

Cultural Tourism Experiences A Development Framework

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of Arts degree by Research*



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DECLARATION

The author hereby declares that, except where duly acknowledged and referenced, this research study is entirely her own work and has not been submitted for any degree or other qualification in Waterford Institute of Technology or any other third level institution in Ireland or abroad.

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January, 2011

ABSTRACT

“Cultural Tourism Experiences: A Development Framework”

Unique and memorable experiences are crucial for the long-term sustained differentiation of the tourism sector (ITIC, 2006; Fáilte Ireland, 2007). Much attention has been centred upon indigenous cultural tourism as a panacea for revitalising and enhancing the wider services sector of the national economy. Indeed, evidence suggests that the experience value of tourism products is the overriding factor influencing customers’ motivation to visit attractions (Brunner Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Prior research indicates a lack of theory relating to the nature of experiences and the experience development process (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons 2000; Morgan, et al., 2009). This study aims to close this extant knowledge gap by enhancing our understanding of the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the process by which they can be developed. To achieve this aim, a critical review of literature in the product, service, experience and tourism arenas generated a conceptual framework for the development of cultural tourism experiences. Through the adoption of a qualitative case study of a best practice cultural tourism organisation, the study was able to explore both the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the manner by which they are developed in practice, leading to a refined framework.

The major outcome of the study is an experience framework that defines, identifies and articulates the elements of cultural tourism experiences and offers a pragmatic ‘*how to*’ framework that provides understanding and guidance of the stages and activities of the experience development process. Notably, the study posits learning as the core activity of cultural tourism and emotional outcomes as the core value delivered. Practitioners must create learning opportunities which reinforce personal values and facilitate a range of emotional outcomes based on an understanding of visitors’ deeper and emotional needs. This study also highlights the equal importance of three *types* of interaction that stimulate experiences: experience provider to tourist, tourist to tourist and tourist to context. Hence, cultural tourism organisations need to design and offer activities which encourage visitor interaction and active participation to personally create experiences.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research has advanced tourism experience literature by delineating the elements that comprise a cultural tourism experience namely, contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes and enhances understanding of the experience development process. The framework clarifies the true nature of cultural tourism experiences and makes a significant contribution to cultural tourism practice as it offers practitioners a pragmatic and implementable process framework to develop new tourism offerings which are capable of generating unique and memorable experiences. From a theoretical standpoint, this research has shown that cultural tourism experiences are no longer ambiguous and abstract.

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“Researchers should ensure that their explorations include journeys into proximate mental territories as well as forays deep into distant lands.”

Tribe (2006:376)

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Abbreviations

CSO (Central Statistics Office)

DAST (Department of Arts Sports and Tourism)

GDP (gross Domestic Product)

IHF (Irish Hotel Federation)

IT (Information Technology)

ITIC (Irish Tourism Industry Confederation)

LCEEI (Lapland Centre of Expertise for the Experience Industry)

NPD (New Product Development)

NSD (New Service Development)

NED (New Experience Development)

NTHP (National National Trust for Historic Preservation)

OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development)

SME (Small to Medium Sized Enterprise)

TPRG (Tourism Policy Review Group)

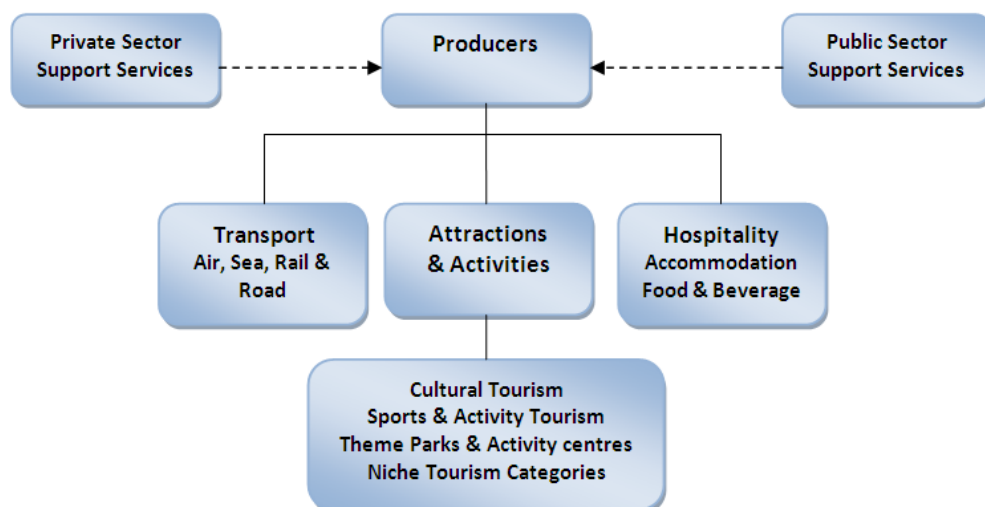
Chapter One: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to position the overall study in the chosen context, which is the Irish cultural tourism sector. The chapter starts with an overview of the tourism sector from both a national and an international perspective to understand its nature, characteristics and economic impact. The researcher narrows the overview to explore the characteristics of cultural tourism and how these impact the development of experiential offerings. The rationale for designing experiences is discussed from both sectoral and academic perspectives to inform the research objectives.

1.1 The Nature and Structure of the Tourism Sector

Tourism is most simply defined as the travel and associated activity of persons away from their usual home environment (Smith, 1994). It is also a collective term for businesses catering to the needs of those persons, which Medlik and Middleton (1973) describe as a bundle of activities, services and benefits. Tourism enterprises are many and diverse, which makes sectoral definition difficult (Cooper, 2008). As tourism can be considered from a wide range of perspectives many researchers have adopted a reductionist approach by analysing it through its parts (Ryan, 2000; Page, 2007). Figure 1.1 illustrates the subsections of the tourism sector.

Figure 1.1: The Subsections of the Tourism System

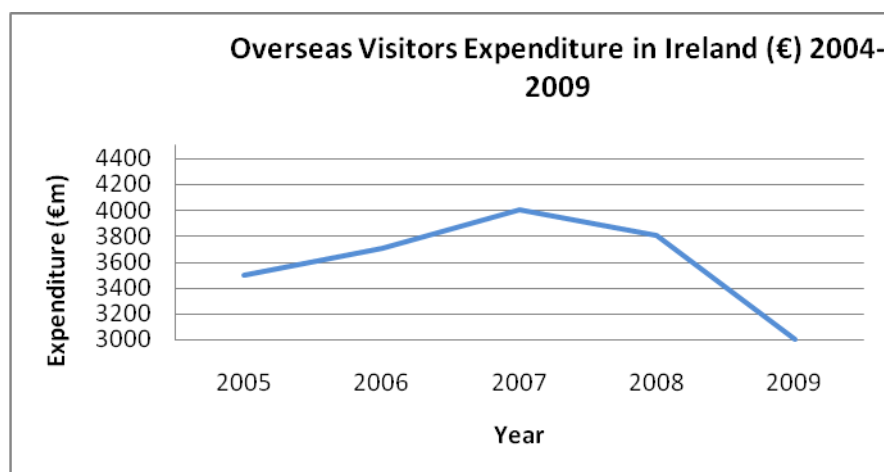


Adapted from: Middleton (1994) and Holloway (2006)

Figure 1.1 overleaf demonstrates the diverse but interrelated nature of the sector, as each constituent part plays either a direct or indirect role in facilitating the overall tourism offering. Tourism producers have public support in the form of state tourism agencies which in the case of Ireland are Fáilte Ireland, responsible for domestic marketing and business supports, and Tourism Ireland responsible for international marketing and destination brand support. Additionally, a number of private sector support services are available such as professional bodies that represent the sector to Government on various issues, and educational and training institutions and marketing consortia e.g. IHF, ITIC. Tourism is commonly divided into transport, hospitality and the attractions and activities sectors each of which can be further subdivided. Attractions offer the most important draw for leisure tourism to a particular destination, however, the sector requires the presence of both transport and hospitality in order to facilitate a complete tourism destination offering (Cooper et al., 2008). Cultural tourism, within the attractions and activities sector, represents a large number of offerings, and which Swarbrooke (1995) asserts is the core component of the tourism system. This research will focus on this section of the tourism system.

Tourism is a major element of contemporary life and influences the economic, social and cultural foundation of almost every country worldwide (O'Connor and Cronin, 1993). Tourism for many countries, including Ireland, represents a major income generator accounting for approximately six per cent of world GDP (Holloway and Taylor, 2006; Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). From a national perspective tourism is the largest indigenous sector of Irish enterprise contributing 1.3 billion euro to the exchequer in 2009 (Fáilte Ireland, 2008; ITIC, 2009). Irish tourism practitioners experienced rapid growth and development in the period from the mid-nineties to 2008, driven for the most part by economic prosperity coupled with government funding and improved access to air travel (ITIC, 2009). The economic environment has radically changed in recent times and the sector has witnessed a significant loss in competitiveness with practitioners currently operating in a highly unstable climate. A recession which began in 2008, greatly affected the tourism sector in Ireland, as consumers demonstrated increased anxiety over their personal finances (Euromonitor, 2009). Figure 1.2 overleaf offers a visual representation illustrating the period of steady growth in overseas visitor expenditure from 2005 to the sharp drop in 2008 and 2009.

Figure 1.2: Overseas Visitor Expenditure in Ireland



Source: CSO and Fáilte Ireland

The considerable softening in growth is evidenced by the most recent tourism figures which identify a further drop of approximately ten per cent in tourism revenue in 2009 (Fáilte Ireland, 2010). This fall in demand presents tourism providers with a litany of challenges and paradoxes from global to individual, in both maintaining, progressing, and developing new products, services and experiences to meet and anticipate new trends and tastes in an unstable economic environment (Page, 2007).

The very character and structure of the tourism sector in Ireland and in the wider European context presents both development and operational issues to tourism practitioners attempting to enhance existing offerings or to develop new ones (Hjalager, 2002). Both Hjalager (2002) and Page (2007) agree that tourism businesses are highly fragmented, characterised by many micro enterprises, frequently owned and operated by an individual or a family. The most recent report to critically focus on the Irish tourism sector by the Tourism Policy Review Group (TPRG, 2003:10) asserts that the predominant enterprise operating in the sector '*is small to medium in size, typically Irish-owned and well dispersed throughout the country*'. Radical innovation does not routinely occur in the tourism sector; rather it generally occurs through imitation and outsourcing (OECD, 2006). Consequently, tourism organisations rarely consider innovation essential or have access to research departments and therefore fail to invest adequate resources (OECD, 2004, 2006). Proprietors who want to be market leaders are obliged to innovate constantly and they have to expect any advantages they gain to be

quickly eroded (Hjalager, 2002). Hall and Williams (2008) contend that a typical feature of the tourism sector is the ease with which new entrants can establish businesses and the high degree of imitability within the sector. The practices of imitation and adaptation combined with the seasonality-based structure contribute to poor levels of knowledge and skills in the development of customer offerings in the sector (Hjalager, 2005). Another issue is the prevailing high degree of firm '*births and deaths*' which generates a cycle of skills and knowledge inflow, loss and transfer, which implies that the processes of developing new offerings frequently exists in a high-risk environment (Hall and Williams, 2008). Buhalis and Costa (2006) argue that only a minority of tourism SME's are truly innovative and competitive, with the vast majority being unmotivated by growth or economic benefits and also displaying a poor understanding of the types of skills necessary to develop globally recognised offerings. The requirement for smaller enterprises to build stronger internal capabilities in the development of new offerings therefore exists, in order to avoid the tendency to follow and/or imitate other successful practitioners. For such organisations keeping ahead of competitors is difficult as constantly shifting market dynamics put businesses to the test in developing viable offerings that match ever changing customer requirements (Froehle et al., 2000).

Tourism services cannot be considered as one dimensional; rather they are an amalgam of tangible and intangible components which must allow for the constant presence of the tourism consumer (Kotler et al., 2003; Keller, 2006). Indeed, any analysis of tourism needs consideration of the tourist to generate knowledge on the reasons why tourism is consumed and to help practitioners in developing products that meet customer needs (Holloway and Taylor, 2006). As customers gain more power and control the development of new offerings is becoming more important (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009). For Stamboulis and Skyannis (2003), tourism has primarily been concerned with the tourist experience of visiting, observing, learning, enjoying and living in a different style of life. It is the tourist's experience of these activities that is used to determine the overall value received (Oh et al., 2009). This challenges tourism practitioners to deliver and develop tourism offerings that are personally meaningful and which reflect tourist behaviours, values and market trends. In recent times increasing attention has been given to cultural tourism as a mechanism to define national identity thus generating new

sources of revenue which offer greater differentiation (Hannabuss, 1999). Cultural tourism offers an important resource to showcase the uniqueness of a destination and to prevent the world from turning into a ‘global village,’ (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009).

1.2 Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism, once considered a niche market, is increasingly recognised as a mainstream element of contemporary tourism, taking in a diversity of activities and resources (Graham et al., 2000; McManus, 1997). Internationally, cultural tourism represents about one third of all tourism business and is one of the key drivers of destination attractiveness and competitiveness (OECD, 2009). According to Fáilte Ireland (2007:59) “Ireland’s cultural and historical heritage is one of the strong magnets for tourists coming to Ireland”. While definitional simplicity is appealing, the vastness of the cultural tourism sector makes it difficult to define succinctly. Cultural tourism, is divided into four main areas: 1] Traditional Culture 2] Living Culture 3] Natural Heritage 4] Built Heritage (Fáilte Ireland, 2008), each area comprising a number of constituent elements, depicted below.

Table 1.1: The Irish Cultural Tourism Sector

Traditional Culture	Living Culture	Natural Heritage	Built Heritage
Traditional music, song & dance	Performing arts such as modern dance, theatre, classical & modern music, theatre & opera	Ireland’s geological & ecological systems	Stately homes, historic houses
The Irish language		The distinctive Irish landscape	Pre-Christian / Celtic / medieval sites
Gaelic sports	The visual arts, film, literature, genealogy	Wildlife & natural habitats in uplands, waterways, woodlands & coastal areas	Attractions & gardens
	Shopping & crafts Festivals & events		Heritage centres, museums Historic towns & interpretive centres

McIntosh and Goeldner (1990:14) define cultural tourism as “*travel to experience, and, in some cases, participate in a vanishing life-style that lies within human memory.*”

Johnson and Thomas (1995) among others argue that there is an over consideration on the term ‘past’ in descriptions of cultural tourism and that the sector draws on the past

for the benefit of the present and future (Millar, 1999). A bringing together of these themes is represented in the definition of cultural tourism by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as *“the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present”* (NTHP, 2008:2).

According to Fáilte Ireland (2009) cultural tourism embraces the full range of experiences visitors can undertake to learn what makes a nation distinctive such as, its lifestyle, its heritage, its arts and its people. The demand for cultural tourism experiences continues to grow worldwide (Hannabuss, 1999) and it is estimated that this form of tourism currently achieves average growth rates of fifteen percent - three times the overall growth rate of other forms of tourism (Fáilte Ireland, 2007). Reflecting on tourism from a postmodernist perspective Hannabuss (1999) argues that cultural tourism practitioners face a number of challenges amongst which the increasing emphasis on ‘experience’ is to the fore. The ITIC (2006:55) assert, *“The core goal of Irish tourism is to develop and deliver distinctive, authentic and memorable experiences that stimulate increased visits, longer dwell time and higher expenditure...The quality of the experience is the key”*. Cultural attractions are a very important part of the Irish tourism product but need greater product development, innovation and integration in the area of experiences (ITIC, 2009). However, if Ireland is to profit from the growth in cultural tourism it is clear that this cannot be achieved without a concerted effort to design better tourism experiences.

1.3 Cultural Tourism Experiences

The importance of experiences has gained substantial support from academia and policy makers and is viewed as an essential means of creating superior customer value and competitive advantage in modern business (Voss, 2004). Indeed, there is a collective agreement in many national tourism reports that the development of authentic, enriching and memorable new experiences is of immense competitive importance to the Irish tourism sector, with authentic cultural experiences particularly high on the discerning traveller’s agenda (Fáilte Ireland, 2008; ITIC, 2010). The attraction of cultural tourism sites is not limited to a desire to observe the physical asset, but for experiences derived from personal and emotional connections with heritage (Timothy, 1997). McKercher

and Ho (2004) emphasise the importance of placing the visitor experience at the centre of cultural tourism rather than the traditional over reliance on the physical heritage asset. Such physical assets, many of which were not originally intended for tourist consumption, should be carefully transformed into something that can offer a cultural experience capable of satisfying tourists' needs (McKercher and Ho, 2004). The core physical asset of cultural tourism only fulfils tangible needs, whereas experiences target higher self-induced needs, which transcends the tangible offering (Xu, 2009). Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009) argue that the experience value of tourism products is the overriding factor influencing customers' motivation to visit an attraction. Offering experiences distinguishes organisations from other competing tourism offerings because they have a special meaning for the tourist (Morgan and Hemmington, 2009). Experiences are increasingly being employed as distinct economic offerings in a broad spectrum of commercial contexts (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) and are especially important to cultural tourism since many consumers consider that they help them to connect with traditional culture and values (Fáilte Ireland, 2007). McIntosh and Prentice (1999:607) consider that many built cultural attractions have traditionally presented a '*show and know*' version of the past, which lacks emotional impact and does not deliver the experience required by the modern cultural tourist.

The overall visitor experience is the outcome of the combination and interaction of many tangible and intangible elements (Swarbrooke, 2002). Each element needs to be carefully designed, as many factors, some uncontrollable by the attraction itself, influence the experience, including the visitor's frame of mind and their expectations and preconceived ideas prior to the visit (Page, 2007). While tourism practitioners recognise the arrival of the experience economy and acknowledge that tourists require more than the basics offerings, not all practitioners understand how to create and put into practice this new desire for tourism experiences (Morgan, et al., 2009). Despite considerable progress in the study of experiences over the past decades in a number of areas, there is a strong consensus that the conceptual configuration of tourism experiences remains particularly challenging (Aho, 2001; Berridge, 2007). From a generalist perspective authors such Boswijk et al. (2007) consider that the field is experiences is still in the pre-theory stage lacking in empirical evidence. Tourism experiences are presented as multifaceted consumptive experiences resulting from

numerous inputs (Gunn, 1988; Smith, 1994), yet they remain particularly challenging events to envision and “*require in-depth study of every aspect of the process that leads to an experiential outcome*” (Berridge, 2007:71). All of which presents providers with extensive difficulties in developing, standardising and managing visitor experiences. Two overriding issues currently face academics and tourism practitioners, firstly the need to address the scant understanding of what comprises a commercial experience (Poulsson and Kale, 2004), and secondly, how to create and put into practice the new desire for tourism experiences (Morgan et al., 2009). Oh et al. (2007:129) contend that “*the experience economy concept has been introduced to the tourism literature only at an introductory conceptual level*” and needs much more research to understand the components and characteristics of touristic experiences (Larsen, 2007).

1.4 Research Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of this research is to explore the nature of experiences and the process by which they are developed, specifically within the cultural tourism sector in Ireland. Justification for this research comes from the increasing demand for quality tourism experiences and from the necessity of expanding cultural tourism offerings beyond the core physical asset. This research aims to provide insight into the characteristics and components of cultural tourism experiences and the process to be followed in their development. By doing so, the researcher aims to provide a framework to enhance the future effectiveness of experience design in cultural tourism enterprises. This research aims to build both academic and practitioner knowledge by seeking to address this question: What is the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed?

This question will be addressed through the following research objectives:

1. To understand the nature of experiences within a cultural tourism context
2. To identify and clarify the elements of a cultural tourism experience
3. To develop a framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism attractions

1.4.1 Methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives the researcher will adopt a case study approach; however this will be preceded by an in-depth study of existing literature in the fields of service design, experiences and cultural tourism. This review of literature will seek to clearly establish the characteristics and components of experiences, the antecedents that need to be considered in the design of experiences. The research seeks to progress existing models in new product and service development to the field of experience design. Once a framework has been conceptualised from theory the researcher proposes to adopt a case study methodology to refine the framework and test its usefulness for the design of cultural tourism experiences. As experience design is an emergent area, case study research is deemed an appropriate method in this exploratory context (Yin, 1994). The case approach allows the researcher to study the characteristics and components of experiences and for the experience development process to be studied in its natural setting. Meaningful and relevant theory can be generated from the understanding gained through the observation of actual practice (Meredith, 1998). A single case will be used which exhibits best practice in Irish cultural tourism. The researcher will utilise a number of data collection methods (interviews, direct-observation and documentary analysis) in order to build an understanding of the real-life process of experience design. The multi-source information collected will be triangulated at all stages to ensure validity and the development of a formal case protocol will seek to increase the reliability of the research findings.

There are limits to the generalisability of the results from case-based research, however it is the researchers assertion that the observations likely to arise from such a study are necessary in order to effectively refine the conceptual framework and it is anticipated that the findings will be instrumental in building a deeper understanding of the characteristics, challenges and process of developing cultural tourism experiences.

1.5 Outline of the Study

Chapter one explores and defines tourism and the tourist and offers a brief sectoral overview of both the broad tourism context and more explicitly the cultural tourism sector. The chapter outlines the contemporary challenges that the sector faces in the rationale for the development of new experiences so as to address the needs of contemporary tourists. The chapter closes with a presentation of the research aims and objectives and an indication of the methodology to be employed in achieving them.

Chapter two examines the nature of experiences based on a number of academic streams of research and discusses how experiences have come to be recognised as distinct economic offerings. A set of components of cultural tourism experiences are presented and their implications for the experience design process established.

Chapter three is concerned with exploring the process whereby experiences can be developed in tourism enterprises. Based on a review of new product and service development literature a conceptual framework is presented which outlines the key stages, activities, participants and outputs to be followed for new experience development. A number of antecedents which underpin a successful experience development process are identified and discussed.

Chapter four presents the series of choices which inform the researcher's methodology. This chapter seeks to explain the author's approach to this study and details the methodology applied. The qualitative strategy adopted is discussed, followed by a description and rationale for the design and administration of the various data collection techniques. The data collected was managed and analysed using Nvivo 8, an analysis tool which enabled the researcher to analyse data in an objective, uniform fashion, adding to the overall reliability and rigour of the research process.

Chapter five presents the findings from the data collection and analysis stages of the research. Findings are presented on the nature and components of tourism cultural experiences and the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed at the case study site.

Chapter six consists of a comprehensive discussion of the research findings on the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the manner by which they are developed. In this chapter the main points of interest that emanated from the current study are discussed. The chapter combines the qualitative findings of the case study with the literature reviewed to consider contradictions and validations in relation to the research objectives. The discussion allows for the refinement of the conceptual development framework presented in earlier chapters.

Chapter seven concludes the thesis by summarising the key findings in experience development for cultural tourism practitioners. The practical and theoretical contributions emanating from the study are discussed. The chapter finishes by discussing the limitations and recommendations of the work whilst also providing possible directions for future studies.

Chapter Two: The Nature and Components of Cultural Tourism Experiences

This chapter presents literature on experiences in order to facilitate greater understanding of the nature and components of cultural tourism experiences. This will be achieved by integrating the salient aspects from experience, service design and cultural tourism literature.

2.1 The Progression from Services to Experiences

There is a general acceptance within the literature that a paradigm shift has occurred from services to experiences. This is largely due to the increasingly sophisticated nature of customers and requires firms to distinguish their offerings to meet the desire for greater differentiation and personalisation (Schmitt, 1999). Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons (2004:10) propose that the next stage of competitive and economic progression involves a *“transformation from the traditional concept of a service transaction to one of an experience.”* For Pine and Gilmore (1999:8-9) *“goods are tangible products that companies standardise”* and sell for their features and services are *“intangible activities performed for a particular client”* designed to offer a set of benefits. However, these offerings have become increasingly standardised and commoditised with little to differentiate them beyond price and availability. An experience *“occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event”* (Pine and Gilmore, 1999:8-9). Entering the experience economy requires a progression from offering a set of functional features and benefits towards engaging consumers on an emotional level for greater competitive advantage (Schmitt, 1999). The Future Foundation (2005:14) note that *“increasingly people want to be differentiated by what they do, not what they buy, so they are seeking to acquire social capital that aspirational brands once provided, through experiences that bring emotional benefits”*.

Thus, experiences offer more meaningful value as they can ‘touch’ people in a manner unachievable by products or services (Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009:312). This engagement results in a higher order economic offering that allows for premium pricing, differentiation and greater customer loyalty (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Gupta and Vajic (2002) reinforce the difference between services and experiences by acknowledging the active role that customers are given in creating their own use environment. Indeed, a service becomes experiential through personal interaction with organisational elements such as activities, people and other customers (Echeverri, 2005). The transition to experiences represents a critical challenge for organisations, as experiences are not the same as services, and as such need to be deliberately designed to incorporate the different characteristics of experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Consequently the design of experiences requires an understanding of experiences, their characteristics and elements.

2.2 Defining the Elements of Experiences

Williams (2006:482) aptly summarises the significance of clearly understanding experiences by referring to the Canadian Tourism Commission marketing strategy which states “*you can't create a positive experience if the experience hasn't been defined.*” While there is no universally accepted definition of experiences (Jurowski, 2009), the term transcends all languages and has become a broad term to describe the feelings and encounters that an individual has during everyday life (Carù and Cova, 2003). The term experience has come to represent encounters of a higher order, as optimal or extraordinary events that are typified by high levels of emotional intensity with the experience narrative revealed over time (Arnould and Price, 1993).

Gupta and Vajic (2002) consider that many designed experiences have failed as they lack understanding of the deeper nature of an experience. In order to better appreciate and delineate experiences, it is appropriate to firstly explore how academic literature has progressed from seeking to understand the characteristics of *inadvertent* experiences, which occur by happenstance, to those of commercial experiences, which are purposefully, designed economic offerings, created to deliver experiential outcomes for the consumer. The literature review unveils a number of research streams which add

light to the characteristics of experiences. Table 2.1 presents a chronological overview of some of the key concepts in experience literature and illustrates the different emphases in literature in the intervening period.

Table 2.1: Key Concepts in Experience Literature

AUTHORS	EXPERIENCE CHARACTERISTICS
Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Havlena & Holbrook, 1986	Events which stimulate the emotions of pleasure arousal & dominance Experiences as hedonistic events
Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; 1991; 1997	Experiences offer optimal, extraordinary, absorbing, personal control, joy & valuing, spontaneous, holistic sensations giving rise to 'Flow'
Reynolds, 1992	Degrees of authenticity and enthrallment
Arnould & Price, 1993	Emotional intensity, personal growth & renewal, <i>communitas</i>
Carbone & Haeckel, 1994; Berry et al., 2006	Cumulative perception formed by consolidating embedded context specific clues, 'Take-away' impressions, set of discrete sub-experiences
Prentice, 1993; 1998, McIntosh & Prentice, 1999	Nostalgia, meaning, inspiration, wonder, & reflection; personal meanings
Goulding, 1997a	Nostalgia, authenticity, educational factors, the opportunity for social interaction
Pine & Gilmore 1998; 1999	Unique and memorable events, requiring customer participation (ranging from active to passive) & connection (ranging from absorption to immersion). Four realms: education, entertainment, escapist & esthetic
Gupta & Vajic, 2000	Experiences are socially produced & context specific Involving sensations & knowledge acquisition. Require participation
Pullman & Gross, 2003; Voss, 2004	Experiences are a result of emotional responses & connections
Chase & Dasu, 2001	Experiences are recollected as key vivid moments, & are measured on the range of pain & pleasure, the high and low points
Aho, 2001	Characterises four core elements of the tourism experiences: emotional experiences; learning; practical experiences; transformational experiences.
Poulsson & Kale, 2004:270	Define a commercial experience as, " <i>an engaging act of co-creation between a provider and a consumer wherein the consumer perceives value in the encounter and in the subsequent memory of that encounter.</i> " Offers personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning & engagement
Hover & van Mierlo, 2006	Memorable Experience: The emotion can be recalled on a later occasion
Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009	Experiences are internal emotional events

Early research utilised psychology literature to understand the emotional nature of experiences, describing them as hedonistic events which stimulate emotions (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Havlena and Holbrook, 1986). The application of psychology literature is appropriate as experiences are formed within the individual by means of psychological processes (Larsen, 2007). Within this stream of literature Csikszentmihalyi is undoubtedly the forerunner, his research seeks to explain the essence of experiences through the idiom of *'flow'*, a state of complete absorption in an activity which is characterised by personal control, joy and valuing, and a spontaneous uninhibited letting-be (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; 1990). Further research, informed by psychology theory, progressed to study the motivations of consumer behaviour, and found that the desire for higher order experiences is at the heart of much of consumer behaviour (Mano and Oliver, 1993). Havlena and Holbrook (1986) tested Mehrabian and Russell's (1974) experience dimensions model and found that the three factors of pleasure, arousal, and dominance can successfully be used to describe the desired emotional outcomes of experiences. Pleasure refers to the degree to which a person feels good, happy or satisfied in the situation; arousal refers to the degree to which a person feels excited or stimulated; and dominance refers to the extent to which the individual feels in control of the situation.

From an outcome perspective, Arnould and Price (1993) expanded the study of experiences depicting extraordinary experiences as offering high levels of emotional intensity, opportunity for personal growth, renewal and *communitas* or fellowship with co-visitors. More recently, Hover and van Mierlo (2006), draw on cognitive psychology to offer three levels of experience:

Basal Experience: *An emotional reaction to a stimulus, with short term influence on ones memory*

Memorable Experience: *The emotion can be recalled on a later occasion*

Transforming Experience: *One which results in a long-lasting change to both attitude and behaviour*

To achieve economic progression organisations must seek to deliver either memorable or transforming experiences. Basal experiences are not good enough, as Getz (2007) contends that presenting visitors with ‘wow’ factors offers only short-term benefits, whereas memorable experiences are facilitated by reinforcing the existing values and attitudes of visitors through offering challenges and opportunities for learning and growth. It is of major significance that experiences for Pine and Gilmore (1998) are not considered as amorphous constructs; rather they are as real as any product or service offering, differing only in the manner in which they engage customers across the mutually compatible dimensions of participation (passive to active) and connection (absorption and immersion) together forming uniquely memorable experiences. Gupta and Vajic (2000) and Poulsson and Kale (2004) concur that experiences are socially produced but move a step closer to defining the nature of commercial experiences. For those authors commercial experiences are personally unique and context specific and afford the customer an active role in creating their own use environment facilitated “*by a detailed understanding of the nature of all the activities that engage a customer during the use of a product or service*”(Gupta and Vajic, 2000:38). Poulsson and Kale (2004) consider that activities need to offer personal relevance, sensations and learning or knowledge acquisition as they form the basis for the subsequent memory of the encounter. In summary the key points emerging from table 2.1 are that experiences are unique and context specific, achievable by affording customers an active role to encourage absorption or *flow* in order to generate a personally relevant and meaningful emotional outcome that can be recalled at a later stage. Now that we understand what an experience is the next stage is to break experiences down into a number of component parts to inform the design process.

In the same way that service design literature proposes breaking services into their constituent components for greater ease (Khurana and Rosenthal, 1997), knowledge of the characteristics of experiences facilitates their deconstruction into a number of core and peripheral components in a similar manner. The ‘core’ represents ‘*what*’ is offered and is described as “*the part of the service we think of when we name the service* (Iacobucci and Ostrom, 1993:158). The peripheral attributes describe ‘*how*’ the service is to be delivered and are subdivided further into physical and interactional attributes (Bitner 1990; Chase and Stewart 1994; Butcher et al., 2003). Physical attributes include

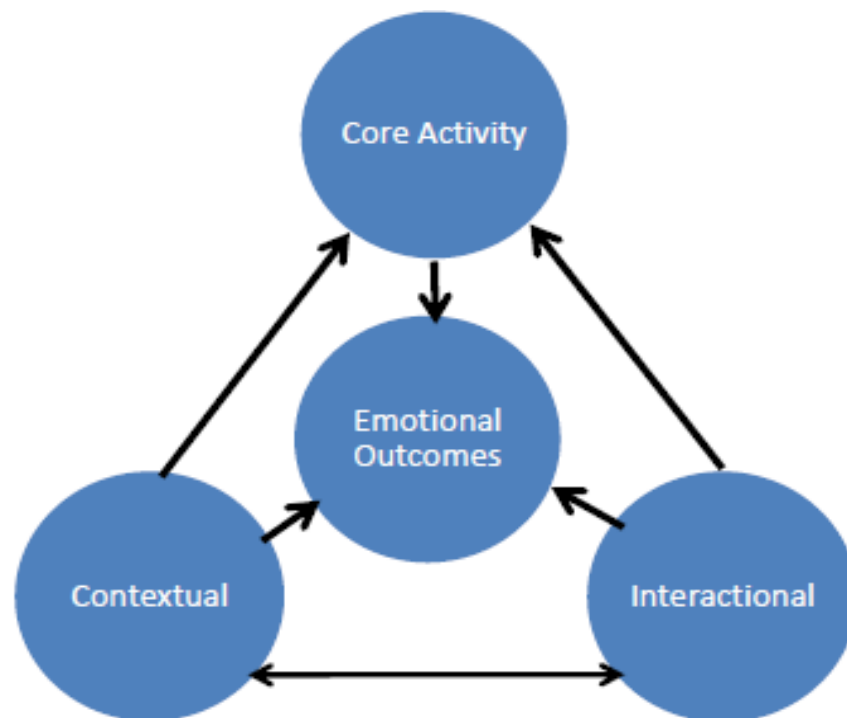
environmental, mechanical, and inanimate components of the service and interactional attributes include all of the interpersonal encounters involved in the service delivery (Anderson et al., 2008). Gupta and Vajic (2002) propose that an experience should be coordinated around a clearly designed core activity. In the case of cultural tourism the core activity is learning and experiencing culture (Richards, 1996) and is generally manifested through a number of core products such as physical heritage assets and artefacts. In the case of experiences, described earlier as higher order entities, the peripheral physical and interactional attributes of services have deeper and more powerful significance. The experience context stands for “*the physical setting, particular selection and arrangement of products, the world of objects and social actors, and the rules and procedures for social interactions with other customers and service facilitators*” which must as a whole, reinforce in a coherent manner the core offering and facilitate the experience (Gupta and Vajic, 2002:34). The contextual component is commonly referred to as the physical attribute in the design of services. However, for experiences it is more than the physical, as it describes the setting within which the experience occurs and includes non-physical elements which encompass the overall atmosphere and each individual’s personal values and attitudes (Falk and Dierking, 1992; Gupta and Vajic, 2002). Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) argue that service experiences cannot be properly understood unless they are considered in the scope of the context and setting within which the encounter take place. Visitors interpret the contextual component in a personal manner to form their own unique environment for experience creation (Gupta and Vajic (2000). Visitor experiences are becoming less and less concerned with simple inspections of physical offerings and more in terms of cerebral engagement (Claws, 1996). The interactional component must fully incorporate its visitors into the attraction by facilitating and stimulating interactions at a number of levels (Jennings and Weiler, 2006) to stimulate participation and connection and therefore includes both interpersonal and intercontextual interactions. Interactions may be interpersonal incorporating tourist providers and other tourists, and/or intercontextual (autonomous and non-human) such as interactions with signage, design, places, and objects which in combination offer opportunities for participation and co-creation (Beeton et al., 2006; Jennings and Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaieris, 2009).

What can be drawn from the foregoing discussion is that the core activity, contextual and interactional components are a starting point in deconstructing experiences. In recent times, a number of researchers have started to explore the emotional nature of experiences. Cook et al. (2002) consider that a feature of many high contact offerings is the desire for emotional stimulation which extends beyond standard benefits traditionally offered. Recent research asserts that tourists mainly consume services to stimulate emotions, which challenges tourism practitioners to achieve high emotionality in their experiences (Otto and Ritchie, 1996; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Aho (2001:33) contends that “*getting emotionally effected*” is one of the core outcomes of touristic experiences. Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009) contend that experiences are internal emotional events; however they note that greater research is required to understand the key inputs which contribute to customers’ emotional states. Many authors contend that it is specific encounters that substantially influence emotional states of visitors (Zeithaml et al., 1988; Bitner 1992; Arnould and Price, 1993). Experience emotions viewed psychologically are feelings which are manifested via triggers or impulses which generate the experience, and from which value in the form of emotional outcomes is perceived by customers during and after the experience by the level of captivation experienced in the encounter (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Whilst emotional outcomes are enhanced by learning, sensory stimulation and co-creation activities (Echeverri, 2005; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Gupta and Vajic, 2003), they warrant a standalone component. Drawing from the foregoing discussion a tentative new definition of experiences is offered:

“Experiences are individual encounters which are designed around a core activity, they are context specific, created through varying levels of human interaction and supported through reinforcing activities with the goal of facilitating uniquely valuable emotional outcomes which can be recalled at a later stage.”

The definition allows experiences to be deconstructed into a proposed set of components of cultural tourism experiences, diagrammatically represented overleaf. The figure illustrates the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes components which in unison support and augment the core activity and provide a foundation for understanding the characteristics of experiences.

Figure 2.2: Proposed Components of Cultural Tourism Experiences



The components clearly reflect the elements of experience as extracted from a review of extant literature. It is important to note that these proposed conceptual components, as yet untested, can be considered to have a degree of overlap with each other as cumulatively they support the formation of unique experiences. With the foregoing material as background the components will be discussed sequentially in greater detail.

2.2.1 Emotional Outcomes Component

Experiences are “*a steady flow of fantasies, feelings, and fun*” (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982:132), and the most profound aspect of tourism experiences is their capacity to connect emotionally with visitors (Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). As illustrated in table 2.2 overleaf, authors have explored the emotional nature of experiences and the literature can be classified in three key themes: defining and identifying the types of emotional outcomes, the role of emotions in customer experiences and the design activities which create emotional outcomes.

Table 2.2: Overview of the Emotional Outcomes Component

Themes	Description	Sample Authors
Definition	<p>Emotions are feelings which are manifested via triggers or impulses which generate the experience and make the experience memorable</p> <p>Range of pleasure, arousal and power</p> <p>Emotions- Happiness, being involved, freedom, being thrilled, flow, joy and valuing, spontaneous, adventurous, awe, affiliation with loved ones, uplifting, majestic and special, nostalgia, meaning, inspiration, wonder, reflection; regression, surprise</p>	<p>Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Havlena & Holbrook , 1986; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Poulsson & Kale, 2004</p>
Role of emotional component in experience	<p>Offer a customer focused experience: which creates emotional value. Emotional value is the economic worth of feelings when customers positively experience products and services</p> <p>Offer emotional stimulation - touch emotions and get into the consumer psyche.</p> <p>To engage customers through all five senses.</p> <p>To influence the emotional state of consumers.</p> <p>To facilitate flow-like feelings.</p> <p>Tangibilise post-experience stage of tourist’s emotional experience</p>	<p>O’Sullivan & Spangler 1999; Barlow & Maul, 2000;Hudson & Ritchie, 2009; Schmitt, 1999; Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Chase & Dasu, 2001</p>
Features & activities in creating emotional outcome	<p>Clear identification of consumers desired emotions</p> <p>Understand customer perceptions- Information of anticipated needs, motives, and emotional outcomes. Segment visitor groups</p> <p>Create pre-perception of the emotional outcomes-</p> <p>Communicate a consistent perception that emotional desires that can be attained. Experience cues, clues, stimuli, triggers</p> <p>Sensory stimulation -sensescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes & tastescapes that provide personal relevance, novelty & surprise</p> <p>Support: from skilled, empathetic and responsive staff</p> <p>Tangibilise: Provide souvenirs and photographs</p>	<p>Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Brunner-Sperdin & Peters, 2009; Falk & Dierkling, 1992; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Wasserman et al., 2000; Poulsson & Kale, 2004 ;Berry et al., 2006; Aho, 2001; Carbone & Haeckel , 1994</p>

In terms of definition, emotions are feelings which are manifested via triggers or impulses along a range of pleasure, arousal and power which generate a memorable experience (Havlena and Holbrook, 1986; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Emotional outcomes are “*subjective personal reactions and feelings*” (Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009:171) whereby the level of emotional stimulation influences the overall satisfaction and value of the offering (Otto and Ritchie, 1996). A number of authors have explored the emotional nature of cultural tourism experiences with an array of

emotional outcomes emerging: adventure, awe, nostalgia, surprise, wonder and reflection, affiliation with loved ones, inspiration, majesty, specialness, regression, 'flow', happiness, being involved, freedom, energetic, and being thrilled (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975; Falk and Dierkling, 1992; Prentice, 1993; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Individuals or groups of tourists can be emotionally transformed through tourism activities, but it is particularly cultural tourism that has the greatest capability to provide spiritually transforming experiences (Aho, 2001).

McIntosh and Prentice (1999) consider that tourism practitioners need to design offerings which offer opportunities for emotional stimulation as they can represent the overall benefit for visitors in the form of personally relevant memories. In this respect the key role of the emotional outcomes component is to generate customer value. Emotional value is the economic worth of feelings when customers positively experience products and services (Barlow and Maul, 2000). A number of authors have discussed aspects of the role of emotional outcomes which includes, offering emotional stimulation to touch emotions and get into the consumer psyche to create rich and exciting memorable experiences (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009; Schmitt, 1999). Experience oriented settings need to strongly influence the emotional state of consumers by engaging them through both human and non human stimuli (Brunner Sperdin and Peters, 2009). As experiences are measured as a cumulative perception at multiple stages before, during and afterwards, emotional stimulation must be offered at many points and as emotional outcomes form take-away memories organisations need to tangibilise the post experience stage (Aho, 2001; Chase and Dasu, 2001; Berry et al., 2006; Berridge, 2007).

In order to fulfill the emotional outcomes component of experiences organisations need to undertake a number of activities to deliberately design an environment that offers an experience (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Berridge, 2007). For Havlena and Holbrook (1986) organisations must influence consumer behaviours by inducing subjective and emotional outcomes, which requires knowledge of the range of emotional outcomes sought by visitors at the very early stages of experience design. Exploring the motives and benefits of an experience from a visitor perspective is useful as it facilitates an

understanding of why customers consider certain offerings necessary and provides rich data on the emotional outcomes and value to be articulated in the process of experience development (Williams and Buswell, 2003). “*A motive is an internal factor that arouses, directs, and integrates a person’s behaviour*” (Iso-Ahola, 1980:230) and motives are the starting point of the decision making process (Crompton and McKay, 1997).

