

Hello local! Hello tourist!

When tourists and locals meet

An inspirational catalogue for
tourism development



**BUSINESS
ACADEMY
SOUTHWEST**

Foreword

“To travel is to live”, wrote Hans Christian Andersen, the world-renowned Danish author many years ago. But if life is really to be lived as a traveler, then it requires good experiences where you are going, whether you are heading to Sydney, Singapore or Sønderborg. The prerequisite for good experiences, is that the right local framework is in place.

What the right framework is, can certainly then be discussed. It greatly depends on the preferences and desires of the traveler. There will naturally be a difference between what a bird-watching younger woman expects when visiting the Wadden Sea to experience the “Black Sun” phenomena, versus what a beer-drinking older man wants and expects from a football trip to England.

The common feature, however, is that it is the local host who, together with the destination’s offers and authenticity, create a breeding ground of opportunities for the visitor to experience. Naturally, the local host can be defined in a myriad of ways, but in its broadest sense, everyone within a given local area has the opportunity to contribute as a host, and thus can contribute to creating the good experience.

My very own personal experience in such an instance came at a visit to Tokyo with a Danish delegation in 2003. After a week-long trip dining on Japanese food in all its forms, we decided that the delegation could use a burger as an alternative, and were recommended a restaurant nearby. Venturing on, we thought we were in the right neighbourhood, but obviously were unable to find the restaurant.

A young Japanese woman passed by, and sensing our panic, stepped in and asked if she could help. Not only did she know where the restaurant was, she also gracefully decided to escort us there. Little did we know that we were around four kilometers from the place. This was hostmanship in its purest form – utterly and completely without ulterior motives.

That’s what this research project is about – to create a better understanding of the importance of this type of hostmanship on the tourist experience, whether it be in the city center, the high street or by the small farm shop. More so, research conducted at Business Academy SouthWest must be practical-oriented, so that it is relevant and realistic, and can support our business community with skills and knowledge, to ultimately help create a better tourism experience in the future. This places a high demand on our employees when they embark on their research projects. It is my belief that this research project lives up these expectations, and that many people can benefit from this catalogue.

Happy reading!

Henrik Larsen
Rector, Business Academy
SouthWest





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1 Introduction

Tourism has been one of the greatest developments in our modern society – a product of modern, social arrangements, yet steeped in traditions reaching as far back as ancient Rome. Yet, in the past six decades, the tourism industry has become one of the fastest growing in the world¹. In 2018, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) heralded an unprecedented growth of (inter)national tourism in recent years, with 1.4 billion international arrivals² – two years ahead of its forecasts.

Such growth has been applauded extensively, and research has shown that tourism can contribute to a series of positive economic benefits – such as investments, tax revenues and additional employment opportunities³. There has, however, been a dark side to this medal. A tourism ‘crisis’ has been brewing with such heavy numbers of tourists overloading destinations. Many destinations have been suffering from overtourism, and locals are angry, feeling they have lost their home to tourists (Venice, Barcelona and Copenhagen being notable examples). High-season periods have become longer and longer, and this booming flood of tourists has brought its share of problems⁴ for BOTH locals (undesired gentrification, declining population, protest movements, loss of livability) and tourists (loss of destination attractiveness, mis-match between type of visitors and destination, mismatch between groups of visitors).

That tourists are starting to find it more difficult to encounter authentic and meaningful experiences is of grave concern. But it is also intuitively

understandable, as with the development of professional tourism evolving alongside growing tourist numbers, destinations have started to develop ‘cookie-cutter’ products and services to tourists (hop-on hop-off buses, franchises restaurant and stores, Segway tours, etc.) resulting in safe, controlled, predictable and constructed artificial realities. While this may shield tourists from inconveniences, embarrassments, and even potential dangers, this also screens them from truly authentic and unexpected experiences and journeys. This safeguard, popularly known as the ‘tourist bubble’, has ensured that destinations have created places that are created to sell to tourists, and do not reflect local culture and values.

Researchers and tourism experts have noticed a shift from tourist to traveler, signifying an increase in demand for authentic, experientially oriented opportunities with more meaningful interactions with locals⁵. This ‘new’ type of visitor requires a different type of destination that traditional DMO’s (Destination Management Organizations) offer.

Many of these issues came to a screeching halt at the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic, which left a decimating global impact on tourism. Yet while we are left itching for things to get back to normal, we stand at a crossroads once tourism will resume once more. Can we take a look at our destinations and say that this is not only a place where both tourists and locals want to be, but also together?

¹Peeters et al., 2018

²UNWTO, 2019.

³Dragin-Jensen et al., 2021.

⁴Peeters et al., 2018

⁵Paulauskaite et al., 2017

While this catalogue certainly cannot provide all the answers, it can serve as an inspiration on how destinations can instigate initiatives that favour positive and meaningful interactions between locals and residents.

Now, we obviously cannot demand or force our residents to be fantastic and welcoming hosts to all tourists all the time, but we can, as Henrik Larsen adequately put it, create the right local framework.

“Can we readjust our definitions of successful interactions between locals and tourists, a so-clearly important symbiotic partnership of a destination?”





