Tourism Product Development - A Collaborative Model for the Western Silk Road

2nd International UNWTO Western Silk Road Workshop
Sofia, Bulgaria 27th June 2017
Presentation by Ethna Murphy Consulting, Ireland
Overarching objective for this session

To consider the elements that will support the model for product and experience development along the Western Silk Road, informed by consumer needs, international tourism trends and information and support the distinctive Silk Road brand by offering compelling and relevant propositions that can support growth and secure the future for all involved.
What we’re going to do this afternoon...

Consider the shift from product to experience development

Share some learning and insights

Explore the elements that need attention

Identify the priorities and quick wins that may build reputation for the Western Silk Road with consumers and stakeholders

© Murphy 2017
SHIFT FROM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT ...
Global is the reference

**The Truth:** Cheap flights and globalisation have reduced the size of the globe for travellers.

**So What:** Destination brands are not competing locally but globally

**The Silk Road** is on a global reference competitive set... And has so much more potential!
The top global ‘must do’ experiences are world famous iconic experience brands.
1. They are all experiences.

2. They have become brands that people want to do and share.
Experiences Matter

“A Tourism Product is what you buy ...

A Tourism Experience is what you remember”
The need to shift....

If you are packaging, advertising and selling a: 5 day visit to ____, staying at the 3-star ____, with tickets to _____, and visits to ____; dining at ____ and travelling on a _______. All for the amazing price of €_____.

You are selling ‘stuff’ and competing on price.

It is time to focus on the experience .... and price for value
People value Experiences

Research shows that people who travel want more out of life and their time away.

They do not want to simply see things; they want to be engaged and to feel immersed while travelling.

Marketing tourism experiences vs. selling products is key to competing on a global stage.
Branding the experience makes it a destination
An Experiential Brand is the convergence of people, place and culture

It is the alchemy of the people, the culture and the geography that creates a truly unique and long lasting experience

*One’s destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.* – Henry Miller
Branding the experience creates an emotional connection that is sharable and enduring

PULL:
Experiential tourism draws people in to the local nature, culture and history— it’s about the story of the place and its people

UNIQUE & STRONG MEANING:
It creates a very personal, unique and individual experience for each visitor
People create meaning through this direct experience.

SHARE:
This meaning creates long and lasting impressions and shareable memories which contributes to the successful development of the Brand Experience
WHAT WE LEARNED
Experience Economy

Differentiated

Destination asset

Undifferentiated

Experience

Service

Product

Contemporary Tourism Context

High Value

Low Value
Bringing experience brands to life

- The Experience Brands are at the heart of the Tourism Ireland Brand
- They are designed to bring it to life
- This is an integral part of that process
- Visitor Experience Development Plans are about creating experiences within the major brand propositions that are
  - Distinctive to the area/theme, and unique to the major proposition
  - Of international appeal,
  - Motivate visitors to stay longer, spend more, and extend the season
    - Sustain & increase job creation
  - Protect the culture & landscape
Ireland’s Tourism Map ..... 

• Significant decrease in international visitors since 2007
• Decrease in international air access
• Over reliance on domestic market and subsequently impact of economic downturn
• Short season in peripheral locations
From Strategy to Action

- Segmentation of target consumers
- Branding
- Product and experience
- Industry and trade engagement
- Distribution and access.
The Experience Development Framework informing Ireland’s strategy

Brand Ireland – Our unique international tourism identity that promises visitors spontaneous and engaging experiences. Tourism Brand Ireland comprises five pillars.

Key Propositions – A key proposition has the potential to stand out in the international marketplace. Ireland has 3 key propositions: The Wild Atlantic Way, Dublin Now and South & East.

Themes/Stories – Unique and authentic themes and stories that bring the proposition to life for consumers.

Signature Experiences – Iconic experiences of sufficient scale to deliver on the Proposition promise and serve as a motivator for international visitors. Generally, though not always, they comprise a combination of experiences that can be story-based, thematic or geographical.

Supporting experiences – Tourism products (e.g. activities, attractions, restaurants) that also deliver on the proposition promise. Individually however, not motivators for international visitors, but vital to ensuring a complete visitor experience.

Experiences Components – An experience requires the four components to be successful.
Focusing on Overseas Growth
Ireland’s Strategy and target segments

Culturally Curious
- Broadening my mind
- Immerse in local experiences
- Meet locals

Social Energisers
- Enjoy ‘buzz & excitement’ of new places
- Every minute packed with things to see /do
- Be spontaneous

Great Escapers
- Take ‘time out’
- Spend quality time with loved ones
- Enjoy experiences / activities off the beaten track

© Murphy 2017
Strategic Focus

Wild Atlantic Way

Dublin

Ireland's Ancient East

© Murphy 2017
Wild Atlantic Way

Where land meet sea

To create a world class, sustainable and unmissable destination brand that engages and energises the visitor so that they become powerful advocates and leave them wanting to return for more.
Long term ambition: Put the Wild Atlantic Way on the top 10 list of experiences to do, globally.
3.8 million overseas visitors 2016 to West Coast

