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Support to capacity building and technical cooperation

Executive Guide on Sustainable Tourism Experience Programs Technical Artefacts

Submitted by the Bureau

Summary

This Executive Guide on Sustainable Tourism Experience Programs Technical Artefacts provides an overview of technical artefacts for experience programs (EPs) and their use in the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This guide presents the Experience Programs Technical Artefacts Project, which encompasses both local and global experience programs, and presents the outputs of the project and the way forward.

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I. Introduction

1. This project was initiated by United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) Travel and Tourism Domain experts after they published their Green Paper on Sustainable Tourism Experience Programs[1]. It was necessary to develop the technical artefacts for experience programs (EPs) to enable global trade in these EP products. In September 2019 the 'Experience Programs Technical Artefacts' project was approved by Bureau.

2. Formal development started soon after approval; however, around April 2020 the project was suspended for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic (though some experts kept working by themselves during that time). Development was complete by the end of 2021. The Bureau then accepted the draft business requirements specification (BRS), which was released for public comments for 60 days. In June 2022 the Bureau approved the revised BRS, reflecting the comments received.

3. The Travel and Tourism Domain had previously completed small-scale lodging house (SLH) information process projects and the technical artefacts from those projects were based on e-business XML (ebXML); therefore it was possible to incorporate those technical artifacts into this project. It should be noted that artefacts developed for this project have been aligned with the reference data model (RDM) concept so that they can be applied using both XML and, in the near future, using application programming interfaces (APIs).

4. This project began its activity with the support of five Head of Delegations (HoDs) from Greece, Spain, Russia, Finland and Japan, which was greatly appreciated by the experts concerned.

II. The Experience Programs Technical Artefacts project

A. Experience programs and the SDGs

5. Experience programs are tourism products created by local people to sustain their lives in local areas. The creators may be from the travel industry, but they may also be any person in any business in the area. These creators are originally keen to create EPs to sustain their environment, but also want to improve their quality of life. It is therefore quite natural for them to embrace the concept of the SDGs.

6. When the green paper was being developed, it was decided that tour products, conventionally created in urban areas, should be handled using the same technical artefacts as the EPs and that future tour products should be created by considering the SDGs.

7. Figure 1 illustrates how this project will align with and incorporate the working results of the Business Standards for Sustainable Tourism Project in which SDG-aligned sustainability claims will be defined. These definitions will be made available to help EP buyers and consumers understand the sustainability claims made by specific EPs. The definitions will be available to the public in the next version of this project.

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[1] This paper was published in April 2019.

Figure 1:
The Experience Programs Technical Artefacts Project and its future development
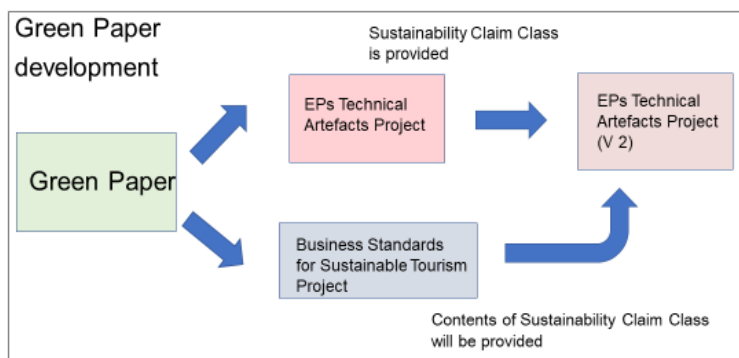

B. What the project is

8. The purpose of this project is to develop technical artefacts to facilitate trade in EPs and to exchange EP-related information between trading parties (i.e. EP information requesters and EP information providers). Figure 2 indicates the various roles of these parties.

9. Exchange programs are unique, localized products, created and operated by a diverse group of local people and businesses; this mean there are a variety of features and information to be communicated to consumers or EP information requesters. In this project, EP information has been analysed to accommodate these needs. In the future new EP information needs may arise, so ongoing and timely updates will be required.