2 Locals and tourist: why this focus now?

According to the UNWTO, global international tourist arrivals were down 83% during the first quarter of 2021 – Europe did not escape from this heavy downturn in arrivals (83 % drop in international arrivals), right behind Asia, hit the hardest with 94% drop. Despite the catastrophic drop in tourists, UNWTO has cautiously instilled some confidence and optimism, as there has been a slow increase in arrivals. We do have to instill patience in equal measures, as tourism experts have noted that arrivals are increasing at a faster pace than originally anticipated yet won't return to pre-pandemic (2019) levels until 2024 or later⁶.

Prior to the global COVID-19 pandemic, there were several areas in Denmark which were being debated as facing heavy influxes of tourist crowds and subsequently challenged by the issues of overtourism⁷. An example of this debate was the opening of the famous TIRPITZ museum, bringing in a large amount of new tourists, in the area of Blåvand (located in western Jutland) – an already frequently visited destination^{8,9}.

As the tourism industry and all its stakeholders await a more normal pre-pandemic situation, we argue that it is beneficial to utilize this opportunity to rethink, to innovate and to improve our tourism products and our many attractive destinations. We also argue that focus should be on engaging the locals more as they play a vital part in the overall experience visitors and tourists have of a destination. Analyzing community residents' attitudes and perceptions regarding tourism in their

local destination in order to further grasp the hidden opportunities and hopefully be on the forefront before more tourists start to make their entrance back into our local communities, should not only be encouraged, but should be prioritized.



⁶UNWTO, 2021

⁷Peeters et al., 2018

⁸Politiken, 2018

⁹ Jydske Vestkysten, 2021

3 A stronger relationship between local locals and tourists

Establishing a community relationship between the different DMOs and the local residents is not something new. DMOs most commonly seek to engage with locals when developing a destination and taking locals on board in some elements of their decision making, in an attempt to make locals feel as a valid and valued stakeholder in a given project. This mostly happens when the DMO and the municipality invites locals to attend citizen meetings, workshops or townhall meetings. However, these meetings most commonly center around specific development projects that may or may not interfere with and impact local residents. The question also arises as to who the attendants are at such meetings? Based on our experiences from the gathered research, as well as participating in numerous of said meetings, we see that those who attend have a direct stake in the tourism industry (work in or around it), hence benefitting economically from such developments at the destinations. So, where are – what we like to call – the local locals? Those who do not profit directly from tourism, but who are so important when it comes to the overall experience by tourists of that same destination?

Understanding the importance of the role these local locals (hereafter simply called locals) play regarding the experience

of the tourist may have at a specific destination is thus an interesting and important topic to focus on. Furthermore, the question arises as to who bears the responsibility to execute hostmanship towards our national and international tourists? Our aim was therefore to investigate and better understand the role (non-tourist affiliated) locals play on the tourist experience, as well as understanding the potentially negative associations locals may have towards tourists and tourism as a whole.

A tourist may have had a pleasant and positive experience with our tourism products, i.e., accommodation, attractions, restaurants, and guided tours – including the welcoming staff working at these organized businesses – yet tourists might not have had an equally pleasant experience when it comes to meeting locals. Moreover, some tourists might not have had any interactions with locals at all. This is a tremendous misfortune, as for some tourists, the experience of interacting with, as well as being welcomed and accepted by locals, is the most important factor leading to overall tourist satisfaction¹⁰.

More so, friendliness from local residents has also proven itself to have a positive impact on the overall well-being of tourists¹¹.



¹⁰ Vajčnerová et al., 2014

¹¹ Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2015

While the argument above surely does not come as a surprise to most of those working with destination development and tourism in general, it is nonetheless seldom that we see DMOs focusing on locals as a vital part of the overall experience when tourists visit. This is often reflected when DMOs send out tourism satisfaction surveys, boiling locals down to a single variable, usually à la “the locals are friendly”. Hardly the distinction worthy of significant constituents of a destination.

Our research revealed that it was clear that locals in our region of Denmark are well aware of high seasons and know exactly when there are many tourists visiting the area. Locals are also well aware of special events, music festivals, natural phenomena (i.e., Black Sun) or other attractions which bring about the influx of tourists. We found that some locals not only decide to leave their area of residence during that period of time, but also plan their holidays around it, as to not be at home during these periods, resulting in locals not being present at the destination when tourists arrive. Furthermore, some locals explained that they tend to change their everyday behavior, i.e., going grocery shopping elsewhere or deciding not to go to the local bakery or butcher in order to avoid the masses and standing in line. This was particularly prominent for those living on the island communities in the Wadden Sea. Moreover, some even stated that having friends and relatives staying during high season could be challenging, as reservations at local restaurants could not be made due to overbookings.



Locals on Fanø have a common term (high-season tired) they use amongst themselves to know and understand whether or not other locals feel exasperated and worn out by the high number of tourists and the length of their stay. It was also lamented that the high-season had significantly grown in length since the term was first coined more than a decade ago. Some even claimed that high-season felt like a year-round proposition now. While all showed understanding for the importance of tourism to the economic well-being of the island, a sentiment was growing for balancing quality of life for the locals, and experiences for tourists.