For Falk and Dierkling (1992) cultural tourism visitors seek to accomplish a variety of goals or potential benefits, social, educational, recreational, entertainment and reverential all of which may be combined as an emotional outcome. Prentice (1998) argues that tourism providers should refocus on the tourists themselves and design experiences that offer meaning, inspiration, wonder and reflection. To achieve this he advocates the use of customer perception auditing by segmenting visitor groups based on understanding the emotional benefits gained (as felt by them) rather than traditional methods such as socio-demographic profiling. A primary motive of cultural tourism is the desire for knowledge; therefore the corresponding emotional outcome offered can be designed to stimulate feelings of intellectual enrichment (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Beard and Ragheb, 1980, Poulsson and Kale, 2004). A second motive cited is the desire for novelty, conveyed by offering opportunities for thrills, adventure and surprise (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). An extension of the novelty motive is the desire for regression over the course of a visit (Crompton and McKay, 1997). For many visitors this involves the stimulation of selective memory or nostalgia, often for something from a different period of time (Walsh, 1992). Designers must offer visitors the facility to regress to an earlier emotional state supported by activities which allow them to reflect and /or exhibit the type of behaviour and emotions associated with it. Many visitors consider the opportunity for socialisation as a strong motive of cultural tourism (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Beard and Ragheb, 1980). Designers must present a set of conditions which encourage emotions of family and/or group togetherness. *Communitas* applies to a temporary state in which people are together and share a common emotion that is context specific (Getz, 2007). It is difficult to fully stimulate and engender emotions of sharing or a sense of belonging amongst visitors, but it is possible to design surroundings which assist visitors to be relaxed, uninhibited and open (Getz, 2007). The final motive that may be considered for experience designers is the

goal of rest, relaxation and well-being (Crompton and McKay, 1997; Beard and Ragheb, 1980). In addressing these motives designers need to understand the emotional state of *flow*, characterised by deep involvement and intense concentration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975). To stimulate *flow* organisations must develop activities that encourage visitors to pause, reflect and take adequate time to move through the cultural attraction.

Chase and Dasu (2001) consider that experiences are assembled through perceptions formed by individual interpretation relying on mental engagement which is assessed by the range of pain or pleasure, the high and low points, and the conclusion. As organisations move to design these emotional outcomes they must consider how they will be interpreted by consumers, that is, the mental image or perception that they can personally achieve a set of emotional outcomes. There are various mediators that affect a person's formation of a mental image which include a person's mental and physical state, personality, gender, age, experience, pre-consumption expectations and those that are outside of the individual, such as, socio-cultural influences all of which are highly subjective (Lin, 2003; LCEEI, 2007; Brunner Sperdin and Peters, 2009). Once knowledge of the various emotional outcomes is gathered and matched with knowledge of consumer's mental perception organisations can begin to define, purposefully design and communicate to visitors a consistent perception that emotional desires can be attained. An effectively articulated experience will clarify for customers their role in the value creation activities of an experience and will determine a set of favourable conditions for the customer to apply their own knowledge and expertise (O'Sullivan Spangler, 1999; Van Looy et al., 2003; Lally and Fynes, 2006). In order to communicate a consistent and coherent message the various tangible and intangible elements of each point or scape within the core offering can be augmented by designing and orchestrating a series of clues¹ which offer personal relevance, novelty, surprise, learning or engagement to create emotional outcomes (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Experience clue management is the systematic practice of applying customer knowledge to design an integrated series of "clues" carrying messages which collectively facilitate a customer's experience (Berry et al., 2002). As

¹ Clues are also referred to in the literature as cues, stimuli, visual elements, design, symbols, triggers and sensory stimulation (Schmitt, 1999; Carbone and Haeckel, 2002; Cook et al. 2002; Haeckel et al., 2003; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Echeverri, 2005; Berry and Carbone, 2007)

experience design is the process of creating emotional connections with customers through the organisation and planning of both the tangible and intangible elements (Pullman and Gross, 2004), organisations can align various clues with emotional outcomes of pleasure, arousal and power to anticipate and generate appropriate customer emotional scripts (Wasserman et al., 2000). Emotional clues are divided into mechanic (emitted by objects) and humanic (emitted by people) clues which elicit a set of emotions through sensory stimulation (objects) and supporting behaviour and appearance (Berry et al., 2002). Berry et al., (2006:44) contend that experience clues “*are anything in the service experience the customer perceives by its presence – or absence*”. Therefore, organisations should harmonise positive clues and remove those that are extraneous from the environment (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

Each clue or element facilitates a variety of emotional responses and converge to create the customers’ total experiences and this requires staff to be skilled, empathetic and responsive to reinforce emotional outcomes (Falk and Dierkling, 1992; Berry and Carbone, 2007). Visitors constantly experience their immediate environment and the objects in it via all their senses, thus organisations must engage visitors intellectually and physically and encourage participation through sensory stimulation (Falk and Dierkling, 1992). Multi-sensory perception aims to engage the consumers’ senses, sight, sound, touch and feeling in an unforgettable way allowing them to experience a product with as many senses as possible in a manner that supports the overall theme or core offering (Schmitt, 1999; LCEEI, 2007; Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Tourism should involve various sensescapes, such as soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes and geography of touch to enhance the emotional outcomes and the overall visitor experience (Urry 2002; Weiermair, OECD, 2004). In order to extend the emotional outcomes for visitor’s organisations need to provide opportunities for memorabilia to tangibilise the post experience stage (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Ek, 2008). Once the desired emotional outcomes have been identified then the contextual and interactional components must be configured to deliver these emotional outcomes.

2.2.2 Contextual Component

Tourism organisations cannot present customers with an experience; they can only create the context in which they can occur, as the experience of even simple artefacts involves a dynamic relationship of people, places and objects which does not occur in a vacuum (Watson and Kopachevsky, 1994; Buchenau and Fulton Suri, 2000; Schulze, 1992; Mossberg, 2003). Table 2.2 below displays the main themes of this component.

Table 2.3: Overview of the Contextual Component

Themes	Description	Sample Authors
Definition	The setting within which the experience occurs- <i>“the physical setting, particular selection & arrangement of products, the world of objects & social actors, & the rules and procedures for social interactions with other customers & service facilitators”</i> . Experiencescape - space of pleasure, enjoyment, entertainment, a meeting ground in which diverse groups interact. Dynamic relationship of people, places & objects	Gupta & Vajic, 2002:34 O’Dell & Billing (2005) Buchenau & Fulton Suri, 2000
Role of contextual component in experience	Effective communication of historical information-the contextual components capacity to construct images, convey information, & engage the visitor through social exchange Offer opportunities to construct personal narratives, browse & learn rather than strict adherence to a preset schedule Communicate particular behaviour/rules Make available artefacts & contexts that encourage experiences Offer an imaginative learning experience created by intertwining personal meaning to ensure credibility Communicating a consistent message to all sensory channels	Goulding, 1999 Holloway & Taylor, 2006; Richards & Wilson, 2003 Mossberg, 2007 Carù & Cova, 2003 McIntyre, 2009 Ludden, 2007
Activities in creating emotional outcome	The physical setting offers the moment of cerebral impact The spatial layout & functionality-signs, symbols, artefacts, ambient conditions (music, colour, lighting, scent). The architecture & feel of a building. Factors beyond control - personal motivations, interests, previous experience and knowledge used to interpret the context and form unique experiences. Design of artefacts, symbols & cues: Scapes – sensescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes Storytelling: A themed semi-scripted narrative, writing of storylines to manage the interplay of the personal, social & physical contexts Dream worlds with stages to act out roles Use messages to influence & enhance storyline Tiered learning: adapted towards different ages, interests & learning styles. Staff adept with handling questions Authentic: Cues & scapes with opportunities to feel & imagine	Falk & Dierking, 1992, Mossberg, 2007, McIntosh & Prentice, 1999, Swarbrooke, 2002; Dann & Jacobsen, 2002; Jennings & Weiler, 2006, Boswijk et al., 2008; Pine & Gilmore, 1999, Stuart & Tax, 2004, Mossberg, 2007, Wasserman et al. 2000; Poulsson & Kale 2004

Following the layout of table 2.2 overleaf this section starts with a definition of the contextual component to guide the discussion. This is followed by an exploration of the role that context plays in facilitating experiences and concludes with the activities that organisations can undertake to create an effective contextual component. The contextual component represents the setting within which the experience occurs and includes “*the physical setting, particular selection and arrangement of products, the world of objects and social actors, and the rules and procedures for social interactions with other customers and service facilitators*” (Gupta and Vajic (2002:34). Experiences are socially produced through participation in a specific context, and designed experiences require participation, interaction and learning acquired via different contextual elements (Arnould and Price, 1992; Buchenau and Fulton Suri, 2000; Tax and Stuart, 2003; Gupta and Vajic, 2003; Berry et al., 2006). As services progress towards experiences the servicescape must also progress towards the experience realm or experiencescape - a space of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, a meeting ground in which diverse groups interact (Bitner, 1991; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; O’Dell and Billing, 2005; Mossberg, 2007).

The role of the contextual component is to stimulate the communication of historical information, in effect the core activity of cultural tourism (Goulding, 1999). The contextual component should offer tourists opportunities to construct their own narratives and allow them to browse and learn rather than strict adherence to a preset schedule to stimulate an imaginative learning experience (Holloway and Taylor, 2006; Richards and Wilson, 2003; McIntyre, 2009). To achieve this, the contextual component has to construct images, convey information and engage tourists through either social exchange or more traditional textual and visual methods (Goulding, 1999). For Falk and Dierkling (1992:130) “*the key is to create an environment in which the visitor becomes part of a seamless array of mutually reinforcing contexts which separately and collectively support the museums goals.*” The contextual component should offer opportunities for personally relevant activities that challenge tourists and stimulate concentration, interest, and enjoyment thus leading to engaging experiences (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). Therefore, the contextual component has an influential role on the overall tourist experience as each of its elements needs to facilitate the creation of experiences by communicating particular behaviour and rules (Mossberg, 2007).

There are various elements of the contextual component which influence tourist's behaviour and the overall experience (Falk and Dierking, 1992; Swarbrooke, 2002; Mossberg, 2007; Berridge, 2007). The physical setting offers the moment of cerebral impact, forming immediate impressions and has far reaching effects on behaviour and perception with significant influence on the overall experience (Falk and Dierking, 1992). This component encompasses the architecture and feel of a place, the spatial layout and functionality, the signs, symbols and artefacts, the ambient conditions each of which affects consumers' behaviour and needs to stimulate interest and engagement (Shostack, 1985; Bateson, 1991; Falk and Dierking, 1992; Goulding, 1999; Mossberg, 2007). There are also factors beyond the control of either the attraction or the tourist which can include, weather conditions, the particular combination of tourists at any one time, the personal motivations, interests, previous experience and knowledge, all of which tourists use to interpret the context and form unique experiences (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Suvantola, 2002; Swarbrooke, 2002).

McIntyre (2009) considers that cultural tourists seek an imaginative learning experience created by intertwining personal meaning with the authentic objects and information presented. Cultural attractions are considered as centres of lifelong learning, telling the story of perhaps a nation, a city or its people to its visitors with varying levels of education and socio-economic backgrounds (Lord, 2007). Tourists expect to be both educated and entertained (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Goulding, 2000; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). This presents two challenges: firstly, to bring the site alive by involving the tourist, and secondly to develop ways of imparting information successfully. The combined use of '*costumed animators and careful staging of settings to make them as realistic as possible,*' are an effective means of allowing tourists to have an authentic experience of the past (Holloway and Taylor, 2006:602). Goulding (2000:105) summarises the challenge presented to experience designers of including a learning component, by asking, "*is a single form of learning suited to everyone of the variety of markets to which the attraction appeals?*" A number of different opinions must be explored to address this question. Traditionally, the modes of information and learning used in the tourism sector have been the guidebooks, maps and labels and descriptive words. Jones (1992:915) argues that artefacts and their images "*cannot speak for themselves*" and require captions and labels to explain their meaning. Vom Lehn and

Heath (2005) describe cultural experiences as immersive and contemplative, *“Plaques designed to be read by children will be dismissed by adults as patronising, while too much information given to those seeking the detailed background to a site will put off those enjoying an entertaining day out.”* An organisation must carefully choose its mode(s) of information transfer whether traditional labelling and/or technological or socially mediated modes are used they should be considered as aids which *“light the blue touch paper”* of imagination (McIntyre, 2009:163). As learning in cultural tourism tends to be informal, frontline employees frequently provide the spark for much of the learning which takes place and therefore, must be trained in how to handle questions from visitors (Lord, 2007).

In cultural tourism learning is generally informal, voluntary and affective as it frequently focuses on personal feelings, attitudes, interests, beliefs and values (Lord, 2007). Information technology (I.T.) such as PDA devices (personal digital assistant), audio visual presentations, electronic guidebooks and maps are in recent times being increasingly utilised to transfer information and learning (Fesenmaier et al., 2000; Woodruff et al., 2001). However, this form of media challenges the active and collaborative nature of many tourist experiences (Brown and Chalmers, 2003). To achieve a balance and meet the needs of different ages, interests and learning styles of their target markets, experience designers should develop tiered learning experiences. Learning and intellectual stimulation can be either intentional or unintentional and forms part of the core activity of most cultural tourism attractions and for many people is highly valued and contributes to personal growth (Aho, 2001; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Roberts and Sparks, 2006). In the case of educational experiences, a tourist absorbs the experience while actively participating through mental and/or physical interactive engagement, which implies that providers must offer opportunities to increase their skills and knowledge (Oh et al., 2007). Falk and Dierking (1992:100) contend that learning is generally socially mediated and that tourists learn while *“...talking to, listening to and watching other people...people learn within settings that are at once physical and psychological constructs”*. Giddens (1990) considers that cultural tourism organisations can present original artefacts and objects in recontextualised environments in place of displaying them in cases and as exhibits. In this manner, learning can be influenced by the ambiance and sensory elements of the

environment and learning can occur “*via the consideration of, immersion in and reflection upon the objects and environments presented as having artistic relevance*”(McIntyre, 2009:159).

As the contextual component transcends the physical, authors have advocated the use of activities such as theatrical staging, theming and storytelling to translate and communicate the context and make it more accessible and comprehensible (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Stuart and Tax, 2004; Mossberg, 2007). For Mossberg (2007) a theme needs to have a context with characters and structure, with a story (real or fictive) which reflects the core offering of an organisation in order to create a more meaningful and memorable experience. Themes and stories connect the disparate elements within the context (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) and can communicate the core activity in an understandable and memorable way as “*the story becomes a verbal and visual metaphor*” which generates a positive experience (Mossberg, 2007:71). The writing of storylines helps to manage the interplay of the personal, social, and physical contexts of tourism experiences (Falk and Dierking, 1992) and can be supported through clue management of authentic elements.

Experiences are manifested as a succession of sub-experiences packed with messages which build and influence a storyline and indeed the customers overall assessment of an offering (Berry et al., 2006). These feelings or sub-experiences can be managed by engineering customer experiences through the design and integration of experience clues such as the visual, auditory, tactile signals emanating from service offerings (Carbone and Haeckel, 1994). Functional, mechanic, and humanic clues need to be managed in a consistent way to enhance the customer’s experience (Berry and Bendapudi 2003; Carbone and Haeckel 1994; Haeckel et al., 2003). Effective mechanic clues can spark customer interest, stimulate experimentation, offer core benefits, whereas with interactive services, humanic clues offer the best opportunity for surprises (Berry et al., 2002). Functional clues refer to the operational elements of the experience and provide reassurance of an offering and are used to influence the clients overall perception of a service experience (Berry, Wall & Carbone, 2006). The use of clues is particularly applicable to tourism services where the use of themed scripting mixed with memorabilia and sensory stimulation can enhance the interpretation of inanimate

physical material. Indeed, Wall and Berry (2007) confirm that positive humanic clues dominate the influence of mechanic clues in certain high contact settings. As with the previous component, designers must orchestrate all clues and eliminate negative ones to manage customer experience of the contextual component (Pine and Gilmore, 1999).

The contextual component must offer scope for tourists to play different roles, interact, and experience new things through the use dream worlds with stages (Mossberg, 2007). This necessitates the gathering of information of attitudes and behaviours of both existing and potential customers which helps to define its audience learning objectives. To create an effective context that reinforces or enhances the customer experience, tourism experience offerings should involve sensescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes and mindscapes (Steinecke, 2000; Hjalager & Richards, 2002; Dann and Jacobsen, 2002). Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009:172) contend that sensory stimulation should not be a once only phenomenon; rather “*tourism entrepreneurs should try to surprise the guests over and over.*” Ludden (2007) contends that sensory design can support the communication of a consistent message to all of the sensory channels of its visitors. These scapes encourage customers to create dream worlds where they can act out roles, interact, and experience new things through use of visual signals, colours, sounds, a theme or a story (Mossberg, 2007). According to Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009:323) experience concepts must be attentive “*to the spirit of the place and its people*”. For those authors this implies that context related experience environments “*will link with the destination’s history, its legends, folklore, stories, myths, etc.,*” and they warn against the practice of experience concept reproduction undertaken by many global organisations who fail to adapt experiences to their context.

Achieving an experience environment that is totally staged and directed is difficult as experiences are subjective and each visitor interprets the elements of the contextual component in a personal manner to form their own unique environment for experience creation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Buchenau and Fulton Suri 2000; Gupta and Vajic, 2002). Tourists seek authentic and genuine contact with both the people and the environment as it offers deeper immersion and enhances the overall experience (McIntyre, 2009; Stuart and Tax, 2004). Authenticity in an experience refers to the degree to which the customer perceives the offering to be genuine and credible which

implies that cues and scapes within the context need to be authentic (Taresen and Karinen, 2006). Yeoman et al., (2007) offer assistance and understanding to practitioners on the prerequisites of authenticity in cultural tourism. They contend that authentic attractions are deeply rooted in place and community, thus visitor's experiences should be founded on local values and presented in their original state that is truthful and reflective of a destination. Equally offerings must be uncomplicated and easy to comprehend as visitors are unlikely to believe complicated offerings. As a final point they assert that as tourism is regarded as a human intensive activity all forms of interaction need to be genuine.

Authenticity is quite complex and personal in nature and determined by no one fixed origin and is based on the individuals own personal context and is formed through an individual projecting their views and mental images on the overall offering of a particular attraction (Adams, 1984; Pearce and Moscardo, 1985; Bruner, 1991; Duncan, 1978; Silver, 1993). As authenticity is highly personal organisations need to consider visitors as active players in the production of their own meaningful contexts (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). Richards and Wilson (2006) consider that it is important to provide visitors with the raw materials from which to construct and develop their own their own narratives which draw upon their imaginative potential. Storymining is a new experience design tool emanating from science and engineering attractions. It moves from a 'just the facts' method of communication which can leave visitors baffled and bored, towards exposing the layers of meaning in culture to create compelling connections by moving from facts to the development of stories (Sohus and Wessen, 2004).. In summary, the contextual component must tell the story of the attraction and allow visitors to learn, as these activities are critical to cultural tourism experiences as visitors want to 'feel' and engage with the experience offering however, "*it is a question of getting the right balance between intrusion and imagination*" (Falk and Dierkling, 1992:153; Goulding, 2000). Providers must ensure that each element of the context, its activities of learning and storytelling and the cues and scapes that communicate them are authentic. Cultural tourism providers should offer contexts that encourage experiences and which can be properly utilised by consumers to co-create their own, unique, experiences (Carù and Cova, 2003, 2007), therefore the next component to be discussed is the interactional component.

2.2.3 Interactional Component

This section explores how various forms of interaction can also influence and facilitate experiences. The discussion commences with defining the interactional component and proceeds to examine its role and the activities that may be undertaken to generate interaction for memorable experiences.

Table 2.4: Overview of the Interactional Component

Theme	Description	Sample Authors
Definition	The interaction of a customer with personal and non-personal mediators which leads to the co-creation of an experience. The interactional component represents all visitor interactions which may be interpersonal incorporating tourist providers, other tourists and intercontextual (autonomous & non-personal) interactions with signage, design, places, objects & atmosphere which in combination offer opportunities for participation & co-creation	Gupta & Vajic, 2000; Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Beeton, Bowen & Santos, 2006; Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009
Role of interactional component in experience	To generate opportunities for active participation To influence the atmosphere & overall satisfaction levels To permit individuals to manage the level of personal control that suits them throughout the experience To offer scope for 'Flow' i.e. focused concentration, control, feelings of timelessness & worryless. To control the customer use environment to make it conducive to customer absorption To control attention-split the experience into a series of moments	Pine & Gilmore (1999) Csikszentmihalyi (1975) Brunner-Sperdin & Peters (2009) Falk & Dierking (1992) Arnould & Price, 1993; Morgan & Curiel, 2009 McIntosh & Prentice 1999, Ooi 2002; 2005, Falk & Dierking 1992
Features & activities in creating interaction	A set of activities & mediators which stimulate interaction in conjunction with the core experience offering: Opportunities, Prompts, Touch-points, Scripted encounters, Technology, People, Sensory cues, mediators Recognition of the customer as an intrinsic partner - Provide scope for customers & employees to jointly create experience Develop mediators: visual, sensory, intellectual challenges, opportunities for imagination regression & nostalgia Remove barriers to interaction: dialogue, access, transparency & risk-benefits. Frontline staff must be highly trained & committed to personalising experiences	Gupta & Vajic, 2000; Beeton et al., 2006; Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah & Fesenmaier, 2009; Jennings & Weiler, 2006; Langkeek, 2001; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Poulsson & Kale, 2004; Urry, 1990; Arnould & Price, 1993; Aho, 2001; Tax & Stuart, 2002

A number of authors have explored how various forms of interaction stimulate experiences. For Gupta and Vajic (2000) it is the interaction of a customer with a service provider which leads to the co-creation of an experience. Echeverri (2005) argues that a service becomes an experience when visitors interact with a number of specific prerequisites such as organisational structures, activities, personnel and other customers. Jennings and Weiler (2006) assert that visitors interact with both personal and non-personal mediators to co-create an experience. Poulsson and Kale (2004) consider that it is through this co-creation that customer value and memories are created. In terms of definition the interactional component represents all visitor interactions which may be interpersonal incorporating tourist providers and other tourists, and/or intercontextual (autonomous and non-personal) interactions with signage, design, places, and objects and atmosphere which in combination offer opportunities for participation and co-creation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Beeton et al., 2006; Jennings and Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaieris, 2009). This supports the entire concept of the visitor experience at cultural attractions which is to enrich, educate and entertain tourists lives while participating in a cultural tourism activity and thereby influence their levels of overall satisfaction with the entire offering (Green and Chalip, 1997; 1998, Laverie and Arnett, 2000).

The role of this component is to stimulate active participation in order to generate more meaningful experiences (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). The opportunity for social interaction is one of the primary motives of cultural tourists (Goulding, 1997); however, tourism practitioners need to understand that experiences may be constructed both individually and collectively, with the final experience concluded independently (Aho, 2001). As experiences are internal in nature (Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009), it is also important to permit individuals to manage the level of personal control that suits them throughout the experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1990), thus allowing the customer to actively participate and co-create an experience that is personally relevant. The interactional component needs to view tourists as active participants rather than passive consumers by letting them *“play key roles in creating the performance or event that yields the experience”* (Pine and Gilmore, 1998:101). The role of this component is to control the tourist use environment to make it conducive to absorption and to stimulate

flow and to control attention by splitting the experience into a series of moments (McIntosh and Prentice 1999; Ooi, 2002; 2005; Falk & Dierkling 1992).

Drawing from the foregoing, three main types of interactions stimulate experiences, tourists with organisation personnel, tourists with other tourists and tourist interactions with intercontextual elements; each is now discussed in terms of their features and the activities that support them. Many authors have emphasised the importance of employee/customer interaction for successful experiences (Lovelock, 1981; Gronroos, 1985; Parasuraman et al., 1985; Grove and Fisk, 1997; McIntyre, 2009). In a tourism context, interaction between tourists and frontline personnel can generate extremely intense and personal experiences influencing the atmosphere and overall satisfaction levels (Gustafsson et al., 2006; Amoah and Baum, 1997). Gupta and Vajic (2000) assert that organisations must provide scope for customers and employees to jointly create the experience with Mossberg (2007) giving frontline personnel the role of value creators and entertainers. Carlzon (1987) describes the point of interaction between the customer and frontline personnel as '*moments of truth*' where a brief opportunity exists to both match and excel customer expectations. It is particularly difficult to manage '*moments of truth*' in a touristic setting, as Amoah and Baum (1997) describes the fragmentation of the experience, with many and varying '*moments of truth*' taking place with a wide range of intermediaries, presenting complexity and issues of control to the main tourism provider. This element must therefore, articulate and delineate opportunities for both customers and frontline personnel to encourage active participation and interaction.

For Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2000) the concept of co-creation can only be pioneered if the organisation recognises the customer as an intrinsic partner in the process and affords them personal control dependent on the degree of involvement sought in the experience. The basis of their argument is the creation of an experience environment within which customers create their own unique personalised experiences. Therefore, a key activity to encourage interaction is the removal of any barriers to interaction. Various authors outline how interaction can be encouraged by creating opportunities for active participation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), and by controlling the customer use environment to make it conducive to customer absorption (Tax and Stuart). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) identify four key building blocks for interactions, namely, [1]

dialogue which involves engagement of at least two parties with an outcome of a shared solution to problems, dialogue is regulated by [2] access and [3] transparency and the avoidance of information asymmetry, and if all three blocks are cohesive the [4] risk-benefits are easy to assess allowing effective co-creation to occur. Traditionally, organisations have always wielded the power or control over customer participation in a transaction, however, more recently customers are seeking to counter this control through taking over the service environment for their own use with personal free will (Aubert-Gamet, 1996). Removing barriers and facilitating greater interaction requires organisations to gather far greater knowledge of their customers. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004:11) suggest a number of market research techniques such as “*focus groups, surveys, modeling, video ethnography...to get a better understanding of consumers and to... identify trends, assess consumer desires and preferences*”. The implication is that designers must be cognisant and intuitive of the personal context of their tourists and afford them freedom and personal control to create individual flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1992). Csikszentmihalyi (1991; 1997) describes experiences as optimal or extraordinary, offering absorption, personal control, and joy and valuing, a spontaneous letting be of the process and a newness of perception and process expressed as ‘flow’, achieved through complete absorption in an activity or challenge. Berridge (2007:71) asserts that “*Flow is associated with the feelings people have at different stages within any experience... with the most satisfying experience achieved when a state of optimal flow is achieved*” (Berridge, 2007). For Nakamura and Csikszentmihalyi (2002) active participation creates ‘flow’ experiences, developed through reaching a state of focused concentration, with strong sense of control, feelings of timelessness, and worriless.

The term tourist ‘gaze’ describes the process through which a tourist objectifies and interprets the place that he or she visits (Urry, 1995, 2001). A recent stream of research argues that the tourist gaze is becoming more mediated due to greater engagement between tourists and other tourists wherein the resulting experience arises from the interaction (Beeton, Bowen, and Santos, 2006; Jennings and Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaieris, 2009). Shared experiences may build close bonds between people with co-creation of experiences offering participants increased satisfaction (Arnould and Price, 1993; Morgan and Curiel, 2009). Co-experiencing something with others has a

number of advantages, which include an increase in the social acceptability of the offering (LCEEI, 2007). Simon (2010) outlines a number of participatory techniques which help to develop experiences that are more valuable and compelling. These techniques include designing opportunities for tourists to share their own content in meaningful and appealing ways e.g. co-develop exhibitions with community members, opportunities to leave real-time feedback either tangibly via message boards or intangibly via social networking sites that can be viewed by other tourists and interactive activities which allow them to create individual experiences that cannot be duplicated.

During the course of a visit to a cultural tourism attraction tourists also interact with elements of the context such as the artefacts and settings (Falk and Dierkling, 1992). From this view, the value of an experience is largely a function of how well the organisation integrates each element to generate an experience (Stuart and Tax, 2004). Providers can use various cues, triggers and mediators to attract and hold tourists attention (Urry, 1990; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Indeed, auditory, visual and sensory stimulation, intellectual challenges, using imagination and regression may all be used to split the experience into a series of moments to control attention and induce emotional experiences (Moscardo, 1996; Rojek and Urry, 1997; McIntosh and Prentice, 1999b; Urry, 1990; Lengkeek, 2001; Ooi, 2002, 2005). Ooi (2005) contends that experiences are manifested dynamically during the flow of tourists' attention, with an immediate experience contingent on that which garners attention at a particular moment. Mediators are a critical tool to frame tourism experiences, by steering customer's attention and directing them towards the correct interpretations and consumption of an experience (Ooi, 2005). In fact, the Internet is increasingly being used as a platform for tourists to interact with an experience offering virtually, prior to the actual visit (Hudson and Ritchie, 2009). Those authors contend that this mediator, as with all messages, cues and triggers, must offer a message that is integrated and consistent with the core activity.

A successful experience is one that facilitates the customer to co-create his/her experience in a unique manner by providing a set of activities which stimulate interaction and which are geared towards the acquisition of knowledge and skills which support the core experience offering (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Frontline personnel

must be highly trained and committed to personalising the experience for each tourist (Falk and Dierkling, 1992). Opportunities for interaction must be clearly articulated and communicated to both parties outlining their role as they converge to form unique experiences.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to integrate the key concepts from literature drawing from service design, experience and cultural tourism literature. The nature and evolution of experiences has been examined from the broader perspectives of psychology, marketing, operations, and within the context of cultural tourism organisations. A conceptual understanding of experiences was achieved by defining and deconstructing cultural tourism experiences into their core and supporting elements. While each component has been presented and discussed independently it is important to note that a harmonic inter-connection exists between each one which affords scope for personally created experiences.

Chapter Three: The Process of Developing Experiences

The purpose of this chapter is to review the experience development literature with the aim of developing a framework which outlines how experiences can be developed in a cultural tourism setting. The chapter begins with a review from a content perspective of both product and service development processes to determine, firstly, the antecedents that determine a successful process outcome, and secondly, the most appropriate framework composition for the process. Thereafter conclusions are drawn, and a composite framework of experience development is presented which extracts explicit principles from both perspectives.

3.1 The Current State of Experience Development Literature

The subject of commercial experience research has undergone a period of evolution over the last decade, generating wide interest amongst both academia and keen practitioners. In general, the literature has been approached from either a generalist broad perspective or from a narrower specialist lens. Generalist studies rationalise the importance of commercial experiences, and offer a broad range of possible guidelines and key imperatives for the design and management of experiences in a number of sectors (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Voss, 2003; Ardhill, 2003; Hudson and Ritchie, 2009; Xu and Chan, 2010). Specialist studies, on the other hand, have a narrower focus, and apply an in-depth analysis to experiences, for instance, the factors that influence tourist's experiences (Prentice et al., 1998; Prentice, 2004; Mossberg, 2007), mapping the customer experience journey (Berry et al., 2002; Shaw, 2007; Voss and Zomerdijk, 2007), or experience measurement scales (Oh et al., 2009). There exists a scant level of understanding of the antecedents, resources and process necessary to develop cultural tourism experiences, despite the competitive value assigned to the delivery of experiences.

Experience design is perceived to be a "*messy process*" and in the case of tourism experiences, Ritchie and Hudson (2009:120) note that "*managing the delivery of*

experiences has been occurring in various degrees for some time now in a relatively 'unmanaged' manner". This research seeks to progress both product and service development theory to the field of experience design. Stuart and Tax (2004) assert that service design principles can be applied to the design of experiences in order to bring a more logical approach to the experience design process. Service design is an evolution of the methodological sequences of product development, correspondingly the design of experiences does not require a completely new design methodology rather it is asserted that the activities within the existing product and service design methodologies can be revised and adapted to incorporate the behavioural and performance characteristics of experiences (Stuart and Tax, 2004). Zehrer (2009:333) contends that creating memorable and satisfying customer experiences must be undertaken as "*a distinctive management discipline with its own principles, tools, and techniques*". However, Oh et al. (2009) note that while experiences are fundamental to tourism there is no consensus on either their definition or the manner by which they can be operationalised. Gupta and Vajic (2000) contend that many designed experiences have failed due to a lack of proper understanding of the true nature of experiences which they consider are socially produced and context specific. They argue that traditional approaches to product and service design portrayed customers as having fixed preferences and expectations irrespective of the context. While cognisant of the initial and emergent research in experience development, from authors such as Stuart and Tax (2004), and following rigorous exploration, there is no existing framework that delineates the experience development process specifically for cultural tourism.

In essence, what emanates from the literature is that very few studies specifically delineate the activities which underpin the development of experiences. Those that have made forays into the area acknowledge that they "*take the form of initial step in moving away from goods-based design models to an approach that recognises the messy process that designing service performances and delivering memorable service experience entails*" (Stuart and Tax, 2004:623). The ensuing section therefore, aims to bring together extant theory from both product and service development models to establish a conceptual framework for the process of developing experiences. The design of cultural tourism experiences needs to be cognisant of the type of factors that can

enable a successful process. Therefore, the literature on antecedents will be first examined before advancing to discuss the product and service development models.

3.2 Antecedents which Enable Successful Experience Development

Many authors have identified that adherence to a predetermined process does not in itself guarantee success and that a number of antecedent activities must also be present. An extensive examination of the literature has identified a number of antecedents which enable success in product, service and experience development. Four themes relating to the antecedent activities of experience development are identified from this literature: market knowledge competence, leadership and resource building, creativity, and process management. A summary of the key antecedents is presented in table 3.1 with a number of sample authors identified.

Table 3.1: Proposed Antecedents for Successful Experience Development

Theme	Description	Sample Authors
Market Knowledge Competence	Examination of market attractiveness/ responsiveness/ Competitor Analysis Strategic orientation Direct customer participation /input at specific stages Market Synergy Quality in completion of pre-development activities	Ottenbacher et al., 2006; Menor & Roth, 2007; Pine & Gilmore, 1999; Zehrer, 2009; Edgett, 1994; Cooper & DeBrentani, 1991; Martin & Horne, 1995; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Cooper & Kleinschmidt 1986.
Leadership & Resource Building	Organisational Leadership Process Leadership Resource Building	Kessler & Chakrabarti, 1999; Menor et al., 2002; Sundbo, 1998; Froehle, 2000; Richards & Wilson, 2006; De Brentani, 2001; Menor & Roth , 2007; Chase et al., 2000; Roth et al., 1997; Ottenbacher et al., 2006.
Creativity	Creativity to avoid ‘serial reproduction’ Rewarding of creativity Experience creation is a result of a highly creative process	Richards & Wilson, 2006; Oke, 2007; Von Stamm, 2003; De Brentani 2001; Boswijk et al., 2007; Olson et al.,1995; Voss & Zomerdijk, 2007.
Process Management	Systematically planned approach, avoid ‘fuzziness’ in front end systems. Diagnose current state for greater integration & balance of strategic/operational activities Formalized planning system stifles creativity Break Process into stages with participants, activities, actions, tasks & evaluations	Tax & Stuart, 1997; DeBrentani, 1989; 1991;2001; Khurana & Rosenthal, 1997; Edvardsson et al., 1995; Bowers, 1985; Cooper et al., 1994.

3.2.1 Market Knowledge Competence

A key finding from literature is the importance of investing resources on the development of new products that satisfy tourists changing needs so as to ensure future profitability (Bramwell, 1998). Market knowledge competence or market acuity is considered as a key antecedent for both new product and new service success and can be justly applied to experience design (Cooper and Kleinschmidt 1995, 1996; Roth, 1993). The key concept behind this antecedent is that the consumer is placed at the forefront of the development process (Menor, 2000). Market knowledge involves the development of an understanding of customer preferences, and when undertaken effectively it allows organisations to “*see the competitive environment clearly, and thus to anticipate and respond to customers’ evolving needs and wants*” (Roth, 1993:22). For experiences, knowledge of customer preferences is not enough since as the previous chapter described experiences as highly personal context specific encounters, supported through interaction, with the goal of generating emotional outcomes. In order to support a successful development process in cultural tourism Ho and McKercher (2004) argue that practitioners need to consider tourists right from the outset, by identifying their underlying emotional needs. They further assert that the aim of the experience development process is “*to introduce cultural tourism products into the mental map of tourists and eventually into their activity space*” (Ho and McKercher, 2004:264). From this view, the highly individualistic and cerebral nature of experiences requires organisations to gather in-depth knowledge on the emotional needs and desires of their consumers in order to translate their core offering into experiences.

Affirming the assertion that experiences are in every respect economic entities, Pine and Gilmore (1999) contend that the intention to develop and offer experiences must form part of the overall organisation strategy. Organisations that seek to develop and offer experiences as economic entities must therefore be entirely committed to the practice by aligning the experience design process to the organisations overall strategy and orientation (Zehrer, 2009). Drawing from product development literature, Khurana and Rosenthal (1997) suggest that right from the very early stages of the process organisations should diagnose their current state for greater external market alignment and internal process clarity. For Nijs (2003) this strategic orientation towards delivering experiences extends further, into the organisation’s structures, systems and culture.

Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) argue that tourists are seldom incorporated as partners in the experience design process even though they are a critical source of understanding of the tourism phenomena and a major input in the development process. Morgan et al. (2009:205) assert that *“if the experience management concept is fully adopted, organisations will not only stage manage a series of memorable events ...but also will make the customer experience a central element in its competitive strategy”*.

Cooper and de Brentani (1991) found that the development process satisfies current and new emerging customer needs if it contributes to overall competitive performance but this requires both a clear understanding of current target markets combined with knowledge gathered on potential large and high-growth markets. There is a general understanding in both the product and service development literature that customer knowledge development occurs through a bilateral process of firm and customer interaction during a range of stages throughout the process (Martin and Horne, 1995; Leonard 1998; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004). Indeed, it is widely agreed that direct customer participation at specific stages in the process is likely to increase the potential for success. This is reaffirmed by Edvardsson and Olsson (1996) who underscore the importance of understanding the customer, their needs, wishes and expectations as the driving force in any form of development. Pine and Gilmore (1999:201) contend *that “innovation in services does not come via the isolation of the R & D lab but in face-to-face interactions with individual clients”*. For Schmitt (2003), this antecedent is also important as organisations need to respond quickly to customers and incorporate customer insights, inputs and feedback in the design of experiences. Directly involving the customer in the experience development process from the beginning avoids both time and capital wastage on unsuitable ideas and concepts (Boswijk et al., 2007). Market knowledge competence is a critical antecedent for a successful experience development process as it compels experience developers to regularly gather information on customer’s deeper emotional needs and to include them as participants in the development of experiences in order to deliver greater customer value which demands an organisational competence in interacting and engaging with customers.

3.2.2 Leadership and Resource Building

This antecedent can be broken into three main sections, organisational leadership, process leadership and resource building with each discussed sequentially. Leadership at organisational level is concerned with generating a strategy, building a positive development culture and putting in place all the resources that are required for the process (Menor and Roth, 2007). While our first antecedent has stressed the importance of market knowledge and strategic orientation in the design of experiences, it must be noted that all strategy is driven by the leadership team and its strategic vision for the business (Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 2007). Leadership provides clear direction to steer the development process, while adhering to the strategic objectives initially set down (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989). The leadership team actively supports the development process *“with words, actions and resource commitments”* (Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 2007:60). Hjalager et al. (2008) contend that good leadership traits can include charismatic leadership styles, the ability to include all kinds of people through being open-minded, and capabilities in building bridges and trust amongst participants. Good leadership will manage conflict constructively and coordinate cross-functional teams in a manner which influences the pace with which the process moves (Johnes and Storey, 1997; Froehle et al., 2000). Part of the leadership role is the development of a positive culture which facilitates a climate for development activities. For Menor and Roth (2007:829) this *“captures the values and beliefs fostered by the service organisation that indicate a willingness and desire to innovate”*. An organisational culture which espouses a strong development attitude is a vital experience development antecedent, as it endorses the role of contact personnel in both the design and delivery of experiences (Chase et al., 2000; Roth et al., 1997). Having a culture of innovation, which encourages staff, customers and suppliers to suggest improvements, is important as it helps create a market-oriented organisation which explores new ideas, accepts mistakes and learns from them and is seen as one of the chief differentiators between top and low performing firms (Garrett and Gray, 2005).

Process leadership, a sub level of leadership refers to the project champion or person who leads the experience development process ensuring that it is sequential and that all tasks are carried out. Schon (1963) originated the term product champion to describe a person willing to put himself on the line for an idea. Kessler and Chakrabarti (1999)

consider that the presence and influence of project champions has a powerful impact on the design process. However, Garcia and Calantone (2002) contend that product champions have a stronger role in driving the development process of radical new products which involve greater risk. Johne (1994b) considers that market championing is preferred over product championing when seeking to identify innovative business opportunities. Market championing is about spotting and developing market opportunities, and addresses issues such as, *“How fast and in which ways is a market growing, and in what new ways can it or parts of it be made to grow more profitably?”* and is considered particularly important in organisations which have restructured on a business basis (Johne and Storey, 1998:220). The progression from product and service offerings to experience offerings requires the skills of market champions who can help to clearly identify new trends and needs and successfully champion these ideas and experience opportunities in their organisation. Process orientated practices guide actions and assure effectiveness in all development undertakings (Froehle and Roth, 2007).

