

## NUEVAS DISCUSIONES ALREDEDOR DE LA EDUCACIÓN EN TURISMO: EL MÉTODO PANCOE, LABORATORIO DEL DISFRUTE, UNIVERSIDAD DE PALERMO, ARGENTINA

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**Resumen:** El presente trabajo sintetiza los alcances del experimento PANCOE, dependiente de la Universidad de Palermo, Argentina. El mismo trabaja el rol del placer y la experiencia placentera con el fin de mejorar la performance académica de los estudiantes de la carrera de turismo y hotelería. PANCOE combina diversos métodos cualitativos tendientes a mejorar la educación con plataformas digitales integradas. Los objetivos de PANCOE son claros a grandes rasgos. Por un lado, vencer el viejo dualismo Cartesiano que enfoca en la racionalidad o los métodos racionales sobre los emocionales. Por el otro, homogenizar las capacidades cognitivas de estudiantes extranjeros que han venido a Buenos Aires y sufren un sentimiento de desarraigo. El laboratorio del disfrute introduce técnicas novedosas para la inclusión social de alumnos con baja performance académica.

**Palabras clave:** Educación; Turismo; PANCOE; Disfrute; Placer; Inclusión.

NEW DISCUSSIONS REVOLVING AROUND TOURISM  
EDUCATION: THE METHOD PANCOE, JOY LABS AT  
UNIVERSITY OF PALERMO, ARGENTINA-

NOVAS DISCUSSÕES SOBRE EDUCAÇÃO NO TURISMO: O  
MÉTODO PANCOE, LABORATORIO DEL DISFRUTE,  
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**Abstract:** The present paper synthesizes the main outcomes of PANCOE, a new experiment based on the Joy Labs at the University of Palermo, Argentina. PANCOE is oriented to fill a double gap. On one hand, it standardizes foreign students through the stimulating of new learning skills. On another, it struggles to overcome the old Cartesian Dualism which subordinates the human emotions to reasoning. Through Joy Labs, PANCOE is a successful experience to better the academic performance of low-graded students in tourism.

**Keywords:** Education; Tourism; PANCOE; Joy; Pleasure; Inclusion.

**Resumo:** este artigo sintetiza o escopo da experiência PANCOE na Universidade de Palermo, Argentina. Aborda o papel do prazer e da experiência prazerosa a fim de melhorar o desempenho acadêmico dos estudantes de turismo e hospitalidade. a PANCOE combina vários métodos qualitativos destinados a melhorar a educação com plataformas digitais integradas. os objetivos da pancoe são amplamente claros. Por um lado, para superar o velho dualismo cartesiano que se concentra na racionalidade ou métodos racionais em detrimento dos emocionais. Por outro lado, homogeneizar as capacidades cognitivas dos estudantes estrangeiros que vieram para buenos aires e sofrem de uma sensação de desenraizamento. O laboratório do prazer introduz novas técnicas para a inclusão social de estudantes com baixo desempenho acadêmico.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação; Turismo; PANCOE; Diversão; Prazer; Inclusão.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the recent decades, classic education entered an unparalleled crisis; above all after the COVID19 and the strictest lockdowns in developed and underdeveloped nations.

Tourism education was not an exception. Some critical voices alert that tourism education is centred on what experts dubbed as the economic-based paradigm which over-values quantitative methods of knowledge learning over other methods (Hsu, 2018). Without any doubt, tourism education is facing a serious crisis resulted from a combination of complex factors. Most certainly, by echoing the legacy of positivism, tourism education bequeathed an older dichotomy between the reasons and emotions. Classic education punctuates the importance to develop learning cognitive skills to enhance education (Rozemond, 1988).

This viewpoint resulted from a long-dormant Cartesian dualism between the body and the mind. In the tourism fields not only does the Cartesian dualism persists but also monopolizes a whole portion of published studies in tourism education (Su 2014; Sheldon, Fesenmaier & Tribe 2011; Ayikoru, Tribe & Airey, 2009).