“On Fanø, we have a question we all ask each other at some point during the year: “Are you also high-season tired?”

On Rømø, we found that locals also retreat to the mainland for everyday necessities, but also that the locals have a tendency to avoid the tourists on the island, finding beaches on the eastside of the island during summertime so not to be on an overcrowded and packed beach on the westside. In Tønder, a similar pattern was found, where locals plan a weekend away from the town when its annual Tønder Festival is held, noting a sizeable change in the profile and expansion of the event’s portfolio (no longer centered around the locals’ demographics).

Engaging proactively with locals and focusing on developing stronger community support facilitates a series of benefits, not only for the DMO and the locals, but ultimately for tourists as well. Below you can find several key areas where locals can have a positive influence on a destination (inspired by our findings and Morrison’s research¹²).



¹² Morrison, 2019



3.1

Locals can and should provide a strong, personal, relational welcome

Meeting, being acknowledged and simply being greeted by locals in a positive manner, leads to a positive experience and a sense of feeling welcome and wanted. Some locals explained to us, that just by looking up and saying “mojn” to tourists at the marina in Sønderborg brought with it a sense of belonging and feeling welcomed. Not only for the visitors but also the locals. The marina was now a common space and a shared community for everyone, not just for the yachties and sailboat-owners, but also others visiting the marina.



“Go where the locals go, then you know it’s good!”

3.2

Locals can aid the visitor experience by providing directions, information, and general public help

When asking our respondents about positive experiences they themselves as tourists had with locals in foreign destinations, it became immediately clear to us that locals provide a helpful service outside the corporate tourism related businesses and tourism information centers. Locals could bring forth a more trustworthy and authentic recommendation on restaurants, bars, places to see and activities to attend – particularly off the beaten track. It was also highlighted that locals would guide tourists in the right direction, sometimes even escorting them. These small, but incredibly memorable encounters leave a positive impression and serves as a strong memory for years to come.



3.3

Locals provide positive word-of-mouth and reviews of experiences in their community

Friends and relatives are considered as some of the best sources for recommendation on where to go, what to see and what to do in places unfamiliar to us. The same goes for visitors and tourists. They too, rely on recommendations, positive word-of-mouth and digital sources of information such as Trip Advisor, Facebook, travelblogs etc. These sources of inspiration might provide them with a sense of safety and security in the choices they make whilst traveling. Locals play a huge part in providing such recommendations both on- and offline. And we all know the saying: Go where the locals go, then you know it's good!





3.4

Locals share common and public spaces with visitors

As Séraphin et al.¹³ put it, *“Public places must remain enjoyable first for the local residents which will subsequently lead to enjoyable public places for visitors.”* Having to share your city, famous sites, squares and other gathering places, and nature with tourists is an inevitable result of an increase in international and national tourism. DMOs and municipalities must provide such environments and “rooms” around the destinations where locals and tourists can gather, interact if wanted and just enjoy being around each other. However, there must be a (re)newed focus on defining and conceptualizing the need for these public spaces for locals first – that is, what type of space do the locals need and want to use – then tourists can come and share (and enjoy) the space amongst the locals. This also necessitates discussions on how many people can comfortably fit into said public spaces – as opposed to simply overfilling the space with tourists, thus causing locals to flee.



3.5

Locals bring friends and relatives to (tourism) businesses at their place of residence

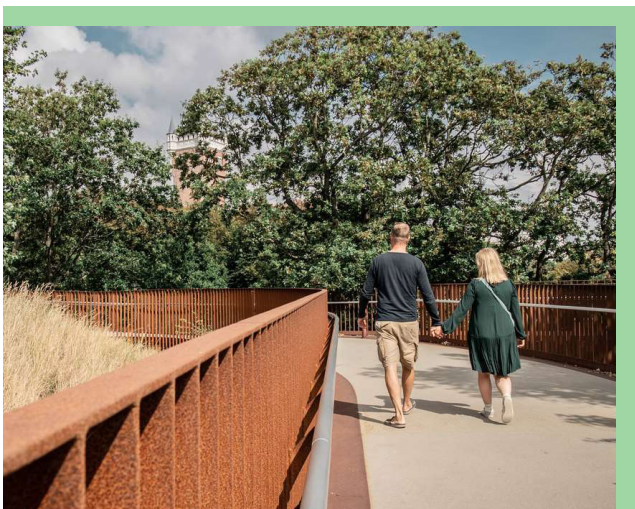
As mentioned earlier, we found that some of our respondents withheld from inviting friends and relatives to stay during high season as sometimes booking a table for dinner or other activities could be difficult. However, DMOs should seek to understand the mechanism around VFR (Visiting Friends and Relatives) tourism at their destination as there are many positive aspects of this. First and foremost, VFR tourism is an indication that locals feel a sense of pride with their community and want to show others. Lastly, when locals do have visitors over, the local tourism businesses benefit.



3.6

Where do we go from here?