Good leadership is also responsible for building, utilising and coordinating the resources provided by the organisation to generate a speedy and effective process (Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 2007). Amabile (1997) explains that resources include everything that the firm has available to facilitate a successful outcome, including sufficient time for producing fresh and new ideas in the workplace, suitable skilled and experienced people, ample allocation of funds and material resources, systems and processes for work in the workplace, relevant information and the availability of training. Alam (2006:242) asserts that organisations that take considerable *“care in the selection and training of service delivery staff and undertake extensive internal marketing to obtain staff understanding and support for the innovations”* can achieve greater success. Employee commitment and motivation can be supported through internal marketing and empowerment throughout the development process, particularly in high contact organisations that are reliant on employees to deliver offerings (Johne and Storey, 1998). This supports prior research on product development which suggests that the factors most strongly associated with success are controllable, which includes efforts to train employees and include them in the process (Montoya-Weiss and Calantone, 1994). Considering that for many practitioners the development of experiences is a new and emergent type of offering, the practice of internal marketing is

certainly applicable. Froehle and Roth (2007) contend that resource-orientated practices focus attention on the intellectual, organisational and physical resources which in combination enhance development capabilities. For Haeckel et al. (2003) designing experiences is a team process which requires the organisation, identification and sequencing of tasks, resources, decisions, and human accountabilities of all departments within an organisation. Morgan and Watson (2007:6) contend that *“this calls for visionary leadership and well-chosen, trained and motivated staff.”*

3.2.3 Creativity

Creativity is cited by numerous authors for its importance in the development of products, services and experiences, (Olson et al., 1995; Von Stamm, 2003; Oke, 2007; Voss and Zomerdijk, 2007). For De Brentani (2001:183) the message to managers is that successful service development *“results from an open, creative and entrepreneurial environment.”* Discussion in the previous chapter has concluded that experiences must be unique, and therefore this requires increased levels of creativity throughout the development process. The need for creativity in developing new experiences is critical in order to avoid what Richards and Wilson (2006:1216) describe as *‘serial reproduction’* in tourism services; they consider that *“that the whole concept is dependent on the tourist as a creative co-producer and consumer of their experiences as well as the creative abilities of the experience creators”*. Creativity also finds its appeal through its association with dynamism and orientation towards the future, critical in a period of change and uncertainty (Richards and Wilson, 2006). De Brentani (2001) contends that creativity is not solely a management function, but necessitates the promotion and rewarding of creativity in service personnel. Boswijk et al. (2007) contend that the challenge of developing experiences requires organisations to renew themselves in order to create not just a single experience environment but an entire portfolio of settings in which experiences are manifested.

A key antecedent of successful experiences is the uncovering of the customer’s needs and desires, by marshalling the organisations creative resources to identify areas and innovations that trigger customer excitement (Erdly and Kesterson-Townes, 2005). Boswijk et al. (2007:10) consider that meaningful experience creation is a result of a

highly creative process that requires the “*letting go of existing propositions and traditional ways of thinking*” achievable by giving “*unconscious thought processes free rein*”, a skill often perceived as difficult in a business setting. It is common for managers of cultural sites to have creative skills, which are valuable for bringing creative people and creative functions together to create mutually beneficial tourism experiences (Richards and Wilson, 2006). Authors also place considerable importance on a management and leadership style that places value on creativity and innovation, as a creative process sets the stage for a whole series of subsequent new developments (Burns and Stalker, 1961; Amabile, 1997). Boswijk et al. (2007) contend that creativity requires moving away from traditional and logical mindsets, and for this experience developers need to allow their intuition to guide them towards creative solutions. As experiences are a progression on traditional offerings and difficult to prototype, highly creative thinking is needed in order to visualise all of the experience components. Experience development involves a process of thinking, doing and reflecting which necessitates organisations to remove ownership of their offerings and adopt creative approaches which promote “*learning by sharing*” attitudes (Boswijk et al., 2007:15). Senior managers need to foster and stimulate a culture of creativity, which encourages employees and other stakeholders to suggest ideas for new offerings, and which includes them as participants in the process (Garrett and Gray, 2005).

3.2.4 Process Management

The manner in which new offerings are developed varies with the type of offering being developed and is far from uniform in practice. In terms of product development, Cooper and Kleinschmidt (2007) assert that having a formal new product process in place has no effect on performance; rather, it is the nature of the process that makes the difference. Opinions on process formalisation in NSD tend to fall into two camps, earlier research by De Brentani (1991) advocates following a formal and planned approach for greater NSD success, whereas more recently it is evidenced that a formalised process is considered less important to NSD than to NPD (Griffin, 1997; de Brentani, 2001; Henard and Szymanski, 2001; van der Aa and Elfring, 2002). Edvardsson et al. (1995) argue that formalised planning systems stifle the creativity needed to develop really successful new offerings. Stuart and Tax (2004) offer some

balance to the foregoing argument. They consider that while much of the development process is carried out via informal communication, it is important to create some formal communication mechanisms, such as regular meetings with documented minutes where all parties can review and discuss progress and address critical issues. It is also more critical to recognise the importance of breaking down the development process into stages which include participants, activities, actions, tasks, and evaluations as recommended in the NSD literature to move from the idea stage through to launch (Bowers, 1985; Cooper et al., 1994). DeBrentani (2001) consider that the acknowledgment of and adherence to these stages that can create a process-focused organisation proficient in transforming an idea into a new offering. His argument proposes a systematic approach that is balanced across both front and back end stages of the process. Drawing from the product and service development literature it is presented that the development of experiences as economic entities must be officially recognised within the organisation and should follow a systematic approach which places a balanced focus on each stage, activity and evaluation point. The development process thus involves activating a number of processes and individuals *“through a kind of chain reaction”* (Hjalager, et al., 2008:12). Trott (1998: 11) concisely summarises the development process as *“not just the conception of a new idea, nor the invention of a new device, nor the development of a new market. The process is all these things acting in an integrated fashion.”* In conclusion, it is not the formality of the process that is important rather it is the adherence to a systematic process that is critical to success.

3.3 Overview of NPD and NSD: Stages and Activities

A general consensus exists that both the product and service development process should progress systematically through a series of stages. This section provides an overview of a number of significant models from both methodologies with the aim of informing the experience development process. The models from NPD literature are the first to be explored and table 3.2 presents a composite summary of the main stages common to a number of significant NPD models. Since the literature review is concerned with understanding common stages and activities the final column of the composite depicts five common stages. The table is a useful base from which to identify

commonalities and differences between the models and offers a starting point on which to assemble a new framework for developing cultural tourism experiences.

Table 3.2: Summary of Key Stages of NPD

Booz et al., (1982)	Cooper & Kleinschmidt (1986)	Reidenbach & Moak (1986)	Composite
Sequential/Linear Model	Process Model	Linear Model	Linear Model
New Product Development Strategy			Development Strategy
Idea Generation		Idea generation/ Evaluation	Idea Generation & Screening
Screening & Evaluation	Initial Screening		
Business Analysis	Preliminary Market Assessment		
Development	Preliminary Technical Assessment	Concept development & testing	Prototype/ Concept Development
	Detailed Market Research	Economic Analysis	
Testing	Business/Financial Analysis	Product testing	
	Product Development		Product Development & Testing
	In-house Product Testing		
	Customer Tests	Market Testing	
	Pre-commercial Test Market/Trial		
Commercialisation	Product Start-up Market Launch	Commercialisation	Launch

It was the seminal linear process model of Booz, Allen and Hamilton (1968, 1982), which first delineated the product development process as a set of seven sequential stages and activities and has become the basis of all subsequent models and is still relevant today. The model is significant for its recognition that the process of NPD should have a systematic structure, and has been used by many as a foundation for NSD models (Johnson et al., 2001). However, the model considers that the process is linear and sequential and has been criticised for assuming that each stage is completed before the next one begins (Biemans, 1992). Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1986) model focuses on NPD as a process, and stresses the importance of concentrating on each stage and its impact on the new product outcome, achievable through greater exploration of the activities undertaken by people at each stage. Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1986) contend that particular activities and personnel resource inputs are key to success and place

considerable focus on the up front or predevelopment activities which include initial screening; preliminary market assessment; detailed market study. This model is useful for its recognition of the importance of correct resources and activities in the process. Reidenbach and Moak's (1986) NPD model added a number of new stages and activities to allow for service sector characteristics. The model includes idea generation/evaluation and concept development stages during which more structure is added to the idea with a preliminary assessment of market reaction. Notably, this model adds a formal evaluation process and advocates the allocation of the new product manager to direct the process. Empirical results indicate that the concept development phase was the most important phase of the entire process, as the new concept was given early exposure to the marketplace and the product was better evaluated under market conditions.

Johnson et al. (2000) contend that the NPD paradigm fails to address the distinctive characteristics inherent in services such as customer's participation in the service process, intangibility, heterogeneity, etc. The BAH model is oriented entirely towards the development of tangible products, yet it must be considered for its recognition of a set of formalised set of stages. It does have some shortcomings in guiding experience development, stemming primarily from the inability of enterprises to *prototype* their experiences. In direct opposition to the advocated sequential nature of the models Hart (1996) argues that there is no clear beginning, middle or end to the NPD process and that in practice NPD is more iterative and recursive incorporating feedback loops and recurring tasks and activities, and should be recognised as a multifunctional program (Saren, 1984; Crawford, 1987; Hart, 1996).

Progressing forward, the research is now informed of the need for adopting a systematic approach with a number of stages and activities which must allow for stage overlap and process iteration. The NPD literature has also uncovered the need for greater exploration of the front-end concept development stage of the process in its application for experience development. Menor et al. (2002:145) argue that the nature of services *"places an onus on service developers to "tangibilize" the service concept/offering so that it is not abstract and that it is understood in a consistent, shared fashion by all parties in development"*. Defining the development process in relation to new services,

Cooper et al. (1994:283) describe it as a “set of activities, actions, tasks and evaluations that move the project from the idea stage through launch”. According to John and Storey (1998:196), “NSD ranges from improvements, right through to new-to-the-world offers,” previously unavailable to customers. To an extent NSD follows the same generic stages as NPD stemming from earlier process models such as the BAH model (1968, 1982). Five comprehensive NSD models are outlined in table 3.3 and are reviewed for the purposes of informing the experience development process. Drawing from each model a compound set of fourteen stages and activities were identified, however, as this framework hopes to inform both theory and practice five core stages are presented in the final column as a foundation for the experience development framework.

Table 3.3: Summary of Stages and Activities of NSD Models

Compound Stages	Scheuing & Johnson (1989) Normative	Edvardsson & Olsson (1996) Holistic	Tax & Stuart (1997) Iterative	Menor et al. (2002) Iterative	Stevens & Dimitriadis (2005) Holistic	Core Stages
Service Audit			X		X	Exploring Opportunities
Formulate new service Objectives & Strategy				X		
Idea Generation	X			X		
Screening, Evaluation/ refining initial ideas	X		X		X	
Service Concept Development/ Service Definition	X	X	X	X		Concept Development
Concept Testing	X			X	X	
Business Analysis / Definition of extent of change (participants/ physical facilities)	X		X	X		
Project authorisation	X		X	X	X	Authorisation
Service Design & Testing Process & System Design & Marketing Program	X	X	X	X	X	Process & System Design
Final Writing of Processes, Procedures & Behaviours Training & Pilot Run	X		X	X		Launch & Review of Feedback & Learning
Market Testing/Adoption	X				X	
Full Scale Launch	X		X	X	X	
Post-Launch review/Feedback	X			X		

The most definitive of the early NSD models was the linear model of Scheuing and Johnson (1989). Many academics felt that the concept stage was understated in the BAH model and accordingly added the concept development and generation stage to their models (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989). Based on the development of a physical prototype, common in NPD, concept development involves turning an idea into an articulated picture that provides a description of the potential new service (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989). Essentially the concept development stage presents the rationale for the development of a new service and outlines the main benefits and attributes thereof (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989). Reflecting the dynamic nature of services, Scheuing and Johnson's model outlined fifteen stages with an active presence of supporting internal and external inputs and defined activities during the development process. The model generated considerable debate, much of which focused on the large number of stages to be navigated and whether development tasks should indeed follow a sequential order (Johne, 1993).

Edvardsson and Olsson (1996) developed a much simpler three stage model depicting the NSD process as three activities commencing with the development of a service concept, followed by design of both the service system and the service process. Central to the ethos of this model is the perception of the NSD process as a means to fulfil customer needs through the provision of customer value; the concept development phase clearly articulates the customer value being proposed and the service process and system are designed to ensure its reliable delivery. Also seeking to simplify the process, and to emphasise the concept development stage, Tax and Stuart (1997) extended theory further by developing an iterative NSD model that acknowledges that new services are frequently born in or of existing service systems. Their model commences with an audit of the existing service system (process, physical facilities and participants) so as to understand the context of the new service. The model also emphasises the importance of a service concept, which they assert must articulate the benefits to be delivered to the customer.

Menor et al. (2002) adapted the NSD process placing the organisations service concept at the heart of the process. The iterative nature of their model emphasises the use of key resources or enablers to support and drive the NSD process. NSD development teams,

design tools and organisation culture all enable the smooth running of the NSD process and provide the knowledge/skill architecture for future innovations. Stevens and Dimitriadis (2005) holistic model is the final model to be reviewed, chosen due to its strong focus on organisational learning. They assert that the development of new services creates new individual competencies, which if integrated, can result in overall organisational transformation. They consider that a key task of the development team is to imagine, design and formalise scenarios (intangible outputs) for service delivery. Stevens and Dimitriadis (2005) consider that innovation is fostered through learning and extol managers to build multi-functional teams comprising individuals with appropriate experience and knowledge to support the NSD process.

Drawing from both product and service development literature a number of common stages are identified and described in table 3.4 overleaf as a foundation for the experience development framework. The term 'offering' is used in place of the terms product and service as the table represents a merging of descriptions from both methodologies.

Table 3.4: Stages Common to both Product and Service Development Models

Stage	Description	Sample Authors
<p>Exploring Opportunities Audit Development Strategy & Objectives Idea Generation / Brainstorming & Screening</p>	<p>An explicit description of the development strategy with details of budget allocation will assist with identifying market opportunities for exploitation. Assessment of organisational objectives New Ideas: Sourced internally & externally formally/informally by individuals/groups through activities such as brainstorming. A number of initially acceptable ideas from both internal & external sources are accrued and then screened further to establish those with the most potential and which are deemed acceptable for further development The screening process generally involves internal organisation personnel using a set criteria, for the purpose of selecting those most suitable for implementation</p>	<p>Hart , 1996; Lovelock, 1984 Booz, et al., 1982; Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1986; Tax & Stuart, 1997.</p>
<p>Concept Development Define & Articulate Concept</p>	<p>This involves turning an idea into a recognisable concept, with attributes & market position identified, including an explicit assessment of customer and market potential; it will involve initial research from customers & input from marketing & technical personnel, this stage should conclude with the identification of the key attributes that need to be included in the offering with costs & target markets identified. An understanding of users' needs and preferences together with a robust market orientation are vital to shaping the concept. Imagine, Refine & Formalise Scenarios with sample of users & collaborators Evaluation and feasibility</p>	<p>Hart & Baker, 1994; Hart, 1987; Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1986; Menor et al., 2002; Edvardsson & Olsson, 1996; Stevens & Dimitriadis 2005.</p>
<p>Process Development & Test Marketing</p>	<p>This stage involves the further developing the concept with limited testing of both the offering & the elements of the marketing mix and usually results in a tentative offering including features and benefits Verify concept through Market Re-Appraisal & Strategic Objectives Budget Development Develop Participants, Processes & Physical Facilities</p>	<p>Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1986; Trott, 1998; Tax & Stuart, 1997.</p>
<p>Launch & Review Formal evaluation process</p>	<p>The new offering is given a full scale introduction to the public. Managers should become more attuned to implementing a disciplined process backed by the correct resources. This stage requires caution as the launch, distinct from all the stages, regularly requires the largest commitment of time, money and managerial resources. Review stage added in order to carefully analyse the entire process and view it iteratively. Organisational learning-development of new offerings creates new individual competencies</p>	<p>Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1986; Urban & Hauser , 1993; Crawford, 1987; Reidenbach & Moak, 1986; Cooper et al. 1994; Stevens & Dimitriadis 2005.</p>

3.4 Experience Development Framework Conceptualisation

Having reviewed a number of NPD and NSD models a number of key stages have been identified (table 3.4) and these will be utilised in conceptualising a framework for the development of cultural tourism experiences. Stuart and Tax (2004:611) argue that process models, *“while helpful in a broad sense, are still focused on the development of efficient and reliable service encounters, not memorable experiences and are therefore incomplete and inconsistent”*. The composition of an experience development framework carries a different set of emphases for developers and each stage must focus on a set of activities that will result in a carefully designed experience context that offers opportunities for interaction and the stimulation of emotional outcomes and which is cognisant of the motives and expectations of the target market. In terms of framework structure, it was found that a formalised process was considered to be less important to NSD than to NPD (de Brentani, 2001; Henard and Szymanski, 2001; van der Aa and Elfring, 2002) and accordingly Berry and Carbone (2007:28) contend that *“creating an experience is much less linear than manufacturing a product to specifications. It is much more dynamic.”* The development of experiences requires a systematic approach embracing a number of stages, activities, participants and underpinned by attention to the antecedents which support a successful development process. Drawing from extant NPD and NSD literature there is a strong rationale for viewing experience development as iterative as experiences, akin to services are frequently born in or of existing service systems.

The highly personal and subjective nature of experiences can be resolved by an increased incorporation of both internal and external parties which Scheuing and Johnson (1989) consider are key resources to the overall process and which also reduces variance as the co-producers facilitate the experience design. An important instrument in the design of experiences is the collection and evaluation of relevant data on customer experience (Zehrer, 2009) which requires the framework to have a strong emphasis on the activities of identifying, gathering and refining market knowledge to inform experience development. There is a strong rationale in the extant literature for gathering information on the emotional needs and motives of visitors to cultural tourism attractions (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999) and this data can be used both in the early stages of the process when generating ideas and in the later stages to assess the reaction

to the overall experience (Haeckel et al., 2003). Each of the cultural tourism experience components identified in the previous chapter affect and impacts the manner by which experiences are developed and therefore the process outcome needs to create the infrastructure for each one. While the core outcomes of product and service development are a product and a service, the aim of experience development can be most simply considered as the emotionalisation of a context specific interaction to generate personally relevant experiences which last as mental imprints or memories (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Aho, 2001; Gupta and Vajic, 2002). However, the core product or activity still remains, and, in a similar manner to the development of services, the experience components role is to support and augment the core activity, therefore the experience development process needs to integrate the operational needs of experiences with those of existing business activities (Johnes and Storey, 1998).

Extant literature indicates that the stage of concept development has been underused in NSD, in spite of the fact that it is considered to have a strong bearing on the outcome (Easingwood, 1986; Reidenbach and Moak, 1986; Scheuing and Johnson, 1989a; Edgett, 1993; Edvardsson and Olsson, 1996; Griffin, 1997). A concept is defined as a clear, explicit and precise description of an offering (Goldstein et al., 2002), which when defined provides a framework which articulates to employees the offering they should provide and to customers the offering that they should expect to receive (Heskett, 1986; Van Looy et al., 1998). The previous chapter developed the rationale for deconstructing cultural tourism experiences into four components comprising: core activity, emotional outcomes, contextual, interactional each with a particular role, features and activities in facilitating experiences. Drawing from the foregoing discussion it is proposed that the four components of an experience should form the framework of the experience concept and experience system stages of the development. This infers that these stages of the framework must include a number of mandatory activities whose chief aim is to create a formal description of the experience by clarifying and defining the role and supporting activities of each component. In addition, the process must focus on fostering and leveraging organisational learning to support the process (Stevens and Dimitriadis, 2005). This implies that the experience development process should follow a holistic approach and draw from all of the organisations resources and capabilities to foster a culture of learning and creativity.

The degree of commonality across the models presented earlier illustrates a broad consensus that certain stages and activities are common in all process development initiatives. However, the process of developing new experiences is more inclined to be non linear in format as experiences are less standardized than products and services and as such require completely different delivery systems with the outcome for visitors manifested in the mind (Johnson et al., 2000; Berry and Carbone, 2007). Sectoral characteristics have dictated a number of criteria for the composition of our framework. Firstly, the context, the tourism sector is predominated by SME's with low barriers for new entrants, a high degree of imitability in the sector and poor experience development knowledge and skills (Hall and Williams, 2008). The framework therefore is required to be not only instructive but also straightforward and uncomplicated in its communication to tourism practitioners the stages and activities of development. It must be customer centric, and focus on integrating the qualities and motives sought by customers from experience offerings. It must also incorporate the knowledge and competencies of a number of participants at key points throughout the process.

The framework is non sequential and the aim of each stage is to produce an outcome to offer solutions for potential new experience, this is achieved through a set of defined activities to be undertaken by the development teams. The concept stage of experience development is particularly emphasised in this framework as the outcome from this stage will provide the basis for how the new experience will be operationalised. Therefore, this stage invests heavily in the activities and inputs of the development team to imagine refine and tangibilise the new experience. The process of designing memorable experiences in any organisation entails the identification and sequencing of tasks, resources, decisions and human accountabilities of that organisation (Haeckel et al., 2003). In this regard, a major task prior to undertaking any experience development process is to understand and to be familiar with the antecedents related to success (Ottenbacher et al., 2006). A set of antecedents are located in the first column of the framework, neither of which are stage nor activity specific but which support and drive the activities of the process. From the beginning and throughout the process project leaders need to consider how each antecedent can support a successful outcome. Key activities include the establishment of a firm intention to develop and offer experiences as part of the overall organisation strategy. The leader must gather together a team from

internal and external resources with which he must stimulate and support a culture of creativity and innovation. A proposed framework for developing cultural tourism experiences is offered in figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: Proposed Framework for Developing Cultural Tourism Experiences

Antecedents	Phases	Activities	Participants	Output
Market Knowledge Competence	Explore Experience Opportunities	Experience Audit Formulation of Strategic Objectives Market Appraisal Idea Generation/ Brainstorming	Coordinator Design Team Frontline Staff Consumers External Collaborators	Analysis of Current Experience Offering 1 st Stage Market Appraisal Strategy for NED Potential ideas identified
	Evaluation, Feasibility & Go/No Go Decision			
Leadership & Resource Building	Define Experience Concept	Experience Idea Screening Define & Articulate Concept Imagine, Refine & Formalise Scenarios with sample of users & collaborators	Coordinator Design Team Frontline Staff Consumers External Collaborators	Experience Concept with Core Activity & Components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual • Interactional • Emotional Outcomes
Creativity	Evaluation, Feasibility & Go/No Go Decision			
	Develop Experience System	Experience Concept verified through Market Re-Appraisal & Strategic Objectives Budget Development Develop Participants, Processes & Physical Facilities	Coordinator Design Team Frontline Staff External Collaborators	2 nd Stage Refined Market Appraisal Set of Designed and defined Experience Components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual • Interactional • Emotional Outcomes
	Evaluation, Feasibility & Go/No Go Decision			
Process Management	Decision			
	Launch Experience	Staff Training Pilot Testing & Final design of Processes & Procedures Operations/ Marketing Programme & Launch	Coordinator Design Team Frontline Staff External Collaborators	New Cultural Tourism Experience

In the interest of parsimony the development activities will be collated into four distinct but interrelated phases:

1. Exploring Experience Opportunities
2. Define Experience Concept
3. Develop Experience System
4. Launch Experience

In the design of the conceptual framework it was deemed appropriate not to stipulate where the process of experience development should commence or finish, rather the framework seeks to reflect the on-going and iterative nature of the process. This assertion is supported by literature which increasingly acknowledges that experience development is an iterative process, that overlaps and circles back on itself many times, in the course of pursuing individual or multiple new developments (Tax and Stuart, 1997; Johne and Storey, 1998; Menor et al., 2002). However, we would suggest that cultural tourism practitioners that are pursuing the process for the first time should undertake the Exploring Experience Opportunities phase first in order to underpin and inform subsequent activities.

Front-end activities occur at the early phases of experience development and require strong efforts by the project coordinator to avoid ‘fuzziness’ (Khurana and Rosenthal, 1997) and to make decisions on whether to proceed to development. The first two phases of Exploring Experience Opportunities and Defining Experience Concept are considered as the front-end activities of the process; phases which Reid and de Brentani (2004) assert are crucial to success and which, upon completion of feedback and learning, determine if the process is to proceed onto subsequent operations design phases. A number of organisational resources are required to support and drive the development process. Scheuing and Johnson (1989) assert that the process can falter at this stage due to lack of structures to support the process. Therefore, it is critical that adequate human and economic resources are present to support the activities of the development team to allow them to effectively carry out the task of imagining, designing and formalising scenarios of the proposed experience. The conceptual framework places key participants at the centre of the framework to support and drive the activities of the experience development process. These participants act as cross-

functional lubricants in the process and can include the design team, organisational staff members, customer bases, and suppliers or external partners. Fundamental to the entire process is the presence of an individual who will coordinate all activities, interact with both internal and external parties. A project coordinator will provide the pivot upon which the entire process will turn, uniting both the initial front and back-end activities. This individual requires a broad skill set including interpersonal skills, dependability, expertise, efficiency and flexibility (Lynch and Holden, 2008).

Menor et al. (2002) viewed service development as a process, driven not only by operations strategy but also by a set of overall organisation strategic objectives devised to unite and incorporate both the front and back ends of the development efforts. At the Exploring Experience Opportunities phase a design team is assembled from internal and external sources to generate and screen a list of 'raw' ideas or opportunities in terms of their feasibility and profitability as potential new experiences (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989). By undertaking an experience audit in the first phase the team can identify and clarify their core offering and how it is currently communicated to customers as an experience. This needs to be then analysed against a market appraisal, with data from the marketing department on customer needs and desires. Idea generation can be undertaken either formally or informally, but needs to be guided by a number of themes identified from a combination of the audit and market knowledge. A number of initially acceptable ideas are accrued and then screened further to establish those with the most potential and which are deemed acceptable for further development.

In the Developing Experience Concept phase screened ideas are expanded into concepts by the project coordinator and his design team, with promising concepts formalised into experience scenarios. For this phase all participants contribute to the process to flesh out screened ideas into concepts by developing a structure around each of the experience components which support the core activity. Buchenau and Fulton Suri (2000:424) argue that *"the experience of even simple artefacts does not exist in a vacuum but, rather, in dynamic relationship with other people, places and objects"*. Therefore at the concept phase the development team must work between the boardroom and the actual environment of the experience context components in order to imagine, refine and formalise experience scenarios for each component of the experience. Key activities

here involve identifying points within each component where cues and triggers can be developed in the next phase.

The back-end or operational focused activities refer to the design and execution of the new experience concept (Khurana and Rosenthal, 1997). In the framework they are presented as the Develop Experience System and Launch New Experience phases. At the developing phase the team determines how the concept developed in the earlier stages is to be operationalised from the perspective of process in each of the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes aspects of the site which includes the facilities and experience delivery personnel. All parties involved in the process come together at this stage to operationalise the new experience and assess it from the three perspectives. Firstly, the concept needs to be verified against both original strategic objectives and a second stage refined market appraisal is undertaken. Secondly, a set of selection and training criterion for experience delivery personnel are identified, in tandem with a description of the customer's role in experience delivery. This allows for the cohesive development of new processes that accurately reflect and deliver on the original experience concept. The experience processes are tangibly supported by the organisations contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes facilities. The design team must balance the new experience process requirements with equipment, interior design and ambiance that correctly support and augment the new experience (Tax and Stuart, 1997). Therefore at this phase each of the supporting activities such as the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes cues and triggers identified in the previous chapter for each component need to be carefully designed so that the whole experience concept offers a natural and authentic impression and stimulates emotional outcomes.

Project authorisation comes about when the final go/no go decision is finalised and management allocates the organisations resources to the implementation of a new experience (Jones, 1995). At this stage, the experience concept and experience system can be converted into an operational entity progressing towards launch. The next phase outlined in the framework is the Launch Experience phase in which the clearly defined experience offering has been evaluated and is deemed feasible for launch. The experience is operationalised through training and learning of new and competencies

unique to the experience offering and the organisation as a whole (Stevens and Dimitriadis, 2005). Following a successful pilot run to resolve any remaining issues the experience is fully launched. The experience implementation requires programmes from both marketing and operations departments to develop a launch strategy (Bitran and Pedrosa, 1998) which can occur in various manners: a full-scale launch to the entire market (Scheuing and Johnson, 1989), or allowing customers to appraise the experience for an initial trial period to ensure full understanding (Bitran and Pedrosa, 1998).

There are three Evaluation, Feasibility and Go/No Go Decision points connecting the four phase's with the following functions:

- To continually undertake both external market analysis and internal business analysis
- To allow for continual retrospective modifications
- To ensure acceptance and feasibility of the experience
- To monitor organisational learning and furnish any additional resources required

The framework allows practitioners to develop entirely new experiences by following each phase and activity presented, however practitioners can also utilise the framework to enhance and improve existing experiences by carrying out regular experience audits and idea generation sessions. The value of developing experiences in this manner not only focuses on the outcome of an experience but on building inimitable internal resources and knowledge which can be utilised in an ongoing manner to develop uniquely differentiated experiences and to achieve overall competitive advantage.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a review of academic literature in the fields of product and service development with the aim of developing a cultural tourism experience development framework. The methodologies of each offering were explored and defined, with various models and processes discussed for their potential synthesis in this research stream. A rationale was presented for the development of a specific framework of experience development created around the characteristics, not only of experiences, but of the cultural tourism sector. The discussion in the chapter contends that experience

development needs emphasis on the particular antecedents which enable success and they therefore form part of the conceptual framework. Similar emphasis is placed on the experience concept development stage of the process via the development and articulation of the aforementioned experience components. The entire process accentuates the presence of a skilful coordinator and a design team (internal and external) to carry out a set of activities at each phase of the process which involves a cycle of imagining, refining and formalising experience components which can be reinforced through a collaborative rather than an individual focus.

It is the author's assertion that no research has previously incorporated NPD and NSD models and the antecedents for success as a foundation for experience development. Theory does not offer all the answers when developing a conceptual framework and therefore the framework will be tested in a case study so as to validate and explore in a more in-depth manner the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the real life practices of experience design.

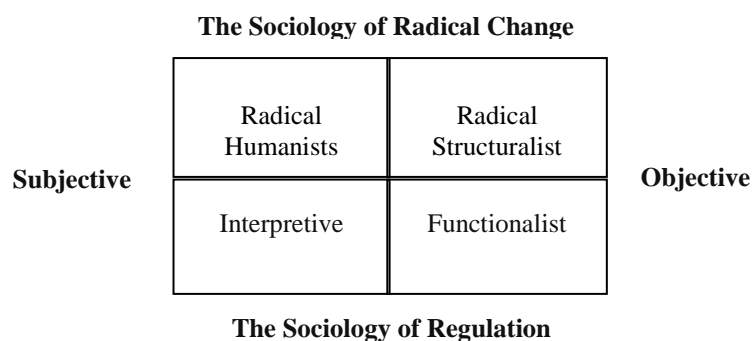
Chapter Four: Research Methodology

In this chapter the researcher examines the various philosophical and methodological factors that have shaped the choice of research design used in this study. The chapter starts with a discourse on the philosophical assumptions needed for the methodology. To achieve the objectives of the research the current study adopts an exploratory qualitative investigation utilising a case study method. The sampling process and case study selection process is described in detail. The strategy for data collection is presented with a justification of the various methods employed for achieving the research objectives. In consideration of the argument that qualitative research needs to be trustworthy and authentic a number of assessments for establishing quality in qualitative research are discussed in the interest of strengthening the quality of this research. In summary, the researcher has sought to adopt a systematic and rigorous research design to achieve the aims and objectives originally laid down.

4.1 Philosophical Perspectives

In order to develop a philosophical perspective the researcher is required to make a number of fundamental assumptions concerning two dimensions: the nature of society and the nature of science (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). The nature of society is based on the rate of change which can be regulatory or radical. The regulatory view sees society as unified and cohesive, whereas radical change views society in constant conflict against the domination of societal structures (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Within these dimensions are four paradigms as depicted below.

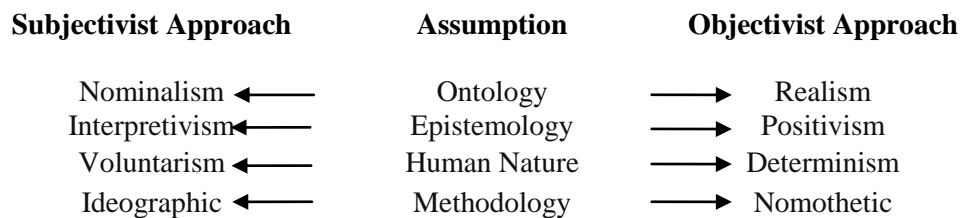
Figure 4.1: Four Paradigms for the Analysis of Social Theory



Source: Burrell and Morgan (1979)

The four paradigms are: radical humanist, radical structuralist, interpretive and functionalist. Humanic research tends to focus on the interpretive functionalist paradigms. For Burrell and Morgan (1979) social science requires either a subjective or an objective approach to research, both of which are further demarcated by a number of correlated assumptions concerning ontology (reality), epistemology (knowledge) and human nature with these assumptions determining the research methodology and the research methods to be employed by the researcher (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Figure 4.2 illustrates the subjectivist and objectivist approaches to social science and the assumptions of each.

Figure 4.2: Approaches to Social Science



Source: Burrell and Morgan, (1979)

Both the subjectivist and objectivist perspectives shown in figure 4.2 have major implications for researchers and have been described as a range of dissimilar opposites with varying philosophical stances aligned between them (Holden and Lynch, 2004). Objectivists perceive that their studies can be undertaken autonomously of that which is being observed, whereas subjectivists contend that it is impossible for researchers to detach themselves from the research phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2003). The subjective approach on the left could be regarded as relating to theory building, whereas the objective approach on the right could be regarded as theory testing. In terms of ontology, a nominalist perspective is deemed suitable because the research objectives are exploratory in nature with the area of research requiring greater understanding of the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the manner in which they are developed. Epistemology refers to the assumptions of what may be regarded as acceptable knowledge in a particular discipline with positivism and interpretivism outlining the contrasting perspectives (Bryman and Bell, 2003). In terms of epistemology the

researcher adopts an interpretive stance in accordance with the view that knowledge is subjectively acquired, and not discovered (Lynch, 2008). Interpretive researchers interact and immerse themselves in the research environment in order to interpret the phenomena subjectively (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Human nature concentrates on the relationship between human beings and the environment in which they interact with two extremes, determinism and voluntarism. As the current research takes a subjectivist/interpretive stance in relation to the previous assumptions discussed above it follows a voluntarism stance which holds that human free will plays a role in the environment. The final choice of methodology is informed by the researcher's perspective on ontology, epistemology, and human nature and has two distinct approaches: ideographic and nomothetic. The general orientation of this research is steered towards a qualitative inductive strategy. Inductive analysis commences with observations and builds towards general patterns from experience with the setting (Quinn Patton, 1990). For Denzin and Lincoln (2000:3) qualitative research is "*a situated activity that locates the observer in the world*", with the researcher studying things in their natural location where they endeavour to interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. The current study is exploratory in nature and focuses on cultural tourism organisations.

4.2 Research Aims

The research question is a concise statement of the overall aim of the study, providing an indication of the eventual methodologies to be used to answer the question. This research has one main question which is mainly exploratory in nature: What is the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed? The research question forms a foundation for a set of more in-depth research objectives which, according to Saunders et al. (2003), offers evidence of a clear sense of purpose and direction:

- To understand the nature of experiences in a cultural tourism context
- To identify the elements of a cultural tourism experience
- To develop a framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism

The exploratory nature of the research is less open to a quantitative approach and therefore dictates an overriding qualitative design structure. Indeed, adopting a qualitative methodology is consistent with the subjectivist/interpretive philosophical approach of this study as it allows the researcher gain insights into a relatively new phenomenon. Qualitative research entails the use of qualitative data, in the form of interviews, documents, and participant observation, in order to understand and explain social phenomena. Quinn Patton (1990:48) notes that *“the mandate of qualitative methods is to go into the field and learn about the program firsthand”*. Qualitative methods are most suitable for organisational research and are characterised by highly active engagement (Smith, 1991; Mason, 2002). Creswell (1998) contends that ‘good’ qualitative research can describe a ‘story’ in a credible way by capturing all the intricacies of real life situations.

4.3 Research Design

The research design is the strategy that guides a research study towards its objectives (Gill and Johnson, 2002; Black, 1999). There are numerous research approaches that can be taken, and the classification most commonly used is the threefold one of exploratory, descriptive or explanatory designs (Robson, 2002). An exploratory design *“seeks to find out what is happening, to ask questions and to assess phenomena in a new light”* (Robson, 2002:59). A descriptive approach describes data and characteristics about the phenomenon being studied. Saunders et al. (2003) note that descriptive research does not seek to draw conclusions from the data that is being described and as such can be used as a forerunner to exploratory research. An explanatory design seeks to establish a causal relationship between variables (Robson, 2002). Based on the objectives of the research, this study adopts an exploratory research approach as the objectives seek to gain insights and clarify concepts about the research problem.

4.4 Research Approach

Various interpretive approaches exist in qualitative research such as ethnography, action research and case studies, all of which are dependent on gaining access to people in the

field. The principal differences between ethnographies, action research and case studies centre on the length of time that the researcher is required to spend in the field and the degree of immersion in the study (Klein and Myers, 1999). Yin (2007) considers that ethnographies require long periods of time in the field whereas case studies do not depend wholly on data from ethnographic or participant observation. As the study is exploratory, a case study methodology was deemed most beneficial to the research objectives as it will permit the researcher to develop an understanding of a complex phenomenon. Justification for the choice of a case study approach is based on a number of factors. Firstly, the research question presented in this study is exploratory and requires a methodological approach that allows the researcher to understand a complex set of factors and the nature of their occurrence (Yin, 2009). Indeed, case studies are required in instances when comprehending the dynamic nature of events is a condition (Eisenhardt, 1989). Secondly, case studies are more preferable over other approaches when examining a contemporary set of events in which the researcher has no control which gives the opportunity to use numerous sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). Thirdly, and in accordance with Gibbert et al. (2008) the researcher contends that case studies seek to study phenomena in their contexts rather than independent of context. Indeed, Miles and Huberman (1994) propose the use of the term 'site' in place of context as it reinforces the fact that a case always takes place in a specified social and physical setting, which implies that individual cases cannot be studied separate to their context as is the situation with quantitative data collection methods. Fourthly, Eisenhardt (1989) contends that case research is especially welcome in new circumstances where little is known about the phenomenon, and where existing theories are deemed insufficient. The nature of cultural tourism experiences and the process for their development is indeed an emerging phenomenon and a case study can present the researcher with scope to exploit numerous sources of evidence (Yin, 2009).

4.4.1 Case Study Design

Case study as a research approach is well documented from several perspectives including design analysis and as a tool for theory building (Yin, 1981, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1984; Eisenhardt, 1989). Stake (1994) reasons, that a case study has a conceptual structure, which is typically organised around a small number of research

questions, which represent issues or themes. Yin (2009:17) describes case study as “...a strategy for doing research, which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence”. The current study attempts to overcome a number of criticisms of case research. Stuart et al. (2002:429) defend case research against those who see it “as simply a collection of anecdotes and war stories” by contending that use of a protocol and proper pre-planned methods of analysis can counter such criticism. Similarly, making accountable design decisions on the research questions, the unit of analysis, the sampling strategy, the strategy for data collection, management and analysis, can augment the process (Mason, 1996; Hirschman, 1986). Therefore, the ensuing sections present the rationale for the various design decisions in greater detail.

4.4.2 The Unit of Analysis

An important component of a research design within case research is the clear identification of its unit of analysis (Yin, 2009). In case study research it is critical to define the case, in terms of what the case is, and where the case ceases (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). For Quinn Patton (1990:168) the key concern in selecting and assessing a suitable unit of analysis is making the decision on that which “*you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study*”. The primary research question of this study is charged with understanding the process by which experiences are developed. This requires an understanding of the nature of experiences within a real life location and secondly, the manner by which that location develops their experience. Therefore the unit of analysis is a cultural tourism experience and the organisation that delivers that experience. The main unit is the organisation as a whole, and a number of smaller units existing within it, such as its managerial team and employees, and its visitors. Once the general definition of the case has been established, the sampling process is the next issue to address.

4.4.3 Sampling

Researchers have a wide set of choices to make in conducting case research which includes determining the number of cases to be used, sampling and case selection (Voss et al, 2002). The first issue to be established was the number of cases to be used for the present study. As the researcher is resource constrained by being a sole researcher, it was determined that a single case which offered multiple sources of evidence would be preferable as it would offer opportunity for deeper observation without being overly costly. Neither retrospective nor longitudinal cases were deemed wholly suitable however aspects of both types do permeate the study; the case is to some extent retrospective as it needs to offer evidence of the phenomenon being explored from both past and present perspectives. Similarly, a longitudinal case was not entirely feasible due to the limited duration of the masters research project; however, the research process lasted one year from establishing original contact to final presentation of findings and therefore has a significant duration.

The literature provides a wide range of sampling strategies that researchers can utilise to select their cases, however, *“the underlying principle that is common to all these strategies is selecting information rich cases”* that will allow the researcher to develop theory (Quinn Patton, 2002:242). According to Quinn Patton (1990) there are sixteen sampling methods which he divides into random probability sampling and purposeful sampling strategies; within the latter is criterion sampling which was deemed suitable for the purposes of this research as it involves reviewing and studying all cases that meet a set of predetermined criteria of importance thereby guaranteeing the quality of each case used for research. One of the key questions to be also considered in choosing a case is the level of data that a case will provide and whether it will adequately address the research questions. Criterion sampling allows for the breaking down of the population to satisfy the need for rich information and to ensure the presence of key activities and characteristics. The criteria used in the study are presented in table 4.1 overleaf with a rationale offered for each one.

