Bringing the Roman times to live:
Options for an experience orientated staging of the cultural heritage

Andreas Kagermeier
Leisure and Tourism Geography
University of Trier
Germany
Andreas.Kagermeier@uni-trier.de

Abstract
The last decade has seen an experience orientation with a particular focus on leisure parks and new tourist attractions such as Urban Entertainment Centres, Brand Lands or Tropical Baths.

The professionalism in staging different leisure and tourist attractions has led to a rise in the level of visitor expectation even in other fields of tourism. Today, even the visitors of cultural urban tourism and heritage sites are not satisfied by only watching or walking through the attractions, but expect a more sophisticated presentation. These expectations must be faced by urban destinations in order to position themselves competitively.

In the contribution different good practice examples and future options for innovative ways of staging the cultural heritage – with a special focus on the Roman times – are presented:

- Event and adventure performances or tours at historic sites which take the audience on a thrilling journey into the past.
- Historical markets and festivals which allow a more comprehensive approach towards the past.
- Integration of culinary arts and historical baths to address all senses of the visitors (including e.g. specific forms of crime dinner)
- Living history with the incorporation of historical tools, activities and dresses in the form of interactive presentations, where the visitor is leaving the role of a mere passive observer (sometimes with the incorporation of historical re-enactment).
- Live action role-playing game (LARP) as a very intensive option to address all spheres of experience.

The common intention of all these ways of staging is to give the observers and participants a sense of stepping back in time and to convey a sense of the everyday life of a certain period in history. The intention is to make the audience really feel in the midst of former times. The general approach is often that the audience takes an active part in bringing the past back to life.

The aim of those activities is always to address and attract a broader public at historical heritage sites. At the same time the analysis of innovative offers has to be seen in the light of recent developments in the leisure society which include reflections on the visitors’ disposition as well as a re-interpretation of the relationship between popular/everyday and high/elite culture.

This in turn leads to a general consideration of perspectives that add value to cultural heritage as leisure and tourism potential by innovative staging.
1 Introduction

The last decade has seen a kind of ‘EVENT-ization’ in many fields of tourism. Today a countless number of events and festivals try to attract potential visitors. At the same time an expanding engagement to present history and heritage by means of festivals, exhibitions or spectacles is to be observed in different tourist destinations.

Seen the multitude of different events with the resulting high number of competitors addressing potential visitors the question arises which factors have to be fulfilled when aiming at successfully conceiving historically oriented events in cultural tourism.

Cultural heritage has always been important in shaping leisure and tourism products (Steinecke 2002). In particular regarding currently booming urban and city tourism, cultural attractiveness is relevant (DTV 2006). Especially in Germany – which is about to establish itself as an appealing incoming destination (Deutsche Zentrale für Tourismus 2006) – cultural urban tourism becomes more and more meaningful.

In order to position an offer successfully in this tight market, it has to be adapted continuously to the market’s quality requirements and the most important trends in demand have to be selected up proactively. Since the 1990s the creation of experiences is one of the key elements for the success of leisure and tourism supply. The orientation on creating experiences was at first served by artificial leisure worlds but it gains more and more significance in cities as well with intensifying the usage of events to increase a location’s attractiveness.

The market success of a culture-orientated facility and/or cultural urban destination is therefore determined substantially by generating products which are orientated on target groups and experience creation. Thus, the way of staging and therewith the development of extended benefits is highly important (Hartmann 2005), one example being the valorisation of urban historic sites with the help of events.

Many classical means of staging were successfully introduced within the last years. It is to be expected that their effectiveness as a factor of attractiveness might reduce in the future, if no innovative ways of staging will be developed. With regard to these future forms of staging, it can be observed that visitors do not experience historic sites any longer only passively and receptively. Recent types aim at a new dimension of experience which tries to assign a far more active role to the visitors.

Thus the guest is included into the staging process which on one hand enables more intense forms of experiencing. At the same time the borders between demand and supply become blurred because the active participation finally leads to the situation that every visitor acts as part of the staging process for other visitors and vice versa. This paper will explore those current developments by using the example of the city of Trier (Germany).

The focus of this contribution reaches from the consistency of the event with the core product of the destination, a distinct identification of the target group and an appropriate orientation of the product to the quality level and the high-performance staging allowing an immersion of the visitors into the past. The role of market-communication strategies with a special focus on internal marketing which means using the population as multipliers by creating an identification of the population with the product to induce word-of-mouth marketing shall be discussed as well as the question of cooperation with destination management and marketing organisations, tourism enterprises to create regional network synergy-effects.
2 Experience-oriented staging as an instrument to differentiate/profile the tourist offer

“Culture is most arguably the most important raw material for the creation of experiences”
(Richards 2001)

Since the 1970s ‘experience’ became a more and more important component of the notion of culture because of the increasing meaning of experience culture and event culture. This is reflected today e.g. in experience-oriented shopping malls and leisure parks (Reinhardt 2007).

