

# 8

# Experience Marketing

## Learning objectives

Readers are expected to learn the following from this chapter:

- The nature of experience marketing and why it is crucial in food tourism
- Service dominant logic and the co-creation of food experiences
- Visitor engagement
- The inter-relationships among image, brand, positioning, and reputation
- Branding strategies specific to food and food tourism
- The formulation and uses of segmentation
- A decision-making process for food and travel experiences
- Media and communication channels to reach foodies
- How to use various mass and social media to reach foodies with the right images and messages
- Packaging for and selling export-ready product to foodies
- Conducting marketing campaigns aimed at foodies

## Introduction to experience marketing

Foodies will be motivated to travel to any given restaurant or destination by the promise (i.e. a value proposition) of a great food + destination experience. Our research has clearly demonstrated what the components of these experiences must be, and how they should be packaged, promoted and communicated. Therefore, this chapter concentrates on experiential marketing to foodies, including the need for targeted messages and images through appropriate communications channels.

Experience marketing is quite different from selling products, and by now the reader should be fully aware that foodies are not merely purchasing food or a travel package. They are looking for rewarding and often novel experiences in which their interaction with the combination of food, culture, and terroir helps create and reinforce their personal and group identities, facilitate personal

development (through learning, mastery, aesthetic appreciation), and gives them a great story to talk about later.

Tressider and Hirst (2012: 14) said that experience marketing: "...utilises a set of conventions and approaches that represents events, tourism, hospitality and food in a particular way that has heightened significance within the rootlessness of the post-industrial/modern world ... by elevating the represented experience to that of the 'extraordinary' and is in direct opposition to everyday reality." The profane, or everyday, is contrasted with the extraordinary, or sacred experience that consumers really must enjoy for themselves. While this sacred/profane dichotomy has been used many times to describe the touristic experience in general, it has special meaning for those in pursuit of authenticity.

When it comes to practical applications of experience marketing, Canada's Province of Nova Scotia has the right idea: (<http://www.novascotia.ca/econ/tourism/marketing-business/experiences/>) access Nov. 26, 2013.

*Experiential Tourism: Delivering Tourism Experiences*

*Travel is not just about where you've been anymore – it's about what you did while you were there, how it made you feel, the people you met while you were there, and the memories you took home. A product is what you buy; an experience is what you remember. Through crafted experiential tourism opportunities, experiences provide our visitors unique, entertaining, and/or educational activities that make it possible for them to have a personal connection to Nova Scotia and its people. It is about visitors becoming an active participant where they can try a new skill, learn about who we are or how we live, or challenge themselves. It is about meeting the locals – the fishermen, farmers, chefs, artisans, guides, musicians, storytellers, and all of those people in our communities across the province that have a special skill to share or an interesting story to tell and which make Nova Scotia a great place to live and visit.*

Just to be clear, what is being sold is a food-related experience, and the style of marketing called experience marketing is how it should be communicated. Experience marketing has a number of inter-dependent elements with overlapping terms:

- *Relationship marketing*: establishing and maintain rewarding relationships with foodies and food tourists; for destinations and food brands, this includes developing brand communities wherein loyal followers feel a special affinity to the brand.
- *Engagement marketing*: involving consumers actively in the production and co-creation of marketing programs.
- *Co-creation of experiences*: highly-involved foodies want to be able to create or participate in the creation of their experiences through: hands-on learning and

cooking; choosing from attractive options; customized trip packaging, starting with their own internet searches and bookings; sharing experiences live, through social networking.

- *Live communications* (or event marketing): the use of planned events to make a brand 'real' to the consumer; direct experience of a food destination builds and/or reinforces the overall food brand of the nation.

## ■ Service-dominant logic

Service-dominant (SD) logic (see: [www.sdlogic.net](http://www.sdlogic.net)), as articulated by Vargo and Lusch (2004) and Lusch and Vargo (2006), provides a set of principles that can guide all marketing. It starts with the premise that the traditional distinctions between goods and services are invalid, and that all marketing is concerned with the exchange of service.

Here are the key principles (adapted from Lusch and Vargo), with our interpretation of implications for food tourism.