Table 4.1 Criteria for Case Selection

Criteria	Rationale
1. An organisation that is consistent with the features of the study's chosen unit of analysis i.e. offers a cultural tourism experience	Offers the researcher a typical representation of the phenomenon under study
2. An organisation that remains open all year	Offers the researcher flexibility for research duration.
3. An organisation that is representational of the categories of traditional & living culture, natural & built heritage	Representative of the sector defined in research objectives
4. An organisation with a minimum of 300,000 visitors per annum	High visitor numbers demonstrates an effective, popular and high quality offering
5. A well established cultural tourism organisation offering evidence of best practice e.g. awards & accolades	Required to be a best practice organisation to gain rich data
6. An organisation that offers more than one experience offering on the same site	Greater variety of offerings from which can be drawn in-depth understanding of the nature of experience
7. Permanence - An organisation that has a well developed visitor experience	The case study needs to be in operation for a considerable length of time to allow the researcher to gather evidence of the process by which experiences are developed in practice with evidence of the early stages and enhancements to the process
8. An organisation that is willing to participate	Quality of access will directly impact on quality/depth of data received

The first criterion (in table 4.1) was used to guide the researcher in establishing a population from which to select a representative sample of organisations. The population or *universe of units* (Bryman and Bell, 2003) is the total of all cultural tourism organisations operating in the Republic of Ireland. The researcher was granted access to Fáilte Ireland's databases of the tourism heritage product which provided an exact and current list of 445 natural and built heritage organisations and the Fáilte Ireland 'Calendar of Festivals and Events' (2009) which furnished an additional list of 844 festivals and events within the traditional and living culture categories. These two databases provided an overall population of 1289 cultural tourism organisations which was deemed to encapsulate the full population of cultural tourism organisations in Ireland. The organisations within the population have numerous differentiating characteristics ranging from size, visitor numbers, location, seasonality and type of cultural tourism offering. From the original population an initial sample group of twenty three organisations was selected using criterion two and three and four in table 4.1 who

were firstly considered representational of the categories of traditional and living culture and natural and built heritage and were secondly considered instrumental to the matter under study, cultural tourism experience development and had a minimum of 300,000 visitors per annum. The twenty three organisations are presented below.

Table 4.2: Initial Sample Group

Aillwee Cave	Guinness Storehouse
Killarney National Park Muckcross House	JF Kennedy Arboretum
Cape Clear Island International Storytelling Workshop	Shannon Heritage -Bunratty Castle & Folk Park
Cliffs of Moher Visitor Experience	Lismore Castle Gardens and Gallery
Craggaunowen, the Living Past	Reginald's Tower
Docklands Maritime Festival	Rothe House and Gardens
Dublin Viking Festival	St. Patrick's Festival
Dublinia and the Viking World	The Jameson Experience
Dunbrody Emigrant Ship	The National Museum of Ireland (Country Life)
Galway Arts Festival	Westport Heritage Town
GAA Museum & Croke Park Stadium	Wicklow's Historic Gaol

Following a further screening process using criteria five, six, seven and eight further investigation of the organisations characteristics was undertaken whereby the initial sample was narrowed down to two possible cases, the Guinness Storehouse and Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. While both sites matched the researcher's definition of the unit of analysis, an initial inspection of both cases prior to selection found that the Guinness Storehouse offered a single experience, and this did not meet criterion six. However, the Guinness Storehouse was deemed suitable to use as a pilot case. Findings from the pilot case study of the Guinness Storehouse are offered in Appendix A.

Bunratty Castle and Folk Park offered a number of forms of visitor experience offerings, and the remaining two criteria of permanence and willingness to participate were established, thereby confirming its selection as the main case study site. The researcher established that the site would be made accessible for the duration of the study. The case selection process helped determine that the case chosen was relevant to the issues and questions of interest and was therefore considered suitable for exploration of the phenomenon under study. The chosen case is well established and is considered one of the leading Irish cultural tourism attractions evidenced in its high visitor numbers and leading reputation internationally and has more than one experience offering on site.

4.3.3 Pilot Test

In the early stages of the current study the researcher drafted a set of questions for the interview process and conducted a pilot case study of the Guinness Storehouse with a view to fine-tuning and evaluating the interview questions for the ultimate case study research process. The Guinness Storehouse was chosen for the pilot test as it represents an example of best practice in the research field i.e. cultural tourism experience design and is the number one Irish visitor attraction (Fáilte Ireland, 2008). The pilot test was important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provided essential feedback, which revealed how interviewees interpreted and understood each question, allowing for the refinement of questions. Secondly, in accordance with Yin (1994) it helped to refine the researcher's data collection strategy and added to the overall projects reliability and rigour. On conclusion of the semi-structured interview, the interviewees were asked to offer additional feedback on the questions, which provided rich information to the researcher on the effectiveness of the questions allowing for the modification of future questions. The pilot test highlighted the necessity of incorporating additional viewpoints on the area of research that had previously not been considered, including, documents and recorded material kept for their historical interest. The pilot test allowed for the development of a focused protocol to be used in the ultimate case study. Finally, the pilot test provided the researcher an opportunity for early exploration into the research question and it broadened the scope of the ongoing literature review.

Protocol Design

In advance of selecting the strategy for data collection a research protocol is an important tool to increase the reliability of case study research (Yin, 2009). A case study protocol is a report that specifies how the entire case study has been conducted (Gibbert et al., 2008) and outlines both the research instrument and the set of procedures to be followed (Yin, 2009). The researcher designed a protocol using the guidelines offered by Yin (2009) with the following sections:

- An overview of the case study project (background, project objectives and issues)
- Field procedures (presentation of credentials, fieldwork access and procedural needs and reminders)

- Case study questions (the specific questions that the case study investigator must bear in mind for the duration of data collection)
- A guide for the case study report (outline, format for data, use and presentation, and bibliographical information)

The research protocol is presented in appendix B and its structure follows a template offered by Brereton et al. (2008).

4.4 Strategy for Data Collection

Yin (2009) considers that three principles are extremely important in order to achieve high quality in case studies, and which, when used properly, should help to deal with problems of establishing external validity and reliability of the case study evidence. The three principles require multiple sources of evidence, a strategy for managing collected data and a clear chain of evidence and each is discussed in sequence.

Principle 1: Use of multiple sources of evidence:

The advantage of using case research is in its potential to draw from many different sources of evidence, commonly known as triangulation. There is a consensus that findings emanating from a case study should be based on several different sources of information (Yin, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989). In seeking to apply Yins' principle the researcher chose five sources of evidence; a combination of semi-structured interviews, structured interviews, document and archival analysis, participant observation and physical artefacts as the chief modes of data collection, and each will be discussed in detail in the ensuing sections.

4.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

An interview is a *'purposeful discussion between two or more people'* (Kahn and Cannell, 1957). Interviews yield direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Quinn Patton). According to Yin (1994) interviews offer the most important source of case study information. Interviews were carried out during the period January to March 2010. At the outset a set of interviews were

conducted with the CEO of the site and his management team and a number of employees. The duration of each interview varied and ranged from thirty minutes to two and a half hours. Table 4.3 provides an overview of the interview schedule.

Table 4.3: Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

Interviewees	Number	Title	Date
John Ruddle	1	CEO Shannon Heritage	7 th January, 2010
Aodhán Behan	1	Operations Manager Shannon Heritage	14 th January, 2010
Anya	1	Castle Tour Guide	27 th January, 2010
Deirdre Stephenson	1	Evening Products Manager	27 th January, 2010
Marie Slattery	1	Sales, Marketing & Reservations Manager	27 th January, 2010
Folk Park Employees	4	Bean an Ti's and frontline employees	27 th January, 2010
Folk Park Employees	3	School Teacher & Animators	17 th March, 2010

At the outset the researcher was concerned with generating an atmosphere of trust with the interviewees and drew on Meyers (2001) strategy for building trust. This entailed developing a procedure for contacting the interviewees and sending a letter explaining the key features of the project and the broad issues to be addressed in the interview with the proposed structure to accomplish them, and how the researcher intended to use and store the information. Both transparency and the avoidance of ambiguity were critical factors to assure reliability, therefore the researcher provided the interviewees with a synopsis of the questions in advance of the actual interviews. In line with the explorative nature of this research, the aim of the interviews was to enable the researcher to understand the research topic from the perspective of the interviewee, and to understand why he or she came to have this particular perspective. A semi-structured interview format was chosen as it allowed the researcher to explore the unit of analysis most fully and without too many boundaries. In advance of each semi-structured interview, a set of interview questions were designed based on the key research objectives and major themes emanating from the literature review. This was subsequently used as a guide to prompt discussions throughout each interview, the order of which varied depending on the direction of the particular conversation at a particular time. The interview guide and questions can be found in the case study protocol in Appendix B. The interviewees were frequently probed to ensure that as much data as

possible could be collected from each interview. According to Bryman and Bell, (2007:482) the interview guide enhances dependability and “*allows the interviewer to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world*”. Many of the questions were open ended, focusing on specific situations and phases of activities in the organisation. This supports the general consensus in case study research that interviews take the form of guided conversations rather than structured interrogations with an emphasis on flow than rigidity (Yin, 1994; Rubin and Rubin, 1995; Saunders et al., 2003). The advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to uncover not only the ‘*what*’ is happening and ‘*how*’ it is happening but more importantly they explore ‘*why*’ it is happening (Saunders, et al., 2003).

4.4.2 Structured Interviews

A set of structured interviews were developed for the purposes of interviewing site visitors. In line with the explorative nature of the study, the goal of the structured interviews was to see the research topic from the perspective of the visitors, and to understand their particular perspective of the phenomenon under study. A shorter and more focused format was considered suitable for these respondents due to the nature of participants. For this study the researcher undertook twelve intercept interviews on the 17th March, 2010. The date was chosen as one of the busiest days at the case location and one for which a large number and variety of tourist types would be present. Visitors interviewed ranged in ages, and across varying nationalities, some were families, others with friends, and others in couples. The researcher read out each question and recorded the response. Questions were of a mixed style, some closed and others open-ended to allow for richer data covering the main themes of the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes of cultural tourism experiences.

4.4.3 Document Analysis

Saunders et al. (2003) consider that documentary analysis is beneficial in triangulating findings against other data collected from interviews and observation. The researcher examined both printed and electronic documents as an additional data source for the case study, detailed in Table 4.4. In total, twenty one documents were used. Information

relating to the inception and evolution of the site, and to the nature and development of its experience offering offered the researcher rich background information in the early stages of data collection. Documents attained also included formal archival studies, site brochures, and websites. The information gathered from the documents was analysed in conjunction with other sources as a means to assure consistency with the findings. Documentary evidence used in this research case study is listed below.

Table 4.4: List of Documents Employed

Document Type	Number of Documents
Formal studies, biographical summaries & speeches*	1
Case studies covering the broad context of the site under study*	1
Site Guide books and maps*	4
Newspaper articles from the mass media	5
Books - Historical Reference	1
Marketing and promotional material from the site under study	3
Event and activity information leaflets *	1
Written reports of meetings and other events*	1
Film and audio recordings of the site under study	1
Websites covering the broad context of the site under study: Shannon Development Shannon Heritage Bunratty Castle & Folk Park Gort Furniture Trust	4

* Documents acquired from Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

4.4.4 Direct Observation

Direct observation provides the researcher with data which offers “*detailed descriptions of people’s activities, behaviours, actions and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experience*” (Quinn Patton, 1990:10). Through direct observation the researcher gains immediate access to examine the activities and interactions of people whilst also engaging personally in those activities as a participant observer gaining rich data about people’s perceptions and experiences (Quinn Patton, 1990). Robson (2002) proposes two forms of direct observation to gather data, namely, descriptive observation and narrative account. In the case of descriptive observation the researcher focuses on observing “*the physical setting, the key participants and their activities, particular events and their sequence and the attendant processes and emotions involved*”

(Saunders et al., 2003:228). For the researcher validity, rigour and reliability were critical terms to be addressed throughout the entire project. The researcher adheres to Quinn Patton (2002:11) contention that “*Systematic and rigorous observation involves far more than just being present and looking around...Generating useful and credible qualitative findings requires discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work.*” Observations facilitated the researcher in observing both the overall visitor experience and more focused observation of the components of experiences identified in the literature. For this case study the researcher used every visit to the site as an opportunity for observation, thus when visiting to conduct interviews or for documentary analysis, six periods of observation were undertaken at several locations in the site for varying durations in time.

The observation of physical artefacts was deemed important, due to the large and imposing influence of the physical aspect of the case under study. Yin (2009) considers that when relevant, physical artefacts can be an important component in the overall case. The researcher observed many instances of visitors interacting with front-line employees and with other visitors and with the contextual aspects of the site. Such observations provided clarity for the researcher on issues that seem unclear from interviews or documentary evidence. The researcher considers that descriptive observation subsequently greatly assisted the writing of the narrative account of the phenomenon. Quinn Patton (1990:10) describes this as organising “*the voluminous raw data*” into clear narrative descriptions with major themes, categories, and illustrative case examples. There are four ways in which an observer may gather data: (1) the complete participant who operates covertly, concealing any intention to observe the setting; (2) the participant-as-observer, who forms relationships and participates in activities, but makes no secret of his or her intentions to observe events; (3) the observer-as-participant, who maintains only superficial contact with the people being studied; and (4) the complete observer, who merely stands back and eavesdrops on the proceedings (Waddington 1994). The researcher as observer chose the role of observer-as-participant. According to Grove and Fisk (1992), observational methods refer to data gathering techniques that focus on experience by providing real-world impressions in authentic surroundings. However, in line with most writers in the area, Adler and Adler (1994) suggest that the hallmark of observation is its non-intrusive nature which

minimises any interference in the behaviour of those observed, neither manipulating nor stimulating them.

The data collection methods used in this study allowed the researcher to gain deep insight into the research question. One important point that must be stressed here is that, utilising multiple data collection techniques raises important questions regarding the training and expertise of the case study investigator. For this research study, the researcher has received extensive training in all the proposed data collection techniques through a variety of research method classes, and one-to-one discussions with her project supervisors and with other senior academic staff.

Principle 2: Strategy for managing collected data

During the course of the research many documents relevant to the case study were collected, these documents took varying size and formats and required physical storage. The researcher is required to organise the collected data into a system, where it can be easily assessed, and *“converted into analysable text, which then needs to be reduced, displayed and used to draw and verify conclusions”* (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 43-44). The researcher created a primary file with photocopies of important sections of these documents and a secondary file that was readily retrievable.

Computer programs also help with the management of collected data and their role in the process of data management and analysis is critical, if not essential. This study utilised the qualitative program of QSR Nvivo to eliminate problems associated with organising vast amounts of interpretative data. Data collected from interviews, observations, documentary and physical evidence were initially transcribed into MS word documents and transferred into an Nvivo computer file. In using this program the researcher sought to enhance her efficiency through data storage/retrieval and applying codes to break the data into a number of themes or trees for analysis. Coding as a technique can interpret qualitative data in a way which allows it to be treated effectively as quantitative data. The use of a software package gave structure to the collected data by maintaining text in organised database files. The program proved highly beneficial as it allowed the researcher immediate access and retrieval throughout the process.

Principle 3: Maintain a chain of evidence:

To increase the reliability of the data in the case study, the researcher must maintain a clear chain of evidence (Yin, 2009). For this study, the qualitative software package of QSR Nvivo contains an audit trail function, which allowed the researcher to track the data collection, analysis and interpretation process. It automatically attaches an identifier to each unit of information, such as the name, number, date of document, page, paragraph, and line number. Therefore, whenever a unit of information is utilised in a report, the software package can automatically refer to the specific source document, paragraph, from which it originated.

4.5 Strategy for Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative activity which seeks to see order from chaos through structuring the data into a variety of patterns, with three parallel activities, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Stuart et al., 2002). The researcher was granted permission to record the semi-structured and structured site interviews which were subsequently transcribed into MS word documents. As modern qualitative data analysis can be supported by computer programs the QSR Nvivo software program was utilised. All data in Nvivo was created from the interview transcripts and arranged into documents and nodes. The Nvivo program allowed the researcher to merge data through editing, coding, retrieving, memoing and linking data into compartmentalised sets of nodes. Through the coding program the researcher firstly read the data and broke it down into segments with common themes using multiple free nodes which were gradually refined into a narrower set of tree nodes reflecting the important themes of the research. A node is defined as “*a collection of references about a specific theme, place, person or other area of interest*” (Bryman and Bell, 2007:609). These free nodes were then assigned into a hierarchical structure of a tree node. Figure 4.3 offers evidence from the data analysis Nvivo program of the tree nodes used in the research. The tree nodes represented in figure 4.3 overleaf centred on the key themes of the study: case site context (organisation overview), process of experience development, (stages and activities), experience elements (experience product information), antecedents of experience development (NED process antecedents) and process evaluation measures.

Figure 4.3: Nvivo Tree Nodes

The screenshot shows the Nvivo interface with a 'Nodes' panel on the left and a 'Tree Nodes' table on the right. The 'Nodes' panel lists: Free Nodes, Tree Nodes, Cases, Relationships, Matrices, Search Folders, and All Nodes. The 'Tree Nodes' table has columns for Name, Sources, and References. The data is as follows:

Name	Sources	References
Organisation overview	3	3
Organisation Structure	1	1
Process	5	15
Stages	3	4
Activities	2	2
Experience product information	3	4
Elements	4	7
NED Process Antecedents	4	8
NED Process Evaluation measures	2	3

On the occasions that data didn't merge with any one particular theme the data was assigned a free node and subsequently coded within it. In conjunction with the software program the researcher drew up physical representations of themes and relationships which were aligned and compared to the software coding. This concurs with Miles and Huberman (1994) who consider that such activities can assist the researcher to discover new relationships and explanations. Unlike quantitative data analysis where the data analysis starts after collection data analysis was undertaken after each series of data collection. This allowed the researcher to reflect on the implications and evidence from each stage of coding before proceeding to the next stage of collection. The researcher used the memo section in the program to log ideas, reflections and notable relationships/anomalies corresponding to themes in the literature review. On completion of data collection, coding and analysis the researcher took a dual approach to conclusion drawing and verification. Stuart et al. (2002:428) refer to "a need for lateral and conceptual thinking to master the case-based research methodology". The researcher therefore reflected on, and discussed early conclusions emanating from the data analysis with research peers and supervisors to build what Miles and Huberman (1994:11) refer to as 'intersubjective consensuses'. It must be noted that no singular eureka moments were encountered by the researcher in drawing conclusions from the data, however, the tracking and documenting of passing thoughts together with the repetitive scrutiny of

the coded data allowed the researcher to draw from the data a set of conclusions to underpin the refinement of her conceptual framework.

4.6 Legitimisation and Triangulation of Evidence

Bryman and Bell (2007) discuss how various researchers have sought to apply the concepts of quantitative reliability and validity to the process of qualitative research. With quantitative methods research legitimacy is established through validity, reliability and generalisability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose four alternative evaluative criteria for interpretative research: *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *confirmability* with each related to the positivistic concepts of *internal validity*, *external validity*, *reliability* and *objectivity* as illustrated below. The researcher undertook to adhere to these criteria throughout the course of the research study to ensure the highest levels and each are discussed.

Table 4.5: Legitimacy Criteria in Quantitative and Qualitative Research

Quantitative Research	Qualitative Research
Internal Validity	Credibility
External Validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Lincoln and Guba (1985)

4.6.1 Credibility

Researchers cannot take for granted that readers and reviewers will accept case-based research as credible, which charges case researchers to offer credible explanations as to why they have concluded certain interpretations of the data (Lincoln and Cuba, 1985; Stuart et al., 2002). Qualitative researchers must strive to ensure that their interpretation of the research data is trustworthy and understandable (Lincoln and Guba, 1989). In keeping with the guiding principles of Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility of research findings and interpretations was achieved through a number of techniques which seek to address whether the research clearly, comprehensively and authentically describes the research phenomenon in its setting (Easterbury et al., 2008; Guba and Lincoln, 2008).

Following the guidelines offered by Lincoln and Guba (1989) the researcher added to the original duration of time designated for case study site visits. This provided scope for the researcher in the first instance to establish trust, rapport and relationships with key interviewees, and subsequently to allow ample observation for unambiguous identification of the most germane characteristics and elements within the site. Both Eisenhardt (1989) and Yin (2009) assert that data resulting from a case study should be sourced from multiple forms of information to promote rigorous measuring of constructs and relationships. This case study in common with best practice uses multiple data sources and a broad range of data collection techniques (as described in section 4.4) in order to reduce the likelihood of misinterpretation, to clarify meaning, and to verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation. In doing so the researcher has sought to develop a set of converging lines of enquiry which offer the reader a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under study (Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000).

4.6.2 Transferability

Transferability is analogous to the purpose of assessing external validity and relates to whether the research findings can be generalised beyond the current case study to other contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Empirical issues can arise in regard to the transferability of qualitative findings in case research generally focused on a small setting which displays particular characteristics (Bryman and Bell, 2007). These issues relate to whether or not “*findings would hold in some other context, or even in the same context at another point in time*” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:316; Bryman and Bell, 2007:413). The researcher has sought to provide thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation and always encouraged participants to freely discuss the subject matter. This provided the researcher with rich descriptive insights into the nature of cultural tourism experiences and process by which they are developed at the case site. This research adopted an in-depth exploration of a single case organisation with the aim of achieving a rich description of the phenomenon under study. And while it is argued that this does create a large amount of ‘contextual uniqueness’, Guba and Lincoln (1994) state that this provides others with what they consider as a database for making judgements about the possible transferability of findings to other contexts.

4.6.3 Dependability

Dependability is equivalent to reliability in quantitative research and is concerned with the stability of research data over time (Lincoln and Guba, 1989; Riege, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (1989) recommend researchers to adopt a stocktaking approach to data and to this end the researcher has followed guidelines offered by authors and maintained complete records of every phase of the research process (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009). The researcher has kept all evidence which includes, selection of participants, observation notes and reflections, transcribed interviews and data analysis coding, each of which are maintained in an accessible manner offering a clear chain of evidence available for peer review. At various stages of the research the researcher has made presentations to her peers and faculty in the Waterford Institute of Technology (WIT) and at various national and international conferences from which she gained constructive feedback. Finally, a series of regular discussions and constructive feedback with research supervisors were undertaken over the period of research.

4.6.4 Confirmability

Confirmability finds its equivalent in objectivity and is *“concerned with assuring that data, interpretations and outcomes of inquiries are firmly rooted...and not simply figments of the evaluator’s imagination”* (Guba and Lincoln, 1989:242). Confirmability is tested by assessing if the interpretation of the presented data is rational and unbiased, that is the extent to which the conclusions are the soundest ones obtained from the data (Riege, 2003). The researcher has sought to establish confirmability by being as objective as possible by clearly delineating and auditing each stage of research design, data collection, data analysis, presentation and discussion and supported through mentoring by research supervisors. The researcher also engaged with peers in discussions after each site visit which allowed her to voice tentative analyses and find ways of overcoming obstructions, ambiguity and occasionally personal subjectivity. The data analysis process has been assisted through the use of data analysis software, also the researcher undertook to have the interview transcripts and findings reviewed by the respondents to confirm their truthfulness. The researcher has not consciously allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to influence the conduct of this research and

the findings deriving from it. Table 4.6 illustrates the legitimisation and authenticity of qualitative methods employed in the study.

Table 4.6: Research Legitimation

Criteria	Concept	Measures in place in the present study
Credibility	To ensure “ <i>that research is carried out according to the canons of good practice and submitting research findings to the members of the social world who were studied for confirmation that the investigator correctly understood that social world</i> ” (2007: 411)	After the interviews had been transcribed, analysed and findings written the researcher sent the case study participants a copy in order to confirm the content of the findings. The participants were also sent a consent form, which they were requested to sign if they were happy that the content reflected their views.
Transferability	Empirical issues can arise in relation to the transferability of qualitative findings normally centred on a small group sharing certain characteristics & are concerned with whether /not “ <i>findings would hold in some other context, or even in the same context at another point in time</i> ” (2007:413).	The researcher has sought to provide thick descriptions of the phenomenon under investigation & encouraged participants to freely discuss the subject matter. This provided the researcher with rich descriptive insights into the nature of cultural tourism experiences & process by which they are developed at the case site, which aids transferability
Confirmability	Establishing confirmability is one of the main objectives of the auditor, in that he/she can indicate if in fact the researcher has acted in good faith.	The researcher has sought to establish confirmability by being as objective as possible by auditing each stage of research design, data collection/analysis presentation & discussion, supported with mentoring by research supervisors. Data analysis has been assisted through the use of Nvivo software. The researcher has not consciously allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations to influence the conduct of this research & its findings
Dependability	In order to ensure dependability a researcher must ensure adequate records of all phases of the research are maintained and accessible for audit	The researcher has kept all evidence of all processes carried out throughout the entire study. Use of a case protocol

Sourced from: Bryman and Bell (2007)

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter sought to appraise the theoretical and conceptual factors influencing the approach to research design. The researcher adopted an interpretive approach to philosophy and took a qualitative inductive stance to investigate the phenomenon under study. The research strategy was presented and justification was offered for the researcher's choice of case research to address the aims and objectives of the study. A description of the case study process was outlined, detailing the sampling strategy, research visit preparations and on-site data collection methods used in the study. The researcher examined principles of legitimisation to be considered for establishing quality in this research. In the next chapter findings obtained from the chosen research methods are presented which will subsequently inform the discussion chapter.

Chapter Five: Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings arising from the analysis of various data collection instruments administered to gather the information needed for addressing the research objectives of the study. The principal contribution of this analysis is in creating a clearer understanding of the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the real life processes underpinning experience development. The findings presented in this chapter were gathered through a series of semi-structured (seven) qualitative interviews conducted with the management team and a number of employees (seven) at the site. A set of structured interviews of visitors (twelve), by means of interception to gather data on the nature of their experience were undertaken at the site, followed by a number of periods of participant observation. The chapter opens with a discussion of the case context and a profile of the case to detail its inception, history and development as one of Irelands leading cultural tourism visitor experiences. Informed by the themes which emerged from the literature review and primary data analysis the findings are presented as follows:

- Case context and profile
- The nature of cultural tourism experiences: evidence of experience components
- The process of experience development: evidence of stages, activities and antecedents of experience development

This chapter serves to give an objective insight into the nature and context of cultural tourism experiences within a best practice Irish organisation. It traces the various activities and processes inherent in generating a cultural tourism visitor experience. The use of narrative is conducive to creating a rich and thick description of the statements and behaviours of the interview participants whilst allowing for an accurate representation of the interviewee's interpretation of observations and documentary and artefact analysis. The chapter concludes with a brief summary of findings and a tabular depiction of the findings to inform the subsequent discussion chapter.

5.1 Case Site Context

In order to explore the nature and components of cultural tourism experiences and the manner in which the experience development process is actually undertaken, an established cultural visitor attraction was chosen for its demonstration of best practice in the design and delivery of experiences. There follows a case profile which tells the case sites' story through its related parts, integrating the evolution and development of the case location, size and structure, business strategy, and organisational culture. The case story begins at the flagship operation of the Shannon Heritage portfolio, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, situated in the south west of Ireland adjacent to Shannon International Airport (see figure 5.1 below).

Figure 5.1: Bunratty Castle and Folk Park and Shannon Heritage Portfolio



Accessed from:<http://www.shannonheritage.com>

Built in 1425, Bunratty Castle was in ruins in the mid 20th century and in danger of being demolished for stone. Viscount Gort, a mediaevalist bought the castle in 1953 for a nominal sum, rescuing it for posterity. Encouraged by a small group of individuals and in conjunction with the Office of Public Works and Bord Fáilte (now Fáilte Ireland), a restoration project was initiated to return the castle to its former splendour and it was opened to the public in 1960. Bunratty Castle and its contents are now held in

trust for the Nation and the castle is now a national monument in State care². Bunratty's journey to becoming a tourism product was one was driven by regional economic necessity. Shannon Development³ was formally inaugurated in 1959 for the development and growth of the Shannon region as an industrial and tourist location. The first Chairman of Shannon Development Dr. Brendan O'Regan is described as a visionary and innovator, and is cited as one of the chief driving forces for developing the Shannon area as an international tourist destination. Shannon Heritage was established in 1986 as a subsidiary of Shannon Development, as a management company to oversee the cultural tourism product portfolio, which has developed from one product in 1963, the Medieval Banquet at Bunratty Castle, to a total of seven daytime visitor experiences and four evening entertainment experiences which includes, Knappogue Castle, King John's Castle, Dunguaire Castle, Craggaunowen, Lough Gur Stone Age Centre, and the Brian Boru Heritage Centre.

Bunratty Castle's inception as a tourism attraction grew from an idea to attract international transiting flight passengers at the nearby Shannon Airport to stay in the Shannon area by promoting access to a mediaeval castle, which hosted evening banquets. Originally undertaken on a pilot basis, the castle banquets became extremely successful internationally growing from 4,500 visitors in its first year. To date over 4.5 million visitors have enjoyed the unique mediaeval banqueting experience. In addition to the castle and the medieval banquet, the site now includes a nineteenth century folk park which recreates both rural and village life from the period. Today, Bunratty Castle and folk park is one of Ireland's top visitor attractions open daily all year-round, with recent figures indicating 305,557 visitors in 2008 (Fáilte Ireland, 2008).

Shannon Heritage has a hierarchical organisational structure and is overseen by CEO John Ruddle and his management team who are based at the Bunratty site. During the busy periods the organisation employs between eighty to a hundred employees. An

² The term 'national monument' as defined in Section 2 of the National Monuments Act (1930) means a monument 'the preservation of which is a matter of national importance by reason of the historical, architectural, traditional, artistic or archaeological interest. National monuments in State care include those, which are in the ownership or guardianship of the Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government (DEHLG).

³ Shannon Development is a government owned regional development company dedicated to promoting and developing the Shannon Region of Ireland.

organisational chart outlining the constituent positions and key areas of responsibility within the organisation is presented in Appendix C.

5.2 The Nature of Experience at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

The nature of experience at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park is presented in the ensuing sections in terms of findings on the organisations core activity and the nature and elements of the emotional outcomes, contextual and interactional aspects of the site.

5.2.1 The Core Activity

Bunratty castle is a fifteenth century medieval fortress, and while witnessing a number of minor enhancements, has remained largely unchanged over the years and is still true to its original Norman construction. While the castle no longer defends the region against Norman attackers, it has today become a leading Irish cultural tourism visitor attraction. In addition to the castle there is the nineteenth century Bunratty Folk Park, which features a variety of traditional Irish farmhouses, a watermill, blacksmith's forge, and a display of nineteenth Century agricultural machinery. The folk park also includes a recreated village street denoting life in nineteenth century Ireland. The streetscape comprises an original schoolhouse, a doctor's house, an artisan's house, a pawnbroker, public house, drapery shop, and a number of terraced houses, grocery, hardware store, and post office. Both the castle and the Folk Park are set on twenty six acres, and they offer a variety of physical heritage assets and artefacts which span a number of historical periods from mediaeval times to the mid nineteenth century. The folk park is described as,

“...a living museum, a celebration of the everyday domestic existence of Irish people living a century ago....the buildings appear just as they would have around 1900 furnished with authentic period furniture and filled with the typical clutter of ordinary life... Each building is a meticulous reconstruction of an original, and is set in its natural environment; most of them came from the local Shannon region” (Healy, 1991:24)

The aim of Shannon Heritage is to *“endeavour to preserve our culture and heritage, traditions and customs, castles and places of history for future generations to enjoy”*. The organisation seeks to communicate the historical narrative of the site to its visitors by offering them the opportunity to visit and spend time exploring a restored medieval castle and recreated Folk Park. The organisations core activity is providing visitors with

an opportunity to learn about Irish heritage and culture through observation, interaction and engagement with multiple periods within a cultural historic site. The site offers three core products, medieval castle life and banquet, rural farm life, and nineteenth century village street life, manifested through a number of core historical assets and artefacts. Shannon Heritage uses the phrase “*unlocking the door to Ireland’s treasures*” to introduce visitors to their attractions in both online and print media. The Sales, Marketing and Reservations Manager summarises the core activity offered at the Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, “*...there are three different experiences here at Bunratty you have mediaeval castle life, you have rural farm life, and you have nineteenth century village street life*”.

The organisation understands that a number of activities are required to facilitate visitor experiences at the site. Therefore, supporting the core physical product, the visitor experience is manifested through a series of day and evening events and activities offered throughout the site. Bunratty Castle closes each day at four pm to prepare for the Medieval Banquet. The banquet is described as a complete experience staged with a full cast of professional musicians and singers in medieval costume who are charged with the dual role of entertaining and serving guests. Many other activities and events take place at the site throughout the year which includes harvest and Halloween events, Christmas activities and pantomimes, tea dances and many cultural festivities.

5.2.2 Emotional Outcomes Component

Visitors are immediately immersed into the site as the castle and folk park buildings appear in their original state generating feelings of power, majesty and adventure at the outset of the visit. The castle and Folk Park, for the most part free of any modern additions or signage and therefore readily stimulate emotions of awe, reflection and contemplation for both adults and children. Both the contextual and the interactional components create an immediate perception to visitors that the visit offers emotional outcomes. The contextual component projects a highly credible sense of past through the numerous variety of historical physical assets and the natural manner by which they are presented. This is combined with various modes of interaction throughout the site to stimulate visitors emotionally. There is strong evidence of planned attempts to create an

emotional connection with visitors amongst the many experience offerings at the site and this is underpinned by knowledge of both a set of particular emotions and of the means to stimulate them. In the course of the interviews with members of the management team the researcher questioned as to whether they design a set of opportunities whereby visitors can achieve emotional stimulation. All respondents agreed that they do recognise that the site offers a variety of emotions and this is achieved by splitting up the entire site into points which have events, activities, animation, interaction and also some to allow for reflection. The Operations Manager is keen to add that while tour guides, animators and employees are placed at several points throughout the site their role is only facilitate visitors experience and are not wholly responsible for creating it. There is a consensus drawn from the interviews with the management team that the organisation has a strong understanding of the importance of emotional outcomes in the attraction. Initially, the management team was asked to identify the emotions that they seek to deliver. Answering the question as to the range of emotions offered at the site, both the Sales Marketing and Reservations and Operations Managers brought the conversation back to the importance of understanding the target market that they aim to serve. The organisation considers it important to understand the type of emotions that its visitors seek from their visits and this is achieved through knowledge of the needs and motives of their target markets. The organisation knows its key markets and knows them extremely well as evidenced from all of the management interviews. Key markets are segmented and the organisation identifies the anticipated emotional outcomes of each segment. As a large proportion of the organisations target market are domestic families, activities and events are designed to focus on stimulating specific emotions. An example is offered here by one manager,

“...you are aiming at the parents as well and how they remember their youth and on what they are handing on. You have to look at the parents and connect them with their youth so you are filling a perception for the parents and offering fun for the kids.”

The Operations Manager maintains that the safe and unrestricted freedom offered by twenty-six acres of parkland interspersed with activities instils emotions of security and freedom and adventure particularly in younger visitors. The Sales and Marketing Manager notes that the organisation seeks to communicate and instil a sense of the past for all visitors, in particular for children. In terms of adults and older visitors it is noted that emotions of nostalgia and reminiscence are most prevalent. The Sales and

Marketing Manager offers evidence of an understanding and awareness of the emotional needs of customers such as the active retirement groups who seek to be brought back to their childhood by visiting the site. It was clearly articulated by the interviewees that knowledge of visitor needs helps Bunratty offer opportunities for emotional stimulation. They revealed how breaking their total market into specific groups allows them to isolate the particular emotions that are required and then to designate sets of emotional cues at particular points across the site and also within the events and activities that occur for visitors. A number of different clues are used to stimulate emotions with the aim of translating and communicating the highly physical aspect of contextual component. The Operations Manager describes how the management team frequently asks questions such as, “*what would the kids be interested in?*” He revealed that, as children seek fun and adventure they design lots of points of interest offering opportunities for them to feel a sense of adventure with a few surprises along the way. The natural and flowing layout of the site is a cue for visitors that they can create their own personal route and assume control through the site, evidenced in this statement from a parent, “*...the young fellow wanted to go number forty to number one so we did the park in reverse and felt in complete control because of that*”.

The Evening Products Manager confirms that the organisation uses a number of cues and triggers to break down perceived barriers and facilitate a set of emotional outcomes such as traditional Irish songs, as evidenced in this comment,

“Danny Boy, oh that invokes emotions of Irishness, connecting with Irishness in them that may be going back generations. You know the way that people crave the connection, they get that with their sense of identity, they are all crucial. We break down barriers and get them engaged through the story telling and singing”.

The researcher questioned tourists directly about their levels of emotional involvement and whether any of them became engrossed at the site. A number of them found that the manner in which artefacts and furnishings and paintings are naturally positioned allowed for greater imagination and contemplation. For one visitor the decor of an old farmhouse facilitated a period of absorption,

“Engrossed? I would say it was in the farmhouse, the old wallpaper I was looking at it, we are not so young that we don't remember the past”.

Within the Golden Vale farmhouse it was observed that many visitors sought a sense of cultural identity and connection through touching, tasting, smelling and listening to the stories of the Bean an Ti. As visitors listened to her stories, some were noticed to add personal reflections from their own youth and remarks about their own mothers, to which the Bean an Ti responded with questions as to their own background. Many visitors confirmed that they would be taking away tangible memorabilia with them in the form of recipe sheets, photographs and souvenirs, a number revealed that they had purchased books (factual and fictional) on Irish history and culture in the gift shop for both adults and children, *“...we got the recipe and we will try to make it when we go home”* and *“Yes now we go the shop to get a book about the place to learn more and my wife she is taking photographs which we can have to show our family”*

A variety of activities such as mobile animators are used to connect many of the points which do not have any animation across the site. Examples of these include a policeman in nineteenth century costume, who links the various points by chatting informally, passing on information and generally connecting with visitors. The Evening Products Manager notes that during the medieval banquet a number of activities and forms of entertainment are offered, which have the overriding aim of *“transporting people”*, to stimulate emotions of nostalgia, melancholy, and inspiration drawn from the historical context of the site. The researcher sought to find out if visitors were aware that a set of emotional outcomes could be attained at the site and to gather information on the types of emotions that are generated and this was achieved through both personal observation and visitors interviews. Findings from the visitor interviews on their emotional outcomes sought evidence of cues and triggers, sensory stimulation, range of emotions, and perception of attainable emotional outcomes. From personal observation a number of cues and triggers are evident across the site but are not presented in an overt manner. The lack of negative or prohibitive signage and labelling combined with the natural positioning of the many artefacts removes any sense of fear or nervousness of touching and feeling items. Similarly, the natural and chatty disposition of the sites employees, guides and animators offers a clear signal to visitors to engage freely with all aspects of the site. Sensory stimulation is widely used throughout many points in the site. In the folk park, farmhouses with open hearth turf fires are maintained at all times, similarly

the animators - Bean an Tí's⁴ ongoing baking activities at the site all combine to generate sensory smells that act as highly effective triggers for visitor emotions. A good example of the power of sensory cues is offered by one visitor, *'It's the smell of the turf, things like the baking are really sensory, it's really romantic here, it's about remembering'*. One visitor from the United States recalled that being allowed to touch things freely really surprised him, he found it particularly moving to place turf on the fires and pause and imagine, which he maintained, created a very powerful experience. Auditory cues are also evident, a visitor reflected on the harpist that they encountered in the on-site pub while having lunch, *"it is great to listen to Irish music it makes you relax and dream"*. In the course of the visitor interviews the researcher asked visitors to describe emotions that they felt during their visit. Table 5.1 offers a tabular summary of the range of emotional outcomes described by visitors during their visit.

Table 5.1 Emotional Outcomes at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

Emotions	Evidence
Sadness	'...so I was I think a little sad'
Poignant	'...it is a special feeling here for me it is personal I cannot describe it to you, maybe it is private in my soul'
Moving	'...the harp player and the music in the pub were incredible I was transfixed watching her and listening to it was so moving it kinda took me away'
Regression	'It's a very moving place I think it really stirs your soul when you smell the turf, see the baking and look at the picture of the sacred heart on the wall it brings you back to your granny's house back to an Ireland that probably felt safer from your childhood'
Reminiscence	'I was reminiscing and was back in my granny's house and she had the same wallpaper in sitting room, reminiscing is different it's about remembering and being back in her house as a child, nostalgia is for me about missing the past and wanting to feel it again, I don't want life now to be like back then, life was much harder, we have it a bit easier nowadays but it's still nice to imagine and remember our past'
Nostalgia	It's a real feeling of how things would have been'
A feeling of times past	'it was so real I was imagining their banquets, maybe because you had to look through a small barred window it was capturing a feeling of the past and how it might have been' 'well that's why we come here to connect back with the past and old Ireland really'
Peaceful	'...you can imagine and feel the past, it was quiet it felt peaceful but I could feel the past'
Cultural identity/ Connection	'Just an appreciation of where our heritage came from, an understanding of how the people lived and of how they did so much with so little' 'It interesting, it's educational, it's a bit of Irish as well, connection' '...we are helping our children appreciate and look back to our Irish heritage...they can't get that from books'' '...we need to ground the kids every now and then to get them to understand where we have come from'
Calmness & relaxation	'...the atmosphere is very calm here and very relaxing so you just soak it all in really'
Family Togetherness	'It's about the family!'

⁴ Bean an Tí is the Gaelic for Lady of the house

5.2.2 Contextual Component

Much of the evidence of the contextual component was collected through direct observation. Fully restored to its original medieval state, Bunratty Castle offers visitors the opportunity to explore a built heritage attraction which represents the traditional life of Ireland in medieval times and the nineteenth century. In addition, the Bunratty Folk Park, beyond the castle walls offers a nineteenth century village with outlying farmhouses, vegetable patches, and farming memorabilia. The folk park covers quite a vast space (twenty six acres) and presents a diverse but mutually supporting contextual element designed to communicate the traditional and living culture of the period. The contextual component is discussed under two sub-headings to facilitate insight of this comprehensive component, specifically, Physical Evidence: Theming and Cues, and Learning Activities: Staging and Cues.