Traditional methods in tourism education are widely prioritized by educators and scholars. The syllabuses are certainly designed to stimulate students' cognitive skills as well as drawing strategies to cope with the challenges of the tourism industry. Unfortunately, traditional education shows some problems to be adapted to the new global challenges of the industry just after the 2000s (Lew, 2014).

Major dangers as terrorism and political instability followed by the multiplication of natural disasters without mentioning global pandemic (like COVID19) puts tourism in jeopardy while igniting a hot debate about its future. Neither scholars nor policymakers are successfully educated to navigate in the oceans of uncertainty (Sigala 2020; Korstanje & George 2021).

As the previous backdrop, the current problems of tourism education inscribe today into three clear-cut axes. First and most important, there is an emerging sentiment of discontent of graduate students when they are recruited as tourism staff in the sub-service sectors. That discontent associates with excessive working hours, low wages and a climate of labour exploitation (Korstanje & George 2021).

Secondly, the programs and syllabuses are plagued with courses that train future tourism professionals such as tour operators or guides with little focus on professional tourism research (Tribe 2002a; Cuffy, Tribe & Airey, 2012). This sentiment opens a gap between theory and practice.

Third, the current curricula fail to form the next professional to handle efficiently the next challenges (if not global risks) of the next century, which are mainly associated with climate change (Amoah & Baum, 1997; Tribe 2002b). Education needs novel fresh insight and methods which stimulate entrepreneurship and active learning skills for the years to come.

## 2. PANCOE AS A STUDY CASE

The present study case is oriented to stimulate the learning skills of pre-graduate students in tourism belonging to the first year of tourism bachelor. Participants in this experiment come from different neighbouring countries such as Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Brazil and Chile.

The case explores the role of pleasure (joy) to optimize the learning abilities and skills to offer an innovative technique in tourism education and marketing. Students were subject to different co-productive experiences like cooking, kneading bread or even tasting some dishes during almost 18 encounters from 2012 to 2018.

The current curricula in traditional tourism education do not consider the role of pleasure to improve learning possibilities. PANCOE is a successful experiment performed by the laboratory of joy to boost notably the students' performances as well as their qualifications. PANCOE has an interesting potential for stimulating deprived or low-class students as well as students in zones of war, political instability and violence.

The case was organized with two different groups, each one formed of 10-20 participants. The main goal of the laboratory was associated to integrate the creativity and gifted students with Artificial intelligence and digital social networks as Twitter.

Secondly, the Laboratory of Joy (Joy labs) explores and recognizes smart ideas through the formation of safe social networks. The experiment was sampled by 870 participants who use regularly Twitter (Twitter-@holapancoe).

The sample divides into active and passive participants. Whilst the former signals to tourism pre-graduate students who are subject to PANCOE (40 students), the latter refers to students –coming from other universities or areas- who talk and discuss the educative issues but are far from the experiment (830 participants).

The cohort ranges from 18 to 25 years old. Originally the sample was drawn with tourism pre-graduate students taking a course of Integración, Ambientación y comunicación (Communication, environmentalism and integration).

PANCOE looks to integrate the multisensory of students as well as emotions with academic performance and the digital platforms. PANCOE devotes efforts to transform negative feelings like fear into positive ones like joy.

The study case employs different digital platforms such as Twitter and Facebook whilst multiple combinations of learning techniques. It is noteworthy that the human senses are five: smell, taste, touch, sight and hearing). Participants in this study were pre-graduate tourism students who have been subject to positive stimulus in smell and taste whereas they were tested in some cognitive skills.

At a first glimpse, their skills were notably potentiated through the stimulation of pleasure (joy) experiences in eating or smelling some dishes. Because it innovated in the fields of tourism education, the laboratory received important international recognitions to be selected as a finalist at *Reimagine education awards QS Stars awards 2016 (Wharton College)*. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that the laboratory combines fine cuisine, in the hands of well-known chefs with neurosciences and the technology of gamification.

