



# 02

## Experience Development

Delivering world-class  
experiences

### **Takeaways**

Who is the Experience Seeker?

What are destination 'Hero Experiences'?

How to support and strengthen  
destination hero experiences through  
the development of your own business'  
'Signature Experiences'

How to go beyond mere  
customer service and deliver genuine  
G.U.E.S.T.™ hospitality

# Delivering World-Class Experiences



## Introduction

All businesses have a role to play in delivering the visitor 'experience' whether they are tour operators, accommodation and hospitality establishments, retail businesses, tourism or discovery centres, tour attractions, local councils, state or federal government agencies, visitor information centres, environmental groups or protected area managers.

What persuades a particular visitor to holiday in a specific destination is their ability to engage in unforgettable and inspiring experiences that touch them in an emotional way and connect them with special places, people and cultures.

Experiential travel is about widening horizons for both the tourism operator and the tourist. It involves taking a basic product or service and transforming it into a compelling and engaging experience.

In an era where global travel is readily available, destinations can no longer compete on a simple product-versus-price basis. Experience development is a creative opportunity that speaks to both first-time guests and repeat visitors but does not necessarily need to be elaborate or costly. It's about delivering memorable moments.

“It’s about making your own memories, getting off the touristy track”

TEQ Consumer Focus Groups:  
Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane (July 2014)



### What is an ‘experience?’

An ‘experience’ is the emotional feeling or personal achievement your visitor gains from a combination of activities, locations and personal interactions in which they participate when they visit your destination. Think unique, unexpected and exotic things that your guests cannot do anywhere else in the world, or that you can do better than anyone else. It’s about delivering the kinds of surprises they will post on Facebook or tweet about immediately and still be talking about at parties and social gatherings for months or even years later.

### Who is the Experience Seeker?

The Experience Seeker is an experiential traveller who wants to venture beyond the beaten tourist path and dive deeper into authentic local experiences, connecting with people from other cultures in ways that enrich their lives and create lasting memories.

They are travellers looking for ‘experiences’ that connect them with the essence of a place and its people. For them, simply seeing the sights is no longer enough.

### Key aspirations of the ‘Experience Seeker’

Research has shown that the ‘Experience Seeker’ has a number of key aspirations to satisfy their travel experience, these include:

- Authentic personal experiences
- Social interactions, including meeting and engaging with the locals
- Experiencing something different from their normal day-to-day life
- Understanding and learning about different lifestyles and cultures
- Participating in the local lifestyle and experiencing it, rather than observing it
- Challenging themselves - physically, emotionally and/or mentally
- Visiting authentic destinations that are not necessarily part of the usual tourist route
- Exposure to unique and compelling experiences, in particular, nature-oriented experiences (which account for nearly half of the Experience Seeker market segment)

### How do you move from product to experiences?

To be market leaders, tourism operators need to move from just selling a tourism product (e.g. reef tours) to delivering a genuine tourism experience (e.g. marine life encounter). This can only be achieved through having a great commodity (e.g. the Great Barrier Reef) combined with exceptional products and service.

A truly world-class experience combines these essential foundation steps and adds that unique touch that will deliver on the promise our target markets are seeking (e.g. to deliver life-changing moments through the world's best reef experience).

The tourism product is what the customer buys, the tourism experience is what they remember.

“It’s not just about the product, it’s the vibe. People want a story.”

The Loft Project London

### How can this impact your bottom line?

Ten years of economic research reveals that true experiential tourism is not only a real point-of-difference in a crowded market place, it is also a product for which an Experience Seeker is prepared to pay a premium.

Experiences can be low-cost because they do not necessarily involve large capital investment or infrastructure upgrades.

## The Experiences Spectrum

This diagram illustrates the process of moving from offering individual commodities, products and services to delivering compelling and engaging experiences.

**Experiences = Greater Economic Value**



Source: Nancy Arsenault, Celes Davar and Todd Lucier (2011)



## Hero Experiences

Hero Experiences are the 'essence' of a destination and are those:

- world-class iconic experiences that provide a destination with a real competitive advantage over other destinations
- experiences that focus on what is truly unique or memorable or engaging about a destination
- experiences which meet the needs of our target markets

### Why Hero Experiences?

Focussing on a destination's hero experiences provides an opportunity to:

- respond to the demands of our domestic and international visitors
- gain a competitive advantage over other destinations
- focus the efforts of tourism stakeholders and create partnerships

“Living the brand is about delivering a distinctive or unique type of service or experience that enhances the guest's destination experience to the point where it is truly pleasurable and memorable,”

Duane E. Knapp, Global Destination BrandScience, 2012

Hero Experiences are the **VOICE** of a destination's brand, personality and competitive advantage, encompassing the destination's:

**V**ision

**O**riginality

**I**cons

**C**ompetitiveness

**E**xperiential qualities

# Destination Hero Experiences

In conjunction with destination stakeholders, destination 'Hero Experiences' have been identified for each of Queensland's 13 destinations.