Physical Evidence: Theming and Cues

The natural manner in which the physical aspects of the contextual nature of the site are arranged allows for a great deal of personal subjectivity as there is limited use of media to transfer information. The brevity of information is noted by the researcher in the role of observer as allowing greater personal or “inner” directed contemplation of the site. Use of theming throughout is evident and it helps to clearly delineate each of the main points and activities within the site. Theming is used throughout the site to clearly define each of the sites key points and it sticks rigorously to the date line represented in each. The different strata’s of society are immediately evident through visual cues which give an early prompt as to the nature of each building and they give visitors a suggestion of the nature of each building well in advance of entering each one. This was achieved by coherency of presentation in the external layout of each one. The strong differences in the size, structure and setting of each dwelling is highly evident, from the simple whitewashed farm labourers and fisherman’s dwellings with their stony and soil ground surface at the entrance, to the wealthier Golden Vale Farmhouse with a formal front flower garden and a brightly painted front door. The coherency is evidenced on the inside of each dwelling too, with each house skilfully themed to the period and social strata that it reflects. The manner by which theming is applied at the site is achieved through fastidious true and honest adherence to historic identity and origins.

The Operations Manager notes,

“We have the original Ardcroney church on site, it was brought in and rebuilt brick by brick from outside Portumna in Co. Galway, and similarly we moved the original Hughes Brothers house brick by brick to the folk park.”

There are number of carefully designed clues evident throughout the site that guide and direct visitors in terms of how to engage with aspects of the context. For the most part the arrangement of the numerous aspects of the contextual component, the place, its objects, people and ambiance is done so in a seemingly casual manner to allow maximum engagement with visitors. While a small number of rare artefacts, such as tapestries and religious icons cannot be touched they are presented in a natural setting so as to allow visitors to imagine and contemplate. Throughout the castle and folk park visitors have a high degree of personal control and can take as much or as little time as they wish to tailor make their visit.

Within the folk park, the farmhouses, school, shops and buildings, many of which were moved brick by brick from the locality to the site offer a historical representation of the various levels of society of the era. The numerous internal original artefacts, all gathered from the locality, such as a pedal operated sewing machine, cooking implements, wooden butter churn and turf burning open fire all combine together to support the overall theme. The stage for the visitor experience is set through the clever and original layout of the contextual elements at the farmhouse, and it is used as a backdrop for the ‘Bean an Tí’ to communicate a historical perspective in stories through her character to visitors. It is the manner in which these artefacts are arranged naturally which suggests to visitors as they enter that this is a real-time living/working farmhouse. As stated earlier the farmhouses are a facsimile of life in the period. The Golden Vale farmhouse has an open fireplace burning turf and a resident Bean an Ti baking traditional fare onsite. The farmhouse holds a range of artefacts and symbols presented not as displays but as they might have appeared at the time allowing for greater credible interpretation by visitors. The Operations Manager explains how the role each building is all about creating a setting which stimulates a feeling of the past,

“...the folk park is all about replicating life in the nineteenth century as it would be and how the different levels of society would live and how their homes would be laid and what artefacts would be in place in the environment but looking very natural and typical”

Taking an observer role within the Golden Vale farmhouse the researcher found it difficult to be objective as the experience was immediate, the sense of past and nostalgia overwhelming. The researcher found herself catapulted back in time to the rural Ireland of her childhood. Addressing this personal subjectivity the researcher asked the Bean an Tí to describe the setting and her role in conveying eighteenth century farm life. She describes how she is generally encountered baking in the kitchen, *'...it could be apple pie or brown bread and we talk visitors through it and we give them a recipe sheet so they can bake at home.'* Visitors comment immediately as they enter the initially dim house, comments such as *'oh can you smell the turf fire'* and *'look at the woman baking on the table'* and *'can I turn the handle of the sewing machine'* are repeated as visitors enter. Visitors are encouraged to touch and feel and taste many of the elements such as the turf and the homemade apple pies and bread made on site and are also encouraged to sit and relax as the Bean an Tí' recounts tales of times past. Bean an Tí's are natives of the locality and are required to be informed and knowledgeable, a certain amount of scripting is evident, however Bean an Tí's identified that employees are given freedom to personalise visitors experience in the farmhouses. The conversations initiated by the Bean an Ti with visitors are un-staged and offer a mix of humorous and sometimes sad stories of former times. Many visitors pose questions to the Bean an Ti which are answered using a combination of historical facts such as details on events and dates, and supplemented through stories delivered almost as personal reflections. During the period of observation the Golden Vale farmhouse was particularly busy for a period of approximately fifteen minutes. In that period, some prospective visitors, upon witnessing the high number of people, decided to forego the farmhouse and moved on to other sites.

Learning Activities: Staging and Cues

The contextual component of cultural tourism experiences at Bunratty Castle relies on a number of activities for their articulation and communication to visitors, which includes authenticity, learning and storytelling. The first element to be explored is authenticity. Within the authentic medieval castle visitors can explore the castle rooms, cellars and turrets filled with fifteenth and sixteenth century artefacts, and works of art over several floor. Parents of young children observed that,

“...the kids got to touch everything, here it's not like a museum where everything is just lined up in cases, the kids could see hear, touch, taste and smell it all, but it's really good also because they don't label it all and they get to use their imagination.”

A high degree of credibility is evident in the site with a strong focus on knowledge and provenance of each artefact, the CEO notes that he would have a *“sense of protection of the long-term asset uppermost in my mind all of the time...it is important to keep the authenticity of it all.”* The Gort Furniture Trust ⁵ maintains and acquires furniture and artefacts for the collection in Bunratty Castle. A medieval historian oversaw how each artefact is presented with the aim of staging them in an honest and coherent manner. The researcher as observer found that the castle building and its surroundings are presented in their original state, with no twenty-first century amendments made to the steep and winding stairs, low ceilings and huge draughty halls. The highly original condition of the site and its artefacts allows the historical vernacular to project itself to visitors in a genuine and authentic manner illustrated in this comment by one visitor,

“...the layout gave you a real feel for it, it's the big rooms...the way they arrange the furniture so sparsely.... you can actually picture people sitting there and imagine what it was possibly like back then”.

The degree of authenticity is considered by many to be quite high at the site, affirmed in this visitor comment, *“...it is authentic because it is done simply and quite real”*. The nature or level of learning however, varied across those interviewed. For some visitors the visit was *‘was more about the feeling of the place, than loads of information’*. A parent with a family of young children notes,

“I think you can't force it on people...a lot of it is subliminal pickup during your visit and for the kids...they are picking it up by themselves rather than it being forced on them that way it becomes really meaningful and personal for us and for them”

In order to facilitate an authentic experience of both the castle and Folk Park a number of elements and activities support the contextual component of the overall experience. The high degree of authenticity is a powerful facilitator of visitor experiences as evidenced in the visitor comments above, however, for many visitors coming to the site the motive is to learn more about the past. The aforementioned variety of tangible

⁵ The Gort Furniture Trust is a group of people originally appointed by Lord and Lady Gort who are responsible for the care and maintenance of the furniture and artefacts collection in Bunratty Castle. They organise and manage a programme of conservation of the collection which at present involves a major project to conserve the tapestries and a phased programme to protect the paintings.

aspects of the contextual component, its buildings, artefacts, furnishings and symbols have an important role at the site to define and demonstrate the nature of life, beliefs, values, and customs from medieval times through to the mid nineteenth century, a highly intangible task.

In order to stimulate a particular feeling or atmosphere the organisation recognises that visitors require a number of activities such as learning and storytelling to translate and communicate the physical asset. A map/guide sheet is presented to visitors on arrival which presents a succinct outline of the site with a brief synopsis of each point. There is no use of information technology or interactive displays on site. It is important to note that there is limited use of exhibitions and displays onsite, rather the Bunratty Castle and Folk Park is a reconstruction of life in Ireland using both living and non-living matter representative of a set historical period. Shannon Heritage has a firm policy of not labelling artefacts and furnishings as they contend that too many signs ruin the natural authenticity of the site. Visitors can seek additional information from support material and the many tour guides at various points throughout the castle and Folk Park. The site is large and offers a variety of physical structures ranging from medieval times to the mid nineteenth century containing artefacts presented in facsimiles of their original settings and enhanced through on site activities. Visitors can choose to follow a guided tour or move independently through the castle and meet and ask questions of the many guides stationed throughout the castle. Guides believe that visitors have an experience that lasts beyond the castle visit, one guide contends that *“it isn’t just a visit that you just pass through, you should take something home”*. Castle tour guides are familiar with the subjective nature of experiences, and address this issue through cognisance of particular needs of the various demographic groups and their characteristics. Older European visitors for instance seek more detail and facts on the restoration and origin of many of the artefacts and want to learn about the general history of the period. Therefore many tour guides accumulate additional historical research to support the standard tour offering. The Gort trust have created additional information on the collection, offering in-depth details of each artefact and piece, and visitors can access the information at the site or on-line from the Bunratty Castle medieval Collection on the Gort Trust website (see example in Appendix D).

In contrast, many visitors want stories of medieval castle life, therefore, guides recount tales which,

“...explain how living in a castle was a big deal in those times... we tell the story of life, we get a basic lifeline for a tour but it's up to yourself how to provide information and what you make around it.”

Additional evidence of staging and cues is evident in the medieval castle banquet. The Evening Products Manager stresses how a great deal of thought and research goes into selecting the programme of stories, poems and songs which are staged to evoke the historical period for visitors. Professional musical arrangers and script writers are contracted annually to review and revise the performances. In terms of the medieval evening banquet the contextual component plays a firm and coherent role in supporting the visitor experience. There is little room for role confusion as credible opportunities to feel and imagine and learn are anchored by the many physical and non-physical aspects such as the setting, ambiance, music, entertainment, and dramatisation delivered by intuitive players, exemplified in the comment offered overleaf by the Evening Products Manager,

“The whole thing is made atmospheric with the harp playing ...passing around the 'bite of friendship' a platter of bread and salt which is a medieval custom to protect you within the castle walls”

School children on educational tours to the site are renowned for seeking less facts and more fiction, so tour guides offer them the level of information appropriate to their needs, and weave tales of fighting soldiers and dungeons. Tour guides demonstrate skills not only in their knowledge, but in their delivery, which is based on a strong understanding of customer needs. From personal observation it is evident that the castle tour guides use a combination of drama and humour to deliver factual yet evocative information on life in the fourteenth century. The tenor of their voices varies from a low whisper to dramatic gasps as they recount historic tales of castle life. Medieval life is well represented physically within the castle through a seamless array of authentic artefacts. However, the thoughtful positioning and almost staging of certain pieces offers visitors a chance to imagine and visualise castle life. The tour guides are omnipresent should visitors seek further clarification or meaning of a particular piece or scene.

A number of visitors were intercepted towards the end of their visit and asked a set of structured questions which covered the visitor's opinion of the physical layout, artefact arrangement, degree of authenticity, information transfer, learning and storytelling and overall atmosphere at the site. It was found that the majority of visitors prefer the natural arrangement of the site. It was noted on more than one occasion by parents, that Bunratty Castle and Folk Park offers a learning experience in a very child friendly manner. The parents considered that the points within the park which offered animators storytelling or re-enacting past times really allowed both themselves and the children to learn and understand the past without having to read facts and listen to tour guides. A large proportion of interviewees confirmed that the activities had a positive effect on their overall experience with activities of storytelling considered very effective by many visitors some of whom contended that both the serious and humorous nature of them helped them to imagine.

5.2.2 The Interactional Component

The interactional component is evidenced right across the different points at the site. Three forms of experience interactions are manifested at the case site; tourist to frontline employee interactions, tourist to tourist interactions, and tourist to context interactions and each are now discussed with reference to the findings from the case study.

Tourist to Frontline Employee Interactions

The interaction of customers with personal and non personal mediators leading to the co-creation of an experience is principally marked in the medieval castle banquet. Firstly, personal mediators are evident in the deliberate casting of frontline staff in the dual roles of entertainers and banquet servers. Guests entering the castle courtyard are transported back to the fourteenth century. The first thing they encounter is a butler and a lady on the drawbridge in medieval costume. The butler oversees the evening which starts with a mead reception where guests intermingle and listen to a short historical synopsis of the castle and the era. Secondly, non personal mediators are evident as guests are encouraged to take time to admire and interact with all the furnishings and

the medieval tapestries as each piece is used as a set for the banquet performance. There are a number of activities designed to encourage visitors to interact with each other. Two guests from the group are randomly selected and crowned as Earl and Lady for the banquet and are escorted royally down to the banquet followed by the rest of the guests. Each course is introduced formally by the butler directed to the earl and his lady. After the main course and dessert are served the entertainment starts for a period of music and songs. The Evening Products Manager describes the banquet server's role,

"it is not enough to be a musician or a singer,...it is part of their job to deal with the people they meet, talk to them and they serve the four course meal so they are assigned a particular table each and those guests are their care for the evening, then get on stage and perform to them all, and mingle towards the end."

While the entire banquet is a staged event, some segments are scripted and others are presented less formally through natural and unscripted discourse. Banqueting servers are actively encouraged to engage with guests through a mixture of scripted and impromptu interactions and activities. The Evening Products Manager indicates that skills of miming, humour and engagement are crucial,

"...there is no script for conversation; they are given pointers, they can engage with customers as they like between the formal stages...personality is really important it is crucial. They develop and grow into their role."

Recently, the banquet has witnessed a sudden and sharp drop in core markets, driven by global economic uncertainty. Responding with a focus on the domestic market, a series of castle events have, and are being developed which are targeted to a range of markets including, families, children, and senior citizens groups. One of these recent new events is a Castle pantomime and high tea staged in the Great Hall. A key feature of these new events is the use of interaction to co-create a memorable experience. The entertainers are not restricted to a stage but move freely and interact with the children at all times while both serving and acting. The Evening Products Manager notes, *"It was designed to be visual and interactive; the entertainers had to engage the children."*

The Belvoir National School is another point in the site that uses interaction activities to engage visitors. The researcher firstly undertook a period of participant observation. During the period Mike Glynn, an animator, who plays the role of 'School Master' in the original classroom uses a number of activities to engage a disparate group of visitors

who are asked to sit at original school desks. Drawing further from the observation, the schoolhouse site offers visitors opportunity for multi-levels of interaction, with the physical aspects, with the school teacher and with other visitors. Following on the period of participant observation the researcher carried out a semi-structured interview with Mr Glynn to establish the skills which he employs to create visitor interactions and co-created experiences. Mr Glynn considers that his role is to re-enact schooldays as he remembers them when he went to school and how teachers would get the children's attention. He uses drama, action and activities to get people involved and to grab their attention. For the children short activities such as *'lamha suas, lamha sios'*⁶, garners attention and once they are doing something they are having fun and having a real experience of old school days. He considers that it is very easy to work with adults,

“you just engage them (the visitors) through activities, like teaching them a song, today I gave out the words of 'The fields of Athenry' and got them to learn it while I was banging the stick on the desk and while I was roaring at one or two of them to listen and pay attention”.

The researcher asked further questions to understand how the school teacher gets people to participate in the schoolroom, Mr Glynn contends that people want to participate naturally, that it is just a case of getting them talking or singing and then have joined in before they realise it. He uses clues such as keeping eye contact with them at all times and turning his ear to them to let them know that he is listening. Mr Glynn considers the use of storytelling an important tool to facilitate visitor experiences, but he stresses that stories must be true and authentic, evidenced in this statement,

“I am a storyteller but I always tell the truth about Ireland in my stories, happy things and lovely things but also bitterly sad things... here you have the stories of real life and the times of people. I am telling people the truth but not from history books”

Throughout the vast Folk Park and castle opportunities for human engagement and interaction are presented. It is significant that these opportunities are not only the remit of frontline staff. The researcher encountered a number of occasions in the park where employees freely initiated conversations. From interviewing one particular employee the researcher discovered evidence of a deep understanding of how visitors seek

⁶ 'lamha suas, lamha sios' is Gaelic for put your hands up, put your hands down

engagement and connection and how employees enjoy chatting and interacting with visitors and understand the importance of market knowledge,

“I talk to tourists the whole time... you learn a few tricks. If you ask them one intelligent question about where they're from they are delighted. We read national geographic... and a lot of us have smartened up on history.”

Many visitors noted that they had positive experiences of interaction with employees at the site. The researcher sought to clarify if the interaction was instigated by them or initiated by the employees. On all occasions the interaction was initiated by employees, *“...they just came along, and spoke to us about the castle and the history”*. A factor which enhanced the interaction between visitors and employees evidenced from the questions was the frequent reference to the empathy of frontline employees which had a positive effect on the visitor's experience, one lady had experienced a sense of claustrophobia while climbing the castle stairs,

“Yes I spoke to an older guide and he convinced me to go up the stairs, he walked up with me and held my hand, when we got to the top of the stairs he explained everything to me with the dimensions of the rooms, the distance between rooms, he was really good, you know what he distracted me from being anxious”

In other cases visitors recount how guides and animators interject in a relaxed manner to offer guidance, information, stories and initiate conversations about the history. In the case of families it was found that information took the form of short statements to inform them of parts of the site that might particularly interest them and for older couples the guides and animators got into longer and deeper conversations. The visitors interviewed presented strong evidence of high levels of personal control at the site and also that the level of personal control had a positive impact on their overall experience. It emerged that the absence of a fully guided tour relaxed visitors as they could take their own pace.

Tourist to Tourist Interactions

Visitor interviews also confirmed that activities of co-creation at the Bunratty Castle and Folk Park also occurred via a number of mediators. Firstly, co-creation occurred between an elderly couple with a group of their peers,

‘...we met a group of OAP's like ourselves, we were all were talking about the fireplace and remembering the griddle bread off the fire ... the kids that came in were staring at us I think they thought we were part of the show”

The visitors also confirmed that the interaction with other visitors had a positive effect on the overall experience. In some of the points at the site there is no human interaction offered. The Operations Manager notes that,

“...we allow visitors to experience the smells and touches, artefacts speak for themselves you have a turf fire etc and its very sensory”

It was noted that visitors to the Belvoir School house immersed themselves into the role of school pupils and were recanting maths tables and Irish poems and songs. The school masters use of cues such as the blackboard and his large stick to bang the desks engaged any visitors whose attention was wavering. It was noted that even though the group had arrived separately and many were unrelated a sense of communitas was built as visitors chatted openly with erstwhile strangers as they left the classroom.

During a period of personal observation at the Loop head Farmhouse it was noted that the level of participation and interaction increased in proportion to both the size and age of the parties entering each building. It was observed that on a number of occasions that the older visitors assumed a role of experience mediator telling friends and family of how they used similar artefacts in their own youth, *‘I used to have to put all the turnips in a mangle like that and fill a bucket for the animals’* or *‘my Grandmother had a chair like that sat there and told us stories about.....’*.

Tourist to Context Interactions

Appreciating that all interaction isn't restricted to human mediators and bearing in mind sudden market changes the Sales and Marketing Manager has sought to address how different markets want to experience their offering. There is a strong awareness that the experience for the children's educational school tours market particularly requires greater reinforcement through newer interactional mediators such as information technology to offer intellectual challenges. The management team are in the early stages of developing a new experience offering entitled 'Past to the Future' which is a dual site experience involving a worldwide destination flight simulator in Shannon Airport representing the technological future followed by a visit to the castle and folk park representing the past.

The Sales and Marketing Manager describes the concept for the new offering,

'Kids will love the technology; it's past Ireland to the future of Ireland. This is the new experience for the kids going back to the past. The simulator will give the technology fix and then they will come here to go back in time. Breaking it up is important, you are giving them the best of both worlds.'

The second point of observation, the Loop Head Farmhouse, in contrast, offered no human animation, but as in the former, it had the equivalent turf burning fireplace and range of artefacts and symbols arranged in a natural setting. The absence of human interaction was obvious here as visitors struggled to gain understanding of the building. The comments on the authenticity of the physical layout were similar but were followed by many questions, *'what is this for?'* and *'do you think he slept there?'* or *'how many people lived here?'* The absence of human interaction did allow people more time to contemplate but the time spent in the Loop Head farmhouse was noticeably shorter than the Golden Vale Farmhouse. The researcher as observer notes that a multitude of varying experiences were witnessed of the same artefacts, and that they are not experienced in a uniform manner by visitors. In the absence of information (physical or human) it appears that visitors experience each artefact or place through personal subjectivity. Without the interaction or mediation of animators or friends and family, visitors spent shorter durations in the sites under observation.

The researcher has sought to offer a balanced perspective of the nature of experience at the site, offering evidence from both the organisation and from the customer. Table 5.2 overleaf presents a summary of the key findings. There is broad evidence as to the nature of experience at Bunratty from the interviews of management, employees and customers undertaken on site. In the next section the researcher presents findings which outline the manner in which the visitor experience is developed at the site.

Table 5.2: Evidence of each Experience Component

Experience Component	Evidence
The Core Activity	Tourists have an opportunity to learn about Irish heritage and culture through observation, interaction and engagement with multiple periods within a cultural historic site. The site offers three core products, medieval castle life and banquet, rural farm life, and nineteenth century village street life, manifested through a number of core historical assets and artefacts.
The Emotional Outcomes Component	The organisation researches and clearly identifies the desired emotions of each market segment that it serves. It offers a range of emotional crescendos which are personally relevant to tourists. The site uses clues and sensory stimulation to engage tourists via all five senses to achieve emotional outcomes. Tangible memorabilia is also present to reinforce memories. Evidence has also been presented that tourists achieve a range of emotional outcomes (Table 5.1).
The Contextual Component	The organisation is rigorous in the use and application of authentic scapes and clues to enhance the contextual component to facilitate experiences. A number of learning and storytelling activities are used to transfer knowledge of the history and culture of the site in a personally meaningful manner.
The Interactional Component	The organisation recognises and promotes interaction between tourists and frontline employees and with other tourists through the use of a range of cues and triggers. Intercontextual interactions are personalised through the design of highly original settings where scope for imaginative experience is afforded through the planned absence of informative material.

5.3 The Experience Development Process

As outlined in the contextual overview at the beginning of this chapter, the originally restored castle and developed tourism product that started in 1954 at the site, while witnessing a number of enhancements, has remained largely unchanged physically over the years. The collections of artefacts in Bunratty Castle are protected by the Gort Furniture Trust and are managed on a daily basis by Shannon Heritage. The detailed work of collecting all of the pieces displayed within the site and their presentation in a coherent way was undertaken by a Medieval Historian. The Operations Manager revealed that Bunratty castle and folk park are a protected structure which is constrained from physical development, he notes, “*we have a solid basis and we can do very little to change.*” Cognisant of a non-changeable nature of much of the site they recognise that

developing experiences can augment the core product. However, the tourism market is not static and recently Bunratty Castle and Folk Park has witnessed a sudden and sharp drop in core markets, driven by global economic uncertainty. Responding with a focus on developing new experiential offerings, the management team has proactively taken action to address the changing market conditions. New experiential offerings have taken the form of a series of cultural activities and events targeted to a range of markets including the domestic market of families, children, and senior citizens and the wider European and American visitor markets. The CEO describes how in addition to Bunratty's core attractions they operate a series of events and activities at different times throughout the year in the castle and Folk Park, and grounds which include, Saint Patricks Day, Easter Event, Cartoon Capers Event, Medieval Event, Market Day, Harvest Festival, Halloween, and Christmas, events last from one to two days right up to twenty three days. The Operations manager notes, *'human interaction and the story are important here'* these are achieved by adding living re-enactments and by staging events and activities at the site throughout the year. In the ensuing section the researcher will present evidence of the manner by which new experiential offerings are developed at the site through a number of stages and activities.

5.3.1 Exploring Opportunities

The CEO takes responsibility for the overall future strategy of the Shannon Heritage organisation, the management company of the Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, citing additional inspiration from the management team. He admits to not formally developing a strategy, mission statement and vision for the organisation as he considers them too rigid and difficult to change. At the outset of the discussion on the experience development process at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park the CEO notes,

"I am against formalising it, against trying to work out which stage I'm at because I see it all as a very simple thing, you just start by asking what am I going to do, and who do I need to help, who is going to get me to the next point, who do I need to be involved so you are bringing in the different bits as you go along, if it doesn't work we say that is a bit that we didn't get right"

He describes Shannon Heritage as *"a fluid kind of organisation...we have a very adaptable cross functional organisation, absolutely flexible."* In terms of creating a set of objectives to drive the experience development process the Operations Manager also

admits to a degree of fluidity and informality in the process. Responsibility for market research and product development rests with the CEO and his management team. An organisational strategy starts to materialise from discussion with the CEO on their business offering,

“We have a core product i.e. the folk park and we’re not going to start digging that up and changing it. What you are really trying to do is shape something to somebody’s needs; you are really trying to say how can I attract an audience that wouldn’t come to me otherwise?”

It is recognised that developing new experiences for domestic and international markets is by no means easy. The Sales and Marketing Manager notes they are *“ticking a lot of boxes when you are developing for the domestic family market”*. They have to design visitor experiences that entice both domestic visitors to come to an attraction that is *“on their doorstep”* and to international visitors to add to their itinerary of places to visit. She considers that events and activities allow them to design new and different experiences for changing markets. The organisation undertakes detailed market research to understand the needs of their markets every few years and this is supported by their recently installed on line reservation system which has two roles, firstly, to provide real-time breakdown of customers and secondly to solicit feedback and to measure customer value. The organisation also gathers potential new ideas from undertaking competitor and market analysis both nationally and internationally, to spot opportunities that can be transferred to the organisation and developed. The Sales and Marketing Manager contacts many of the large tour operators that send high numbers of visitors to the site regularly to track market shifts and to identify new visitor needs and trends.

The idea generation stage of the process at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park is largely informal and described as occurring organically as the organisation does not undertake formal idea generation or brainstorming sessions. Alternatively, the management team tends to voice and discuss individual ideas at management review meetings or through informal communication between management. The organisation seeks to gather information from visitors in order to identify new trends and to meet visitor expectations. While consumers are not brought physically to a table to brainstorm, management do actively seek to include the customer’s voice in the development process. The Sales and Marketing Manager regularly meets tour operators to identify new needs and to gather potential new ideas. Equivalently the CEO and management

team will meet with external stakeholders to discuss potential collaborations which can initiate new offerings. The organisation has a proactive approach to gathering new ideas from staff and they hold staff forums to review business and to give staff a chance to offer ideas for new developments and to give feedback from events and activities. A number of creative employees regularly “*come up with ideas*” which are subsequently discussed at management level. However the operations manager states “*we don’t sit down formally and say let’s plan an idea*”. Once the CEO has given a tentative approval to progress an idea two activities can take place. Firstly, the idea is quickly assigned to a member(s) of the management team for further exploration and evaluation against its business potential for the organisation. Typically this stage of the process involves a number of questions, illustrated here,

“We would look at the site and the area in general and the time of year (Easter) and ask “What do people want at that time of year and what can the site do to get extra people into the site?”

Secondly, if the CEO feels that the organisation lacks expertise to develop the idea wholly internally he will move to gather a group of ‘*five good brains here and brainstorm about it and I think after an hour you will have all the elements that you need, so you need a theme and bring the brains around it, that’s how it’s done.*’ The CEO acknowledges a strong willingness for external collaboration in the development of new experience products and reflects on the spontaneous nature with which ideas emerge,

“The idea of Christmas came first with a couple of external people would you believe it, we were sitting around having lunch one day and we were just talking about Christmas.”

Due to dynamic market conditions new events and activities generally have fast process development at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park and this requires close access and strong relationships with cooperative resources. The CEO notes, ‘*I’d say we start with a lot of ideas and the amount that would get down to operations would only be a fraction*’. It is noteworthy that much of the idea refinement and evaluation are constrained by the physical product of the site. However, there is strong evidence that the organisation actively seek out new ideas for their development potential,

“We try to keep a sense of what is going on and we like to bounce ideas around off the team and staff, I like to meet staff and piggy back ideas with them, we don’t really bring customers in to get ideas. Sometimes at management meetings we will have a general brainstorming for company direction etc. John will take us off site maybe once a year for this not only about ideas but examining existing product.”

The Operations Manager notes that the process of idea screening for feasibility and evaluation guided primarily by the need to maintain the ethos of medieval and nineteenth century living and by the many operational limitations of the physical site. He notes, that during the idea refinement stage his activities focus on creating an early mental operationalisation concept in terms of the process, the people and the infrastructure *“so that we don’t have to waste time, we can just get on with what is feasible.”*

5.3.2 Defining the Experience Concept

When a set of screened ideas have been identified an idea is selected by CEO/coordinator from the process for further discussion/analysis/feasibility with the management team. The factor underpinning the concept development stage of all new experience products at Bunratty is a fastidious adherence to theme. Many of new ideas for visitor experiences will be discarded for reasons such as being perceived as not adequately authentic or for not being in keeping with the cultural history of the site. As screened ideas move towards being ‘fleshed out’ the management team concentrate development on concepts that uphold the theme of the site and reflect the company ethos.

The Sales and Marketing Manager plays an important role in the concept development stage and articulates that the first step is to identify a gap in the market and determine how the concept will interest visitors. Different parties are involved in the activities of this stage. The Sales and Marketing Manager brings a strong understanding of customer needs and market trends to the process,

“I liaise with customers and with large customer groups and their tour directors, tour operators, and individuals, I very much focus on customer needs in all of the target markets and spotting new niches.”

The target market for a concept will be discussed by the management team and the Sales and Marketing Manager will provide input on customer needs and typically uses feedback received from tour operators and corporate organisations that use the site regularly. Identifying the market for which the experience is targeted towards is considered important by the management team, as it forms the basis for many of the elements of the concept design. For example, events designed for children are required to be fun and adventurous, events for older adults are designed to evoke nostalgia and sense of the past.

Experience scenarios are developed in an informal manner, without the use of a structured checklist or criteria, but from knowledge honed within the organisation and “*gut instinct*”, which management consider allows greater flexibility and speed in the development process. The Operations Manager describes this stage of the process as visualising the concept and involves an investigation into the resources required to move the concept along and to identify if operationalisation can potentially occur. This establishes firstly, if the physical site can support the concept and helps identify shortfalls in both physical and non-physical requirements (e.g. equipment, decor, music, etc.). Again, much of the development process occurs away from the desk, as the Operations Manager describes how he finds the best way to communicate a concept is by placing himself at the point or location in the site where the experience is intended to occur. He will undertake a visualization and discussion with which ever participants that he is working with on site as this clarifies any issues. Secondly, the resources for concept development are identified; this generally involves a review of employees to determine if the organisation can deliver the experience from wholly internal resources, and finally, deciding on the emotional nature of the concept. The Operations Manager considers that speed and delegation are important when developing new visitor experiences that need to be developed for the marketplace with a short lead in time,

“Okay I’d take on certain points to sort and I’d ask others to sort out, the train would be on the track moving down rather than just waiting there, okay we need someone to shovel in some coal, because there are other things happening here at the same time”.

In terms of day time events and activities the Operations Manager is responsible for seeing how the concept scenario could be potentially operationalised at the site by identifying a number of elements. If it is established that external resources are required,

the manager concerned develops a brief which visualises the potential concept and the organisational needs. If the resources to develop and launch the concept are not available on site suitable contacts have to be established externally. External resources are then identified and contact established. At this stage a meeting is arranged on site and the external parties come to the site to discuss the concept. These meetings tend to be quite open and honest, the organisation shows a strong willingness to co-develop concepts and recognise their internal shortcomings in resources,

“We sourced them and contacted them, and they came down and looked at the site. we discuss what we want and we give them a brief, like we want to attract people to here by staging a medieval battle and they said not only can we do a medieval battle we’ll provide tents that will be doing medieval braiding, selling coins, spitting a pig, so the whole concept came together. So we visualised tents here and there in the field.”

One of the early activities of the stage of concept development is to present and explain the screened idea to employees to determine if they will go along with it and get a “buy in” from them. The Evening Products Manager notes that this activity is critical to the overall success of new projects and can require a number of meetings. Typically new concepts are pitched to staff members to stimulate a willingness to be part of developing new business opportunities for the future success and competitiveness of the organisation. There is a general consensus in the organisation that the ‘people’ element of new concepts is one of the most important.

The organisation rarely makes changes to the core infrastructure when developing new experience offerings as they have a high degree of established authenticity. Typically, the natural and homely layout presented in the folk park farmhouses encourages visitors to co-construct experiences. When the experience concept is being visualised the team will use a number of existing buildings as experience touch points where interaction and co-creation can occur. The team will ascertain the contextual changes that need to be made to design the new experience offerings. For example for the Christmas events the rural farmhouse becomes ‘Mrs Claus’ house where visitors are welcomed to meet and watch her *‘prepare for Santa’s trip - making sure his clothes are ironed and he has plenty of food for his journey’*. For this touch point, creating an atmosphere of fun and adventure was achieved by decorating existing buildings in keeping with the concept theme.

Fundamentally, much of the concept development in terms of the contextual element of experiences is about developing the site into a series of points which offer opportunities for interaction and co-creation. Interestingly, these ‘opportunity points’ are designed to be encountered randomly by visitors with an emphasis on surprise and nostalgia. There is also a strong emphasis on keeping visitors emotionally stimulated. The organisation recognise that they need different mediators or catalysts to generate visitor experiences and that they cannot rely on simply physical props. They will therefore identify at the concept stage which mediators they require, such as storytellers or traditional craftspeople to recreate ‘times past’. Sensory stimulation is also designed with the use of sounds, tastes, smell, and sight to garner attention and augment scenes.

At the stage of concept development the sales and marketing manager is called upon to develop a pricing structure for the concept, she notes that in the current climate value for money is of key importance to visitors, but adds that this is not always about fiscal value. She also delineates the potential benefits of the concept when she is assembling the marketing program for the concept.

“We’d sell the experience first, it’s an experience that they are not going to get anywhere else, but we also list out the benefits within the experience, we start with the overall experience and then describe the bits and pieces underneath it, but the benefit for us selling is ‘normal admission rates apply’ we’re happy to have the regular admission but to increase the footfall for these events.”

As a rough concept starts to form the management team developing it starts to focus on the elements that can generate an experience for their visitors. They firmly recognise that the difference between their new experience offerings and others is the strong levels of interaction included. They recognise the importance of developing a concept that is visual and interactive, with entertainers who can engage the children and adults. Key words that emerge from the interviews are authenticity and interaction and sensory stimulation,

“...can you imagine being told you are going to an authentic pantomime in an authentic castle, in an authentic banqueting hall with all the sights and sounds?”

In similar developments such as medieval battle re-enactments, concept development focuses on sensory stimulation through offering visitors multiple opportunities to touch medieval ornaments, smell and taste a pig cooked by the authentic spitting technique,

and to partake in activities with animators such as arm-to-arm combat. The organisation also recognises the importance of offering various emotional highs and lows throughout their events to create lasting memories of the experience. It is recognised that new experience offerings require emotional stimulation. Storytellers and animators, homemade baking demonstrations, all re-enacting traditional Irish customs and folklore such as *straw boys*⁷ are used to arouse nostalgia, and stimulate visitors' imagination. Scripted material is developed to support the concept theme much of which is developed with the purpose of evoking a range of particular emotions. Knowledge transfer is also considered an important component in the development of new experience concepts. However, organisation learning from the development of previous new experience offerings has made management cautious about the level of knowledge delivered,

“...they are getting tidbits all through it, little bites but nothing heavy, we learned that with Knappogue, it used to be a very intense literary evening quite high brow and a lot of script and it was found through experience that really it was too much so now we give little pieces of fact intermingled with story and then singing, it is not heavy.”

In terms of the concept proceeding to the next stage of development the management team will meet to discuss the project. The Sales and Marketing Manager states *‘you know there is no great science to this feasibility thing, really I have to be honest it’s a gut, its knowledge of our market and also it’s a risk taking for certain things’*.

5.3.3 Developing Experience System

The concept stage is evaluated in terms of feasibility and also analysed to determine if it is creating the correct perception. Management will compare the concept against previous events and activities and examine visitor numbers and revenue, and discuss overall satisfaction levels. The CEO in conjunction with his management team will at this stage authorise the new concept to be fully developed and full costings are developed. As the concept moves into developmental stage the team need to ensure that they have clearly identified the target market and the role that visitors will play in the event, that is, the degree of involvement required and the activities that are needed.

⁷ Straw boys are traditional characters who would sing and dance at local events

When a coherent concept has been visualised with all of its required elements delineated the team proceeds to determine the concepts requirements in terms of how it will be operationalised. The department concerned will identify its staffing requirements and their role in the event and then training can commence. Some concepts require the development of new skills so external expertise is brought into the organisation; examples of this include professional script writers, musical directors and producers. The organisation also employs a team of professional animators for events. Costs are firmly established in this stage of development allowing budgets to be finalised and approved. There is however a realisation that first time events can require flexibility of budget, and scope for this is afforded by the CEO.

The Evening Products Manager notes that this stage of development becomes quite formalised particularly in her department. She believes in face-to-face communication with the various people involved in the development process to avoid confusion and also confirms that at this stage several things are happening simultaneously. Therefore a set of meetings to review progress of the development are arranged and a various milestones are set out. She notes that a number of the new castle experience events have involved a lot of external collaboration and the development of new knowledge and skills of existing staff members. As the new experience offering is developing amendments and changes are undertaken and rehearsals help to refine the concept. It is noteworthy to mention that many challenges are presented in this stage, the Evening Products Manager notes a "*belief we were going to make it work regardless*" attitude helps smooth progress.

The Sales and Marketing Manager contends that new events need to be constantly reviewed to maintain a close reflection of changing market needs, therefore, she may be called on to reconfirm market issues or changes. The degree to which the Sales and Marketing Manager has a strong rapport with a number of tour operators and local social organisations really reinforces the process. For example the organisation was recently developing a 'tea dance' event for older visitors and she was able to speak directly to a local group to refine the concept towards its operational entity. Another activity of this stage is the finalising of the marketing campaign. Capacity is firmly established as '*numbers are needed in order to get a pricing strategy as well as feel for*

the target market'. Therefore in this stage each of the requirements for the original concept in terms of the contextual, interactional and the emotional outcomes components are re-checked and amendments made accordingly. Training needs are identified both internally and externally at this stage. It is noted that communication between departments for this stage is crucial to avoid wild goose chases and keep the development on track.

5.3.4 Launching Experience

In this stage of experience development final adjustments are made as necessary. As stated earlier, a fastidious adherence to theme and matching needs of the target market is evident in the latter stages of the process. The management team will communicate with each other informally to review and make subtle amendments to the soon-to-be launched new experience offering. The layout is reviewed and minor amendments made at this stage in terms of presentation and image. In terms of new training and skills developed for the new experience both employees and external collaborators will be briefed on the organisational expectations for the event. Particularly important issues that arise here are the importance of connecting with visitors and creating a memorable experience for everyone. At the launch stage of new offerings the management team will ask a number of people to informally review the new offering in order to identify any changes and amendments that need to be made, one manager notes,

"I asked some friends to attend and got feedback from them, and we got great ideas from them to also add to on the night".

All of the management team are present for the launch of experience events and activities at the site and play a strong role in smoothing over any minor problems that arise in the early stages of launch. The management team will have a formal review meeting after the launch to discuss the various issues and to share customer and staff feedback. This is discussed further in the next section.

5.3.5 Feasibility, Evaluation and Learning Activities

Organisational learning arising from the development of new experience offerings at the site is generally considered post development at organisational review meetings. The management team will analyse and discuss weekly sales breakdowns to evaluate the success of new experience events and activities. The Operations Manager notes,

“We got great feedback afterwards, we needed it and we needed it at the beginning to know if it was working. Feedback has given us the indication that we can increase this next year and run it for way longer starting earlier and finishing later. Feedback gave us info like ‘very friendly, value for money, very entertaining, standard high’. We had certain operational things that needed to be changed.”

The proactive stance to the development of new experience offerings evidenced at the site has borne many successes however, failures have also occurred,

“In contrast to that we put on a festival of events in King Johns Castle about three years ago, outdoor theatre where you bring your own picnic, it was divine but very small audience...and the night after that we put a big huge Metallica type band....didn't work. So we took the aspect that worked best at it which was the open air theatre and we put it on for another year”.

The organisation has also learnt that the recent success of events has generated a national audience with visitors travelling from all over the country and abroad. The new experience offerings have helped to change the static perception of Bunratty and generated a huge increase in visitor numbers particularly for shoulder periods. One manager reveals that there is *“no great science to feasibility really”* it is underpinned by a strong knowledge of their markets and combined with a willingness to take a certain amount of risk for certain things.

5.3.6 Antecedents of the New Experience Development Process

The development of new experiential offerings at the site has proved successful over the past couple of years in attracting visitors and offers evidence that the development of new experiences founded in a number of authentic physical assets, can offer cultural tourism organisations a new source of competitive advantage. From an observation of the process on site it was identified that certain organisational competences and capabilities underpin and support the experience development process and its resultant

outcome at the site. The management team consider that a number of factors impact on the success of the process, *“Budget, getting the right people to do the job that can interact and can do the job properly, money and biggest of all is weather; it is a big factor for success, costing is critical too, in order to make money”*. These antecedent activities are discussed under four themes: market knowledge competence, leadership and resource building, creativity and process management.

5.3.6.1 Market Knowledge Competence

Market knowledge competence has been one of the constant activities and skills that have underpinned much of successful development that has occurred within the organisation. Shannon Heritage CEO John Ruddle brought the researchers early attention to Dr Brendan O’Regan, appointed chairman of Shannon Development in 1959, with the contention that to know the present organisation the researcher should be aware of its evolution. He describes Dr O’Regan as a visionary who worked very hard over many years to put Shannon on the map. He was involved with the restoration of the castle in conjunction with Bord Fáilte⁸ and the OPW, and in its subsequent promotion. A biographical work was written on Dr Brendan O’Regan in 2004 and it describes his influence and how he recognised the potential on the development of the area and the Bunratty site in particular. From reading various archival documents it would seem that Shannon was a stimulating place to be in those years as it was at the forefront of Irish exposure to a world of international travel, emerging aviation, new technology and foreign faces. Similarly, a case study of Shannon development by Callanan (2000:47) contextualises the then atmosphere with a quote from Dr O’Regan,

“...everybody in the place was talking about development. There was a total appreciation that the place had to develop or else go back to the hares.”