We cannot simply expect our locals to immediately don the role of destination ambassadors, and to escort tourists around at a whim. Nor can we expect all locals to greet tourists with open arms and provide a unique VIP treatment to every tourist they bump into. However, the DMO can instigate certain initiatives which can aid in constructing a framework where locals can feel they retain ownership of a destination, want to spend time in an area with tourists, and increase authentic interactions with tourists. The following chapter and sub-chapters will elaborate on these initiatives.





4 Going “Localthentic”

‘Build it and they will come’ it is said – but who will come? In the realm of tourism management, many products and services are built within the framework of primarily attracting tourists, serving as cash injections for local communities. While locals may sporadically visit a tourist attraction in their backyard (or at least once for curiosity’s sake), seldom are they identified as social and cultural pillars of a community.

We therefore herald a term we coin as “Localthentic”. Rather than a strategy or a set of objectives, we deem Localthentic as a mindset when developing a destination – a critical standpoint of consistently including and incorporating locals with regards to destination development, in order to not only develop, but emphasize

authentic experiences for travelers and locals alike. More specifically, going Localthentic will help build a platform where locals can more naturally provide the hostmanship that tourists love to receive. DMOs can foster a mindset in which locals are empowered and brought to the forefront of tourism development and given a voice and role within the destination.

Through our [research](#), we have identified several insights into helping grow the Localthentic mind-set (figure 1). These insights, feeding into the mindset, should facilitate DMO’s in creating platforms for where tourists can interact naturally and authentically with locals, spurring moments of hostmanship from the locals. So what’s hostmanship?

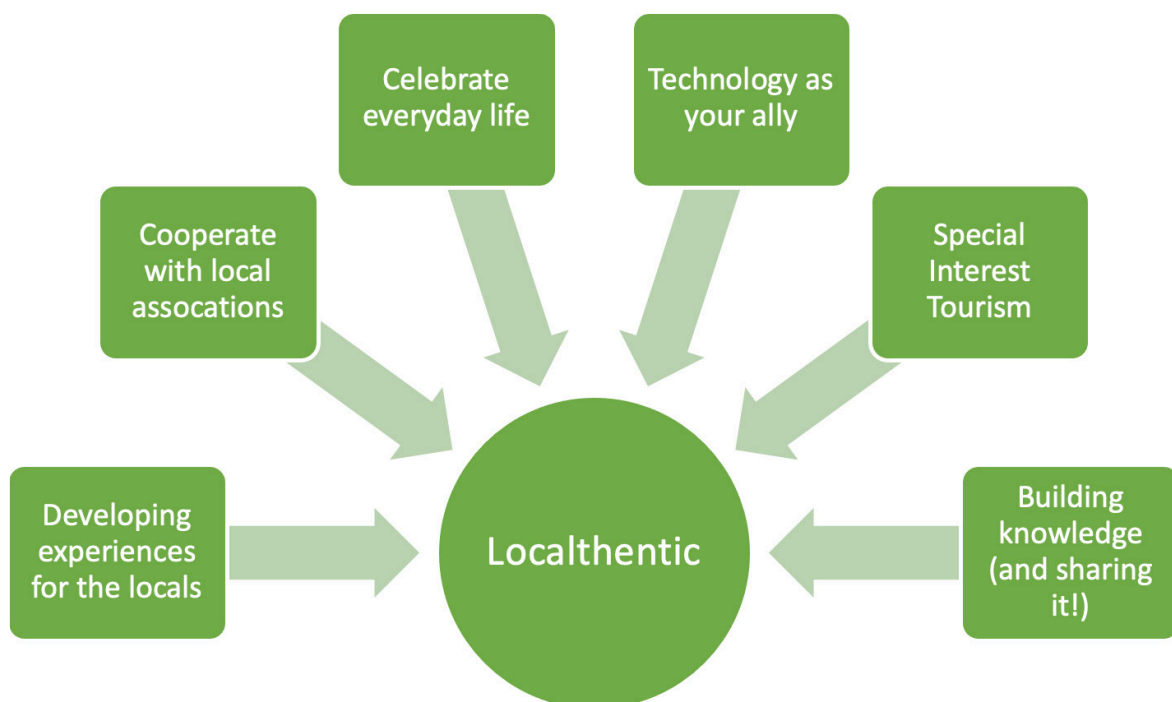


Figure 1. Going Localthentic: Building a platform for hostmanship

Gunnarsson & Blohm's pioneering definition of hostmanship seems most apt: the art of making people feel welcome¹⁴.

Does your destination truly make visitors and tourists feel welcome and wanted? We strongly believe that making visitors and tourists feel welcome is not only a job for the people working in and with tourism related products and services, but we also acknowledge that local hostmanship provided to tourist by locals is a significant contributor to authentic and memorable experiences for tourists. Such experiences are not only geared at satisfying tourists, but also provides numerous advantages for locals – meaning, joy, success, pride, and gratitude¹⁵.

“Hostmanship:
the art of making
people feel welcome.”

Meaning: When locals are at ease and help tourists by doing something for them, what they do becomes meaningful.

Joy: This occurs when locals do something with passion, with their hearts and their willingness to share stories and information.

Success: Hostmanship is a force that contributes to greater success, not just for our destinations but also for the people living and working there.

Pride: Locals feel a sense of pride when doing something for someone else.

