

Fishing Trips in Greece: A Co-creative Experience for Tourists

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ABSTRACT

Tourism and travel experiences often extend well beyond temporary sojourns and the consumption of place. The performance turn in tourism adopts the above by arguing that tourists today want to “roll up their sleeves” and achieve life-long goals, using personal resources such as skills, technological capabilities, culture or knowledge. To meet this goal, tourism and hospitality organizations are increasingly adopting the logic of value co-creation. Fishing trips in Greece give the tourist the opportunity to live a memorable tourist experience transforming him from a passive recipient into an active actor. The aim of this study is to emphasize the element of co-creativity in this innovative form of tourism called fishing tourism.

Keywords: Co-creation; Active participation; Fishing tourism

ABOUT THE STUDY

Many authors report an increasing demand for more participative and interactive experiences [1-4]. These experiences are considered desirable due to their contribution to the meaning of individuals' lives as they connect the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions on a moment-to-moment basis [5,6]. This active involvement can be a physical, emotional or mental commitment [5,7] and can strengthen personal or collective identity as well as intensify the experience through use of personal skills and resources [5,8]. These trends are leading businesses and destinations to involve customers in the design, production, and consumption of experiences.

Fishing does not only indicate the simple consumption of fish but also a deep insight into the life of people and their relationship to nature [9,10]. Essentially fishing covers all strands of civilization by providing knowledge, skills and techniques which are transferred from generation to generation. Now tourists are losing interest in the traditional sun, sand and sea packages and are instead looking to experience something more actively engaging. For some, fishing activities and exploring cultures with an ancient fishing heritage can be significant attractions [11,12]. Thus, fishing tourism has received increasing attention in recent years as a pioneering form of tourism with a strong inclusion of the element of co-creativity.

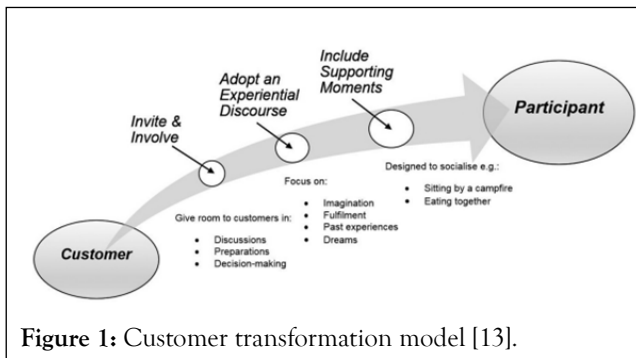
Fishing trips in Greece offer to prospective tourists the unique opportunity to initiate them into the fishing world smoothly and enjoy the trip on a fishing boat under the supervision of a professional fisherman. Besides Greece's natural beauty and distinctiveness of certain regions, tourists have the advantage of becoming an integral part of the whole fishing process and enrich their knowledge. From the beginning of the trip the captain and his assistant (usually a member of the captain's family) welcome whole-heartedly each customer on the boat, offering them a cup of coffee or local delicacies as a treat. Then the whole trip is adjusted to the active participation of tourists. Each visitor is given a type of fishing gear (usually a fishing rod), and by following step by step the instructions of the experienced captain, attempt to fish their first catch. Fishing training goes on until a significant amount of fish is gathered for meal. Shortly afterwards, the guests have the chance to swim in secluded, crystal-blue beaches. However, some of them prefer helping the captain scale the fish or prepare the meal (frying fish, cutting vegetables for the salad, etc.). Finally, both the crew and the tourists gather around the table to share and enjoy the fresh fish, they themselves caught, as well as local products. The following Figure 1 fully depicts the transition of tourists from ordinary consumers to active participants.

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The specifications of fishing trips in Greece allow tourists not just to look but to achieve the goals of the fishing trip using personal resources such as knowledge, skills, technological ability. Their “own activity” results from doing (fishing), interest and engagement and a decisive contributor to experiences, bestowing experiential content on the activity itself. Here the tourist is someone who wants to interact, actively learn, and apply knowledge more than watch other people. In short, the tourist boarding a traditional fishing boat in Greece, holds up the captain as a role model whose advice become the key part of the whole fishing experience [13].

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the tourism industry is full of experiences of a social nature and settings in which people with similar interests, motivations and goals meet together and interact. It is therefore significant for tourism businesses to understand the importance of customer perceptions of their experiences and to work hard to measure and continually improve ways to satisfy tourists. Fishing trips to Greece are an example of co-creative tourism as a distinct relationship develops between producers and consumers. In this relationship, consumers are described as co-creators of value or even the sole creators of value through the necessary instructions received from professional fishermen. Participating in stimulating activities, where tourists adopt

certain aspects of the local way of life leads to memorable tourist experiences.

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