Shannon Heritage CEO John Ruddle explains how from inception, the organisation has always been focused on researching, developing and meeting market needs, *“He (Dr. O’Regan) wanted Americans to have home comforts, their own thing but on our soil. He was incredibly ahead of himself. He wanted to meet all their needs, psychological and physiological, he offered coaches and all designed with the American customer in*

⁸ Bord Fáilte was the title of the present day National tourism development organisation known as Fáilte Ireland

mind". In the current marketplace global economic events have intervened and altered the organisations traditional core US market. The organisation recognised the sudden market changes, but sought to retain its full workforce and to remain competitive. This required a re-examination of core markets. It is found across each of the management interviews that there is a strong adaptability to revising target markets and identifying growth potential in new areas such as the domestic Irish family market. The Sales and Marketing Manager notes, *"I very much focus on customer needs in all of the target markets and spotting new niches in the markets that we or nobody else in the market is fulfilling, particularly now when we are looking to amend our existing product to get in new customers"*

From analysis of the management interviews a number of strengths are identified amongst which include pricing skills, market knowledge, customer needs, a strong feeling for what people want. The practice of gathering market knowledge in the organisation is the general remit of the Sales and Marketing Manager and her department, who notes that a key input in the process is the gathering of *"customer feedback in order to improve or change existing products"*. She contends that a key part of her role is liaising with customers such as *"large customer groups and their tour directors, tour operators, and individuals, I very much focus on customer needs in all of the target markets and spotting new niches in the markets"*. The sales and marketing department constantly scan the market for new and emerging trends and the Sales and Marketing Manager admits that a strong knowledge of the needs of their main markets allows them to identify new ways in which their existing offerings can be adapted to match new trends. She further notes much of the skill of market knowledge competence is based on understanding that their offering at Bunratty needs to fill a perception in the minds of each of the visitor groups and this requires in-depth knowledge of the needs and expectations of each segment. The CEO acknowledges that they are required to undertake extensive research on the needs of the family market and will regularly draw on their own families as in formal focus groups when developing new family oriented offerings.

The Operations Manager summarises the importance of market knowledge in a simple way, *"I think we have our finger on pulse that we know exactly what people want, we have a fair idea of what will work and won't work"*. However, he is keen to add that the

organisation can on occasion misinterpret a markets needs, and how on occasion this has resulted in the development of new offerings that simply do not draw high number of visitors. He contends that the organisation draws on the learning points when this happens, and uses them to refine and develop future offerings. He considers that as the organisation has a high volume of repeat business it needs to “*refresh and improve constantly*” but that this requires a lot of market knowledge, therefore the organisation solicits feedback from customers in an informal manner such as, “*we listen to them at departure and see what they say, also we get a lot of positive feedback by email*”. The CEO notes that his personal goal for the organisation is to be skilful at developing new offerings in a challenging economic climate and considers that the organisation needs to become adept adapting existing offerings to match customer needs.

5.3.6.2 Leadership and Resource Building

There is strong evidence of both leadership and resource building in the organisation and this antecedent is one that has filtered through the organisation right since its inception to the present day. The researcher has determined longitudinal evidence of strong leadership in the organisation through analysis of a number of archival documents and publications. Callanan (2000:172) notes,

“The leadership of Brendan O’Regan was most pronounced in the early days of (Shannon Free Airport Development Company) – 1959-67 – producing a clear vision of what was needed.....with constant brainstorming and intensive teamwork. He exerted a remarkable personal influence and charisma on those about him, one that extended to other entrepreneurs, activists and investors such as hoteliers, industrialists, business leaders and politicians”.

The current CEO, John Ruddle believes that the organisation is charged with protecting and maintaining the site for future generations, he does not believe in exploiting it for purely financial reasons. This culture or ethos is also evident in informal conversations with many of the frontline employees who consider that their role in facilitating visitor experiences extends beyond their job description. In terms of a managerial role the CEO has an open door policy to his management team and employees encouraging open communication right across the organisation. The CEO expects his managers to move away from behind desks and get out with the frontline employees to serve customers. He also considers his role in the wider community beyond the castle walls and is widely

involved in many local tourism and business groups. He notes that he regularly meets other external stakeholders to informally brainstorm about ideas for new offerings.

Employee empowerment and commitment is evident. The Evening products Manager notes that while the organisation undertakes formal training in areas such as customer service, grooming and presentation she notes that the organisation seeks to empower its employees by allowing them to ad-lib and develop their own knowledge to support their roles. Employees are allowed a certain amount of freedom and lee way in their interactions with visitors, conversations are not scripted, with a set of pointers offered to guide conversations, it is more critical that employees have strong people skills and can easily engage visitors. They therefore allow employees to *“develop and grow into their roles”*. The Evening Products Manager provides an example of employee autonomy and empowerment, *“The butler is master of ceremonies of the banquet, he is like the person who links it all together he gets everyone to join in and participate and he also controls audiences on occasion...in a very nice way. He judges and gauges the tempo.”*

The Evening Products Manager contends that their employees are crucial for successful events and they therefore have high standards and undertake regular training. Evidence of employee commitment through internal marketing is also clear as an antecedent to underpin the process of developing new experiences and is verified in a number of the management team interviews and articulated as the term *‘buy in’* by a number of the management team. Employees are involved in the development of new offerings as they are moved from the concept stage towards operationalisation and this augments both the process and the subsequent outcome. The Evening Products Manager explains the importance of resource building it this piece,

“So first thing I spoke to the staff when it was still an idea, I wanted to know if they would go along with it and get a ‘buy in’ from them... you have to bear in mind that they have been following the same program the whole time...and after meeting number two I got buy in, yeah they were suddenly on for it when I explained everything to them. I said we have got to try new things, but I said it won’t work if you are not willing to do this it will not progress; anyway I got buy-in. That gave me people.”

The management team believes that they have strong commitment from their employees for the development of visitor experiences and consider that they are starting to trust the

organisation with the many new ideas that are being developed as they can see how new offerings bring increased visitors to the site which benefit the company as a whole.

5.3.6.3 Creativity

The organisation has a strong belief in being a market leader in tourism, and, from the interviews of the management team there is a strong resistance to imitating other organisations with a preference to developing new and interesting visitor experiences by drawing from their core activity. Indeed a culture of creativity has long formed part of the organisation, evidenced in the following extract by Dr Brendan O'Regan

“Creativity in an organisation calls for more. It calls for a climate, for relationships between the many people involved that will encourage innovation for a cooperative effort that will enable an idea to be shaped not only by one brain but by several. It calls for leadership that will stimulate people to look beyond immediate practicalities and daily pressures and look to an objective which may be achieved in many ways, some of which, right now, we have not even imagined. It calls for receptivity to ideas, an attitude that regards innovation as something of potentially great value and not as something which threatens comfortable and established patterns. When we think of organisational creativity in this way we are immediately brought to one great practical conclusion. That is that receptivity can be a great deal more important than individual creativity if the organisation as a whole is to be creative.”

(Irish Management Institute, 1970)

Evidence of creativity emerges from interviews with both management and employees. The CEO has a lifelong interest in traditional Irish arts and culture and believes that they can be communicated within the site in a creative manner. This creativity not only underpins the manner by which the organisation develops its visitor experiences but in the manner by which the experience is delivered and facilitated by employees. A number of managers confirm that the organisation is fortunate to have a very creative staff and that they are constantly developing, one manager notes, *“It is only when you are challenged that you can develop. Our team have really developed they are much more creative and ready to do the next event and we are passing on some of our new ideas to the big tour groups like CIE Globus through sales and marketing”*. Similarly, the Evening Products Manager notes that greater levels of creativity are required for developing new experience offerings as the organisation is adapting and changing some of their traditional offering which requires a new mindset. On the occasions that the organisation decides that they cannot effectively draw on internal resources for creativity in the development of new offerings they move to collaborate with external organisations for greater inspiration.

5.3.6.4 Process Management

Bunratty Castle employs a systematic approach to the process of developing new experience offerings. There is clear evidence that the organisation appreciates the importance of each of the stages of the development process and moves through them in a logical and systematic manner. The organisation is cognisant of the various participants, activities, actions, tasks, and evaluations that move the new experience offering from the idea stage through to launch, and undertakes a number of formal meetings and reviews throughout the process. The series of interviews undertaken with the CEO and management team present evidence that a systematic process is utilised in the organisation and is considered by them to be effective in bringing new experience offerings successfully to the market. However, there is a degree of fluidity and flexibility in the process which allows the management team to infuse it a lot of informality, which has the consequence that a number of people can contribute and participate at various times within the process. The CEO notes,

“I am against formalising it, against trying to work out which stage I’m at because I see it all as a very simple thing, you just start by asking what am I going to do, and who do I need to help, who is going to get me to the next point, who do I need to be involved so you are bringing in the different bits as you go along, if it doesn’t work we say that is a bit that we didn’t get right.”

The Operations Manager contends that the organisation has a good process within the organisation and that this has allowed them to achieve more with a somewhat limited infrastructure (human and non-human) in the development and delivery of visitor experiences. The willingness to collaborate in the development of new ideas with external partners allows for greater flexibility in the process. As the development process is action oriented it is fluid and geared towards a short lead in time from idea to launch, activities of monitoring and tracking the process are undertaken informally. Similarly, while evidence of each stage is presented in the process, the degree of flexibility evidenced means that on occasion there is overlap across front and back-end stages. This is best explained in this statement by the Operations Manager,

“...the train would be on the track moving down rather than just waiting there okay we need someone to shovel in some coal, because there are other things happening here at the same time”.

Figure 5.3 below outlines the theoretical stages and activities of experience development with evidence of their practice at Bunratty to inform the ensuing discussion.

Figure 5.3: Evidence of Stages and Activities of Experience Development at Bunratty

STAGES OF NED	ACTIVITIES OF NED	Evidence of Practice at Site	
		Formal	Informal
1.Exploring Opportunities	Experience Audit		✓
	Formulation of strategic objectives		✓
	Market Appraisal		✓
	Development Team Assembled at start from internal and external sources		✓
	Generate & screen list of raw ideas/opportunities- Brainstorming		✓
	Assess them for feasibility & profitability as potential new experiences		✓
2.Define Experience Concept	Screened ideas expanded into experience concepts by coordinator & team		✓
	Define and Articulate concept: Contextual		✓
	Interactional		✓
	Emotional Outcomes		✓
	Imagine, Refine, Formalise concept -Identify trigger points for each component	✓	
3.Develop Experience System	Determines how the Experience concept is to be operationalised – Process, Physical Facilities and experience delivery personnel	✓	
	Market re-appraisal	✓	
	Description of customers role in experience delivery		✓
	Development of new exp processes which reflect the concept. Selection & Training Criteria	✓	
	Development of supporting physical facilities –Tangible Elements (equipment, interior design, ambiance to support & augment the new experience	✓	
	New exp converted into an operational entity	✓	
4.Launch Experience - Design & Execution of Expcon	Internal/External conflicts resolved through training & learning of new competencies unique to the new Experience & the organisation as a whole	✓	
	Pilot run to resolve any remaining issues		✓
	Launch Strategy	✓	
Feasibility/Evaluation feedback/Learning Loops	Continually undertake market analysis		✓
	Retrospective modifications to ensure acceptance & feasibility		✓
	Monitor organisational learning		✓
	Project Authorisation – Allocation of resources to implement the concept	✓	
Key resources	Coordinator, design team, staff, customers, external enablers	✓	

5.4 Conclusion

The recent organisational focus on the development of new experience offerings at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park has generated a momentum to re-examine the existing its traditional core. Perhaps this is why the CEO is dogmatic about avoiding rigid and unchanging organisational strategies and visions as they hinder the growth and development of a creative organisation. The organisation understands the importance of developing new visitor experiences and adapting old ones for new markets,

“You just cannot afford to sit back anymore it is a very changing market peoples interests have changed people are far more discerning, much more informed, and you have got to appeal to that as well. I want to move away from the traditional medieval banquet, and get even more interaction and be less static, add new scenes, we have broken the mould and now we want to change”.

Bunratty Castle and Folk Park recognise the importance of refreshing and changing existing products as they have a large proportion of repeat business, the operations manager notes, *‘it’s all about having lots of points of interest where people can pause and stop and move on different at each point in different ways with surprises along the way’*. The findings chapter has outlined in great detail the findings drawn from the analysis of each data collection method. In the ensuing chapter the researcher discusses the findings presented in this chapter, integrating them with theory and existing literature and academic research studies.

Chapter Six: Discussion

Findings have been presented in the previous chapter and these are now discussed in the context of the literature review and with reference to the research objectives. This chapter allows the concepts and theories that were generated from the literature review and the primary research to be developed into a balanced and conclusive framework for understanding the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the process of experience design.

6.1 Research Objectives

As stated at the outset of this thesis this research had one main question which is mainly exploratory in nature:

What is the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed?

The above research question formed the basis for a set of more in-depth research objectives reiterated below:

1. To understand the nature of experiences within a cultural tourism context
2. To identify and clarify the elements of a cultural tourism experience
3. To develop a framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism practitioners

The goal of the qualitative study presented here was twofold. Informed and guided by the research objectives, the culmination of the literature review chapters saw the development of two conceptual frameworks, firstly a tentative set of components of cultural tourism experiences and secondly, a process framework outlining the antecedents, stages, and activities for the development of cultural tourism experiences, both of which form the basis for this discussion.

6.2 The Nature and Components of Cultural Tourism Experiences

In this section the researcher addresses the first two research objectives of this study which seek to understand the nature and elements of cultural tourism experiences. In terms of the nature of cultural tourism experiences in the course of the literature review the researcher drew from several streams of experience literature to offer a tentative holistic definition of cultural tourism experiences:

“Experiences are individual encounters which are designed around a core activity, they are context specific, created through varying levels of human interaction and supported through reinforcing activities with the goal of facilitating uniquely valuable emotional outcomes which can be recalled at a later stage.”

The above definition offers a concise account of the main elements of tourism experiences. In the ensuing discussion experiences will be examined in greater detail under four sub-headings which are drawn from the definition, Core Learning Activity, Context Specificity, Human Interaction and Emotional Outcomes.

Core Learning Activity

Many organisations are founded on a core product with a core activity around which experiences can be designed as *“an experience created around an empty core is unlikely to lead customers to create their own experiences”* (Gupta and Vajic, 2004:44; Bitner et al., 2008). Having reviewed the literature and with the benefit of immersion in the case site, it is clear that cultural experiences are designed around both a core physical asset (product) with a core learning activity based on the former. The case organisation has a renowned core product from which a core activity has been developed which offers visitors an opportunity to learn about Irish culture through observation, interaction and engagement with multiple historical periods. The general consensus in the literature is that tourists are no longer drawn to cultural tourism attractions purely for the desire to observe historical physical assets; rather they seek experiences derived from personal and emotional connections with heritage (Timothy, 1997). Xu (2009) contends that experiences target higher self-induced needs, which transcend the tangible assets offered by cultural tourism attractions. While the nature of

offering at the case site is relatively fixed both the core product and its learning activity form the foundation upon which the organisation has developed its visitor experience. The findings confirm that cultural offerings have shifted towards a desire to learn through experiencing which can be facilitated through a number of additional experience components.

Context Specificity

According to the literature the contextual component includes “*the physical setting, particular selection and arrangement of products, the world of objects and social actors, and the rules and procedures for social interactions with other customers and service facilitators*” (Gupta and Vajic (2002:34). Findings from the case study indicate that the physical setting is explicitly the most palpable aspect of the contextual component in cultural tourism attractions. Taking into account that the core learning activity at Bunratty revolves around numerous historic assets the first aspect of this component that is most evident is the physical setting. The contention by Falk and Dierking (1992) that this aspect offers the moment of cerebral impact forming immediate impressions which effects behaviour, perception and the overall experience is also confirmed in the findings. Findings suggest that the immediate impression offered by the physical aspect of the contextual component is one that involves thinking and reasoning, which can be considered as an early mental building block at the base of experience construction.

Mossberg (2007) considers that the ambient conditions of music, colour, lightning and scents are less overt but critically important aspects of the contextual component which affect consumers’ behaviour. From the findings it can be concluded that the physical aspect anchors the many non-physical aspects such as the setting, ambiance, music, entertainment and dramatisation delivered by the creative employees. For Falk and Dierking (1992) “*the key is to create an environment in which the visitor becomes part of a seamless array of mutually reinforcing contexts which separately and collectively support the museums goals.*” Both literature and findings indicate that the contextual component comprises a variety of aspects which creates challenges for experience designers to communicate a consistent message to tourists on how they can have an

experience. However, the findings reveal that the key to creating personally unique experiences is in offering tourists a personally controlled role with credible opportunities to feel, imagine and learn within the context of the case site. The findings support authors such as Pine and Gilmore (1998), Buchenau and Fulton Suri (2000) and Gupta and Vajic (2002) who contend that experiences are subjective and that each visitor interprets the elements of the contextual component in a personal manner, to form their own unique environment for experience creation.

From the literature, cultural tourism attractions face a number of challenges as they must strive to bring a highly historical attraction to life by involving the tourist while also developing ways of imparting information successfully (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Goulding, 2000; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). As the contextual component transcends the physical, authors have advocated the use of activities such as theatrical staging, theming and storytelling to translate and communicate the context and make it more accessible and comprehensible (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Stuart and Tax, 2004; Mossberg, 2007). The findings offer a wealth of evidence of such activities and more importantly of their effectiveness in facilitating experiences. However, the literature also exposed an even more challenging issue, *“is a single form of learning suited to everyone of the variety of markets to which the attraction appeals?”* (Goulding, 2000:105). The findings show that the case organisation does not rely on one single learning opportunity rather efforts are made to offer a balance of activities at the case site to facilitate a range of experiences that meet the learning and interactive needs of a variety of tourists. In addition the findings indicate that the organisation seeks to develop a coherent theme which links the various points, their respective aspects and activities thus creating a unified experience. A high degree of consistency is evident at the case site and in the many periods of observation the researcher never encountered confused or lost visitors.

The findings have also revealed that the case site are against controlling the tourists experience preferring to allow them scope to explore and imagine, and therefore Bunratty Castle and Folk Park create settings and scapes within which they limit the amount of textual information which allows for a natural atmospheric representation of the site. In fact it is the organisations policy not to label artefacts or to offer a predesigned unidirectional tour of the case site. Findings support the notion that cultural

tourism organisations need to understand that only certain aspects of the context are controllable. The findings indicate that through varying levels of theatrical staging organisations can alter the tensions of control between them and the tourist. The combined use of ‘*costumed animators and careful staging of settings to make them as realistic as possible,*’ are an effective means of allowing visitors to have an authentic experience of the past (Holloway and Taylor, 2006:602). Formalised theatrical staging is offered for set periods in the form of rich and highly skilled performances such as the medieval banquet and Christmas castle pantomimes which take the form of staged events over a fixed period of time. While the tourist mainly plays an observer role in these staged performances there is evidence of participatory activities throughout. It is interesting to note that managing these occasional scripted and non-scripted interactions requires creative skills on the part of employees, who are actively encouraged to ad lib,

“...there is no script for conversation; they are given pointers, they can engage with customers as they like between the formal stages...personality is really important it is crucial. They develop and grow into their role.”

In the literature it was presented that the contextual component must offer scope for tourists to play different roles, interact, and experience new things through the use of dream worlds with stages (Mossberg, 2007). The key activities identified in the literature which support the contextual component and facilitate unique experiences are authentic storytelling and learning. Drawing from the literature it was established that authenticity is quite complex and personal in nature, and determined by no one fixed origin, based on the individual's own personal context and formed through an individual projecting their views and mental images on the overall offering of a particular attraction (Adams, 1984; Pearce and Moscardo, 1985; Bruner, 1991; Duncan, 1978; Silver, 1993). A high degree of credibility is evident in the case site as strong efforts are made to present buildings and artefacts in their natural state. In the findings the case site CEO describes how he has a strong “*sense of protection of the long-term asset uppermost in my mind all of the time...it is important to keep the authenticity of it all.*” The highly original condition of the case site and its artefacts allows the historical vernacular to project itself to visitors in a genuine and authentic manner and is reflected in a tourist's comment,

“...the layout gave you a real feel for it, it’s the big rooms...the way they arrange the furniture so sparsely.... you can actually picture people sitting there and imagine what it was possibly like back then”.

The variety of tangible aspects of the contextual component, its buildings, artefacts, furnishings and symbols have an important role at the case site to define and demonstrate the nature of life, beliefs, values, and customs from medieval times through to the mid nineteenth century, a highly intangible task. In order to stimulate a particular feeling or atmosphere the organisation recognises that visitors require a number of activities to translate and communicate the physical asset. It was earlier stated that the core activity in cultural tourism is communicating the past and at the case site this is achieved through offering visitors an opportunity to learn about Irish culture through observation, interaction and engagement with multiple historical periods. The discourse on learning in cultural tourism presented in the literature review determined that this aspect presents particular challenges to practitioners as many visitors expect to be both educated and entertained (Beard and Ragheb, 1983; Goulding, 2000; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). This presents two challenges: firstly, to bring the case site alive by involving the visitor, and secondly to develop ways of imparting information successfully. Jones (1992:915) argues that artefacts and their images “*cannot speak for themselves*” and require captions and labels to explain their meaning. The findings have challenged this assertion as the case site is against labels and captions preferring instead to use themes and storytelling to articulate the contextual component. Evidence in the findings reveals how storytelling is one of the most powerful activities which make historical culture accessible to tourists at the case site. Themes and stories communicate the contextual component in an understandable and memorable way as “*the story becomes a verbal and visual metaphor, which shows the total offering, the total package, which for tourists hopefully, is received as a positive experience*” (Mossberg, 2007:71). A significant finding of this study is that successful storytelling to facilitate experiences cannot rely on one element such as the storyteller but on a number of aspects that converge to create memorable experiences. Therefore, scapes, settings, cues and triggers must all be designed to authentically support experience creation. It is the particular selection and arrangement of each aspect that start to facilitate experience formation, and most importantly it is the skilful use of cues that move the case site from a core activity of observing a physical setting to an opportunity to immerse oneself in a personal historic narrative.

In the less formal setting of the folk park the animators (Bean an Ti's and School Master) use stories to communicate the historical context of the case site. Animators at Bunratty can be considered as storytellers, however, they are not placed at all and every point as the organisation does not seek to totally stage or direct all activities at the case site allowing visitors to personally imagine and reflect and subjectively construct experiences. For Falk and Dierking (1992) storylines balance personal, social, and physical contexts of tourism experiences and can be supported through clue management of authentic elements. This is achieved at the case site as animators tell their stories in a natural setting, typically a Bean an Ti can be found making bread in the farmhouse kitchen, which immediately immerses visitors into the historical context of the case site, with the setting made experiential by the stories and tales recounted naturally by them. Similarly in the nineteenth century village schoolhouse the animator (school master) uses original school room artefacts as a stage to tell visitors stories of Ireland's past. Findings support Yeoman et al.'s (2007) contention that cultural tourism offerings must be honest, truthful and reflective of the destination. This is achieved through employing indigenous animators who have in-depth knowledge of the history of the case site and its surrounding area who can draw on native folklore and stories. Thus they achieve what Sohus and Wessen (2004) describe as story mining - exposing the layers of meaning in culture to create compelling connections by moving from a 'just the facts' method of communication to the development of stories. The practice of story mining is a key finding in this study and it is important for organisations to draw on the knowledge and imagination of their employees to mine or research stories relevant to their organisation.

For Giddens (1990) cultural attractions should present original artefacts and objects in recontextualised environments rather than in cases and as exhibits. In this manner, McIntyre (2009:159) considers that visitors' learning will be influenced by the ambiance and sensory elements of the environment with learning occurring "*via the consideration of, immersion in and reflection upon the objects and environments presented as having artistic relevance*". A number of visitors interviewed at the case site indicated that the freedom to consider and immerse themselves in artefacts and their settings was very important. The findings offer evidence that the settings are highly authentic and artefacts are arranged consistently and true to their origins which is

exemplary of the practices recommended by authors such as Yeoman et al. (2007). However, it is the skilled use of cues that facilitates visitor experiences. Evidence from the findings indicates that cultural tourism organisations can manage the tension between each contextual aspect by using cues and triggers, creative employees, learning and stories to bring to life the historical objects, artefacts and settings. By taking a guiding rather than a leading approach the organisation allows tourists to create personally relevant experiences which have been constructed through authentic and credible assimilation of the aforementioned cues, triggers and supporting activities. Thus, by carefully theming the various points and supporting them with a series of authentic cues the contextual component facilitate visitor experiences of the physical aspects of the case site. This concurs with the literature which states that an organisation cannot present customers with an experience; they can only create the conditions and the context in which they can occur (Schulze, 1992; and Mossberg, 2003).

A particular challenge that emanated from the literature was achieving coherency amongst each aspect of the contextual component. Strong attention to detail is evident and this allows for a seamless recreation of life in the historical periods being communicated at the case site and facilitates deeper immersion and imagination. This is vitally important and the case site has sought to design and theme all the adjoining and adjacent areas of each key point which includes the pathways, gardens and general grounds all of which communicate and reinforce that which is impending. This concurs with Pine and Gilmore's (1998) assertion that theming connects the disparate elements within the context and provides customers with something around which they can organise their impressions of the overall encounter.

Cultural tourism attractions are highly reliant on the contextual components capacity to communicate historical information, thus this component needs to engage visitors by constructing images through either social exchange or more traditional textual and visual methods (Goulding, 1999). There is evidence throughout the study that the case site communicates behaviours through cues designed in "*objects and social actors, and the rules and procedures for social interactions with other customers and service facilitators*" (Gupta and Vajic, 2002). The findings have established that ambient conditions have a powerful role in bringing to life the physical artefacts and assets of

cultural tourism. Evidence is presented that a range of sensory, visual and auditory cues and triggers can successfully be used to convey highly tangible physical aspects. However, the findings suggest that it is critical that each cue or trigger is authentic and consistently delivered to ensure a credible experience. According to McIntosh and Prentice (1999) and Suvantola (2002) each tourist carries a set of personal motivations, interests, previous experience and knowledge which they use to interpret the context and form unique experiences. Cues and triggers act as catalysts which consolidate tourist's personal aspects with contextual aspects to stimulate learning and to elicit a variety of emotional responses. This research contends that it is the manner by which the historical information is communicated that forms experiences. Evidence from the findings indicates that the use of theming has been successful in delineating key points throughout the case site. What has emanated from the findings is that if an organisation decides to theme the contextual component the theme must be consistent and coherent or else visitors will be confused, lacking in both direction and understanding. Mossberg (2007) contends that the contextual component facilitates social interaction and communicates particular behaviour and rules to visitors, therefore the next component to be discussed is the interactional component.

Human Interaction

The interactional component embraces all visitor interactions which may be interpersonal incorporating tourist providers or other tourists, and/or intercontextual (autonomous and non-personal) such as interactions with signage, design, places and objects and atmosphere which in combination offer opportunities for participation and co-creation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Beeton, Bowen and Santos, 2006; Jennings and Weiler, 2006; Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). Evidence presented in the findings chapter indicates that the case site understand that interaction is a very important component of visitor experiences, and also that interactions occur at a number of different levels.

Interpersonal interaction between tourists and tourist providers is the first form to be discussed. The findings chapter has presented evidence that the case site does not rely on any single form of interpersonal interaction, rather they clearly articulate and

delineate opportunities for interaction between tourists and frontline employees through activities offering varying levels of participation ranging from passive to active. Evidence in the findings indicates that many of these interactions allow visitors to manage personal levels of control during the encounters which leads to Csikszentmihalyi's (1992) individual flow experiences. Indeed, the case site are in agreement with the contention that customers are seeking to counter this control through taking over the service environment for their own use with personal free will (Aubert-Gamet, 1996) and thus offer a variety of activities through which tourists can interact with employees. While the formally staged activities are more controlled by the organisation they are interspersed with clear opportunities for interaction between tourists and providers, through activities such as “...*passing around the 'bite of friendship' a platter of bread and salt*” which encourages interaction between employees and tourists at the start of the medieval banquet and helps break down barriers. This is an example of co-creation whereby value and memories are created (Poulsson and Kale, 2004). By encouraging ‘dialogue’ between parties the organisation are intentionally recognising the customer as an intrinsic partner in the experience process and once again offering evidence of affording them personal control dependent on the degree of involvement sought in the experience (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

A number of informal activities encourage interaction at the case site in which control is passed to tourists who can join in activities by their own volition. To achieve this authors consider that the role of this component is to make the customer use environment conducive to immersion and to stimulate personally controlled ‘flow’ achievable by splitting the experience into a series of moments (McIntosh and Prentice 1999; Ooi 2002, 2005; Falk and Dierkling 1992). Amoah and Baum (1997) contend that a tourist's experience of a site is not based on any single interaction, it is fragmented with many and varying ‘moments of truth’ with a wide range of intermediaries, presenting complexity and issues of control for tourism providers. Opportunities for interpersonal interactions, though formally designed by the organisation, are encountered randomly by visitors; in this manner the organisation have a facilitative role in interpersonal interactions. Falk and Dierkling (1992) consider that frontline employees must be highly trained and committed to personalising the experience for

each tourist. Some best practice examples of frontline animators were outlined in the findings chapter, with details of the key skills which facilitated interaction between tourists and providers. These skills included the use of drama, storytelling, actions and activities to capture attention combined with strong understanding of the emotional needs of tourists. The findings demonstrate that the animators successfully make the most of authentic cues and triggers to support their activities as evidenced in this statement by the case site School Teacher,

“You just engage them through activities, like teaching them a song, today I gave out the words of 'The fields of Athenry' and got them to learn it while I was banging the stick on the desk and while I was roaring at one or two of them to listen and pay attention”.

Evidence from the interview with the School teacher indicates that a holistic approach to interaction is taken which generates deeper immersion for those participants. The term holistic in this study means drawing from each and all aspects of the attraction (the controllable and the uncontrollable) to stimulate interaction. It was also observed that on the occasions that no human interaction was offered by the case site many visitors engaged with other visitors to build meaning and co-create interpersonal experiences. An example of a co-created or co-mediated experience between an elderly couple with a group of their peers was offered in the findings,

‘...we met a group of OAP's like ourselves, we were all were talking about the fireplace and remembering the griddle bread off the fire ... the kids that came in were staring at us I think they thought we were part of the show”

These findings are in line with Pine and Gilmore’s (1998:101) contention that active participators “*play key roles in creating the performance or event that yields the experience*”. Notably, personal observation of the tourist-to-tourist interactions gave evidence that the level of *communitas* grew in proportion to the level of interaction stimulated. This was exemplified in the schoolroom where it was noted that even though the group had arrived separately and many were unrelated, a sense of *communitas* was built as visitors chatted openly with erstwhile strangers as they left the classroom. Therefore, the case site offers evidence of their capacity to create an

environment that is conducive to tourist to tourist interaction which, in turn, results in co-created experiences which reinforce the value of the offering.

An understanding of intercontextual interactions at the case site was gained through periods of personal observation by the researcher. Key findings here indicate that intercontextual interactions without any human mediation allow for greater contemplation of artefacts, their settings and ambiance. Visitors spent varying lengths of time in contemplation, with some struggling to gain understanding and others happy to dream and imagine, largely impacted by the absence of labels and information. The study exposes a concern of intercontextual interactions as to the level of meaning and understanding yielded. While the case site has created additional information on the collection of castle artefacts accessible via the Gort Trust website (see example in Appendix D) there is perhaps an opportunity to provide access to additional material for those tourists that seek deeper learning.

The findings are in accordance with Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004:11) assertion that organisations need to be cognisant and intuitive of the needs of their visitors in order to "*identify trends, access customer desires and preferences*" which allows them to design opportunities which garner visitor's attention (Urry, 1990, Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Evidence reveals that the case site management and frontline employees have key skills which facilitate interpersonal interaction: a high degree of customer knowledge, an understanding of visitor's experiential needs, empathy and willingness to initiate conversations, historical knowledge imparted through stories, and use of cues to add a sense of drama and fun to engage visitors. Interestingly, both interpersonal interactions and intercontextual interactions intersect at certain points at the case site to mutually reinforce the visitor experience. While the animators engage visitors through stories and conversations they use a number of contextual elements as cues to reinforce their delivery. For instance in the school house, for visitors to participate they must sit in the old school desks and read lessons written on the blackboard while the school master uses his stick to focus attention.

Emotional Outcomes

The literature confirms that the underlying prerequisite for successful visitor experiences is that they generate memorable emotional outcomes as these represent the overall value of the visit (Otto and Ritchie, 2006; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009). In addressing this, the literature identified that the key challenge for tourist organisations is to understand the emotional outcomes sought by its customers (Prentice, 1998) and then to design and offer visitors opportunities for emotional stimulation (Pine and Gilmore, 1998). Evidence presented in the findings concurs with theory as the management team and their employees are highly customer focused and clearly understand the importance of identifying the emotional needs of their various markets. By segmenting key markets the organisation sought to identify the particular emotions sought by each segment, and they are then in a position to design various emotional clues⁹ at particular points across the case site and also within the events and activities offered at the site, which is consistent with the guidelines offered by Berry et al. (2002). The key premise of experience clue management is the application of customer knowledge to orchestrate a series of “clues” which collectively facilitate a customer’s experience (Berry et al., 2002). Emotional clues are divided into those that are emitted by objects and those emitted by people which elicit a set of emotions through sensory stimulation and supporting behaviour and appearance (Berry et al., 2002). The natural and open layout of the case site is an immediate clue for visitors that they can navigate themselves freely, and as they do not have to follow a strictly guided tour opportunities for immediate unrestrained immersion into the site are possible. Buildings, grounds, and artefacts are naturally presented at the site and their thoughtful positioning and almost staging of certain pieces offers visitors a chance to imagine and visualise. One visitor revealed how she became engrossed while looking at some old wallpaper in one of the farmhouses causing her to regress to her past. Similarly, the use of freshly baked bread and turf burning fires are all sensory clues which evoke several emotions in visitors. These findings support LCEEI (2007) who contend that experiencing a product with as many senses as possible supports the core experience being offered.

⁹ Clues are also referred to in the literature as cues, stimuli, visual elements, design, symbols, triggers and sensory stimulation (Schmitt, 1999; Carbone and Haeckel, 2002; Cook et al. 2002; Haeckel et al., 2003; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Echeverri, 2005; Berry and Carbone, 2007)

The degree to which some activities are formally staged (medieval banquet) in the case site and others are informally staged (folk park and village street activities) impacts on the structure and format of clues whose role the organisation considers is to break down barriers and facilitate a set of emotional outcomes. It is evident throughout the organisation (and not limited to frontline employees) that humanic clues are used to stimulate visitor's emotions, and depending on the location within the case site this occurs in either a formal or informal manner. Employees are afforded a high degree of freedom in their dialogue with visitors and this creates more personally meaningful encounters. What has emanated from the findings is that employees balance their appearance and their language (scripted or non-scripted) with personal and enthusiastic delivery skills supported by tone of voice and body language. Observation undertaken at the case site outlined how frontline employees vary the tenor of their voices from low whispers to dramatic gasps as they recount historic tales of castle life and are each afforded an extremely high degree of personal influence in their encounters with visitors. From the foregoing, and in terms of experience design, designers who seek to use emotional clues whether they are humanic or functional must consider that visitors will all use them differently so standardisation is impossible.

A strong argument has been presented in the literature that exploring the emotional outcomes of experiences from a tourist perspective is useful as it helps organisations understand customers and facilitate a set of emotional outcomes (Williams and Buswell, 2003). A number of emotional outcomes were drawn from the literature and there was broad evidence that tourists at the case site had achieved them as presented in the findings chapter (see table 5.1). Emotional outcomes such as thrills, adventure and surprise while evident tended to represent younger people visiting with families. The emotional outcomes expressed by adults were described as profoundly moving and touching feelings such as sadness, felt at certain points during the visit. The findings also reveal that feelings of regression were generally derived from highly authentic scapes portraying particular historical periods. While the emotional outcomes of regression largely correlate to literature they can be divided into those visitors who felt a positive sense of nostalgia, feeling wistful for the past and those that considered that certain settings were useful to remind them that life was a great deal harder for their ancestors which reflects the importance of authenticity in the design. Bunratty castle

and Folk Park in all its manifestations strives to be honest and true to its historical narrative with many visitors affirming that they sought a sense of cultural identity from their visit. The term *communitas* applies to a temporary state in which people are together and share a common emotion that is context specific (Getz, 2007). Multiple opportunities for *communitas* based connections are evident in the case site, as the site is personally navigated and relatively devoid of labelling many visitors informally chat together, also the activities in the site are designed to bring people together and break down barriers such as the schoolhouse and the medieval banquet. Finally, relaxation and togetherness were widely evident, as there are few negative cues which impact on visitors emotional outcomes. The only negative cue that the researcher encountered was in relation to poor crowd management which at one point impacted on the experience. However, as visitors can control their own pace, moving on and returning to a busy point is possible. Indeed the case site is laid out so naturally that there are numerous points that encourage visitors to pause reflect and take adequate time to move through the cultural attraction.

The study has confirmed that emotional outcomes represent a major component of the value creation process of experiences. A major implication from the study is that in order to design the conditions which stimulate a set of emotional outcomes organisations need to be constantly aware of and examining their key markets for evidence of their desired emotional outcomes. This knowledge is the major underpinning factor for designing multiple forms and points with cues which stimulate sets of emotional outcomes. Evidence has been presented that emotional outcomes are a result of a blend of inputs, both human and non-human, and it is presented that as visitors emotional needs are highly variable that it would be erroneous for organisations to rely on any one form of cue to stimulate visitor emotions or to assume that all tourists seek similar emotional outcomes. The emotional outcomes which are most common to the findings are awe, reflection and contemplation arising from the natural and largely informal nature of the case study site.

This study has also highlighted that memorabilia can be used to tangibilise the post experience stage for tourists. The findings have offered some examples of memorabilia with evidence of informal activities such as visitors taking photographs and purchasing

books and souvenirs however, greater opportunities could be formally offered, perhaps guests could be offered a personally inscribed medieval goblet or some homemade soda bread prepared by the Bean an Tis, presented as an unexpected, value-added item (Ellis and Rossman, 2008).

Final Adapted Definition of Cultural Tourism Experiences

Before advancing to explore the final research objective of the experience development process it is first necessary to review the extent to which the first two research objectives have been addressed in this study. Following a case study exploration of a best practice cultural tourism experience commonalities are evident in aspects of the original tentative definition of cultural tourism experiences. However new insights offered by the case study enhance and add to the definition. The role of personal control is understated in the extant literature. In practice, it was found that personal control on the part of the tourist has a large influence on the resultant experience. This requires organisations to shift control to the tourist by being cognisant and intuitive of the personal context of their tourists. This concurs with Csikszentmihalyi (1992) who advocates affording customer's freedom and personal control to create individual flow experiences. Furthermore, the core activity moves to a core learning activity which emphasises the importance of creating opportunities for knowledge transfer which can reinforce personal values and meet deeper needs (McKercher and Ho, 2004; Getz, 2007).

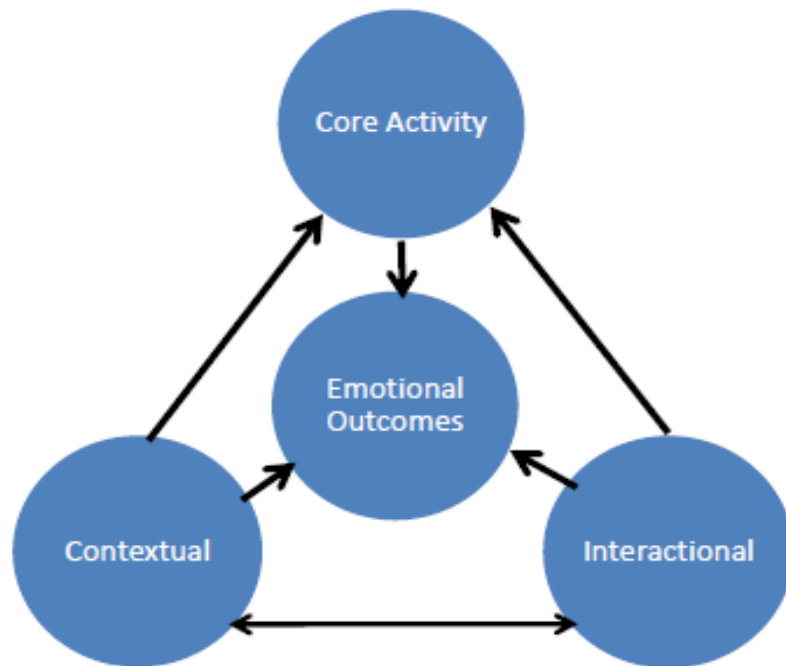
Whilst supporting activities remain crucial to encourage visitors to actively participate and personally create their experiences it is the role of cues and the creative abilities of frontline employees that communicates historical assets in a holistic and consistent manner allowing the experience to extend beyond the actual visit. In order to realise the first research objective of this study, that is, understanding the nature of cultural tourism experiences an adapted definition is presented below:

“Cultural tourism experiences are personally controlled encounters, designed around a core learning activity that is context specific, created through varying levels of human interaction with a number of contextual elements supported through activities, cues and creative employees with the goal of facilitating uniquely valuable and memorable emotional outcomes”.

While the foregoing discussion displays some convergence between this study's research findings and the literature concerning the nature and elements of cultural tourism experiences, it is important to note that there are a number of aspects of each component that require a degree of adaptation. Cultural tourism sites are clearly defined by the large reliance and constraint of the physical built heritage which places an increasing challenge for practitioners to facilitate visitor experiences. Both employees and visitors at the case site clearly understand their roles, this is achieved by the careful balance and use of cues within the emotional outcomes, contextual and interactional components each of which continuously converge to support the organisations core activity thus creating an holistic experiencescape which facilitates uniquely personal experiences.