Among the various classical experience market and experience products, culture “most arguably (represents) the most important raw material for the creation of experiences” (Richards 2001). Culture therefore has to be considered as a marketable product. The demand side actually shows an increasing interest in culture, in particular in a staged and experience-oriented culture.

The definitions of staging in tourism are manifold but mostly the term ‘staging’ is used in theatre. In the German language area, staging is often defined as “… the market-orientated realisation of themes relevant to tourism through diverse institutions, organisers, partners and media based on a clear concept” (Steinecke 1997). It further refers to “generative processes, which conceptualise and realise – to ideas that link the imaginary, the fictional, and the real (empirical) together in a specific way” (Scheurer 2003). Staging gains more and more importance as a critical success factor in the touristic competition, because the customer no longer only requests tourist services but claims experiences (Kronenberg 2006). Therefore it also describes an instrument to profile the tourist offer.

Core components of successful staging are:

**Imagination**: Illusion and staged facades as authentic as possible are part of it. The setting can be more beautiful and impressive than reality. Imagination does not get along without setting or dramaturgy.

**Attraction**: Special attractions make the event incomparable. The feeling of uniqueness and something extraordinary adjusts together with the surprising and the unpredictable.

**Perfection**: Everything Goes! But it requires a high level of perfection. No mistakes are allowed, everything must be planned in detail and as perfectly as possible.

**Identification**: The feeling of togetherness/common identity only develops when guests and natives are integrated honestly (Romeiss-Stracke 2006).

This staged tourism brings forth/expresses a new manner of tourist experience which (shall evoke) evokes those positive impressions. Basic requirements for a successful and experience-oriented „staging of the authentic“ are referring to Gross (2004)

- High emotionality of attractions and products (adventure, pleasure, experiences etc.)
- Involvement of the five senses,
• Significance of the external factor (physical attendance) and the obligation to cooperate (integration of persons and use of specific moods)

• Knowledge of the target group’s desires and needs as well as originality and therefore being highly bound to spatial requirements/conditions.

Staging does not mean to put artificial and not regionally adapted decorations or constructions but emphasising the essential and leading the guests towards the extraordinary. Thus an experience can be granted which is easy to learn and entertaining (Scherrieb et al. 2006).

In a tourist destination, the location represents a brilliant facility to supply the topic and support the staging through the ambiance (Inden-Lohmar 2006). The cultural heritage enables experiencing the past (Nuryanti 1996, S. 338). To interpret and experience a cultural/historic site is a crucial component of the experience-oriented staging.

Classic places of staging are urban entertainment and mixed use centres, staging in hotels and in gastronomy as well as modern thematic museums. Besides those processes, events become important to stage cultural offers which will be highlighted now.

3 Experience orientated staging through events

Due to several reasons, events are considered to be an adequate instrument of staging to profile a destination in the mature tourism market.

• By orientating on actual developments within the target groups (trend towards short trips, experience orientation), they generate a value that is relevant to the market.

• The high media presence leads to cumulative effects within a broad market segment.

• They offer an experience which is associated with the destination also in the long run (Fontanari/Partale 2006).

Nevertheless “only new ideas (offers) or historically or regionally based events still achieve impacts” (Steingrube 2003). Therefore, events must have a distinct profile, which is goal-oriented and possesses a professional concept and organisation (Romeiss-Stracce 2006). To achieve the goals they have to be oriented towards the customer and therefore be attractive and entertaining, to reach the participant in a positive manner and to guarantee a planned and perfect procedure (Holzbaur et al. 2005). Customer orientation is particularly important because participating in events is on a voluntary, short-term basis and can be terminated at every time (so called exit position) (Wopp 2003; Pechlaner et al. 2006). The supply side should therefore try to create positive and to avoid negative impressions in any case.

During the event, this can be achieved by the following criteria:

• positive impressions, experiences and emotions,

• additional benefit on top of the basic event content,

• diversity of events, media and perceptions,

• the participants should be activated positively and

• organisation and staging of the process (Holzbaur et al. 2005).
4 Presentation of the case study: actual experience oriented staging of the Roman past in the city of Trier

At about 300 A.D. the city of Trier became during the reign of Emperor Konstantin for about fifty years the capital of the Western Roman Empire. The traces of these period result in one of four city gates (c.f. photo 1), an amphitheatre, three thermal bath complexes (c.f. photo 2) and the reconstructed palace of the Emperor. The roman period can be seen as the core and USP of the tourist product in Trier.