© Murphy 2017
Strategy to Create Compelling & Motivating Visitor Experiences

Where Land meets Sea
Landsacpes & Seascapes

Life Shaped by the Atlantic
Traditional Culture & Heritage

Geographic

Thematic
Public and Private Partnership

Beacons of discovery

© Murphy 2017
Building a Partnership for Delivery ...
Complex Project – Partnership essential

- Insights & Experience Development
- Capital Investment
- Trade Engagement
- Stakeholder & Community Engagement
- Consumer Engagement
- Sales Development

© Murphy 2017
Tourism Destination Development Mosaic

“Getting things done through others”

- Access & Infrastructure
- Public Realm
- Litter
- Traffic Management
- Public Order
- Sense of Place
- Product Investment
- Customer Service
- Web e-business Social Media
- Festivals & Events
- Civil Society
- Insight & Innovation
- Marketing
- Landscapes & Streetscapes
- Local Government
- Enterprise Supports
- Quality & Standards
- Business Advice
- (Business) Chamber of Commerce
- Public Art
- Food & Accommodation
- Culture
- Sports GAA
- Water & Air Quality

A Distinctive Destination

Civil Society

Insight & Innovation

Enterprise Supports

Quality & Standards

Business Advice

C (Business) Chamber of Commerce

Public Art

Food & Accommodation

Culture

Sports GAA

Water & Air Quality

Distinctive Destination

Civil Society

Local Government

Enterprise Supports

Quality & Standards

Business Advice

Chamber of Commerce

Public Art

Food & Accommodation

Culture

Sports GAA

Water & Air Quality
United with a common vision and ambition

Partners

Harnessing information, opportunity support

To collectively grow and develop new business

Working together to deliver more visitors, more revenue, better experiences

© Murphy 2017
Destinations need to build partnerships to:

• Help Imagine its visitor experience at its best – develop its proposition and create a destination that visitors will want to come to now – not someday (Brand)
• Harness all its assets in a manner that ensures that the sum is more compelling than the whole and deliver real savings when everyone understands their role and what they can deliver
• Ensure that everyone and every business understands their offer and story – authentic and inspirational and they are proud to share it with their visitors (great digital storytelling opportunities)
• Build a well-resourced development plan (Partners mix and rules of engagement)
• Gather and share research and insights to keep pace with visitor needs and trends and to drive constant improvement and encourage innovation and measure what is working
What this means ...

Become the experiential brand that people do, not see.

Can the experiences of Western Silk Road appear on the top to do list because they offer a combination of experiences that you won’t find anywhere else.
The most successful places stake a claim that cuts through the ‘noise’ of the competitive environment.

They do this by agreeing and telling a “shared story” ... a story that goes much further than simply marketing communications, and is at the heart of destination development.
Building on a strong foundation

• Define the prize/ proposition
• Building a structure for implementation
• Stakeholder engagement
• Developing an action plan
• Market development & communication
• Measurement & evaluation
The Vision

To create a world class, sustainable & unmissable experience brand that engages and energises the visitor so that they become powerful advocates and leave them wanting to return for more.

Benchmarked globally, identify the top references

Has iconic awareness, is a well known and talked about destination, has strong top of mind awareness and clear and consistent imagery

not only had they a great time, it stimulated them in a different and unexpected way

Is authentic and immersive

They want to share their stories about their experience / leaving them excited and wanting more/ the bragging rights!

© Murphy 2017
Let's discuss and consider ...

1. Describe the Western Silk Road experience that could be delivered in the next 12 – 24 months, one that can has the power to attract international attention and build reputation.

2. Profile two potential consumer segments for the Western Silk Road - who and where are they, how to reach and exceed expectations.

3. What needs to happen to unlock iconic experiences along the route, who needs to be involved and why.

4. What needs to be in place to support a private sector operator deliver a silk road experience.

5. How do we measure success and what risks need to be managed in putting these experiences in the international shop window.
Let's discuss and consider ...  

1. Describe the Western Silk Road experience that could be delivered in the next 12 – 24 months, one that can has the power to attract international attention and build reputation.

2. Profile two potential consumer segments for the Western Silk Road - who and where are they, how to reach and exceed expectations.

3. What needs to happen to unlock iconic experiences along the route, who needs to be involved and why.

4. What needs to be in place to support a private sector operator deliver a silk road experience.

5. How do we measure success and what risks need to be managed in putting these experiences in the international shop window.

© Murphy 2017
A Suggested Path Way to support Development along the Western Silk Road

Step 1: Vison and Ambition
- Research
- Competitor review
- Consumer Segments
- proposition
- Values
- Stories

Step 2: Building the Cluster and Partnerships
- Testing
- Agreeing priorities
- Exploring market
- Sharing motivating Stories

Step 3: Experience Development Action plan
- Committed Partners
- Agreed actions Quick wins
- Funding and resources
- Measurement and success Celebrated

Step 4: Market and Communications

© Murphy 2017
THANK YOU
ethna@ethnamurphyconsulting.com