://www.visitsealife.com/london/			
Multilingual	Book tickets in advance	Contact details	Visitor information	Social media links	Up selling opportunities

English only	Yes	Dedicated ticket line, contact address and online form.	Yes	Located at the bottom of each page icons to share pages. Facebook, Twitter and Flickr and YouTube used.	Yes, Throughout the whole website.
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The View at the Shard

The Shard is an iconic, landmark building on the London skyline, designed by Master Architect Renzo Piano. At a height of 1,016ft (310m), the tallest building in Western Europe, The Shard redefines London's skyline and will be a dynamic symbol of London, recognisable throughout the world (The View at the Shard, 2014)

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Type of the attraction	Viewing platform
Visitor numbers	Undisclosed
Cientele	Individuals, groups and trade and corporate clients
Types of experience	To ticket experience on to platforms.
Opening date	February 2013

WEBSITES SUMMARY					
Web address			http://www.theviewfromtheshard.com/		
Multilingual	Book tickets in advance	Contact details	Visitor information	Social media links	Up selling opportunities
English only	Yes	Dedicated emails, and telephone number booking in advance.	Located on the home page	Yes, Twitter Facebook and Pinterest	Only gift vouchers

The Royal Albert Hall

The Royal Albert Hall was built to fulfil the vision of Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's consort) of a 'Central Hall' that would be used to promote understanding and appreciation of the Arts and Sciences and would stand at the heart of the South Kensington estate, surrounded by museums and places of learning (Royal Albert Hall, 2014).

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Type of the attraction	Multi-purpose venue
Visitor numbers	On
Cientele	General public
Types of experience	Shows, Concerts and events
Opening date	29 March 1871 (143 Years ago)

WEBSITES SUMMARY					
Web address			http://www.royalalberthall.com/		
Multilingual	Book tickets in advance	Contact details	Visitor information	Social media links	Up-selling opportunities
English only	Yes	Yes, dedicated	Located on the	Facebook and	Not until you

		emails, and telephone number booking in advance and Online form	home page	Twitter Likes and share button	book.
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The National Maritime Museum

Experience the world's largest maritime museum, filled with inspirational stories of discovery and adventure at sea. Explore our vast collection and enjoy free Wi-Fi in the comfort of the Compass Lounge. Hear the personal stories of our island nation in Voyagers. Steer a ship into port and fire a cannon at a dastardly pirate ship in the Children's gallery (National Maritime Museum, 2014).

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Type of the attraction	Museum
Visitor numbers	1,943,054 (National Maritime Museum 2012-'13 Performance, 2013)
Clientele	General public
Types of experience	Museum and learning
Opening date	27 April 1937 (77 Years ago)

WEBSITES SUMMARY					
Web address			http://www.rmg.co.uk/national-maritime-museum		
Multilingual	Book tickets in advance	Contact details	Visitor information	Social media links	Up-selling opportunities
German, Spanish, France, Italian, Polish, Arabic, Mandarin, Nihongo and Russian	Yes	Yes, dedicated emails, and telephone number booking in advance	Located on the home page	Not on home page, but Facebook and Twitter linked are on other pages.	No

APPENDIX 2 – Sample Interview Questions

GENERAL (GEN)

1. Do you consider your attraction to have a USP?
2. What is your target market for your tourist attractions?

PRE-TRIP (PRE)

1. How do you engage your visitors to purchase a ticket in advance for your attraction?
2. Regarding 'inter-services', what does your tourist attraction do to engage your visitors after they purchase a ticket and before they arrive at an attraction?
3. What are your thoughts regarding 'inter-services', and do you feel is relevant in your tourist attraction?
4. What methods do you use to contact your visitors in advance?
5. How do you encourage your visitors to plan their day in advance before they arrive at an attraction?
6. Does your attraction use co-produce methods in your processes?
7. How do you present your tourist attraction as a "we care" attitude, especially for first timers and foreign visitors who want necessarily visit your attraction again?

ON-SITE (ONS)

1. How do you balance the expectations of a visitor when visiting an attraction in advance based on the information you provide publicly?
2. How do you encourage up selling, and at that stage(s) do you implement this?
3. Regarding your employees, how involved are there with the overall experience of your attraction?

POST TRIP (POS)

1. How do you evaluate engagement between visitor and attraction?
2. Do you contact visitors who booked in the past to encourage them to visit again? What information do you provide to do this?

APPENDIX 3 - LinkedIn Research

Confidant

APPENDIX 4 – The Four Realms of an Experience



(Pine and Gilmore, 1998)