Primarily based on cultural tourism Trier as one of those medium sized German cultural towns saw during the last 10 years an 50 % increase in overnight stays (c.f. Fig. 1). Especially remarkable is the fact that during this period the number of international tourists has more than doubled.
4.1 Events in (cultural) historic sites

Photo 3: Moselfestwochen and Antikenfestspiele use the historic sites as setting for classical performances

A first approach to a certain experience orientated use of the Roman past is quite traditional. Since a couple of years historic sites have been used as settings for diverse cultural performances which generated a synergy between the valorisation of historic sites and cultural events. In Trier, examples are the so called “Moselfestwochen” (Moselle Festival Weeks) and the “Antikenfestspiele” (Antique Festival). Here, classical concerts and operas are performed as open air events on the historic sites such as the ruins of the roman baths and the amphitheatre. The roman heritage provides a setting in order to increase the experience value of the performances (see photo 3).

4.2 Event performances in Trier

A second approach towards a more experience orientated staging of the product refers to guided tours through the monuments. Apart from traditional guided visits the sites have been used since 2004 as settings for so called “Erlebnisführungen” (event performances). Compared to the traditional approach of the Moselfestwochen and the Antikenfestspiele, these events performances integrate the historical settings more intensively and the experience orientation is thus more intensive.
So within the context of event performances in historic sites, no traditional guided tours are offered any more. In fact, professional actors play the roles of fictitious historical people following an existing screenplay in the respective places/sites (see figure 2). Thus, conveying historical information about the sites does not stand in the limelight anymore. This form of “playing the site in a theatre-like way” tries to bring the former life back to today’s cultural/historic monuments as imagined former participants are playing their story linked with the respective monument/place.

**Figure 2: Plot of an event performance in the Roman baths in Trier**

**Event performance:**

**Betrayal in the Imperial Baths**

**The story ...**

- It is AD 367 ... Uncertain times! The borders of the Roman Empire are constantly being threatened. The inner workings of the Empire are also in turmoil. Uprisings and attempts to overthrow the Emperor occur frequently - intrigues are the order of the day.

- Emperor Valentinian delegates his veteran tribune Mallobaudes to a secret mission to Trier. For he knows that only a Frankish nobleman like Mallobaudes has the influence to divert the conspirators from their plan. A suicide mission! When the secret mission is leaked, Mallobaudes is branded as a traitor by his enemies at court. And that can be dangerous for the Emperor as well. Experience a fascinating epoch live with the Tribune Mallobaudes during the tour through the Imperial Baths in which Trier moves into the center of Roman global politics. It is a time of radical change and insecurity foreboding the approaching end of Roman power.

Mallobaudes will take us along on the thrilling journey into the past ...
The script for the first event performances was provided in 2000, in 2004 already three event performances were offered (see photo 4). Between 2004 and 2008 about 3,200 performances put on with about 116,000 spectators. Because the capacity of the three locations is already saturated and the performances are usually fully booked in advance, a fourth performance has been conceived in the year 2007 (more exactly see Wipprecht 2007). The involvement of the participants, who are addressed e.g. as Roman soldiers and in this role also get tasks of ‘their’ Centurion, aims to positively activate the participants. They can be considered to form substantial elements of ‘taping’ the urban space and thus promote the “experience area city”.

4.3 Roman games in Trier – the Event “Bread and Circuses“

A further form of staging the cultural heritage with even more active participation and therefore experience orientation is represented by the event “Bread and Circuses” (Brot & Spiele). Originally a summer camp for young people, the Roman ruins are brought back to life by emulating Roman encampments, playing gladiator fights in the arenas and simulating Roman market places (see photo 5).

Photo 5: Legionary encampment and gladiator games bring life back to the Roman ruins

Photos: Jennifer Arleth

Similar events have been established in recent years of which those of Carnutum in Austria are one of the most popular. The basic principle being the same as in the “Brot und Spiele” event in Trier: trying to activate the visitors who instead of being mere spectators are integrated into the course of the event.
Other examples for a similar experience orientated way of processing the cultural potential are medieval events where amateurs become more and more involved as they wear costumes, play roles and participate actively during the event. One example is the so called “Burgenfest Manderscheid” (Castle Festival Manderscheid) in the low mountain region of the Eifel (c.f. photo 6).

Demographic data from different surveys in the above mentioned events demonstrate clearly, that those like the experience orientated “Brot & Spiele” and “Burgenfest Manderscheid” attract – compared to traditional ways of staging at the Antikenfestspiele and the Moselfestwochen – a much younger clientele.

*Figure 3: Age structure of the visitors of traditional cultural events and experience orientated events.*

*Source: own survey*
5 The experience orientated principle

Traditional ways of an experience orientated adaption of historical themes – whether they are intending entertainment or head for educational aims – leave the visitor in a more or less passive role where he is mainly absorbing the presented stimuli.