Gratitude: The feeling which is invoked in all of us when we see that what we do has made a difference in someone else's life – whether small or big – but a difference

Table 1. The Rewards of Hostmanship (adapted from Gunnarsson, 2007).



4.1

Developing experiences for the locals

With an increase in demand for both authentic and experientially oriented opportunities, alongside meaningful interactions with locals, experiences for visitors need to be tailored towards the locals in equal measure.

Research also found that locals are better at gauging whether such places and experiences were authentic than tourists¹⁶, so getting them onboard is key. Designing creative places alongside creative tourism has been heralded as an experience that can “be enriched through co-creation and innovation of new experiences between tourists and locals”¹⁷.

“If locals don’t want to experience it, then would tourists not also hesitate to join in?”

Creative tourism offers visitors the opportunity to be actively involved in co-creating experiences with communities, and thereby, the locals. In this sense, creative tourism can be, according to Richards & Marques¹⁸:

- » A means of involving tourists in the creative life of the destination
- » A creative means of using existing resources
- » A means of strengthening identity and distinctiveness
- » A form of self-expression/discovery
- » A form of edutainment – education a self-realization and education
- » A source of “atmosphere” for places
- » A source for recreating and reviving places

These factors relate to activities that are of interest to (most) locals and offer more engaging platforms than traditional tourism planning approaches, the probability of locals and tourists meeting and interacting are greatly heightened. So what are examples of creative tourism? The founders of the Creative Tourism Network, Raymond and Richards¹⁹ provide some great examples:



¹⁶Blapp & Mitas, 2019

¹⁷Richards, 2020, p.5

¹⁸Richards & Marques, 2012, p.4.

¹⁹Creative Tourism Network, 2021

“Painting in Tuscany, being a “silletero” for a day in Medellín, participating in a craft workshop in Loulé (South Portugal) or in the charming villages of the Empordanet (Catalonia), taking part in a photographic route in the French Provence or in Urla (Turkey), preparing your chocolate in Quito, carving sculpture on ice in Canada, learning traditional dances in Brazil, participating in a cooking classes in Thailand, mixing like a DJ in Ibiza or even performing your own concert in Barcelona...”

Events – ranging from cultural and music festivals to amateur & professional sports, are also a great way of creating platforms where locals and tourists can meet, provided the events play a to the favour and heritage of the locals.

Ringridning festivals in Sønderjylland and the Fanø Knitting Festival are excellent examples of events that are designed by locals, attracts locals, respects their heritage, and allows visitors to interact with locals in an authentic environment. As a respondent from our focus group in Sønderborg said:

“Tourists are more than welcome to join us at the Ringridning Festival, it is a fantastic celebration and shows so much what we are about. But it is our event, after all.”



4.2

Cooperate with local associations

What's more local, than a local association, such as an amateur sports club, handcraft group, and other hobby/activity-based associations? They are deep-rooted in communities, and are (almost always) grassroot-driven, initiated by a bottom-up approach. They tend to also create their own collaborations with other associations, so there are far-reaching networks available for DMOs to tap into. Ideas for events and creative place making (see previous recommendation) are intriguing forums to invite the associations to, also ensuring that locals will find them interesting as well.

“Local associations are essential stitches in the fabric of any community or society.”

By including associations as a critical partner in the DMO stakeholder groups, there are multiple advantages to be had²⁰:

- » Diversification of the tourism offers
- » Quality tourism
- » Help combat seasonality of tourism
- » Community empowerment and boost self-confidence of locals
- » Social cohesion through co-creation and meaningful story-telling
- » Developing new tourism and governance tools

People tend to find groups and sub-cultures which are relevant to their passions. This is most certainly the case for tourism (particularly sports tourism²¹), so it is an area of great opportunity for DMOs to connect visitors with locals. A travelling family with children who love to play basketball? DMO should be able to connect them to the local basketball club and see if they can hop by a practice. An avid bird-watcher visiting the area? Provide a link on your website to the local birdwatching club.

DMOs should consistently map out local associations who would welcome other people passionate about similar interests as the tourists.





4.3

Celebrate everyday life

For areas that are particularly burdened with overtourism, a return to everyday life is a much-needed tonic – both for locals and tourists alike. Maitland’s research²² has shown fascinating insight into the attraction of everyday life and conviviality of locals for tourists, as he so aptly states²³:

“It is everyday life, doing what the locals do, that is attractive and in its way exotic. For most interviewees, getting to know the city was a convivial experience — local people and local places to drink coffee or shop were important. The emphasis is on the everyday and an appreciation of the conviviality of the ordinary.”

Tourist zones are not the only manner in which to attract tourists (thankfully!), so this advice is particularly hard for DMOs, which is not about doing something, but more about doing

nothing. Many tourists want to tap into a place’s everyday activities, to see a place for what it truly is – to be a fly on the wall, so to say. This is increasingly difficult in these constructed, artificial realities, known as tourist bubbles, which at their worst, have been ‘McDisneyfied’ – places burdened with tourist experiences which are predictable, efficient, calculable, and controlled²⁴.