- *Service is the fundamental basis of exchange; goods derive their value from the service they provide to users.* Food and food-service value is defined by the users. Restaurants and other venues exist to provide service (as benefits or measured value) to specific user groups.
- *Service is the application of knowledge and skills; these are the source of competitive advantage.* Not venues or natural resources, but knowledge and skill lead to success in food tourism.
- *Complex combinations of goods, money and institutions provide service, which can make the nature of service difficult to perceive.* Food tourism as a system is complex, involving many stakeholders and interactions, but the entire process is intended to provide valued service to customers.
- *Service is exchanged for service; all markets exist for the exchange of service; a customer-centered view is essential.* The foodie is at the core of food tourism - not resources, supply, restaurants or chefs.
- *Co-creation: the customer is always a co-creator of value; it is an interactional process; firms and destinations offer value propositions, they do not deliver value on their own.* Destinations and food-service venues and events offer the potential to satisfy customer needs and give event-tourists rewarding experiences; it is the job of suppliers to work with customers to ensure the experience is rewarding, even memorable; close and on-going relationships are essential.
- *Value is determined by beneficiaries; it is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual and meaning-laden.* This principle of SD logic is identical to the core phenomenon of event tourism and event management, as explained in *Event Studies* (Getz, 2007; 2012). This is why interdisciplinary theory is essential.

- *The context of value creation is networks of networks, or resource integrators.* Food tourism as a system requires that resources are devoted to venues, events, infrastructure, marketing, skill development and knowledge creation. DMOs know this is their job – to be team leaders in getting the resources and applying the knowledge. The cluster concept is directly related to this proposition.

<b>Factors</b> (Source: Moscardo, 2010)	<b>Applications to food tourism</b> (Source: the authors)
<b>Theme:</b> strong, clear and consistent, supported by design and 'servicescape'	Themed food trails; theme years built around cuisine; themed food districts/restaurant streets; themed markets; slow food in slow towns; settings designed to facilitate particular styles of meal (e.g. fine dining, casual and authentic, self-catered)
<b>Story</b> or narrative: allows customers to play a desirable role or create their own stories to tell others	Myths and legends involving food; story telling by chefs, farmers, fishers, expert guides
<b>Perceived authenticity</b>	Access to objects, places and people (i.e. objective authenticity) associated with cuisine; genuine interactions with chefs; pick-your-own experiences; and opportunities for activities that reflect one's true self such as cooking, fishing, collecting; authenticity markers (as in communications about food that are intended to convey cultural authenticity, such as the specific provenance of food and beverages)
<b>Interactive, participatory and engaging:</b> customers as co-creators of the experience	(Help) cook your own meal; self-guided food trails with access to producers; customized packages; hands-on cooking classes; buying fresh and local at markets
<b>Uniqueness,</b> rarity, novelty, and surprise	Celebrity appearances; sampling from the best supplies (e.g. vintage wine, aged cheese, very expensive fish); adding surprise extras to meals
<b>Easy to access:</b> easy to get to, move around and understand (i.e. legibility)	Guides and trails available; online information; servicescapes designed for food tourists
<b>Multi-sensory</b>	For foodies this means touch, taste, smell and even listening; can be augmented by expert advice
<b>Emotive</b>	Genuinely friendly host-guest contacts; inspirational stories about food or cooking; communitas (i.e. belonging and sharing) with other food lovers; celebrating culture and cuisine with residents; the inspiration provided by celebrity chefs
<b>Opportunities to be social</b>	Shared meals and cooking experiences; communitas with other foodies; hosts and guests interacting; co-created family/friend experiences
<b>Personal relevance:</b> making connections to personal history	Stressing ethnicity or roots in cuisine; stories about professional chefs and their history
<b>Total immersion</b> in the setting	Hotels, resorts, cities/towns offering complete foodie experiences; staying in cooking schools with other foodies; connecting intimately to foodscapes
<b>Learning opportunities</b>	Classes, seminars, guides; thematic interpretation at events; mentors

**Figure 8.1:** Factors associated with effective and rewarding customer and tourist experiences, applied to food tourism