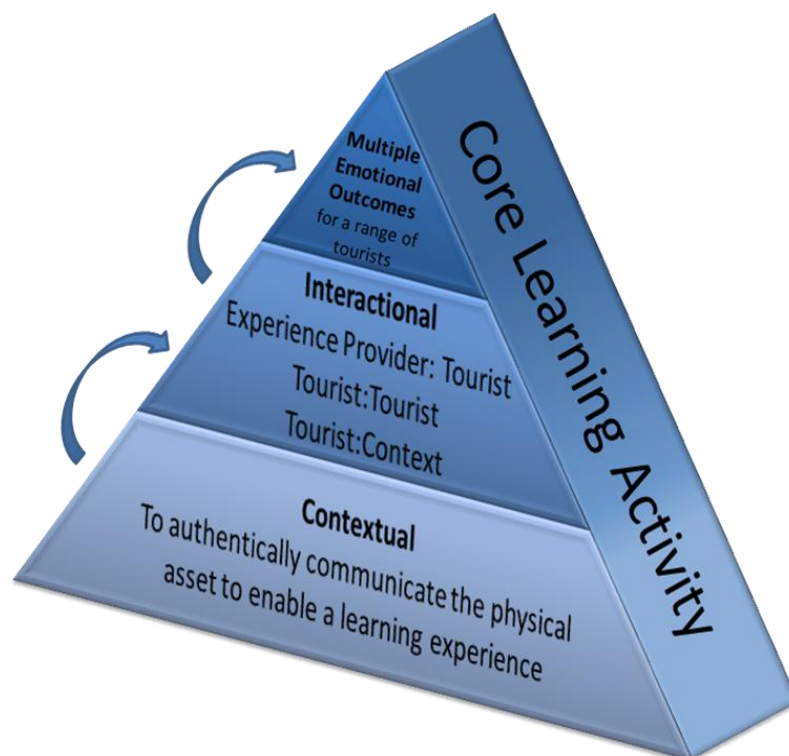
In advance of presenting an adapted experience components framework it is necessary to firstly review the original experience components framework (Figure 6.1a presented overleaf). In its original view each component stood separately connected by arrows to illustrate a connection. Each component was articulated simply without any description and the core activity was represented in equal station to the other components.

Figure 6.1a: Components of Cultural Tourism Experiences



The findings from the case site have a bearing on the proposed experience components presented above and therefore a new and adapted framework is outlined in figure 6.1b.

Figure 6.1b: Adapted Components of Cultural Tourism Experiences



The nomenclature of the components remains the same but in light of the findings certain aspects of each component are adapted and added to. Figure 6.1b now delineates the role of each component; the core activity now includes the term learning in its depiction. The contextual component is placed at the base of the pyramid as it is presented as the initial mental building block at the base of experience construction which must facilitate a learning experience. The interactional component must offer opportunities for three types of interaction: tourist provider to tourist, tourist to tourist and tourist to context. Finally, the emotional component must offer multiple outcomes to meet the needs of a disparate range of tourists. Rather than each component standing as a separate entity, they build upon each other to create an experience which warrants an adaptation to their graphic depiction. This framework accomplishes the second research objective as it identifies and clarifies the elements of a cultural tourism experience.

The results of this study could provide both theoretical and practical implications. The experience components framework contributes to knowledge generation and theoretical progress of understanding on cultural tourism experiences and offers a basis for future empirical research. From a practitioner standpoint, the experience components offer cultural tourism practitioners a useful framework for auditing, planning and designing experiences, as each component of the framework offers both understanding and clear directions for managerial attention and actions. Such practical applications will help practitioners improve their offerings and better serve visitors' experiential needs. A summary table is offered overleaf which outlines how both the literature review and the case study findings have influenced the components.

Table 6.1: Summary of Experience Components

Components	Role	Supporting Activities for Experience
Core Learning Activity	Learn about cultural assets	Observation, interaction and engagement
Contextual Component	<p>To communicate historical information-</p> <p>To communicate behaviour/rules</p> <p>Make available artefacts & contexts that encourage experiences</p> <p>Offer an imaginative learning experience</p> <p>To communicate a consistent message to all sensory channels</p>	<p>Theming and Storytelling: Scapes and Settings</p> <p>Range of learning forms: To meet the needs of range of visitors</p> <p>Authentic: Clues, cues and triggers</p>
Interactional Component	<p>To facilitate interactions:</p> <p>Tourist provider:Tourist</p> <p>Tourist:Tourist</p> <p>Tourist:Context</p>	<p>Formal & informal activities with scope for participation and co-creation</p> <p>Remove barriers to interaction</p> <p>Careful & limited usage of textual information</p> <p>Shift control to tourists</p>
Emotional Outcomes Component	Create emotional value and longterm memories	<p>Information of anticipated needs, motives & emotional outcomes.</p> <p>Segment visitor groups by emotional outcomes</p> <p>Communicate a consistent perception that emotional desires that can be attained</p> <p>Experience clues.</p> <p>Sensory stimulation -sensescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes & tastescapes</p> <p>Skilled, empathetic & responsive staff</p> <p>Provide tangible memorabilia</p>

6.3 New Experience Development: Process and Antecedents

The third and final research objective is to develop a framework of the process of experience development. In achieving this aim the researcher took a twofold approach to framework conceptualisation. Firstly, the researcher sought to discern the antecedents which enable success in the process and secondly, to identify the stages and activities of the development process. The antecedents of product and service development have been widely researched with abundant findings generated to date. Through an exploratory case study the researcher sought to identify the antecedents enabling success and the manner by which experiences are developed in real-life and use the findings to refine the conceptual framework. In the ensuing discussion both the antecedents and the process framework will be discussed in succession.

6.3.1 Antecedents which Enable the Development of Cultural Tourism Experiences

Many authors have identified that adherence to a predetermined process does not in itself guarantee success and that a number of antecedent activities must also be present (Cooper and de Brentani, 1991; Cooper et al., 1994; de Brentani, 1995; Froehle et al., 1998; Johne and Storey, 1998; Stuart and Tax, 2004; Johnson et al., 2000; Chase and Voss, 2000; Ottenbacher, Gnoth and Jones, 2006; Froehle and Roth, 2007; Menor and Roth, 2007). In the course of the literature review a number of factors which enable success in the development of new offerings were explored which drew from product, service and experience development literature leading to four antecedents. Interviews with the management team at the case study site confirmed and added to the literature findings resulting in some adaptations to the initial set of antecedents, now articulated as:

- Market knowledge competence
- Leadership and internal marketing
- Creativity and willingness to collaborate
- Systematic Process Management

The development of new experiential offerings at the site has proved highly successful over the past number of years and offers evidence that the development of new experiences developed around a core activity founded in cultural assets, can offer cultural tourism organisations a new source of competitive advantage. From an observation of the process on site it was identified that certain organisational competences and capabilities underpin and support the experience development process and its resultant outcome at the site.

The personal goal of the CEO of Bunratty is for the organisation to be skilful at developing new experience offerings, which he places at the forefront of the organisations strategy. This is consistent with Pine and Gilmore (1999) who contend that the intention to develop and offer experiences must form part of the overall organisation strategy. The CEO also notes that developing these offerings in a challenging economic climate requires the organisation to become adept at adapting existing offerings to match customer needs. While the development of new experience offerings as activities and events is relatively new in the organisation the development process draws from the organisations inherent skills assimilated over the last forty years. The resultant experience offerings have proved highly successful to date due in part to their close alignment to the organisations core offering. Evidence of the importance of market knowledge competence is offered in this statement by the Sales and Marketing Manager,

“I very much focus on customer needs in all of the target markets and spotting new niches in the markets that we or nobody else in the market is fulfilling, particularly now when we are looking to amend our existing product to get in new customers”

The Sales and Marketing Manager admits that gathering knowledge of user needs within their main markets allows them to identify new ways in which their existing offerings can be adapted to match new trends. Findings also show that the case site inherently understand that they need to create a perception in the minds of each of the visitor groups and this requires in-depth knowledge of the emotional needs and expectations of each segment. The findings support the contention of authors such as Ho and McKercher (2004) who consider that practitioners need to consider tourists right from the outset, by identifying their underlying emotional needs. An example of this is offered by the Operations Manager who notes, that as children seek fun and adventure

they design lots of points of interest offering opportunities for them to feel a sense of adventure with a few surprises along the way. They will regularly draw on their families and friends as focus groups when developing new family oriented offerings. The organisation regularly solicits feedback from customers both formally and informally, the Operations Manager summarises, *“I think we have our finger on pulse that we know exactly what people want, we have a fair idea of what will work and won’t work”*. He considers that as the organisation has a high volume of repeat business it needs to *“refresh and improve constantly”* but that this requires a lot of user knowledge. The organisation is quick to learn from new offerings that have not been successful, using customer information to refine and develop future offerings.

Each member of the management team applies the voice of the customer to the development process in different ways and at different times. Additionally, through a culture of involving employees in the development of experiential offerings employees can become a key resource as sensors of market satisfaction as they provide inputs to both the development and delivery of the experiential offering. In the pre-development stages the CEO goes out into the market place and meets with stakeholders to discuss and examine new trends. The Sales and Marketing Manager meets with tour operators who furnish Bunratty with high numbers of visitors to identify market needs and both the Operations and Evening Products Managers scan the site for face to face feedback from visitors at multiple stages of the development process. This is consistent with a number of authors (Martin and Horne, 1995; Leonard 1998; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004) who contend that customer knowledge development occurs through a bilateral process of firm and customer interaction during a range of stages throughout the process. Like Boswijk et al. (2007) who contend that directly involving the customer in the experience development process from the beginning avoids both time and capital wastage on unsuitable ideas and concepts the case site have become adept at adapting existing offerings to match customer needs in a challenging economic climate.

Longitudinal evidence of strong leadership in the organisation was presented in the findings and concurs with Scheuing and Johnson (1989) assertion that leadership provides clear direction to steer the development process, while adhering to the strategic objectives initially set down. The leadership culture at the case site is one which is

underpinned by a strong ethos to protect and maintain the site for future generations rather than short term financial gains. Successful new experience offerings are developed at the site through good leadership, and similar to Hjalager et al. (2008) these good leadership traits include an open-minded attitude and capabilities in building bridges and trust amongst participants. In the vein of authors such as John and Storey (1997) and Froehle et al. (2000) evidence was found that good leaders manage conflict constructively and coordinates cross-functional teams in a manner which influences the pace with which the process moves. This antecedent was originally articulated as 'Leadership and resource building' and while the literature review identified that resource building is critical the findings show that the key resource that needs building in the development of experiences is the experience delivery personnel and this requires internal marketing activities on the part of the organisation. Therefore, internal marketing is the key resource building activity that is required. There is evidence of effective and open communication between front-line employees and managers at the case site which propels the development process at the site. While previous research acknowledges that organisations who "*undertake extensive internal marketing to obtain staff understanding and support for the innovations*" can achieve greater NSD success (Alam,2006:242), the findings have shown that this process requires deliberate activities on the part of the management team and is in fact a key success factor in the development of experiential offerings. Evidence of employee commitment through internal marketing is articulated as the term '*buy in*' in the case study findings and was referred to by each of the members of the management team in the course of the case study. One manager explains that the nature of experiential offerings requires managers to take adequate time to fully explain and discuss the potential new offering to avoid confusion and garner support,

"So first thing I spoke to the staff when it was still an idea, I wanted to know if they would go along with it and get a 'buy in' from them... you have to bear in mind that they have been following the same program the whole time...and after meeting number two I got buy in, yeah they were suddenly on for it when I explained everything to them. I said we have got to try new things, but I said it won't work if you are not willing to do this it will not progress; anyway I got buy-in. That gave me people."

The management team believes that through establishing '*buy in*' in an open and honest manner they have developed strong commitment from their employees for the development of visitor experiences. They consider that through internal marketing

employees trust the organisation with the many new ideas that are being developed as they clearly understand their role in the new offerings and have witnessed the increase in tourists to the site which benefit the company as a whole. For Menor and Roth (2007:829) this “*captures the values and beliefs fostered by the service organisation that indicate a willingness and desire to innovate*”. Considering that for many practitioners the development of experiences is a new and emergent type of offering, the practice of internal marketing is certainly applicable. Johne and Storey (1998:220) describe market championing as spotting and developing market opportunities from within the organisation, which addresses issues such as, “*how fast and in which ways is a market growing, and in what new ways can it or parts of it be made to grow more profitably?*” Theory correlates to practice as the case sites management team have recognised the importance of facilitating memorable visitor experiences by restructuring their core offering to respond quickly to market changes. In view of the fact that this research seeks to assist cultural tourism organisation who are new to the experience development process the title of this antecedent is adapted as follows: ‘Leadership and internal marketing’, to reflect both the managing and guiding roles that leaders have in clearly articulating and discussing the new offering with employees.

It has been widely discussed in this thesis that experiences must be unique and personally relevant in order to be memorable (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Poulsson and Kale, 2004). The need for creativity in developing new experiences is critical in order to avoid what Richards and Wilson (2006:1216) describe as ‘serial reproduction’ in tourism services; they consider that “*that the whole concept is dependent on the tourist as a creative co-producer and consumer of their experiences as well as the creative abilities of the experience creators*”. It is evidenced in the findings that the case site exhibits a certain degree of creative imagination and is against employing the same strategies as their competitors, but open to considering a vast range of new ideas to meet the need for cultural tourism experiences of increasingly sophisticated and individualised tourists. Richards and Wilson (2006) contend that it is common for managers of cultural sites to have creative skills, which are valuable for bringing creative people and creative functions together to create mutually beneficial tourism experiences. Evidence was presented that a culture of creativity exists in the case site, generated through a strong resistance to imitate other organisations and a preference for

developing new and interesting visitor experiences. The findings show how the CEO and his management team regularly engage and collaborate with external persons and organisations to come up with new and interesting ideas. The management team do realise that greater levels of creativity are required for developing new experience offerings and on the occasions that the organisation cannot effectively draw on internal resources for creativity in the development of new offerings they move to collaborate with external organisations for greater inspiration. Through external collaboration the organisation can co-opt new knowledge and skills that may not be present within the organisation.

The case site afford their visitors a high level of personal control during their time spent at the site, rather than totally staging their activities they encourage visitors to actively participate and personally create their experiences. This is underpinned by the creative abilities of their animators (Bean an Tis, schoolteacher) and frontline employees who engage visitors through various activities and clues, making each encounter unique rather than wholly staged and lacking in originality. Boswijk et al. (2007) contend that the challenge of developing experiences requires organisations to renew themselves in order to create not just a single experience environment but an entire portfolio of settings in which experiences are manifested. For this Bunratty have placed their core offering at the heart of each new experience development process, and in doing so have drawn on the internal creativeness of its organisation. The organisation believe that by developing new experience offerings from their own resources (human and non-human) they are both increasing the creative abilities of the organisation whilst also strengthening themselves for the future. A number of managers confirm that the organisation is fortunate to have a very creative staff and that they are constantly developing. One manager notes,

“It is only when you are challenged that you can develop. Our team have really developed and they are much more creative and ready to do the next event”.

Boswijk et al. (2007) contend that creativity requires moving away from traditional and logical mindsets, and that experience developers need to allow their intuition to guide them towards creative solutions. The management team replace the word intuition with gut instinct honed from years of experience which they consider affords them greater

speed in the development process. Evidence is also presented that a degree of risk taking is required in the development of creative new offerings and the findings show how the organisation has always been creative in their development processes as cited here by former CEO Dr. O'Regan who regards *"innovation as something of potentially great value and not as something which threatens comfortable and established patterns"*. This creative attitude evidenced in the findings correlates with Boswijk et al. (2007:10) who consider that meaningful experience creation is a result of a highly creative process that requires the *"letting go of existing propositions and traditional ways of thinking"* achievable by giving *"unconscious thought processes free rein."* As experiences are a progression on traditional service offerings and difficult to prototype, highly creative thinking is needed in order to visualise each of the aforementioned experience components. The management of Bunratty believe in creativity when visualising new concepts and admit to removing themselves from the boardroom to the experience setting as it helps the process. Bunratty's creativity is evident in its experience offerings and stems from the top down, the CEO admits to being cynical about rigid strategies viewing the organisation as fluid, adaptable and cross functioning with an openness and willingness to discuss and develop new ideas. As a result of the foregoing discussion the title for this antecedent is: 'Culture of creativity and willingness to collaborate'.

From the literature it was presented that organisations can follow either a formal or informal approach to the development process. De Brentani (1991) proposes following a formal and planned approach for greater development success, yet Edvardsson et al. (1995) argue that a detailed, formalised planning system stifles the creativity needed to develop really successful new offerings. The series of interviews undertaken with the CEO and management team present evidence that a systematic process is utilised in the organisation and is considered by them to be effective in bringing new experience offerings successfully to the market. However, there is a high degree of fluidity and flexibility in the process which allows the management team to infuse it a lot of informality, which has the consequence that a number of people can contribute and participate at various times within the process. The CEO notes,

"I am against formalising it, against trying to work out which stage I'm at because I see it all as a very simple thing, you just start by asking what am I going to do, and

who do I need to help, who is going to get me to the next point, who do I need to be involved so you are bringing in the different bits as you go along, if it doesn't work we say that is a bit that we didn't get right."

This largely correlates with Stuart and Tax (2004) who consider that while much of the development process is carried out via informal communication, it requires a number of formal communication mechanisms, such as regular meetings with documented minutes where all parties can review and discuss progress and address critical issues. Bunratty achieve a balance of both informality and formality in their process. The organisation is cognisant of the various participants, activities, actions, tasks, and evaluations that move the new experience offering from the idea stage through to launch. The various stages of the development process are discussed and reviewed at both formal meetings and through informal discussions amongst the management team. It is perhaps more critical to recognise the importance of breaking down the process into stages which include those participants, activities, actions, tasks, and evaluations as recommended in the NSD literature to move from the idea stage through to launch (Bowers, 1985; Cooper et al. 1994). Bunratty Castle and Folk Park employ a systematic approach to the process of developing new experience offerings. There is clear evidence that the organisation appreciates the importance of each of the stages of the development process and moves through them in a systematic manner. However, the development team regularly alternate between both front and back end stages which they consider facilitates a more focused fine tuning, thus stages and activities frequently take place concurrently. These antecedents represent a balance of theory and practice and serve as fundamental resources and capabilities to underpin the experience development process.

6.3.2 Phases and Activities of Experience Development for Cultural Tourism

Due to significant changes in the marketplace the traditional offerings of many cultural tourism organisations no longer meet consumer needs requiring organisations to find new ways to communicate their core offering. A framework of experience components presented in chapter two of the literature concluded that successful experience development should result in a carefully designed experience context that offers opportunities for interaction and the stimulation of emotional outcomes. The final objective of this study is to develop a framework which outlines the process by which experiences are developed. However, a challenge in this research was to determine

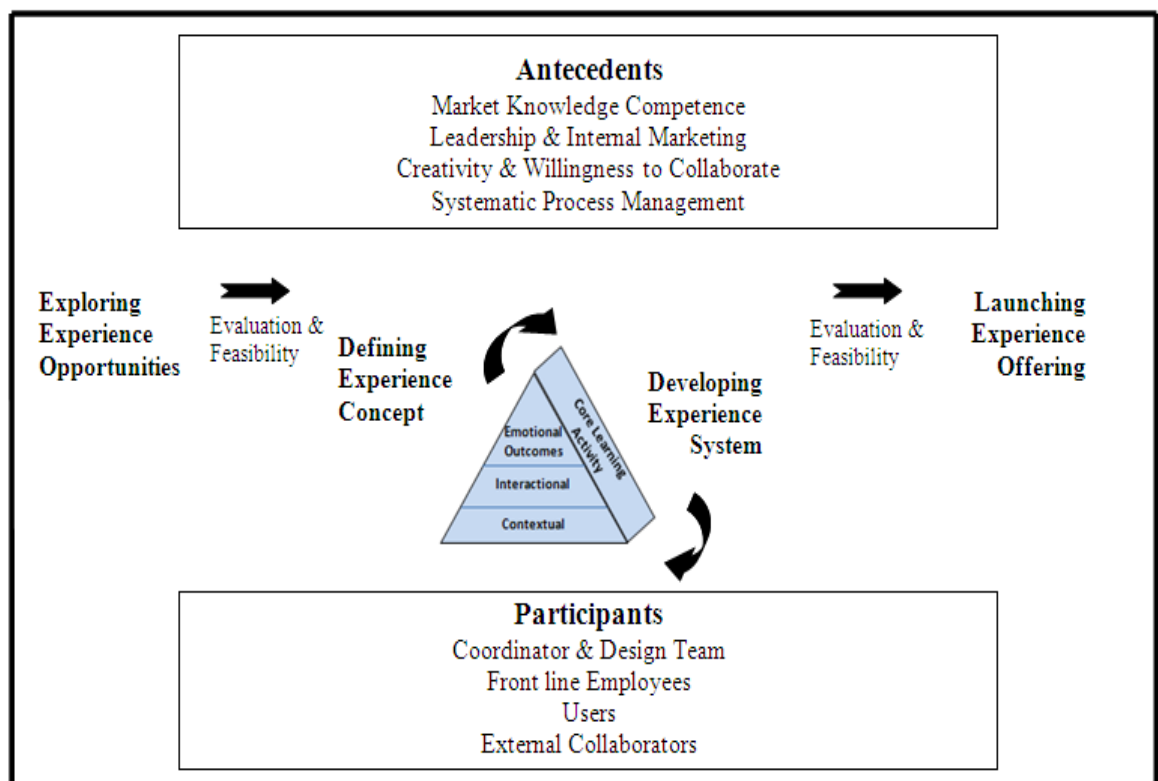
methods that correlate to the nature of cultural tourism experiences. From examination of the extant literature it was found that no process model could be identified which outlines the stages and activities of experience development. As experiences represent a progression from services and products (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), the researcher reviewed both product and service development literature to extract a number of key phases which formed the basis of a composite framework for the development of experiences. A conceptual systematic framework outlining a number of phases, activities, participants and outputs of experience development for cultural tourism was presented and discussed in detail (see figure 3.1 in the literature review).

Findings from the case study build on the conceptual framework and provide additional insights into the process of developing cultural tourism experiences which are now discussed. The initial framework identified four phases with evidence of each one in the case site. Evidence in the findings indicates that in practice the process is systematic with high elements of flexibility, and therefore the process is nearer to three phases as a number of activities within both the defining experience concept and developing experience system phases overlapped a great deal and became quite synonymous occurring in an iterative cycle. Evidence of this overlap is identifiable in certain activities such as visualising the concept (experience concept development phase) in tandem with identifying how it can be potentially operationalised (develop experience system phase).

This research highlighted that the participation of users as well as frontline employees are beneficial in the development, as each group brings requirements for the new experience from their perspective. The study also revealed the importance of a willingness to collaborate with external parties to co-opt new skills and competencies. Hall and Williams (2008) consider that the tourism sector is deficient in knowledge and skills for developing new offerings which they consider results in the common practice of imitation of successful offerings. A possible solution is offered in the findings from the case study which reveals that the organisation focuses all new experience development activities around their core offering. By sticking rigidly to developing new offerings which support and enhance their core offering they are creating experiential offerings that are unique and differentiated thereby generating a more competitive

organisation. Evidence in the findings has shown that tourism organisations are therefore moving away from the traditionally espoused scenario of adopting a ‘me too’ approach of imitating successful innovations in other firms (Pikkemaat and Peters, 2007). Based on the case site findings a new format for the experience development process is offered in figure 6.2 below.

Figure 6.2: A Framework of the Experience Development Process



In general, the modifications to the process framework reflect guidance from theory made clearer from evidence of practice. This research supports Berry and Carbone (2007:28) who consider that “creating an experience is much less linear than manufacturing a product to specifications. It is much more dynamic.” This is definitely evident from the case study findings as the case site follows a systematic development process with a number of development stages and activities which on occasion run concurrently. The graphic depiction of the framework is simpler than its predecessor as it is a tool to aid experience development, by providing direction and review points and suggesting when to incorporate users, employees and external collaborators in the development process. The framework provides a systematic process guide to cultural

tourism providers for developing and improving experiences systematically. The framework has four key phases but outlines the overlap between the mid phases. The experience development process at the case site is led by the CEO and his management team, the CEO is fundamental to the experience development process as he coordinates all activities by interacting with both internal and external participants. The management team assert that the entire development process is geared towards the development of experience offerings that will meet customers' needs. The voice of the customer is included in the process through the organisations strong customer orientation as discussed in the antecedent activities. The aim of each phase is to generate a number of outputs through a set of defined activities to be undertaken by the development teams. These activities and outputs which originally formed part of the framework now take the form of a supporting table shown below.

Table 6.2: Activities and Outputs of the Experience Development Process

Phases	Activities	Output
Exploring Experience Opportunities	Experience Audit Formulation of Strategic Objectives Market Appraisal Idea Generation/ Brainstorming	Analysis of Current Experience Offering 1 st Stage Market Appraisal Strategy for new experience Potential ideas identified
Defining Experience Concept	Experience Idea Screening Define & Articulate Concept Imagine, Refine & Formalise Scenarios- Identify Trigger points for each component	Experience Concept with Core Activity & Components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual • Interactional • Emotional Outcomes
Developing Experience System	Experience Concept verified through Market Re-Appraisal & Strategic Objectives Verified Budget Development Develop Participants, Processes & Physical Facilities- Design Cues for each component	2 nd Stage Refined Market Appraisal Set of Designed Experience Components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contextual • Interactional • Emotional Outcomes
Launching New Experience	Staff Training Pilot Testing & Final Design of Processes & Procedures Operations/ Marketing Programme & Launch Evaluation & Feedback from Visitors	New Cultural Tourism Experience

One of the primary activities of the conceptual framework is to undertake an experience audit with the aim of identifying and clarifying an organisations core offering and to establish the manner in which it is communicated to customers as an experience. In keeping with the highly authentic and historical context of the site Bunratty choose not to introduce experience offerings that would require major changes to their core offering. The CEO notes,

“We have a core product i.e. the folk park and we’re not going to start digging that up and changing it. What you are really trying to do is shape something to somebody’s needs; you are really trying to say how can I attract an audience that wouldn’t come to me otherwise?”

At Bunratty the experience audit is not a one off activity, as the management team constantly assess their organisations experience offering comparing what they have with what they consider visitors want. In terms of creating a set of objectives to drive the experience development process the findings have established that the organisation is fluid in their strategic objectives on the development of experiential offerings, *“a fluid kind of organisation...we have a very adaptable cross functional organisation, absolutely flexible.”* The entire new experience development process at Bunratty focuses on developing new offerings that match customer’s needs, however, potential ideas must match the ethos and core product at the site. Typically the idea generation process at the site focuses on a number of questions, illustrated here,

“What do people want at that time of year and what can the site do to get extra people into the site?”

The organisation has a proactive approach to gathering new ideas from both employees’ and customers as outlined in the findings chapter and the antecedent activities. In addition the CEO collaborates with external stakeholders to generate new ideas,

“The idea of Christmas came first with a couple of external people would you believe it, the manager of the Shannon Shamrock and another guy who does an entertainment company in Shannon and the three of us were sitting around having lunch one day and we were just talking about Christmas.”

However, idea generation at the site can be rigorous as while numerous ideas are espoused from both internal and external sources the nature of the site places a number of constraints on the process. The Operations Manager notes that the process of idea

screening for feasibility and evaluation is confined to developing new offerings that maintain the ethos of the site and which are feasible within the operational limitations of the physical site.

Defining Experience Concept

In this phase idea refinement stage activities focus on creating an early mental operationalisation concept in terms of the process, the people and the infrastructure, the Operations manager notes that this activity is highly beneficial “*so that we don’t have to waste time, we can just get on with what is feasible.*” This is a noteworthy finding of the research and reflects how the process does not sequentially follow any one stage at a particular time and has an implication on the subsequent framework structure. In the conceptual framework screened ideas are expanded into concepts by the project coordinator and his team, with promising concepts formalised into experience scenarios. In practice the screening process is guided by concepts that uphold the theme of the site and reflect the company ethos. Typical criteria used in this stage are a rigorous adherence of the concept to match the core offering at the site. The management team will discuss the target market, for which the experience concept is being designed in terms of their emotional needs and expectations and how they can be met at the site. In the conceptual framework it was presented that the development team must work between the boardroom and the actual experience context in order to imagine, refine and formalise experience scenarios for each component of the experience. At Bunratty each member of the management team is responsible for various activities in this stage. For instance the operations manager and the evening products managers are charged with developing experience scenarios. The Operations manager describes his role in this stage as visualising the concept to determine which resources are required for operationalisation. For this the sites core product is examined to establish how it can support the experience concept in terms of the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes of the potential experience.

Recent research by authors such as Boswijk et al. (2007:10) consider that meaningful experience creation requires “*letting go of existing propositions and traditional ways of thinking*” a skill often perceived as difficult in a business setting. The case site are in

accord with this stance as the operations manager agrees that much of the development process occurs away from the desk with him placing himself at the point or location in the site where it is intended to occur in order to visualise and clarify any issues. Evidence is presented that the organisation have to make few changes to the core infrastructure when developing new experience offerings as they have a high degree of established authenticity in the site. For the contextual component key issues to be considered are that the concept balances the authenticity of the site and what additional cues and triggers will be needed to reinforce this aspect. Sensory stimulation is also designed to facilitate emotional outcomes from the contextual component through the use of sounds, tastes, smell, and sight to garner attention and augment scenes. Key activities involve identifying the contextual touch points where storytelling and learning activities may possibly occur. The organisation recognise that they need different mediators or catalysts to generate visitor experiences and that they cannot rely on simply physical props. They will therefore identify at the concept stage which mediators they require, such as storytellers or traditional craftspeople to recreate ‘times past’.

For both the human interactional and emotional outcomes components both Operations and Evening Products Managers will consider the human resources necessary for the new offering at this stage which generally involves a review of employees to determine if the organisation can deliver the experience from wholly internal resources. During this stage of the process an employee meeting (s) will be arranged where managers will present and explain the screened idea to employees to determine if they will go along with it and get a “buy in” from them. This activity is critical to the overall success of new projects and can require a number of meetings. Typically new concepts are pitched to staff members to stimulate a willingness to be part of developing new business opportunities for the future success and competitiveness of the organisation. If external resources are required both managers undertake research to identify potential external sources. It is noteworthy that as the development of new experience offerings occurs on an on-going basis the organisation has established strong relationships with a number of external collaborators from which they can draw.

There are open lines of communication throughout the experience concept development stage of the process between the management team which facilitate the process to move

along swiftly. The Sales and Marketing manager feeds into the concept stage regularly offering inputs such as market knowledge and potential pricing strategies. She also delineates the potential benefits of the concept when she is assembling the marketing program for the concept. The CEO will liaise with the management team to discuss progress, budgetary factors and the feasibility of the experience concept to proceed to the back-end operationalisation stages.

Developing Experience System

In the initial conceptual framework, operationalisation of the experience concept occurs as a third phase of the process. The findings have shown that to a degree operationalisation occurs in tandem with the emerging concept. As the concept becomes more coherent and feasibility is established the team proceeds to determine the concepts requirements in terms of how it will be operationalised. At this stage of the process the management team determine how to develop the various aspects of the experience concept developed in the previous stage. Each of the experience components: contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes are developed to support and facilitate the new experience. The design team will establish that the experience concept is proceeding by verifying its current status through a market re-appraisal. Secondly, a set of employee selection and training criterion for new experience delivery personnel are identified, in tandem with a description of the customer's role in experience delivery. This allows for the cohesive development of new processes that accurately reflect and deliver on the original experience concept. When developing the experience system the organisation is on occasion required to collaborate with external sources to bring new skills and knowledge into the organisation. This reflects new business activities emerging in the last decade such as alliances, networks, and collaboration among companies and "*competing as a family*" (Prahalad, Ramaswamy and Venkatram, 2000). Considering the challenging economic environment in which the tourism industry currently operates (ITIC, 2009), a willingness to collaborate externally for the greater good of the organisation is vitally important.

As the new experience offering is being formally developed at this stage a number of activities are happening concurrently. The Evening Products Manager considers that

communication is important to avoid confusion. Therefore a set of meetings to review progress of the development are arranged and a various milestones are set out. The experience processes are tangibly supported by the organisations contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes facilities. The design team must balance the new experience process requirements with equipment, interior design and ambiance that correctly support and augment the new experience (Tax and Stuart, 1997). Therefore at this stage each of the supporting activities such as cues and triggers identified in the previous chapter for each component need to be carefully designed so that the whole experience concept offers a natural and authentic impression and stimulates interaction.

Launching New Experience

The next stage outlined in the framework is the ‘Launch Experience’ stage when the new experience process is formalised and clearly defined and internal and external conflicts resolved through training and learning of new and competencies unique to the new experience and the organisation as a whole (Stevens and Dimitriadis, 2005). This largely correlates with the case findings as management note that both external collaboration and the development of new knowledge and skills of existing staff members have led to the organisation as a whole building new sets of resources and competencies which can be drawn on for future projects. Evidence in the findings shows that the management team will communicate with each other informally to review and make subtle amendments to the soon-to-be launched new experience offering. For Bitran and Pedrosa (1998) a launch strategy must be developed through programmes from both operations and marketing departments. From an operations perspective both employees and external collaborators will be briefed on the organisational expectations for the event. The findings illustrate that key issues at this stage are ensuring that the new experience offering adheres to themes and matches the needs of the target market. Additional issues that arise here are the importance of connecting with visitors and creating a memorable experience for everyone. The Sales and Marketing team will have developed a full programme to launch and support the new offering. As with Scheuing and Johnson (1989) the organisation has a full-scale launch to the entire market rather than piloting the event. However, the organisation gathers early feedback from customers allowing them to make any necessary changes or

amendments. All of the management team are present for the launch of new experience events and activities at the site and play a strong role in smoothing over any minor problems that arise in the early stages of launch.

In the conceptual framework each of the first three stages were divided by evaluation and feasibility activities. The findings show how in practice feasibility does not occur after and between stages but simultaneously with each activity throughout the process. However, the nature of feasibility and evaluation concurs with theory as management continually undertake both external market analysis and internal business analysis to allow for continual retrospective modifications throughout the process, to ensure acceptance and feasibility of the new experience, evidenced by one manager who notes that there is “*no great science to feasibility really*” it is underpinned by a strong knowledge of their markets and combined with a willingness to take a certain amount of risk for certain things. Drawing from the case findings three main feasibility criteria need to be considered:

- Does the potential experience fit with the organisational ethos and the core organisation activity?
- Does the experience meet the emotional needs of its intended target market?
- Is the experience operationally feasible?

Organisational learning is an important feature of the development process, and management need to evaluate the success of new experience events and activities and determine how the organisation as a whole has improved. This may occur through organisational review meetings which discuss customer and staff feedback.

The framework has drawn from both theory and best practice and offers organisations seeking to develop new experience offerings a systematic process to guide the development of experience offerings. It is particularly important that organisations apply a creative perspective to the process and afford it a degree of flexibility. Organisations who wish to apply the framework must not do so from the desks of the boardroom, as participants need freedom to imagine and visualise experience scenarios in the prospective setting where it is intended to occur. While the first activities of the process, experience auditing and strategy are vital, the manner in which each of the

stages and activities occur is not rigid and scope for forward and backwards movement needs to be considered. The customer's voice must feed into the process at a number of stages as outlined in order to develop personally meaningful experiences. The framework promotes active collaboration with external partners to develop new experience offerings. The regularity with which Bunratty develops new experience offerings suggests a successful process is practiced at the site and indicates that the organisation recognises the benefits of a highly flexible and fluid process and are willing to take risks involved in such a venture. At the heart of experience design is the ability to identify the nature of experience that an organisation wishes to develop. This can be achieved by deconstructing potential experience offerings into the components framework and applying them to the emotional needs of cultural tourists. This framework places the customer at its heart and focuses on experience developers taking a customer-centric approach through thorough market analysis and research to understand the needs and expectations of visitors of heritage and culture tourism.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the findings generated from the qualitative research undertaken. The findings were integrated and compared with the literature review and discussed with specific reference to the research objectives. The findings have addressed the main research question which sought to explore the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed, and all three of the objectives. The nature of experiences has been addressed through a refined definition of cultural tourism experiences. Utilising the refined definition, the elements of cultural tourism experiences were identified and clarified thereby satisfying the second objective. The researcher has achieved the final objective through the development of a systematic framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism practitioners.

The findings have shown that the perceived complexity ascribed to experience design can be made clearer through the framework that this research offers. The experience design framework offered herein builds upon existing literature as it enhances understanding of the nature of cultural tourism experiences. In fact, the experience design framework can guide practitioners in the creation of memorable cultural tourism experiences. A number of key conclusions, considerations and management implications have been recognised as a result of inquiry and framework development, which will be explored in the next chapter.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

This chapter concludes this study on cultural tourism experience design. The purpose of this chapter is to draw conclusions from the preceding discussion to offer a number of academic and practitioner recommendations regarding experience design in the cultural tourism sector. The limitations of the study are also outlined and potential areas for further research are discussed.

This study set out to explore the manner by which cultural tourism experiences are developed. In order to achieve the study's main aim the researcher sought to understand the nature of experiences initially from a broad perspective through a review of a number of literature streams and more narrowly within a cultural tourism context. The researcher presents a definition of cultural tourism experiences which allowed her to identify and clarify the elements in the form of an experience components framework. This definition was subsequently refined following findings gathered from a case study of a best practice cultural tourism attraction, Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. The researcher proceeded to explore the manner by which cultural tourism experiences can be developed through examining both product and service development literature. This exploration provided the necessary insights in order to develop a conceptual framework of the process, with particular cognisance of the antecedents which enable a successful outcome. Through the adoption of a qualitative case study of a best practice cultural tourism organisation, the study was able to explore both the nature of cultural tourism experiences and the manner by which they are developed in practice. The study offers insight into both the nature of cultural tourism experiences and how they can be developed. This chapter summarises the key findings emanating from this study.

7.1 Research Outcomes

Cultural tourism offers a fundamental resource for the Irish economy and attracts an increasing number of visitors, both domestic and international. Equally, from the tourist perspective there is an increasing demand for authentic and personalised offerings which are only achievable through emotionally satisfying experiences. The general aim of this study was to provide an understanding of the process of experience design within a cultural tourism context. To achieve the research aim three objectives were developed which sought to generate insights into the nature and elements of experiences within a cultural tourism context and the process by which they can be developed. The outcomes of the study are now summarised in light of the preceding discussion as a set of key recommendations to consolidate an understanding of the research objectives. The following recommendations are not prescriptive activities that will assure experience creation in cultural tourism; more exactly they are a set of suggested guidelines that may assist cultural tourism practitioners in understanding both the nature and process of developing cultural tourism experiences in order to augment their organisations core offering to an experience. To clearly link the research outcomes to the research objectives the findings are now discussed with specific reference to each of the three research objectives.

Research Objective One:

To understand the nature of cultural tourism experiences

The first research objective of this study relates to understanding the nature of experiences within a cultural tourism context. This research has explored and defined both the terms ‘culture’ and ‘experience’ and both are found to be multifaceted constructs. Achieving this objective firstly required an insight into the study’s context, which is the cultural tourism sector. It was found that the sector was extremely broad comprising four main areas: traditional culture, living culture, natural and built heritage, each with its own constituent elements. The concept of cultural tourism offerings has expanded over the years and is captured most succinctly by the NTHP (2008:2) which describes cultural tourism as “*the places, artefacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present*”. A review of extant literature

exposed a criticism that many built cultural attractions have traditionally presented a ‘*show and know*’ version of the past, which lacks emotional impact and does not deliver the experience required by the modern cultural tourist (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999:607). From a broader experience perspective Gupta and Vajic (2000) consider that many designed experiences have failed as they lack understanding of the deeper nature of an experience. In order to realise the first research objective of this study, that is, understanding the nature of cultural tourism experiences the researcher developed and refined a definition which draws from both theory and practice,

“Cultural tourism experiences are personally controlled encounters, designed around a core learning activity that is context specific, created through varying levels of human interaction with a number of contextual elements supported through activities, clues and creative employees with the goal of facilitating uniquely valuable and memorable emotional outcomes”.

This definition is the first step in deconstructing experiences as it reveals a number of key elements namely, the core learning activity, contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes. A number of authors consider that the area of experience design suffers from “*a poor conceptualization and fuzzy directions*” (Poulsson and Kale, 2004:275) hence, this definition advances understanding and clarity of the nature of cultural tourism experiences. The definition represents a foundation of the experience development framework for cultural tourism practitioners who seek to attain greater competitive advantage from offering experiences as it demystifies the experience phenomenon. In addition, whilst extant literature has explored and discussed many aspects of the experience concept this definition deals specifically in a cultural tourism context and thus contributes to theory.

Research Objective Two:

To identify and clarify the elements of cultural tourism experiences

The foregoing definition identifies four key components of cultural tourism experiences, namely, the core learning activity, emotional outcomes, contextual and interactional. Each component has a particular role in facilitating visitor experiences and through a number of features and supporting activities offers a means of creating personally relevant memories. The framework is supported by a summary table which draws from

both the literature review and the case study findings to outline the role and activities of each component. The experience components framework offers cultural tourism practitioners a useful framework for auditing, planning and designing experiences, as each component of the framework offers both understanding and clear directions for managerial attention and actions. The framework accomplishes the second research objective as it identifies and clarifies the elements of a cultural tourism experience.

Within the framework of cultural tourism experiences a number of additional outcomes are now discussed. This study has found that the core activity of cultural tourism is learning. Cultural tourism learning can consist of the history and heritage of others or about their contemporary ways of life and enjoying the atmosphere of a place (McIntosh et al., 2005). Evidence from the case study confirms this, as the core activity at Bunratty castle and Folk Park is providing visitors with an opportunity to learn about Irish heritage and culture through observation, interaction and engagement with multiple periods within a cultural historic site. Recognising that the core activity is a core learning activity emphasises the importance of creating opportunities for knowledge transfer which can reinforce personal values and meet deeper needs (McKercher and Ho, 2004; Getz, 2007). This research has addressed a critical question originating in the literature by Goulding (2000:105) “*is a single form of learning suited to everyone of the variety of markets to which the attraction appeals?*” Converging evidence from both the literature and the case findings indicates that a range of learning forms are required in cultural tourism offerings. Indeed, the findings contradict Jones (1992:915) argument that artefacts and their images “*cannot speak for themselves*” and require captions and labels to explain their meaning. Rather the findings are in accord with Lord (2007) who considers that cultural tourism learning is focuses on personal feelings, attitudes, interests, beliefs and values. Findings also confirm that learning is generally socially mediated occurring within settings and scapes which combine both physical and mental aspects.

