

Marketing in Food, Hospitality, Tourism and Events

A Critical Approach

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Putting the Experiences in Experiences Marketing

■ Introduction

In order to understand how experiences marketing needs to differ from other forms of marketing, we first need to identify why THEF plays such a significant role in contemporary society and so, as a consequence, that its marketing requires special attention. Just as THEF reflect social and cultural movements, so does its marketing. As the western world has moved from what may be defined as the era of modernity into the era of post-industrialisation/modernity, this shift has been accompanied by certain social, cultural and economic traits that have resulted in a restructuring of society (Harvey 1989; Lash and Urry 1994). It is argued that this has led to a period of 'social (dis)-organization' (Franklin and Crang 2001:7). This 'social (dis)-organization' can be seen to be the result of an alleged fragmentation of society and culture (Harvey 1989). We now live in a society that is dominated by the media, traditional communities have broken up, trends are fleeting, our lives change very quickly. This has resulted in a feeling of uncertainty and as a result of this uncertainty we have turned to activities that provide comfort and

meaning, contemporary experiences marketing frames these activities within the marketing language and processes of food, tourism, hospitality and food.

Additionally experiences marketing reflects the social and cultural movements that circulate contemporary society and draw on discourses, rituals and trends to create a complex form of marketing practice that offers the entry into a dreamscape in which emotions and the needs of the consumer are met by utilising a range of strategies, conventions and representations that differentiates experiences marketing from other forms of marketing. Before the significance and meaning of experiences marketing can be charted, it is important to identify themes that have emerged from the shift to the post-industrial to the modern era, as experiences marketing can be perceived as both the result of these themes and as a reaction to them. For authors such as Eco (1995) and Foucault (1987) the contemporary world is dominated by signs, the result of which is that the individual's social and cultural location is governed by 'simulational' (Foucault 1987) and 'hyperreal' (Eco 1995) relations. As Baudrillard asserts:

The era of simulation is everywhere initiated by the interchangeability of previously contradictory and dialectical terms ... the inter-changeability of the beautiful and the ugly in fashion; of the right and the left in politics; of the true and false in every media message; of the useful and useless at the level of objects; and of nature and culture at every level of meaning. All the great humanist criteria of value, all the values of a civilisation of moral, civic and practical judgement, vanish in our system of images and signs. Everything becomes undecidable.

(1993: 128)

The result of this for the individual is that the relationship between the signified and signifier becomes blurred, for example, as a reaction to the current economic downturn food retailers have introduced basic ranges that include smoked salmon, extra virgin