The image displays a grid of 13 fact sheets, each representing a different Queensland destination. Each fact sheet includes a title, a main image, and several columns of text detailing visitor experiences, reasons for the experience, and specific activities. The destinations shown are Mackay Region, Fraser Coast, Sunshine Coast, Bundaberg Region, Gold Coast Region, Outback Queensland, Southern Queensland Country, Tropical North Queensland, Whitsundays, Brisbane Region, Capricorn Region, Townsville North Queensland, and Gladstone Region. Each fact sheet also features a small collage of images at the bottom and the Queensland Tourism logo.

To download the Destination Hero Experience Factsheets visit: [teq.queensland.com/heroeperiences](http://teq.queensland.com/heroeperiences)

“Be different or be dead. Memorable experiences are about creating value. Value is the defining factor. When there is no difference people buy on price alone. You can only compete on price for so long, but you can compete on value forever.”

The Experience Economy



## Tips for supporting and strengthening your destination's Hero Experiences

### Accommodation Providers

- Personal one-on-one recommendations
- Theme or decorate foyer or meeting rooms with your destination's hero experiences
- Team meetings to discuss what's new in the region
- Ask a tour operator or local attraction to present to staff on recent innovations
- Package experiences with other operators around the “heroes” in your region
- Think simple and authentic

### Visitor Information Centres

- Train and educate staff and volunteers on your destination and its hero experiences
- Assist visitors with locating hero experiences
- Share local experiences such as weekend activities, dining options and community events that highlight and celebrate your destination hero experiences
- Provide collateral and promotional material such as banners and brochures on hero experiences

### Tour Operators

- Plan tour itineraries around hero experiences in your region
- Value add by joining forces with a like-minded tourism business to deliver destination hero experiences
- Cross promote other tourism businesses in the region on your website

## Signature Experiences

### What is a 'Signature Experience'?

Your written signature is unique, confirms your identity and makes your promise legally binding. It is similar for your 'signature experience'. This defines what is unique and different about your product, something you do especially well, distinguishes you from other products, and makes you stand out in people's minds. It is consistent with your brand and the image you want to project, and it encompasses your commitment and promise to your guests.

The following 10 tips were used to define Queensland's destination hero experiences and they can also assist you in identifying your individual product signature experience.

### 1. Only in your destination

- Nowhere else on earth
- No one does it better
- If travellers want to have this experience, your destination is the best place in the world for it
- This experience makes your destination truly unique, puts Queensland on a global stage and attract visitors on its own merits
- Contributing factors could include a unique setting, unique wildlife, local customs or food

### 4. Touch, smell, taste, sight, sound

- Is the experience:
- Multisensory and provokes emotion?
- Interactive with hands-on elements?

### 5. A 'backstage pass'

- Does the experience:
- Provide a special insight into how your operation ticks?
- Make your visitors feel truly special?
- Give visitors a feeling of exclusivity?
- Deliver a once-in-a-lifetime feel, bragging rights?

### 7. Authentic and genuine

- The experience is real, does not have a staged mass-market feel and is not commercialised or superficial

### 8. Your destination brand and brand Queensland

- Is the experience an embodiment of your destination brand?
- Does your experience deliver on any of the following brand Queensland themes:
  - Adventure?
  - Natural Encounters?
  - Island and beaches?
  - Queensland lifestyle?

### 2. An inspirational story

- Does the experience:
- Feature an inspirational story or theme?
- Tell the story of local characters, customs and culture, or flora and fauna?
- Provide the visitor with an opportunity to interact with and learn about your destination?

### 3. The customer in the 'lead role'

- Would travellers from all over the globe want to come to your destination to be part of this experience?
- It is a 'must-do' draw card that will excite and attract your target audience?
- Will the experience exceed your customers' expectations?

### 6. Feel like a local

- Does the experience make your visitors feel like they are part of your local way of life?
- Do you make your visitors feel really welcome, like an old friend and not just like another tourist?