In this vein, the laboratory brings students a firm background to improve their academic performances in learning during their careers. In addition, the centre is headed by Alejandra Zuccoli.

By a combination of tasting, smelling and cooking or even preparing a meal students release endorphins that dispose students to improve not only their attention but also stimulating their memory.

At the time of taking exams, their scoring was notably higher than those students who met with the experiment. The experiment takes place during different days of the elective year whilst students

bolster a fluid dialogue with other students as long as the experience. The communication process and instructions are given through the use of social media and digital platforms.

### 2.1 Facet one

Participants are pre-graduate students who course their first year of tourism bachelor at the University of Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina. They are divided into two groups formed by 20 participants each. Each group works in isolation. Group A is subject to PANCOE experiment whilst group B embraces traditional programs and syllabuses for their courses.

At this preliminary stage, students (in group A) were encouraged to knead bread since cooking and tasting cultural dishes. These pieces of bread and dishes followed different cultural traditions from where the student comes. Each participant created a Twitter account with 50-60 followers.

They should communicate and share information about their cooking recipes with their followers. The interaction was based on the importance to sell their products whilst gaining traction respecting other competitive products.

### 2.2 Facet two

At a second stage, students are encouraged to manifest their emotions and feelings. They should leave a testimony describing the fears, problems and hopes during the experiences. In addition, students are tested through standardized and regularly-based exams which are performed orally and by writing. This stage lasted roughly 2 hours. Results and ratings were public almost two weeks later the exam.

Centred on the logic of tourism branding or marketing, PANCOE is a simple method equipped with scientific measurements which consist in accomplishing a pleasurable tasks like eating, tasting or even cooking to improve academic performance.

The experiment originally instrumentalizes the cognitive reserve of endorphins to engage poor-grade students but -sooner than later- the method was applied to other groups. To create safer social networks, the goal of PANCOE associates with the integration of creativity and Artificial intelligence and digital technologies.

PANCOE struggles to transform negative emotions or experiences into joy (well-being). As long as the experiment, each participant was invited to imagine the best-preferred tourist destination sharing with other participants the culinary customs of their own country. Students were subject to see pictures containing islands, beaches and paradisiacal landscapes. We use the term imagined landscape to create a climate of well-being.

The first stage follows the logic of tourism branding or marketing. Each student involves in creating a cultural product, a dish, or a bread piece.

Participants are encouraged to create a Twitter account to promote their products. In fluid interaction with others, participants exchange recipes while answering questions about how the product was ultimately elaborated. Meanwhile, participants are forced to compete with others to gain further followers.

PANCOE is based on 18 encounters where students share their experiences with peers but also with well-renowned Argentinean chefs without mentioning students and lecturers from other faculties.

Complementarily, in each encounter students, taste cultural dishes cooked by their classroom mates. This process is vital to enhance students' interaction, allowing a rapid optimization of acquired learning and skills. Besides, the experiment re-integrates multiple sensory dimensions of students in a friendly-marked climate of cooperation.

Furthermore, in each encounter students are invited to imagine a preferred destination to enjoy their holidays. Each piece of bread exhibits not only a student's identity but a cultural imprint that facilitates interacting with peers more positively. Each Twitter account is anonymous and virtually followed by almost 50 persons.

At the second stage, students proceeded to express their emotions about the resulting experience by writing. Although because of privacy and ethics, their names have been distorted in the present study case, participants were interviewed on several occasions or at least invited to tell their experiences.

Maria (female, 22 years old) said *"the experience was outstanding, thrilling, it was as to apply everything we learned in the classroom but the real life. I did not how to create a Twitter account, I learned to use Twitter*

*to upload my bread as well as communicating my experiences with unknown others. I was shy to communicate my feelings, PANCOE was a great experience if you ask me"*.