According to the dimensions of visitor involvement by Pine & Gilmore (1999), the new ways of experience orientated event performances where the visitor fulfils a more active role can be seen as an approach to induce an immersion of the visitor into the cultural offer. Not only to receive actively or passively but to integrate the visitor into the offer in order to create a high degree of involvement directly represents the goal of the offer (c.f. fig. 4).

**Figure 4: Visitor involvement in urban cultural spaces**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>absorption</th>
<th>entertainment</th>
<th>educational</th>
<th>immersion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>passive participation</td>
<td>active participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whenever visitors are actively involved in an event and therefore become a part of the experience offer for other guests, the borders between demand and supply blur. Thus, some of Hodes’ requirements for a successful stage management are used (see table 1). The guests are not only invited onto a time journey where historic sites tell their stories. The visitors themselves play a role. When combined with authentic visual, acoustic, culinary or makrosomatic experiences new dimension of experience is enabled, which might correspond to the flow of experiences.
Table 1: Rules for the Stage Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Give the visitor an added value.</th>
<th>Give him a non exchangeable adventure.</th>
<th>Give him wow-effects as much as possible.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Combine high tech with high touch.</td>
<td><strong>Use staff and people of your town as an attraction.</strong></td>
<td>Even if people cannot understand the historical background of your performances, they should enjoy the entertaining components.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The visitor should fill a role.</td>
<td>Effect should be transmitted to the visitor immediately.</td>
<td><strong>Combine smells, music, eating and drinking with information.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrate the rooms by functions not by explications.</td>
<td>Integrate ceremonies, rites and folklore in the city.</td>
<td>Invite people to a time travel at authentic places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate animals.</td>
<td>Use unusual transport systems.</td>
<td>Use information systems by iPod and Mobile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Give the buildings a chance to tell their stories themselves.</strong></td>
<td>Give visitors from other cultures the chance to understand the local history (of the past and the present).</td>
<td>Give visitors a reason to stay overnight.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hodes 2006, p. 89

Compared to traditional experience orientated staging approaches from the 90ies the newly established approaches are all characterised by an intensive use of personnel. Compared to the earlier more technical orientated staging principles these personalised approaches allow less standardised and more individual experiences.

6 Future options for an intensification of the personalized experience orientation

In cooperation with the Tourist Info Trier we are currently trying to evaluate and elaborate further options for an innovative way of staging the cultural past.

Apart from almost “classical” ideas like the integration of culinary arts (as well as wine), Roman styled baths, historical Roman markets or the use of the historical sites as background for different activities like for example weddings in a historical surrounding I would like to have a more closer look on two approaches which try to develop the core idea of a further integration of the participants in the ways of staging the products.

6.1 Options for “Living History” (“Historical re-enactment”)

Historical re-enactments try to reconstitute the historical past according to handed down sources. This approach has been mainly used to replay famous battles – from Civil War battles in the United States or historical battles in the United Kingdom. The idea of “Living Hist-
"tory" has a more loose relation to the concrete historical situation even if the basic idea is quite similar to replay a certain historical constellation.

In 2007 for example in a small village near Trier where the historical high relief of a Roman wine ship has been excavated a reconstruction of this ship has been realised. Together with a group of students from our department, ways of using this ship for Living History Events have been elaborated and partially implemented.

In the future the boat could be used for historical cruises – combined of course with Roman eating, wine, music and costumes. With a second boat even races might be imaginable.

In a wider sense under the brand of Living History even historical Crime Dinners in historical settings or the replay of historical novel can be developed.

6.2 Live Action Role-Playing (LARP)

One of the most intensive ways of integrating the participants is realised with the idea of Live Action Role-Playing games (LARP).

“A live action role-playing game (LARP) is a form of role-playing game where the participants physically act out their characters’ actions. The players pursue their characters’ goals within a fictional setting represented by the real world, while interaction with one another in character”. (en.wikipedia.org)

The settings, characters and game rules are described in a general way, but there is no concrete screenplay so that the participants act improvisational and according to their individual ideas. Compared to approaches of Living History the frame conditions are less strict and the intensity of immersion can be even more profound while merging the historical character with the individual character of the players.

Especially historical sites are well apt for so called Fantasycons where themes from Roman mythology or historical constellations are the starting point for the games.

6 Summary

In this contribution it has been shown that the former traditional ways of experience orientated staging of historical cultural sites have been developed further and also changed in the last year. In general it can be stated, that the newer approaches are aiming at more activat-
ing ways of addressing the visitors. Instead of passive spectators active players are the visions for future ways of experience orientated use of historical settings.

After the consumption orientated experience society of the 90ies these new ways of involving the participants might be described according to Ritchie & Hudson (2009: 115) as post-consumption experience.

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