### 9. Surprise

- Does the experience feature an element of surprise and create the unexpected?

### 10. Create lasting memories

- Ultimately, does the experience:
- Engage visitors emotionally, adding meaning to their personal lives?
- Allow visitors to take home lasting memories that they will share with families and friends?



### Steps for delivering your own 'signature experiences'

1. Focus on your key markets, who they are and what experiences they want
2. Examine what experiences fit with your business, what your business can offer, and how you can involve the community and other partners
3. Plan your experience/s around how guests can be involved, how you can provide a wow factor and how to link with your destination hero experiences
4. Train staff and business partners on your signature experience/s so they can deliver on the experience promise and guest expectations
5. Think about how you will market to potential consumers and your main communication with them to maximize the attraction and appeal of your signature experience/s
6. Deliver and evaluate needs and modify the experience/s if necessary

### Staffing and front office

- Ensure staff are aware of the signature experience/s your business is aiming to

deliver through integrating key messages into orientation programs

- Provide guest service training that incorporates open-ended questions of guests (e.g. what are you planning on doing while you are here?) with the aim of promoting your destination hero experiences
- Have copies of regional guides and event calendars at reception to give to customers
- Incorporate key elements of your signature experience/s into your business' answering machine message
- Encourage your staff to attend community business networking events to educate people about your signature experience/s, support the promotion of your destination hero experiences, to keep up-to-date on current events and develop community contacts

### A picture says a thousand words

Use great images for your brochure, website, media kits and other promotional materials. A consistent approach is required and by using images that highlight your destination hero as a guide, it will help to promote and communicate your business' signature experience/s.

Tourism and Events Queensland has an extensive [visual gallery](#) available for promotional use by tourism businesses.

### Capture your signature and hero experiences in words

When writing copy for brochures, websites, media kits and other promotional materials, use language which sells your signature experience/s and associated destination hero experiences.

Develop a media release when you have something new to announce and incorporate your signature experience/s and destination hero experiences into this messaging. Distribute to local media, your Regional Tourism Organisation and Tourism and Events Queensland.

Host a lunch with local media or stage a media familiarisation to establish relationships with media.

Align your signature experience/s with your destination's hero experiences to enable you to answer a common journalist question: "So, what's great about your destination?"

More information can be found in the [Media and Publicity](#) section of this guide.

## Tourism experiences - worksheets

Tourism and Events Queensland, in partnership with Griffith University, has created a series of videos and supporting worksheets to assist tourism operators to respond to increasing visitor demand for exciting, engaging, and authentic experiences. They are designed to assist tourism operators who want to rejuvenate or develop a 'WOW' experience that is memorable, and delights and surprises the guest. These resources will explore how to bring your experience to life through story making and experiential marketing.

### Worksheet 1 - Inspiring experiential travel in Queensland



Evolve and revolutionise. Look to provide awe-inspiring, positive word-of-mouth, holiday-of-a-lifetime experiences.

### Worksheet 2 - Creating a memorable experience



What experience do you offer? What are your region's hero experiences? How can you leverage off these and what hidden gems could you share?

### Worksheet 3 - Knowing your guests and what they want



Understand your current guests, identify who is your ideal customer, and adapt to changing markets.

### Worksheet 4 - Bringing your experiences to life



What are you passionate about in your destination? What can you share? How can you share local history of the region? How can you weave your story into the product delivery? How can you surprise and delight your customers?

### Worksheet 5 - Delivering on the promise



What is your brand promise and how does the experience you offer connect to it? What is your destination brand promise and how does the experience you offer connect to it? Do your staff live the brand and what can you do to improve?

To download the Tourism Experiences Factsheets and the video series visit: [teq.queensland.com/experiencedevelopment](http://teq.queensland.com/experiencedevelopment)



### Operator insight

“We are a helicopter ride and have services that go from Cairns to a number of locations on the Great Barrier Reef. After working with TEQ we realised that we wanted to take it from being just a ride to an experience, so 18 months ago we looked at our facilities where the helipad is based and from the moment you walk in the door the experience begins. You’ve got imagery on the walls, videos playing and our front office staff are seated in approachable low desks.

From the minute visitors walk in they are brought into the experience. There is always something going on so you can always hear or see something is happening. Once the briefing is out of the way we tell them about the type of helicopter on which they will be flying and also about the pilot.