Following this, Julieta (female, 20 years old) replies *"to my end, the PANCOE associates directly to the communicative process; each student disseminates a product (a bread) to share a message with professors, students and other peoples. This exhibits a circular model where all we are senders and receivers! The experience interrogated me emotionally situating as a real challenge but it was indeed gratifying!"*

The figure of difference or the radical shift to traditional education occupied a central position in the laboratory of joy. As Rosa puts it, *"it was a strange experiment, innovative, different. Professor Alejandra put to use Twitter as an instrument of education and emancipation whilst our products were promoted to the public. Since the Twitter account was anonymous it was free to express my feelings."*

It was very interesting the previous moment to promote my slices of bread; I did not know who my followers were. My user-made public not only the loaves of bread but also fine gastronomy. Twitter serves as a fruitful and useful instrument to engage with others". In the same direction, we get with Rogelio (male, 20 years old) who overtly acknowledges that *"PANCOE is great! I never used Twitter; it took some time to learn to move in twitter's world. Anyway, I created my avatar; I offered my products whilst interacting positively with other users. This is the type of experience I am willing to make again and again and again!"*

The problem of self-esteem and peer valorisation was present in PANCOE as well. Marcelo (male, 20 years old) eloquently claimed that *"I had a serious problem talking with others. This is my Achilles tendon, to the limitations I had because I am not familiar with Twitter, one should add I am abroad out of my home. I learned to cook many dishes and I enjoyed getting new experiences during this experiment!"* Finally, Natalia (female, 18 years old) accepts *"PANCOE is a new form of education simply because it put me in the Other's lens. In PANCOE you put yourself in the other place to improve the relations as well as gaining further understanding of the "Other". Through Twitter and PANCOE I discovered my inner-world"*.

The final (third) stage consists of regularly-based exams which were performed orally and by writing.

Each stage lasted approximately 2 hours. The results were overwhelming, the memory retention increased notably to 33% in students who took part in PANCOE in comparison to groups who did not participate in the experiment (20%). The graduation rate, which means the number of students who finally earned their degrees, was 40% in students with PANCOE, and 28% in students who did not participate in the experiment.

Amongst the limitations of the study, needless to say, there is some consensus more investigation is needed. In that direction, the study was based on middle-class foreign students, excluding Argentinean peers. In the same way, there is no evidence of results in lower-classes or groups subject to durable psychological deprivations such as students in zones of war, social conflict as well as ongoing political instability or in devastated areas.

Promising approaches can be done to marketing issues adapting PANCOE to future products. Lastly, PANCOE shows an interesting potential to mitigate the negative effects of COVID19 on consumers. PANCOE remains an innovative method that credits the important role of pleasure (joy) in tourism education.

### 3. CONCLUSION

After further review, the present case study brings reflection on the power of pleasure (joy) to better the classic education system. Whilst pleasure was overlooked as an instrument to make positive feedback in students for classic education, PANCOE (and Joy Labs) goes in the opposite direction.

The Laboratory of Pleasure stimulates students' skills and performance through the articulation of pleasurable experiences. The results notably show that those students who participated in PANCOE have better degrees than those who are not taken part in the experiment.

What seems to be more important, the endorphins liberated by positive interactive communication paves the way for the rise of pleasurable experiences which dispose of better academic performances.

Originally PANCOE was designed to standardise the learning process of foreign students. The goal was chiefly oriented to retain the student reducing academic desertion, which means the rate of students who fail to earn a degree.

The results showed that PANCOE not only improved the academic degrees of participants but facilitated their final graduation. Of course, more research should be focused on how PANCOE helps psychologically-disturbed or deprived students who live in zones of war, conflict or disaster as well as whether the same results apply for other groups.

Although the outcomes are certainly innovative and exhilarating, they cannot be extrapolated to other universes simply because the method is not based on a statistical representative method. PANCOE is a successful experiment performed by the Joy Labs situated at the University of Palermo, Buenos Aires, Argentina.

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