Figure 2:
EP Information process
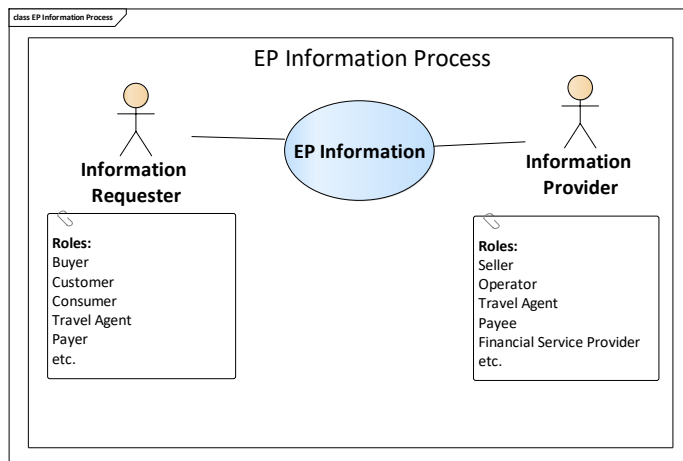
10. The project will have the following outputs as per UN/CEFACT development procedures:

- Business requirements specification (completed and approved, to be published soon);
  - The BRS consists of several class diagrams, business information entities (BIEs), code lists, and message assemblies. The listed BIEs form the basis for any future needed message(s) for trade in EPs since these BIEs are part of the UN/CEFACT Travel & Tourism Reference Data Model.
- Technical implementation guide (to be published separately).

## C. Who will benefit from the technical artefacts

11. The objective of this project is to make EP information available and trade possible both locally and globally. Local EPs offered on the global market may be smaller in number

and offered by smaller suppliers (SMEs), but the quality of these products might be excellent. However, it requires significant effort to start an EP business. Figure 3 shows the situation surrounding EP-related businesses.

12.   Now that the project has produced standardized deliverables, these can be used to support digital information exchange between systems in the travel industry. It is expected that improvements in information technologies such as blockchains, XR[2], APIs, etc., together with the outputs of this project, will result in more cost-effective solutions that will support the development of EP process systems to deal with these locally distributed small units of EPs.

Figure 3:
Challenges in starting up an EP business
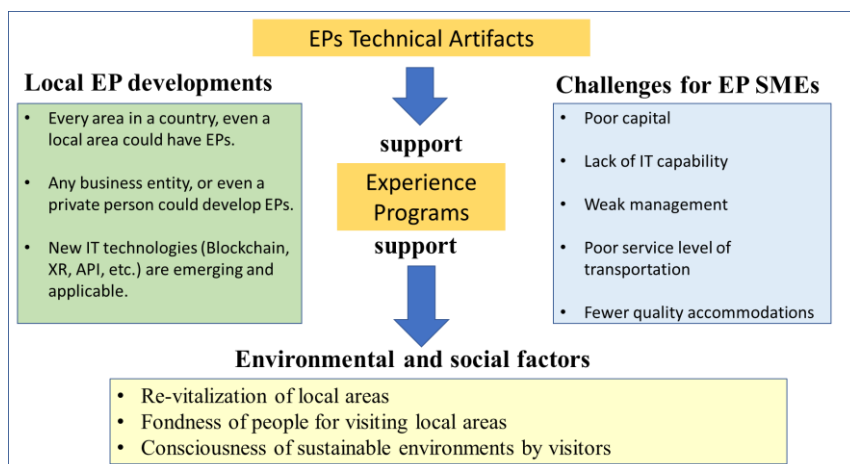
III.   The future of this project

13.   Efforts by relevant experts will continue after project completion and will be applied to the next version of the project. The deliverables of the project should be disseminated and applied to the real-world trade of EPs by global users as much as possible.

14.   These newly developed technical artefacts and derived XML messages are mainly based on the ebXML specifications of UNCEFACT and will be applied by users of XML technologies. End users such as consumers and SMEs expect to trade EPs cost effectively and as simply as possible (e.g. using smart phones); APIs would be more suitable for these types of users. The UN/CEFACT OpenAPI specifications will soon be ready for use and the domain experts will be studying them for use in the next version of the project.

15.   To trade EPs globally, buyers (e.g. consumers, travel agents) should be aware that their chosen EPs are harmonized with the concept of the SDGs. These EPs will be able to provide more sustainability information to buyers using the next version of the technical artefacts.

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[2] XR stands for "extended reality", meaning all types of combined, real-and-virtual environments/experiences and the technology that enables it.