A rising trend in tourism is way finding – directing tourists to where there are attractions, sites of heritage interest, shops and other related amenities where they can generate revenue within the

destination. Wayfinding then intuitively makes sense for DMOs to invest in, so it is no surprise that we are seeing this in Denmark as well, where (digital) projects in wayfinding for tourists are being instigated on a larger scale²⁵. Yet research²⁶ has also found that digital wayfinding also leads to tourists to recognize less of the city they traversed as they would passively follow the guidance line on their GPS. While they felt less anxious than the group of tourists who had to find their own way, they did not get to interact with locals or other means of finding their way, and thereby exploring less of the destination!

“When in Rome, do as the Romans do – but can tourists do this in tourist zones?”

If we want to have tourists experience a place alongside locals, then DMOs bear a responsibility to not create or expand tourist bubbles, and not to (over)develop tools which prevent tourists being able

to pierce the existing tourist bubbles. Actually, developing digital tools which help pierce the tourist bubble should be encouraged instead (see sub-chapter ‘technology as your ally’)!

This most certainly means letting go of the notion of ‘control’ over a destination, which is an intimidating thought for any DMO, yet the alternative of being deemed as McDisneyfied hardly seems convivial or a celebration to the everyday life?

²² Maitland, 2008, 2010

²³ Maitland, 2008, p.23

²⁴ Ritzer & Liska, 1997

²⁵ Dansk Kyst & Natur Turisme, 2020, 2021

²⁶ Vaez, Burke & Yu, 2019



4.4

Technology as your ally

Today technology and digitalization has come to aid us in our attempts to provide better and more helpful experiences for all types of travelers. We are particularly fond of customization as consumers, and technology has most certainly served as an ideal platform to do so. While we advised caution in the previous chapter about (over)developing digital tools which prevent tourists piercing the tourist bubble and finding genuine interactions with locals, we certainly can advise to develop and use digital tools which can help facilitate tourists meeting locals in their own natural 'habitat'!

Food and local culture mirror each other's souls, and it is therefore understandable that there has been an emergence in food tourism. This is positive for Denmark, which is renowned as a hotspot for high-end gastronomical experiences. While not all want a luxury meal while in Denmark, there is a link between having new food experiences and socialization, serving positively as an element of attraction in a destination²⁷. So apps/websites such as [Eatwith](#) are fantastic opportunities for visitors to meet locals, and for locals to provide an insight into their own culture (and food) – and ultimately, to provide some much needed hostmanship!

These types of digital tools are not limited to eating, as [WithLocals](#) offers visitors the opportunity to be shown around by locals – where locals, acting as guides, can show their favourite spots, thus potentially avoiding crowded tourist zones, as well as providing intriguing insights that many guides could not necessarily offer. Want to know which bar, restaurant or nightclub to go to – or even meet up with locals to join in the

festivities? Check out [SuperLocals](#) to connect. Many locals also wish to learn about different cultures and meet new people (visitors), and many locals are also proud to show the (hidden) gems of their hometowns - provided that it is on their own terms, and these types of tools to connect are beneficial to both parties.

“Develop and use digital tools which can help facilitate tourists meeting locals in their own natural ‘habitat’.”

However, once again the discussion is about what the DMOs role is in the involvement of using these tools. Is it simply to notify incoming visitors (and to locals) that these options exist, or to develop (and control) these types of tools? If it is the latter, then DMOs must be cautious as to not 'professionalize' the services to the point where it simply becomes a booking platform for professional services – thus creating a barrier to pierce the tourist bubble.

²⁷ Pérez Gálvez et al., 2017.



4.5

Special Interest Tourism

In the words of renowned tourism expert, Doug Lansky, the one word which defines tourism strategy is: MORE. More tourists, more products, more beds, more services, more seasons, more flights, more. While this certainly is a solid growth-based strategy, it has also led to many destinations becoming overcrowded and suffering from overtourism, which exacerbate a destination's decline, perhaps even to the point of disappearance²⁸. A strategy to help overcome this is SIT (Special Interest Tourism), which occurs "when the traveler's motivation and decision-making are primarily determined by a particular special interest with a focus either on activity/ies and/or destinations and settings"²⁹. Examples could be (but not limited to) agri-tourism, gastro tourism, spiritual/wellness tourism, rural tourism, and adventure tourism. Words associated with SIT has been alternative, sustainable, appropriate, new, responsible, eco, niche, and ego tourism³⁰.



With the ability to avoid mass-tourism (and hereby the cookie-cutter destination development), SIT can contribute to³¹:

- » Enhancing the image of a destination and providing a distinct and unique destination brand
- » Enriching a tourist's experience
- » Being profitable to a wider range of providers
- » Local resident's happiness (as it a result of peoples' desire for a good quality of life).

The last point is particularly pertinent to this catalogue, as these types of tourism development should therefore also facilitate greater community support – critical for the success of destination development.

SIT does have some limitations, however, as it is very susceptible to change due to catering to more niche tourism services and products, so changes in demand can be critical when focusing on certain SIT segments.

²⁸ Benner, 2020.

²⁹ Trauer, 2006, p. 186.

³⁰ Séraphin et al., 2019.

