

## ABSTRACT

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### Measuring event experiences and redefining its social nature

Leisure is inherently social (Glancy & Little, 1995; Kyle & Chick, 2002; Mannel & Kleiber, 1997; White & White, 2008). Therefore, a major limitation of the current experience economy perspective is the fact that experiences are viewed as something individually constructed. Although much experience research has been conducted, empirical studies exploring the way social interaction contributes to leisure experiences are lacking. In the light of the importance of experiences within the experience economy and in particular the leisure field, researching and finding a tool to measure this relationship will be of vital importance to both academic scholars and management or policy makers. So far, no attempts have been made to measure social interaction during events and their effect on experience.

If it can be concluded from previous studies, that interpersonal interaction during leisure experiences is essential (Ahola, 2005; Castells, 1996; Collins, 2004), and that social elements are important experiential elements (Dunn Ross & Iso-Ahola, 1991; Falk & Dierking, 2011; Kyle & Chick, 2002). It seems strange then that previous research focused on experiences from an individual point of view, leaving these social elements out of consideration (Glancy & Little, 1995). Illustrative of this is a study by Hull and Micheal (1995) in which the authors explored the relationship between leisure, mood and stress reduction in two settings. Only participants that were alone in both settings were selected to participate, "to control [for] the potentially confounding factor of social interaction" (p. 9). Thus, although scholars have generally acknowledged the importance of social elements -such as social interaction- within leisure (Colton, 1987; Glancy & Little, 1995; Kyle & Chick, 2002) and tourism (Huang & Hsu, 2009; White & White, 2008), empirical experience research that incorporates these social elements is scarce.

Although several authors have tried to capture the essence of the experiential elements that comprise the leisure experience, scholars have not reached a consensual definition (Walls, Okumus, Wang, & Kwun, 2011). So far no successful efforts have been undertaken to bring this research together. So our first challenge is to build an instrument to measure leisure experiences in a quantitative manner and the second one is looking at the way social interactions influence this experience. After reviewing relevant literature on this topic I will present the necessary steps that are planned in order to achieve this goal.