“We partner with other companies out on the Great Barrier Reef and our experience is part of the entire experience. We have a crew member out on the platform to ensure a seamless transition to the next experience.

“On board the pilots are trained quite rigorously in the region and not just about Cairns and the

Great Barrier Reef but the Daintree and the unique environment in which they operate. For our Chinese visitors we have an inflight Chinese commentary.

“The impact of these changes has been very positive. We get absolutely rave reviews. We had someone recently who said the pilot made the experience.

“Sure, we have helicopters and the Great Barrier Reef but it is not always a beautiful day, the sun is not always shining and we don’t always get sea turtles so having your people in the air and on the ground trained, they know how to make sure the visitor has a great experience. We have a wet season and we definitely have our challenges.

“We recently had a client who couldn’t hear the inflight commentary. I downloaded the USB onto a company video and she received a whole lot more information than she would have and was happy. Things can go wrong, but it depends on how you go about it. We always have to keep in mind that people are here for an experience.”

**Harriet Ganfield,  
Head of Tourism Sales,  
GBR Helicopters, Cairns**

## Hot Tips

- Surprise and delight customers, a small surprise can go a long way
- Exceed guest expectations with outstanding customer service and by creating a positive customer service culture within your workplace
- Work with your local community
- Make your guests feel like VIPs, give them a backstage pass to your business and destination
- Encourage your guests to rave about their quality experience through various social media platforms
- Stand out from the crowd with something which makes your product unique

“Destinations and tourism operators need to focus on how they can create a strong competitive position that will distinguish themselves from competitors in a way that is meaningful to their guests,”

Duane E. Knapp, Global Destination BrandScience, 2012



## One experience does not make a destination

Your experience is usually one of many in a destination and no matter how good you are, the visitor's overall experience is generally determined by the sum of all their experiences in your destination.

That is why it is important that tourism businesses and other service operators in a destination work together as much as possible to provide not only practical and functional links to one another's products but also emotional connections between their experiences so as to provide visitors with a seamless and memorable destination experience.

Tour operators and businesses who adopt this approach are far more likely to generate visitor recommendations, attract new customers and achieve repeat visitation than those who wish to 'stand alone'.

In addition, by working this way, operators are in a better position to bundle and package their offerings and gain a competitive advantage by participating in cooperative

newspaper and television marketing campaigns, leveraging off each other's social media platforms and together transforming a destination into one of many experiences worth visiting.

Even if you do not experience the direct benefits on the first visit, chances are you will likely be top-of-mind for their return and your destination will be viewed, spoken about, and promoted as vibrant, creative and engaging.

More information on packaging and bundling can be found in the [Domestic Marketing](#) section.



## From customer service to G.U.E.S.T.™ hospitality

The customer is always right. Never has a more truer word been spoken. In tourism, the customer is king and should be treated like one. These are the people who can make or break your business.

A key element of any visitor experience is the service quality – how well customers get what they want, when they want it and in the best possible way. However, to provide a truly engaging and memorable visitor experience tourism operators need to deliver more than just great customer service, they need to provide genuine ‘hospitality’ because service is what you do whereas hospitality is how you make someone feel. It’s about making a real emotional connection.

To help facilitate this transition from mere customer service to authentic hospitality, Duane Knapp, an expert brand strategist, contends that we need to see our visitors and customers as ‘guests’ because a visitor is just someone who is passing through and a customer is someone we are having a transaction with, but a guest is someone who is invited and more highly valued and afforded special treatment.

As outlined in the following, Knapp has developed a G.U.E.S.T.™ philosophy to guide service providers to go beyond customer service and provide one-of-a-kind hospitality:

### **G.U.E.S.T.™** Hospitality

**Greeting** – The initial greeting is always designed to communicate. ‘We’re glad you’re here.’

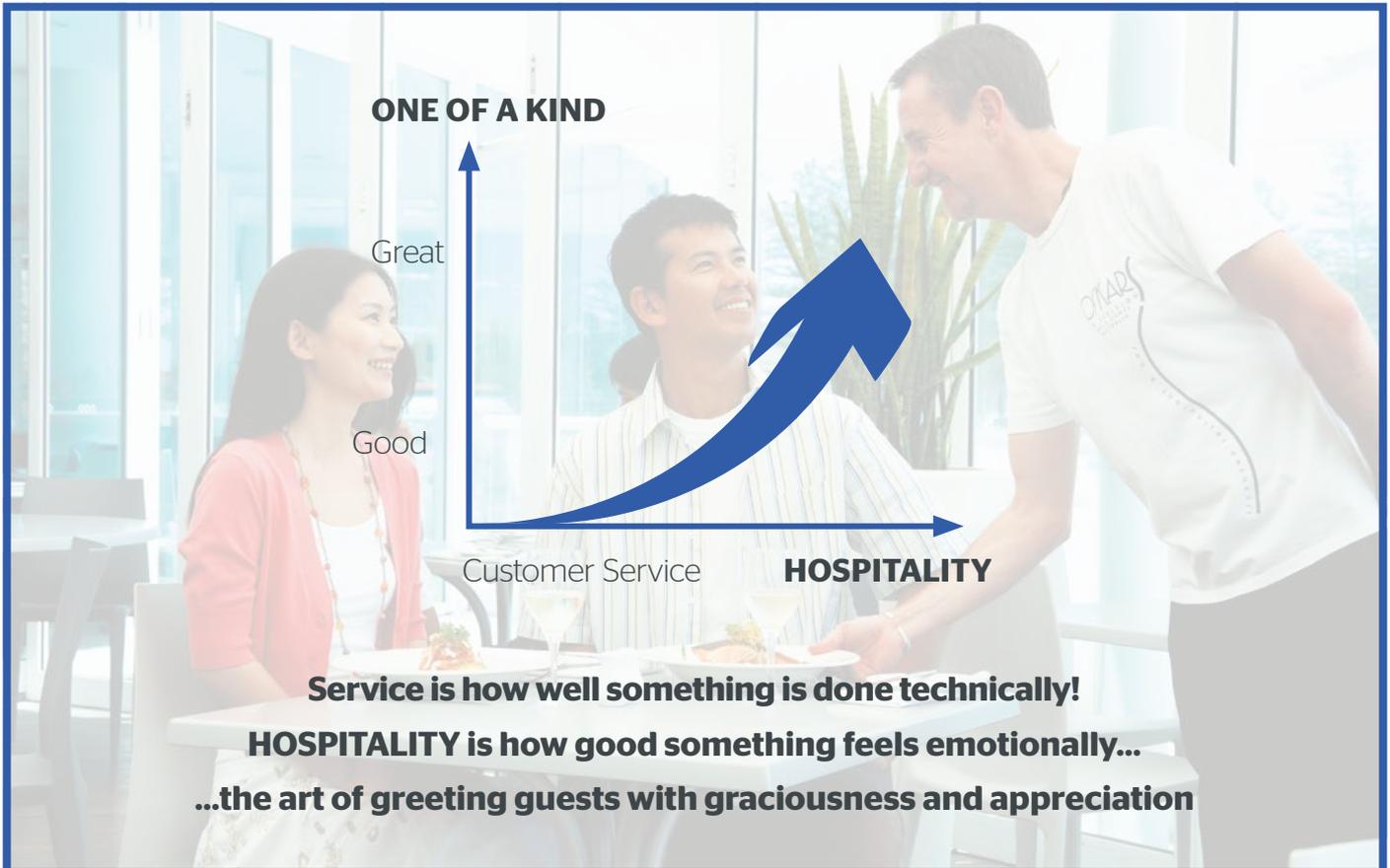
**Understanding** – Listen, learn and understand your guests, their needs and their feelings. ‘We always listen for the way our guests feel.’

**Efficiency** – Efficiently handle requests and concerns. Fast and easy is always the answer. ‘We respect your time, we know it’s valuable.’

**Special Treatment** – There is always something you can do to make guests feel special. Remember, ‘We have the power to provide a pleasant surprise for our guests’

**Thankfulness** – Thank each and every guest for his or her patronage. ‘We don’t take your business for granted, we want you to be a friend and we understand the lifetime value of your relationship.’

## One of a kind ... from service to HOSPITALITY



### Ten tips to further delight your guests

- Greet every guest with a smile and a hello
- If you cannot provide an advertised service for some reason, offer an alternative
- Deploy basic manners such as please and thank you
- Treat your guests how you would wish to be treated
- If you make an obvious mistake, admit it, apologise and offer to rectify it
- Surprise your guests with a small gift or gesture
- Follow up when your guests leave with a thank you email, letter or phone call
- Be friendly but not overly familiar
- Remember your guests' names and special anniversaries or events
- Offer assistance with other activities, outlets and operators in your destination