³¹ Séraphin et al., 2019.

4.6

Building knowledge (and sharing it!)

Moving towards strategically developing and improving a destination should be based on a solid and in-depth understanding of “where are we now?”. For this catalogue, the focus should be on how locals feel, think and act regarding tourism and tourists in their region.

Back in December 2020, the DMO for Esbjerg and Fanø municipality conducted a survey amongst locals and holiday homeowners in and around Fanø as well as the town of Ribe, measuring the experience they themselves had regarding the summer season of 2020 (a season which in many ways does not depict a normal - pre-pandemic - season). However, such surveys are exactly what are needed. Not just when times are hard, and situations are new and insecure. We argue that surveys like these should be conducted frequently (read: annually). More so, one should note that the tourists who visited these destinations in the summer of 2020 were not the typical pre-pandemic tourist, which normally and for the most part are international tourists arriving from Germany³².

A good example of conducting surveys on local sentiments on tourism and tourists is the Hawaii Tourism Authority. Hawaii, in the Pacific Ocean, catering to millions of tourists a year saw an increase of 5.3 % in total number of visitors from 2018 to December of 2019 going from 9.67 mill. to 10.2 mill. visitors (note: the numbers include international and domestic travel coming from the U.S. mainland). In December of 2020, the total number of visitors fell to 161.201 - a drop of just over 70 %.³³

One of the key elements in this survey, showed not only do the locals now have a positive attitude towards tourism as an industry, having witnessed the enormous impact the lack of revenue has brought with it, but also that integrating quality-of-life initiatives is essential to improving resident sentiment. As the report notes: *“It’s no longer just a matter of economics and tourism tax revenues, as residents expect the industry to benefit their quality of life and to grow in a responsible, sustainable way”*³⁴. Yet, when prompted whether the island is run for tourists at the expense of locals, and if the island’s economy is too dependent on tourism, the answers indicated that locals felt that tourism and tourists are at the forefront, leaving locals and their quality of life somewhat behind.

As with the survey from Hawaii, we too found that what locals feel about tourism and tourists differ greatly amongst a host of variables, i.e., the type of tourist coming to and staying at the destination, the lengthening of the high-season and the development and strategies constructed by the DMOs and municipalities. Most DMOs generally fail to draw enough attention to how locals might feel about the (type of) tourists coming and their exhibited behaviour (particularly towards locals and natural resources), and how this affects local in their everyday lives

³² [VisitDenmark](#), 2021

³³ [Hawaii Tourism Authority](#), 2021

³⁴ [Skift](#), 2021

Some great questions you can ask your local locals about tourism development could be (but not limited to):

- » Do you think tourism is worth the issues associated with the industry?
- » To what extent do you feel that the economic benefits that tourism brings enhance your quality of life as a local?
- » To what extent do you feel that tourism is being managed well in your area?
- » To what extent are the officials making an effort to include you in the development of the destination?
- » Do you know how your local area benefits from tourism?
- » Do you feel you have a say in the future developments of the community?
- » Do you feel the needs of tourists are placed higher than the needs of locals?
- » Do you feel tourism should be expanded in your local community?

Not only used for understanding locals better, but the knowledge gathered through these surveys could serve to benefit the DMOs by providing good narratives – directed at the locals themselves. Gathering local community support is of utmost importance, and (when you work with your locals in mind) the results of surveys should hopefully reflect this. Informing the community of their own views on tourism and tourism development should hopefully garner further support. More specifically, we propose that DMOs find inspiration from tourism researcher Morrison, and the steps he puts forth on how to plan for and establish better community relationship

and involvement. First, he denotes the importance of analyzing the residents' attitude and perceptions of tourism and tourists. Second, it is also encouraged that DMOs should open more channels to maintain an ongoing dialog with the locals - a two-way communication underlining the importance of DMOs informing locals about what the DMO is doing and letting locals be part of that dialogue: ensuring that they are being listened to and heard. Thus, the DMOs should be more visible to and interested in locals and even more so, interested in what the locals have to say about tourism and tourists. Third, and this goes well in hand with establishing a better relationship, educating locals. Having set forth a better two-way communication between locals and the DMO this also provides the DMO with a platform to educate the locals about the benefits of tourism in their community. By educating the locals they will obtain a better knowledge and comprehension about tourism, harnessing feelings that they are involved and engaged with the tourism that surrounds them. Fourth, involvement and engagement can subsequently lead to better word of mouth and recommendations of places to go, things to do, restaurants to eat at and other attractions at the destination. It is proposed that involvement and engagement is best achieved when DMOs invite locals to attend local tourism attractions, restaurants, events, and other destination facilities and services.

