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Using Ketso for engaged tourism scholarship



Alison J. McIntosh *, Cheryl Cockburn-Wootten ¹

University of Waikato, New Zealand

Tourism scholars have called for serious consideration of collaborative, co-transforming and experiential methods (Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2013). This research note proposes Ketso as a qualitative method that offers a new and creative way for tourism researchers to become facilitators in co-creating insightful outcomes with tourism stakeholders. The Ketso toolkit (www.ketso.com) has been used successfully in other disciplines including Education and Environmental Studies to create engagement, co-learning and collaborative thinking with community stakeholders. Developed by Dr Joanne Tippett, it has been used to run stakeholder workshops focusing around environmental governance, health, social care and enterprise training (Ketso, 2010). Ketso has also been used to develop research questions with stakeholders (Tippett et al., 2009), to engage in action with research participants (O'Shea, 2012), and for gathering data (Cowen, Stella, Magahy, Strauss, & Morton, 2011).

Ketso is run as a workshop that engages groups and encourages creativity. The portable kit consists of colourful reusable leaf shapes that can be written or drawn on by participants, (and later wiped clean), then placed on a table-top felt workspace. Its most significant benefit is the ability to facilitate both individual 'voice' and group analysis. Ketso interactively allows groups to be creative about methods for addressing social issues and develops visual plans to propose actions and solutions

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +64 7 838 4962.

E-mail addresses: mcintosh@waikato.ac.nz (A.J. McIntosh), cwootten@waikato.ac.nz (C. Cockburn-Wootten).

¹ Tel.: +64 7 838 6377.

(Watts & Wray, 2012). It does not need note taking, which distracts from interaction, because the process records the outcomes. Photographs can be taken and a toolkit proforma can be typed up to capture results in a summative manner. Alternative planning tools, including teambuilding methods (e.g. LEGO), computer-based simulation tools (e.g. SimVenture) and hands-on group-based exercises (e.g. Community Mapping), are limited because they impede mutual learning between participants; do not allow individual participants to engage in a meaningful manner; focus too much on barriers reducing outputs; and do not focus on creative thinking for new solutions (Tippett, Handley, & Ravetz, 2007).

Philosophically, Ketso is based on “learning by doing” (Kolb, 1984) and stimulates the ownership of outcomes through the interaction and engagement process. The tool is also based on theories of creative thinking (de Bono, 1990) and mind mapping (Buzan & Buzan, 1993). The visual nature and moveable nature of the pieces of the kit was inspired by Gardner’s (2000) ‘multiple intelligences’. Ketso has been found to be a difficult and unsettling concept for some participants to work with as its inductive approach contrasts with the rigid logical learning style of a positivist worldview seeking quantitative outcomes (Watts & Wray, 2012). A further limitation is that Ketso requires all participants to be available at the same time and in the same location. As Ketso captures reflections, it would not be suitable for some tourism researchers who want to examine in-the-moment evaluations of tourism activities. In addition, a facilitator is needed to explain the logic of the method and ensure that individuals and team analysis occurs. For a group of stakeholders, the participation process enhances capacity through the exchange of ideas and opportunities to question existing practices (Furlong & Tippett, 2011).

The Ketso workshop process uses the analogy of a tree. The trunk becomes the main focus of the workshop and the branches are themes associated with the main focus. For example, the main focus of our research on diaspora tourism and migration involving 60 ethnic community organisations was ‘welcoming Pacific and ethnic migrants’ (see Fig. 1). Individuals each identify issues independently which become grouped as sets of common ideas during the course of the group discussion. Themes are inductively derived by the participants during the group discussion. A warm up question is often used to build participants’ confidence with the tool, e.g. ‘What are you good at?’ The questions that guide the workshop process are asked one at a time and given a specified time period for participants to answer each question, e.g. fifteen minutes. Four key questions guide the workshop and are aligned to colour-coded re-usable plastic leaves. The participants write their answers on the leaves placing them on a relevant theme/branch of the tree, which they think represents the leaf’s point. The colour codes relate to the questions and to the analogy of the growth of the tree.

The first question (brown leaf), is related to the soil; what is currently happening that is good and should be continued? The second question (green leaf) relates to growth; what would you like to see grow/what could be done to build upon what currently exists? The third question relates to grey skies (grey leaf); what are the barriers to achieving growth? Usually only one or two grey leaves are given to the participants. The workshop process may use further green leaves to identify particular solutions to those barriers (‘greening the grey’). The fourth question relates to the sun coming out; what are the future solutions? The questions allow participants time to develop their ideas before sharing them. Ketso parts are re-usable and moveable (attached with Velcro) for the leaves and themes to be moved to show areas of commonality and allow ideas to flow as they are raised. During our workshop, the four main themes identified by diaspora communities in Hamilton, New Zealand related to ‘personal qualities and behaviours’; ‘integration’; ‘cultural awareness’ and ‘information and services’ (Fig. 1). Visually, Ketso allows participants to see areas of the greatest barriers (i.e. most grey leaves) and, most importantly, the greatest development and growth potential (most green and yellow leaves). Instant visualisation allows participants to explore meaning and perceptions of their key ideas. After this initial process, moveable icons are offered to participants to indicate the best ideas, and/or issues to be taken with a warning, and an action plan for moving forward.

Review of the Ketso tool generally reveals that participants enjoy the process of engagement (Furlong & Tippett, 2011, 2013). Ideas are generated from the ground up, starting with each participant, then opening the discussion up to all participants in the workshop in a way that is not leading and which levels power inequalities. Due to the questioning process and theming of ideas, the toolkit enables valuable conversations to be had and complex problems to be discussed. This is particularly

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