A major outcome of the study is the finding that emotional outcomes represent the form of value delivered from cultural tourism experiences. This is one of the most important conclusions emanating from the study and supports both the literature (Otto and Ritchie, 2006; Brunner-Sperdin and Peters, 2009) and the case study. Interviews with a range of

tourists at the site revealed that a range of emotional outcomes were experienced through clues derived from highly authentic scapes portraying particular historical periods creating connections at a deeper level. The findings have shown a myriad of emotional outcomes. For some tourists these emotional outcomes brought reminiscence with profoundly moving and touching feelings such as sadness, for others it was emotions of thrills, adventure and surprise and for others it triggered a sense of belonging. *Communitas* refers to a temporary state in which people are together and share a common emotion that is context specific (Getz, 2007). *Communitas* was evidenced in the findings with examples of activities designed to bring people together and break down barriers. Emotional outcomes are reinforced through authentic, honest and true clues and triggers which emanate from frontline employees and within the settings and scapes of the site.

Another element of experiences is that interaction and participation are core activities in experiential offerings. Prior theorists had recognised the importance of interaction in experiences but this study highlighted the equal importance of three types of interaction that stimulate experiences: Experience provider to tourist, tourist to tourist and tourist to context. Each of these forms of interaction engages the customer in a different way and each one requires a number of skills on the part of the organisation. The findings show that cultural tourism organisations cannot solely rely on totally staging activities but also on less formal activities which encourage visitors to actively participate and personally create their experiences.

The findings reveal that tourists seek experience environments which allow them to exert personal control. Therefore, the key to creating personally unique experiences is in offering tourists a personally controlled role with credible opportunities to feel, imagine and learn within the context of the case site. The findings support authors such as Pine and Gilmore (1998), Buchenau and Fulton Suri (2000) and Gupta and Vajic (2002) who identify that experiences are subjective and that each visitor interprets the elements of the contextual component in a personal manner, to form their own unique environment for experience creation. In practice, it was found that personal control on the part of the tourist has a large influence on the resultant experience. The findings show that organisations need to be cognisant and intuitive of the personal context of their tourists.

The case site should their visitors a high level of personal control during their time spent at the site, rather than totally staging their activities they encourage visitors to actively participate and personally customise their experiences. As a consequence, cultural tourism organisations need to recognise the customer as an intrinsic partner in their experience offerings and afford them personal control dependent on the degree of involvement sought in the experience. It is noteworthy that the use of theming and storytelling within the case site helps connect each disparate point and removes the necessity for signs, plaques and textual information.

A further outcome of the experience framework relates to the importance of supporting the physical aspect of cultural tourism sites through strong clue management. Findings show that the physical aspect of the experience context is an early mental building block at the base of experience construction. Both literature and findings indicate that the highly fixed nature of the physical aspect creates challenges for experience designers to communicate a consistent message to tourists on how they can have an experience. As a consequence the skilled management of clues can communicate this aspect and facilitate visitor experiences. Evidence in the findings indicates that sensory clues were the most powerful elicitor of experiences, as they facilitate a mental connection between tourists and historical artefacts. The findings have also determined that each clue must be authentic as their role is to offer tourists opportunities to feel and imagine and this will only occur if the tourist consider the clues credible. These findings build on the literature which promotes the use of sensescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes (Dann and Jacobsen, 2002; Mossberg, 2007).The experience components framework contributes to knowledge generation and theoretical progress of understanding on cultural tourism experiences and offers a basis for future empirical research.

Research Objective Three:

To create a framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism attractions

The third and final objective of this study was to develop of a framework of the process of experience development. The study generated a framework of the experience development process for cultural tourism practitioners which it refined from findings

drawn from the case study. A number of key conclusions are now offered. Firstly, it has been found that the experience development process relies on a number of antecedent activities: market knowledge competence, leadership and internal marketing, culture of creativity and willingness to collaborate and systematic process management. The findings offer evidence that cultural tourism organisations need to have a strong commitment to the development of experiential offerings. While the term antecedent refers largely to activities that precede the development process, the findings also show that each antecedent develops into an organisational capability or resource which is unique and inimitable. The study has also concluded that knowledge of deeper market needs is critical to the development process. Exploring the emotional outcomes of experiences from a tourist perspective is useful as it helps organisations understand customers and facilitate a set of emotional outcomes (Williams and Buswell, 2003). A major implication from the study is that in order to design the conditions which stimulate a set of emotional outcomes organisations need to be constantly aware of and examining their key markets for evidence of their desired emotional outcomes. If they understand these emotional needs they can start to develop experience offerings which can stimulate the sought after emotions. This requires ongoing engagement with both users and frontline employees to gather the information.

The study has revealed that the development process is systematic with a balance of formality and flexibility. Within each phase of the framework are a number of activities which are undertaken to move the new experience offering from an idea to launch. The framework recognises that a degree of overlap exists amongst the activities of defining experience concept and developing experience system phases. The framework represents a 'how to' approach to experience development and is designed to guide practitioners through a number of phases. The framework reflects theoretical methodologies and incorporates the exigencies of contemporary business life; therefore whilst systematic, a number of activities across certain phases can occur concurrently. Supporting the framework is a table which outlines the activities and outputs of each phase. This is a practical tool to guide practitioners during the course of the development process.

The research further reinforced the need for a number of key participants throughout the development process. The findings indicate that the development of personally relevant experience offerings requires the direct participation of users. The user is a key participant as they offer information on a myriad of aspects such as the types of emotional needs of each market, the manner of interactions preferred, and their need to personally control their experience. This research also illustrated the importance of including external participants in the process, for two main reasons. Firstly, external collaboration brings new ideas to the organisation and secondly it can bring new skills and knowledge which may not be available within the organisation. Including frontline employees in the process is also critical as the research has shown that their behavior and interactions facilitate meaningful experiences. Therefore including them in the development process provides insights from those responsible for facilitating experiences. Finally, by designating a leader and a design team the organisation are committing to the process and its activities. In summary, the outcomes achieved within in each research objective cumulatively accomplish the overall research aim of understanding the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed.

7.2 Research Contributions and Implications of Findings

The research was undertaken in response to both academic and practitioner calls for greater knowledge in the area of experiences. The fundamental nature of the research was to advance understanding of cultural tourism experiences and to provide a *'how to'* framework to assist and encourage experience development among cultural tourism practitioners. This has resulted in an experience design framework which has in achieved the research objectives, hence, a number of contributions to both theory and practice are proposed.

7.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

While the general field of experiences has seen increasing levels of research, the area of cultural tourism experiences has been largely under explored. The opening chapter of this thesis presented a strong rationale for understanding the nature of cultural tourism experiences. Cultural tourism, rich in many physical assets has grown in recent times

(Hughes, 2000), but along with this growth visitors are seeking emotionally intense experiences which offer them connection with culture in its many manifestations (McKercher and Ho, 2004). The research has shown that the key challenge to be faced in the development of experiences is designing experiences while still maintaining the historical and cultural ethos of the core offering. By tracing the evolution of experiences from psychology literature through to commercial experience literature the research is situated on a firm theoretical foundation. By deconstructing experiences into components designers are able to design each component while understanding the role that each one plays in facilitating experiences. Through adopting a case study of a best practice cultural tourism organisation the researcher was able to verify and clarify the presence and features of each component.

From a theoretical standpoint, this research has shown that cultural tourism experiences are no longer ambiguous and abstract. The components explain the true nature of cultural tourism experiences which are largely driven by the search for deep emotional outcomes which are realised subjectively. The refined process framework for the development of cultural tourism experiences builds on previous literature in product and service development and encompasses the unique characteristics of both experiences and the challenges of innovation faced by the sector. In general studies on the development process have either addressed the process with its stages and activities or explored the antecedent activities which enable successful outcomes. This research has brought both approaches together to generate a framework which places the antecedent activities to the forefront of the development activities and thus adds to the literature.

7.2.2 Practitioner Contributions

From a practical standpoint, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature and components of cultural tourism experiences. The research has a highly practical focus as it addresses the perceived ambiguity that practitioners have had to date in the area (Morgan et al., 2009). Cultural tourism experiences are not just about staging shows to entertain visitors, instead they must allow visitors to immerse themselves and afford them personal control to generate imaginative and emotional outcomes (Boswijk et al., 2007; McIntyre, 2009).

The research has extracted evidence from a well established Irish best practice cultural tourism experience practitioner to consolidate the theoretical findings. The components framework offers practitioners clarity as to what each component should convey to ensure that a desired meaningful experience can come about. Through the definition, graphic depiction of the components and the supporting checklist outlining the role and supporting activities of each component practitioners are offered guidance to understand cultural tourism experiences. From this research cultural tourism practitioners can audit and investigate their existing offerings in terms of each component and learn how, within much of our existing cultural treasures is the means to generate meaningful experiences. The research helps practitioners to realise that they can facilitate emotional learning experiences by moving away from a traditional reliance on labels and staged or guided tours through the design of clues and triggers within the contextual, interactional and emotional outcomes components in conjunction with the organisations core activity.

The key step of cultural tourism experience development is the activity of identifying the underlying emotional needs of cultural tourists (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999). Hence, practitioners must offer their customers a personal role in the creation of their own experiences. The substantive issue for this is affording them control to personally engage with each component. For this, practitioners need to understand the various components that facilitate unique experiences. It can be argued that developing experiential offerings without prior knowledge of what makes up an experience will lead to an ambiguous offering which visitors are unsure how to utilise.

The research has also generated a systematic '*how to*' framework which illustrates the process by which cultural tourism experiences can be developed. The framework has a strong practitioner focus and outlines the stages and activities to be undertaken. The framework also guides the process by identifying key participants and outputs at each stage. The framework is supported by a tabular checklist which outlines the activities and outputs of each phase of the development process. It is critical that organisations seeking to develop experiences understand that a number of antecedents can enable and drive the process to be successful. Each of these antecedents is discussed in detail in the thesis and is also present in the framework to underline their importance. In summation this research has made a start at addressing both theoretical and practitioner calls for

further knowledge of experiences and the process by which they can be developed (Fitzsimmons and Fitzsimmons, 2000; Pullman and Gross, 2003; Tourism Policy Review Group, 2003; Fáilte Ireland, 2007) but acknowledges that there remains still much to achieve in fully understanding customer experiences.

7.3 Limitations

Whilst the researcher has taken great care at every stage of this research, there are some limitations to this study. By choosing to focus on a single case with a sole researcher the research only offers one perspective and reduces the generalisability of the findings. The research might have benefited from more cases or the opportunity of cross case comparison. The study was undertaken within a limited context (only cultural tourism) and the field would benefit from other research contexts in the wider tourism experiences sector. However, rigorous criteria were used in the case selection process and also considerable attention has been paid to the case protocol to ensure reliability in the research. Additionally, the use of multiple sources of evidence from an established best practice cultural tourism practitioner combined with longitudinal engagement with the management team and the research site have enhanced the quality of findings.

7.4 Future Research Directions

The design framework presented herein on the components and process of cultural tourism experience development has the potential to be extended for further research in other contexts in both the tourism and wider services sector. It is noteworthy that each component of cultural tourism experiences depends on the characteristics of the core offering and therefore in other contexts the framework will need to allow for the apposite differences in offerings. This research was qualitative and did not seek to quantitatively measure or test the framework components or process. Future research could attempt to test and measure each component of the framework both in terms of how they should be conducted as well as how they are experienced.

One interesting outcome of the study is the significance of inter-tourist interactions. This finding has revealed how on occasion, tourists discuss and make sense of certain

aspects of a cultural tourism offering by interacting with other tourists and that these tourist to tourist interactions can significantly influence the overall satisfaction of the experience. This warrants greater exploration of how experience providers can manage each form of interaction in order to enhance and enrich tourist experiences. As the research has revealed the importance of collaborative activities in the development process a future action research study could seek to study how a co-produced experience offering is developed. The unit of analysis for this study was a single organisation; a future study could use a tourism experience destination (with multiple experience providers) as the unit of analysis. Lastly, this study has only taken a cursory glance at the usage of information technology (I.T.) in tourist experiences future investigations could undertake greater investigation of the interactions between tourists and I.T. to determine the role and impact of technology in facilitating experiences.

7.5 Conclusion

This research has explored the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed and has highlighted the importance of understanding the components that comprise an experience and the activities and antecedents to be undertaken in the process. In conclusion the experience design framework proposed in this thesis brings together and builds upon extant experience design knowledge through a best practice case study to augment theory and offers cultural tourism practitioners a pragmatic set of guidelines by which they can develop memorable and unique visitor experiences. As outlined in the research outcomes findings drawn from theory and practice join together to offer a number of key conclusions which add to both theory and practitioner knowledge on the process of creating memorable personal experiences.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Pilot Research Case Study of the Guinness Storehouse

To progress the development of a conceptualisation of the components of cultural tourism experiences the research adopted a qualitative pilot case study on the Guinness Storehouse, an Irish tourism experience that has demonstrated industry best practice (Voss, 2006; Williams, 2006). A number of data collection methods were utilised including interviews, direct-observation, and documentary analysis. This case study's primary aim was to build an understanding of the components of the experience at the Guinness Storehouse.

Located in the historic St. James Gate area of Dublin, the Guinness Storehouse, formerly the onsite fermentation plant is a seven storey visitor experience dedicated to communicating the history and production process of the world famous Guinness brand. The Guinness Storehouse receives over one million visitors annually and is the top Irish cultural tourism attraction (Fáilte Ireland, 2008). A number of criteria informed the brief for the development of the Guinness Storehouse experience which included the development of a tourist attraction to immerse visitors in the Guinness brand, the provision of on-site event facilities for corporate Ireland, and a space to house the vast Guinness archive. The Design team was asked to incorporate the three core elements of the Guinness brand into the design process: *Power, Goodness and Communion* to augment the core activity of learning about the history and development of the Guinness brand.

Contextual Component Designers allowed 'the industrial vernacular of the building' to project the *power* element of the experience. To achieve a feeling of authenticity the building is presented in its original traditional nineteenth century industrial state, with bricks and steel unchanged or refined. Visitors are unconsciously guided through the Guinness Storehouse by sets of carefully planned clues, for instance auditory clues are evident from the powerful sounds of water crashing into a pool, to the bangs and

clanging sounds which evoke the industrial ethos of the building. On the ground floor of the seven story visitor experience visitors are introduced to the ingredients, the barley, hops, yeast and water that combine to make Guinness displayed in their natural condition. Both visual and tactile clues are highly evident, and they guide visitors to pause, look and touch artefacts and ingredients freely. Similarly, plant equipment from the brewing process rests as it would have during production right across the storehouse radiating authenticity. Designers have used theming and storytelling to augment the tangible memorabilia. This is done through the use of different media, for instance the story of the brewing process is conveyed via a *virtual* master brewer who follows visitors through the displays telling stories themed to the production process of Guinness from the past and the present. Similarly, the story of the cooperage section is told through displays of timber casks to replicate the giant pyramids of 250,000 casks that once stood in the Guinness coppers yard, along with real life narratives of former coopers and their authentic memorabilia. The Guinness Storehouse recognises that learning is an important activity for its visitors, but acknowledges that visitors have differing learning needs, hence, tiered levels of information and knowledge transfer are provided, from the huge block lettering of the signs on the walls to longer and deeper levels of information available in different forms depending on the visitors needs.

Interactional Component The core visitor experience is supported by a variety of elements which offer personal interaction. The *communion* element is evident through the various stages of the experience with a variety of communal areas attracting visitors to relax and interact with both the brand and other visitors. Opportunities for interaction are presented to visitors at various points throughout the visit. Visitors are encouraged to co-create their own experiences through a number of activities such as learning the art of pouring their own pint of Guinness at the Source Bar, or to leave a message for others to see on the message board or have their photograph taken with the Guinness global map. This form of interaction promotes co-creation through both physical and human interaction for visitors. The Guinness Storehouse considers that their employees play an active part in the visitor experience. It is common for a visitor to engage with the same employee at entry stage and again at the experience summit the ‘Gravity Bar’ where visitors receive a complimentary pint of Guinness to be enjoyed while enjoying 360° views over Dublin city. There is the high degree of personal control evident in the

tour; visitors can pause at any time to sit at a cafe or a viewing area whilst still partaking in the experience.

Emotional Outcomes Visitors are immediately absorbed into the Guinness Storehouse experience on stepping into the vast atrium designed as a giant pint glass ascending over seven floors. However, the Guinness Storehouse acknowledges that it is not possible to sustain the initial ‘wow’ factor or emotional engagement which visitors experience on entry as they gaze upwards through the vast glass atrium, therefore a series of emotional crescendos are designed at strategic points throughout the experience. The *goodness* element of the Guinness Storehouse experience is interpreted through the ingredients of barley, hops and water shown in their natural state but maximised through high levels of sensory engagement incorporated into their presentation, as visitors were observed touching, tasting and smelling ingredients from the huge troughs used for displays. The series of authentic physical elements presented in a variety of modes provide a series of sensory stimuli, connection and emotional engagement delivered in peaks and troughs throughout the tour. The experience generates emotions of excitement, surprise, pleasure, control, and authenticity. The Guinness Storehouse experience communicates a clearly targeted perception of the Guinness brand, reinforced positively through the use of displays of high quality natural ingredients and the addition of a social responsibility component. The key benefits include brand affinity, connection, knowledge, learning, participation and engagement. Through a range of customer feedback methods the Storehouse can design a set of defined customer perceptions which deliver expected visitor experience outcomes. The design team actively use feedback to improve and enhance the experience at regular intervals.

The following are a summary of the elements of the Storehouse experience, a scripted theme, authentic physical elements, range of emotions including excitement, surprise, pleasure and personal control, sensory stimulation, nostalgia, brand connection and emotional engagement. The experience is supported by activities including the use of mobile elements, knowledgeable and engaging staff, the interactive use of mixed media, and the active solicitation of customer feedback. Altogether, these components and sub-elements combine to support the core activity of the Guinness visitor experience making it truly memorable! The Guinness Storehouse has become the number one Irish tourist

experience in spite of it not being the core Guinness product and has won many national and international awards.

Appendix B: Case Study Protocol and Interview Guides

Background

This study is conducted at Waterford Institute of Technology as part of my Masters Research thesis. My name is Roseline Dalton, and I qualified with a Bachelor of Arts degree (Hons.) in Hospitality Management from WIT. I am currently studying under the direction of Ms Anne Marie Lally, Department of Languages, Tourism and Hospitality, and Dr Patrick Lynch, Department of Management and Organisation Waterford Institute of Technology.

About the Study

The research question seeks to understand the process by which cultural tourism experiences are developed. The aims of this study are to:

1. To understand the nature of experiences within a cultural tourism context
2. To identify and clarify the elements of a cultural tourism experience
3. To develop a framework of the process of experience development for cultural tourism practitioners

Participant Selection

Case selection was based on satisfaction of the following criteria:

- An organisation that is consistent with the features of the study's chosen unit of analysis, i.e. offers a cultural tourism experience
- An organisation that is representational of the categories of traditional & living culture, natural & built heritage
- A well established cultural tourism organisation offering evidence of best practice e.g. awards & accolades

- Permanence - An organisation that has a well developed visitor experience
- An organisation with a minimum of 300,000 visitors per annum
- An organisation that offers more than one experience offering on the same site
- An organisation that remains open all year
- An organisation that is willing to participate
-

Design

The research design is an embedded single-case study of Bunratty Castle and Folk Park, located in the Shannon region in the southwest of Ireland. Using a single case will allow the researcher to investigate the unit of analysis ‘an experience’ within the rich case context of Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. Multiple sources of evidence will be triangulated to create rich data in order to illuminate the nature and process by which experiences are developed in a best practise organisation.

Data Collection Method

A number of semi-structured and structured interviews will be carried out by a researcher namely, Roseline Dalton for varying durations at the site, with the management team, employees and visitors. Interview questions will be based around the objectives to be achieved by this project and the interview will be recorded. The researcher will undertake a number of periods of observation at the site and will carry out documentary and artefact analysis.

Ethical Considerations and Benefits/Risks of Participation

Any information collected during interviews, observations and documentary and artefact analysis was treated in the strictest confidence. Permission to use participants and the organisation names and their identifying details has been afforded. All data collected during the period of the research will be accessible only by the researcher. Only aggregate data will be used in the final dissertation. Participating organisations can expect to gain further understanding of how experiences are developed within a cultural tourism context. No risks can be identified.

Case Study Procedures and Schedule

The researcher interviewed the CEO and three members of the management team, the operations manager, the evening products manager and the sales, marketing and reservations manager, each interview lasted for varying durations from one to two hours. Key themes of these interviews included: organisation overview and context of Bunratty castle visitor experience main elements and features (core activity, emotional outcomes, contextual and interactional components). The experience design process, strategy, stages and activities, structure, evaluation techniques, experience product information, feasibility and success factors. Neither the human resources manager nor the financial controller was interviewed as the CEO did not feel they were applicable to the research. A number of employees were also interviewed at various periods during the research for brief periods lasting approximately ten minutes. For the semi-structured interviews the researcher firstly used a set of broad questions covering the various themes. On the occasion that respondents did not clearly answer questions the researcher used more probing questions to affect answers. The visitor interviews were carried out by random interception, lasting approximately ten minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. For participant and artefact observation the researcher was guided by the research themes, particularly seeking evidence of the four-component framework of cultural tourism experiences: core activity, emotional outcomes, contextual and interactional components. The general manner by which observations were recorded was by note taking after the period of observation. The research Schedule for interviews and observation is offered in table 8.1 overleaf.

Table 8.1: Research Schedule: Interviews and Observation

Date	Interviews/Observation	Aims
7 th January 2010	John Ruddle, CEO Shannon Heritage & Bunratty Castle & Folk Park	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview to establish research agenda, discuss access to management team, employees and visitors. Request for relevant documentation for data analysis. Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
7 th January 2010	Participant/ artefact observation	To gather data on main research themes
14 th January 2010	Aodhán Behan Operations Manager	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
14 th January 2010	Participant / artefact observation	To gather data on main research themes
27 th January 2010	Anya Castle Tour Guide	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
27 th January 2010	Deirdre Stephenson Evening Products Manager	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
27 th January 2010	Marie Slattery Sales, Marketing & Reservations Manager	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
27 th January 2010	Folk Park Employees Bean an Ti's & frontline employees	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
27 th January 2010	Participant/artefact observation	To gather data on main research themes
17 th March 2010	Folk Park Employees School Teacher & Animators (various)	Data collection Format: Semi-structured interview Use of interview guide with themes and questions to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
17 th March 2010	Visitors (12)	Data collection Format: Structured interview to gather data on main research themes (See Appendix B)
17 th March 2010	Participant/artefact observation	To gather data on main research themes

Documentary analysis was used to triangulate evidence on the nature of experience and the development process, a full list is presented below in table 8. 2

Table 8.2: List of Documents Employed

Document Type	Number of Documents
Formal studies, biographical summaries & speeches*	1
Case studies covering the broad context of the site under study*	1
Site Guide books and maps*	4
Newspaper articles from the mass media	5
Books - Historical Reference	1
Marketing and promotional material from the site under study	3
Event and activity information leaflets *	1
Written reports of meetings and other events*	1
Film and audio recordings of the site under study	1
Websites covering the broad context of the site under study: Shannon Development Shannon Heritage Bunratty Castle & Folk Park Gort Furniture Trust	4

* Documents acquired from Bunratty Castle and Folk Park

Data Analysis and Management

Following each interview a manual transcription of each interview was undertaken which was saved and coded into the qualitative software package Nvivo 9 and subsequently into a set of nodes representing themes generated from the research. In order to triangulate data and to add context to the presented findings documentary analysis was used, particularly the formal biographical study of Dr. O'Regan, former CEO of Shannon Development.

Schedule

Planning: June 2009 – December 2009
 Data Collection: January 2010 – April 2010
 Data Analysis: January 2010 – April 2010
 Writing-up Findings: April 2010- June2010

Interview Guides

Meeting One: John Ruddle (CEO) Thursday 7th January, 2010

Semi-structured interview seeking evidence of - Organisational Overview and general context for Bunratty Castle & Folk Park, nature of visitor experience and development process.

Beginning- Take me through the story of Bunratty castle

- I would like to start off by getting an overview of Bunratty Castle; can you tell me when and why it was set up as a tourist attraction? What was the rationale behind its development?
- What and who were the main drivers behind its development?
- Were target markets identified for the product?
- What was the original product comprised of? Main features etc.

Evolution- How it changed and progressed over the years

- Can you tell me how the Bunratty product has evolved into what it is today?
- What were the major changes/milestones in its development? Was there highs and lows during the development?
- Who were the key people involved with each milestone?
- Can you describe your organisational chart during its evolution? Outlining management structure and roles
- In general, how have key markets and customer segments changed over the years?
- How do you identify these markets? Do you undertake market research? Is this done internally or do you use external partners to gather information?
- Can you give a description of these visitor groups (key features)?

Present and Future of Bunratty Castle

- Where do you see the Bunratty castle and Folk Park product today? Describe the current situation? What type of organisation is it?
- What is the Bunratty mission statement?
- Does Bunratty have a vision for the future?
- Does Bunratty have a strategy to achieve this vision?

- Can you outline your current organisational chart? Outlining management structure and roles
- What are your approximate visitor numbers per annum? How are they broken down seasonally? How have they grown? Is there a market breakdown?
- Based on these visitor numbers how many full and part time staff do you employ, allowing for seasonal requirements?
- Can you describe the challenges you are facing? How do you address these challenges?
- Do you as an organisation develop new products in an ongoing manner? Where are you going?
- What are the organisations strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats?
- Who are your present customers? Geographic, age, segments etc.
- Have you identified any emerging/new markets?
- What are their needs/expectations? Do they differ by segment?
- Do you intend to redevelop/enhance the existing product to meet this market?

It would be valuable if you can identify or provide documentary evidence in answering or supporting the above questions e.g. Annual reports, strategy documents, product development documents, visitor numbers/targets etc.

Meeting Two: Aodhán Behan, Operations Manager Thursday 14th January, 2010

Overview

- What are your approximate visitor numbers per annum? How are they broken down seasonally? How have they grown/dropped? Is there a market breakdown?
- Who are your present customers? Geographic, age, profile, segments etc
- Based on these visitor numbers how many full and part time staff do you employ, allowing for seasonal requirements?
- Can you outline the breakdown of operation staff in your department? Describe their roles?
- How would you describe the core Bunratty Castle and Folk Park product? Can you describe the core visitor experience?

Business Challenges & Product Development

- Can you describe the challenges you are facing? How do you address these challenges?
- What is your role in the organisation in developing new products?
- Have you identified any emerging/new markets?
- What are their needs/expectations? Do they differ by segment?
- Do you in general redevelop/enhance the existing product to meet this market?
- Building on this core activity that we discussed earlier was it decided to expand it further?

Role in the Process

- Can you tell me about some of the recent new events that you have taken part in the development of at Bunratty?
- What was your role? Tell me about how you were and are involved?
- Who else amongst your team was involved? Frontline managers and staff?
- Can you describe how the original idea or set of ideas started? Was it through a series of formal meetings or how are new ideas presented or discussed?

- Who was present at the meetings, was there an agenda and who coordinated the meeting?
- Did the team have brainstorming sessions (one/multiple)?
- Who was involved? Did this result in a number of ideas?
- How was this set of ideas cultivated by the group?
- Did you have criteria for screening the initial ideas?
- What were the criteria? Who took control of running this stage? Who tracked the ideas?

Idea Screening and Development

- Were some ideas deemed unsuitable? Why? Did you keep a number of the discarded ideas for future consideration?
- Was it recognised at the start that the new Bunratty Castle Experience (BCE) events would require a process?
- Let's start with the process how was it organised? Was it informal (not officially organised, more ad hoc) process?
- Who were the people involved? Was there a team formed? Who came from the operations department?
- Were there pre-organised meetings arranged?
- Did the process have a set of stages and activities?
- Were frontline management and staff involved?

External Participants

- Do you bring in external partners when developing a new experience?
- How do you align external actors with staff and operations to deliver the visitor experience?
- Were customers brought into the process?
- Any other participants in the process you can add?

Screening

- Describe the screening process, who was involved?
- What difficulties were encountered during this stage?
- How did you overcome the difficulties? As the initial ideas were screened did the team members roles change?

- Were people given more responsibility? What was difficult at this stage?
- How did you overcome this?
- How many screened ideas were deemed suitable to be explored further?
- Were these ideas divided into themes?
- Were they separated into departments? If so, can you tell me which departments and the key people involved?
- Was a timeframe set for the ongoing development of the screened ideas?

Moving towards a concept

- How did you plan to develop the screened idea further? To put meat on the bones as it were.
- Who were the key people involved at this stage?
- Based on the set of ideas/single idea for the Bunratty Castle Experience (BCE) that was to be considered/developed further can you describe it?
- Did you identify a set of key people necessary? Did you give them roles or job descriptions? Was training provided? Do you have any of this material?
- What did you use to help you visualize the event? Did you stage the event in advance?
- And how did you plan to develop it further?

Moving towards an experience concept

- Was it difficult to visualize what you were trying to develop with the screened ideas?
- What did you use to help visualize/imagine the experience beyond the idea stage?
- What was your starting point? What was the first element that you could use to develop the experience?
- Did you start with the existing product/physical surroundings/people/?
- Did you identify what was going to be the factor(s) that would change the existing product into an experience?
- What was the factors/key attributes of the BCE concept? How did you broaden these factors?
- How did you do this and who was involved?
- How many meetings did you have and can you

- Did you identify a targeted visitor experience, or how you saw the visitor experiencing the event? Did you try to understand how they would like to feel? Did you identify any particular emotions? Excitement, fear, anticipation, happiness, elation etc.
- How did you tackle developing this experience and generating these emotions?

Operationalisation

- Now can we move forward to when you start to flesh out the new product idea/ concept/event as you are moving towards operationalising it
- Where do you start? Do you look at your work process/systems and identify changes or amendments that need to happen? Can you give me some examples?
- What specific areas do you have to develop?
 1. Service delivery personnel – front line staff
 2. Process – work systems
 3. physical facilities – layout, design, ambiance etc
- How do you do this and who are the key people involved? Are other departments involved.....sales and marketing, banqueting? What sort of time scale is involved? Who is coordinating? Can you give me an example?
- Can you tell the kind of issues and problems that arise with the development of new products/events? How do you overcome these issues?

Test and Launch

- Is the new product given a clear go-ahead at this stage?
- Would you have a pilot run of the new product; can you describe how this goes? Are customers brought in at this stage for a test run or to offer input?
- Have you a set practice for launching new products to the public? Can you describe it?

New Skills/ Feasibility and Evaluation

- Was it discovered that a new set of skills would be required to progress the BCE project?
- Were a set of organisation learning points identified and tracked at this early stage?

- Who was responsible for the feasibility/learning evaluation within the organisation?
- If so can you describe the skills and how they were to be attained?
- Who was responsible for developing these skills? What does the word enabler mean to you?
- Did the organisation recognise that the project needed inputs from both external and internal sources?

Benefits and Value of the new experience

- Did the team identify a set of benefits/value offered by the BCE concept? What were these, can you describe them?
- What types of mediums were used to portray/illustrate/display/communicate/articulate the screened idea/ early BCE concept?
- Did you use words, images, drawings, drama, and scene visualization? What did you do? Who was involved in this stage?
- Were frontline staff and customers involved? Was it oriented to a particular market segment and/or to many segments?
- If customers were involved can you describe their input?
- Did you actively seek out early market reaction to the BCE concept during its formative stages of development?
- If staff were involved can you describe their input? How did you manage/oversee this process?
- What skills were needed to manage/oversee this process?

Meetings Three & Four: Wednesday 27th January 2010

Deirdre Stephenson: Evening Products Manager

Marie Slattery: Sales Marketing & Reservations Manager

Overview

- I would like to start off by getting an overview of the banquets and events; can you tell me when and why they were set up as a tourist attraction?
- What and who were the main drivers behind the development?
- Do you offer more than one experience offering? Can you elaborate on each one?
- Describe the castle/folk park/banquet experience
- Are there other experience offerings? In general, what are your key markets and customer segments?
- Can you give a description of these visitor groups (key features)?
- Have you actively explored their needs and expectations?
- Have you identified any emerging/new markets?
- What are their needs/expectations in terms of a visitor experience?
- Do you intend to redevelop/enhance the existing experience to meet this market?

Evidence of Experience and Development Process

- Is there a theme of the banquets and evening products?
- How was this developed? Can we look at the process? Who was involved?
- Do you develop new evening events? Can you tell me about them?
- ‘Physical context (in culture and heritage) comprises both the architecture and feel of a building, its objects and artefacts, and has far reaching effects on customer behaviour, perception and has significant influence on the overall experience’.
- You have a great physical/tangible tourist product at Bunratty Castle, how did you progress this to becoming an experience? How do you make the building become an experience?

- The building itself, Storytelling, singing, dancing, theatre
- You say 'For one night journey back in time', describe how this journey was designed and operationalised
- Let's start with the process, was it a formal (done in an organised and precise manner), or an informal (not officially organised, more ad hoc) process?
- Can you describe how the original idea or set of ideas started?
- Who were the people involved? Was there a team formed?
- Were there pre-organised meetings arranged?
- Was it recognised at the start that the new Bunratty Castle Banquet Experience would require a process?
- Can you describe how you saw this occurring?
- Did the process have a set of stages and activities? Was a leader/coordinator appointed to manage the process? Were team members identified? Who were they?
- Were frontline staffs involved? Were customers brought into the process? Any other participants in the process you can add? How did you start the process?
- Did you start by identifying and describing the Bunratty Castle core activity/experience?
- Can you outline this for me please?
- Did you identify and explore potential target markets?
- What were the markets? Describe them please? Building on this core activity was it decided to expand it further?

Participants

- How? Who was involved?
- Did the team have brainstorming sessions (one/multiple)?
- Who was involved? Did this result in a number of ideas?
- How was this set of ideas cultivated by the group?
- Did you have criteria for screening the initial ideas?
- What were the criteria? Who took control of running this stage?
- Building on this core activity was it decided to expand it further?
- How? Who was involved?

- Did the team have brainstorming sessions (one/multiple)?
- Who was involved? Did this result in a number of ideas?
- How was this set of ideas cultivated by the group?
- Did you have criteria for screening the initial ideas?
- What were the criteria? Who took control of running this stage?
- Who tracked the ideas? Were some ideas deemed unsuitable? Why? Did you keep a number of the discarded ideas for future consideration?
- Describe the screening process, who was involved? What difficulties were encountered during this stage? How did you overcome the difficulties? As the initial ideas were screened did the team members roles change?
- Were people given more responsibility? What was difficult at this stage? How did you overcome this?
- How many screened ideas were deemed suitable to be explored further?
- Were these ideas divided into themes?
- Were they separated into departments? If so, can you tell me which departments and the key people involved?
- Was a timeframe set for the ongoing development of the screened ideas?
- How did you plan to develop them further?

Based on the set of ideas/single idea for the Bunratty Castle Experience (BCE) that was to be considered/developed further can you describe it? And how did you plan to develop it further?

Feasibility & Evaluation

- Did the coordinator have definite feasibility criteria at this stage for the project or did it just emerge as the project progressed? Can you describe the feasibility criteria?
- Were a set of organisation learning points identified and tracked at this early stage?
- Who was responsible for the feasibility/learning evaluation within the organisation?
- Was it discovered that a new set of skills would be required to progress the BCE project? If so can you describe the skills and how they were to be attained?

- Who was responsible for developing these skills? What does the word enabler mean to you?
- Can you describe the feasibility criteria? Were a set of organisation learning points identified and tracked at this early stage?
- Who was responsible for the feasibility/learning evaluation within the organisation?
- Was it discovered that a new set of skills would be required to progress the BCE project?
- If so can you describe the skills and how they were to be attained?
- Who was responsible for developing these skills?
- Looking at this stage of the BCE concept development can we break down roughly how much time was spent on it and who did what and why?
- Let's summarise, can you describe the physical and non-physical elements that you had identified and explored at this stage of the BCE concept development process?
- What was the outcome at this stage? Had you identified the people that were needed for further development of BCE in terms of operations/marketing etc?

Wednesday 17th March, 2010: Visitor Intercept Survey Bunratty Castle & Folk Park

NOTE: These questions were delivered orally and answers were orally recorded and transcribed

1. What were your expectations coming to Bunratty Castle and folk Park today?

2. Tell me about your experience here today?

3. Was the overall quality of the experience?

Very Poor, Poor, Average, Good, Very Good

4. Did the experience engage your senses at BCFP?

	Yes	No	Example
Positively			
Negatively			
Sight	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sound	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Touch	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Taste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Smell	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

5. Were there any particular emotions you experienced while you were here? Was there any particular stage during your visit that you were totally engrossed in an aspect of the site

Yes

No

If yes, explain how you felt

6. Did you talk/interact with other visitors?

Yes

No

If so, did other visitors affect your experience? Positively Negatively No Affect

Please explain _____

7. Did you join in any activities/events here today?

Yes

No

Did the activities affect your experience?

Positively

Negatively

8. Did particular objects/surroundings impact on your experience?

Is there a particular atmosphere/ambiance (mood) at Bunratty, can you tell me about it?

9. Did you learn something new here today?

Yes

No

How did you learn?

10. Was the knowledge/information?

11. Can you describe the highs and lows in your experience here today?

12. Did you feel you had personal control at the site at all times during your visit?

(You could control the pace/amount of time you spent at each point, and pause at any stage)

13. What was the real benefit gained from your experience here for you here today?

14. So do you feel that your original expectations before coming to BCFP have been met?

15. Are you taking any tangible memories home with you? Yes No

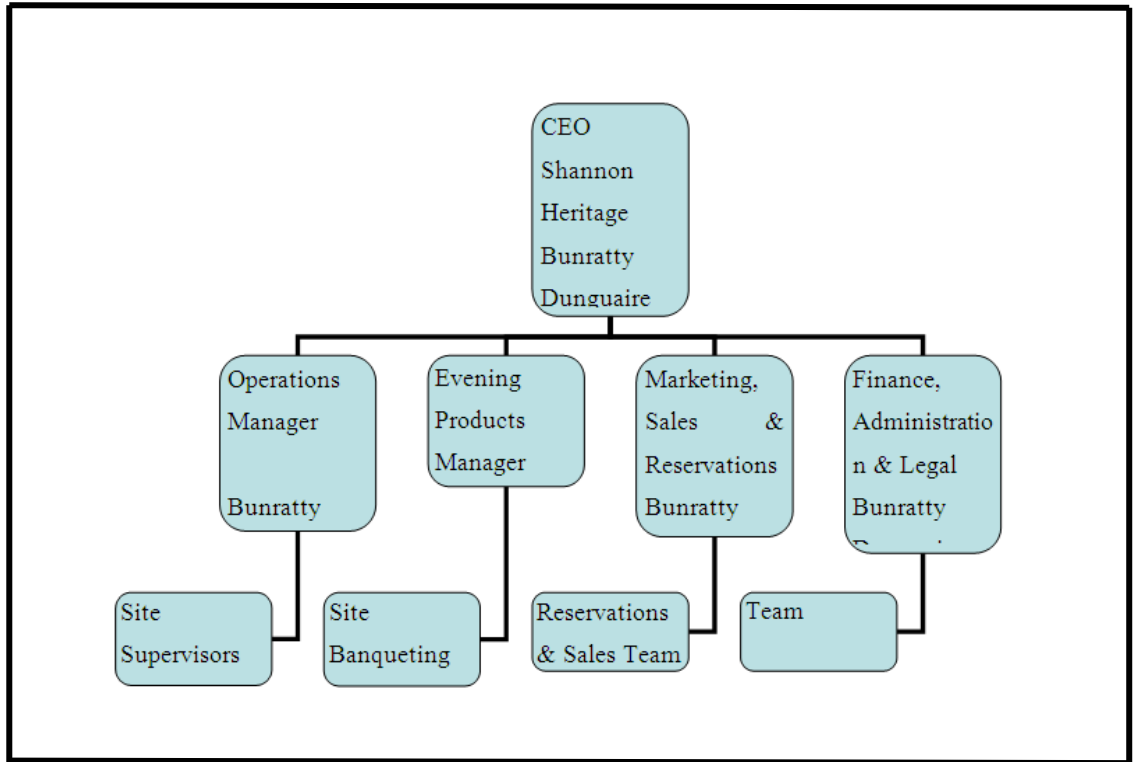
(Memorabilia, photographs)

Please describe _____

Thank you very much for partaking in this survey; all information will be treated confidentially

Visitor Profile:	Domestic <input type="checkbox"/>	International <input type="checkbox"/>	
Family <input type="checkbox"/>	Couple <input type="checkbox"/>	Group <input type="checkbox"/>	Independent <input type="checkbox"/>
Approximate Age Bracket			
0-18	<input type="checkbox"/>		
19-35	<input type="checkbox"/>		
36-65	<input type="checkbox"/>		
66+	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Appendix C: Organisation Chart at Bunratty Castle and Folk Park



Appendix D: Bunratty Collection- Online Resource

BUNRATTY CASTLE MEDIEVAL COLLECTION

GORT FURNITURE COLLECTION

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Oak corner cupboard


Object: Cupboard
Country of Origin: Holland

Description: An Oak Corner Cupboard, made up from Dutch shuttering.

Acc. No: 351
Item No: 235
Subject Type: Cupboard
Object Type: Furniture
Location: South Solar Bedroom
Nationality: Dutch
Mediums / Material: Wood/oak
Measurements Metric: 3M x 1.22M
Measurements Imperial: 10ft x 4ft

[Next »](#)





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<http://www.bunrattycollection.com/search.php?i=351&r=13>