Oppositely, when gathering data from tourists, there also needs to be a greater focus on distinguishing locals – who work in the tourism industry, and those who are the local locals. These are key distinctions which can better help DMOs understand what tourists think of the locals – maybe everyone in the restaurants are friendly and welcoming (because its their job), yet the locals in the supermarket waiting in queue with the tourists are considered unapproachable and lofty. Great questions to ask tourists about the local locals could be:

- » Have you had any encounters with locals at the destination? (Locals are residents who live in the destination and who don't work in the tourism industry and have not received money in exchange for a service)
- » What type of encounter did you have with a local:
 - » Helping me find my way
 - » Avoided me when I approached him/her
 - » Approached me of their own free will
 - » Spoke negatively to me
 - » Told me a local story
 - » Was not interested in helping me
 - » Came with a recommendation only a local would know (e.g., restaurant, accommodation, attraction, experience)
 - » Asked me if I needed help
 - » Threatened me
 - » Other: _____

- » The locals are:
 - » Accommodating
 - » Friendly
 - » Helpful
 - » Considerate
 - » Willing to invest time in me
 - » Interested in my well-being
 - » Hospitable
 - » Social
 - » Good local hosts
 - » Genuine
 - » Willing to share their city/area with me



5 About the catalogue

The catalogue is based on an analysis consisting of three elements:

- » An extensive international literature review on 61 research articles about the relationship of locals and tourists. You can find the review [here](#).
- » 6 focus groups conducted in Esbjerg, Ribe, Fanø, Tønder, Rømø and Sønderborg with residents from 2020-21. The focus groups were of a heterogenous background with regards to age, occupation and income, gender, lifestyle preferences such as travel and holiday patterns.
- » Interviews conducted with professionals working for DMO's in Sønderborg and Destination Vadehavskysten from 2019-2020.

The literature review set the foundation and overlying themes for the questions asked of both the focus groups, as well as the interviews with professionals.

5 of the 6 focus groups were conducted online (due to COVID-19 restrictions) and 1 was conducted just prior to the first lockdown in 2020. All focus groups were recorded and transcribed. Consent was given by all focus group members prior to participation. The interviews were conducted in person. Once all the data had been collected, patterns, themes and nuances were analyzed and then synthesized, resulting in the recommendations and initiatives provided in this inspiration catalogue.

5.1

Practical information:

Authors:

Christian Dragin-Jensen

Mia Post-Lundgaard

Catalogue Design and layout:

Ólafur Árdal Sigurdsson

Organisation:

Business Academy SouthWest

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About us

Business Academy SouthWest is a school of applied science and part of the Danish higher education system. As of 2021, we have 2500 students across our two campuses in Esbjerg and Sønderborg, with 17 programs and 16 continuing education programs. Our programs range from technical educations such as Offshore Technicians and Construction Management, IT & Media programs such as Computer Science and Web Development, to Business Programs such as International Sales and Marketing and Service, Tourism and Hospitality Management.

Business Academy SouthWest is also the member and founder of the Tourism Education Network, [TourNord](#).

TourNord's goal is improving tourism education in the Nordics, inspired by the key recommendations of the Nordic Council of Ministers' 2019 tourism policy analysis for the industry:

- » Increase Nordic cooperation on sustainable development in tourism
- » Digitalize to 'Smart' Nordic Destinations
- » Encourage innovation to foster competitiveness and growth.

Want to hear more about TourNord, or want to become a partner? [Click here](#) for a contact form.



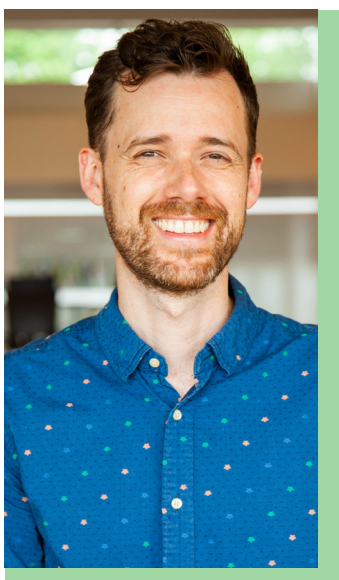
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The authors

Christian Dragin-Jensen

is a Research and Business Development Specialist at Business Academy SouthWest. He holds a PhD degree in Business Economics from the University of Southern Denmark. His core field of research is in Place Branding and the experience economy. He has published in internationally recognized journals such as Cities, Event Management, Growth & Change, and the Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism. He has worked in numerous local, regional, national and internationally funded projects (such as Erasmus+) within city branding, event management, tourism-resident interactions and classroom innovation in the experience economy educational sector. He has worked in the hospitality industry and is an avid traveler, having lived and worked in 12 countries across 3 continents, and loves to meet new cultures and people, particularly through their food, sporting and cultural celebrations.

Want to get in touch with Christian? Write to him at cdje@easv.dk or on [LinkedIn](#)



Mia Post-Lundgaard

is an Associate Lecturer at Business Academy SouthWest. She holds a master's degree in Economics and Business Administration from the University of Southern Denmark. Her core field of interest and work is in tourism destination development, service design- and management alongside hostmanship within the experience economy. She has co-authored and published literature for higher education in Denmark focusing on marketing, strategy, and service management. Before becoming an associate lecturer, she has worked in the hospitality sector both nationally and internationally, whilst living and studying abroad in China, France, New Zealand, and Australia. She too, is an avid traveler and loves to meet and interact with locals and learning about their culture and ways of life.

Want to get in touch with Mia? Write to her at mpj@easv.dk or on [LinkedIn](#)



