



ADVENTURES IN SMALL TOURISM: STUDIES AND STORIES

Edited and with an Introduction by Kathleen Scherf

ISBN 978-1-77385-477-9

THIS BOOK IS AN OPEN ACCESS E-BOOK. It is an electronic version of a book that can be purchased in physical form through any bookseller or on-line retailer, or from our distributors. Please support this open access publication by requesting that your university purchase a print copy of this book, or by purchasing a copy yourself. If you have any questions, please contact us at ucpress@ucalgary.ca

Cover Art: The artwork on the cover of this book is not open access and falls under traditional copyright provisions; it cannot be reproduced in any way without written permission of the artists and their agents. The cover can be displayed as a complete cover image for the purposes of publicizing this work, but the artwork cannot be extracted from the context of the cover of this specific work without breaching the artist's copyright.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: This open-access work is published under a Creative Commons licence. This means that you are free to copy, distribute, display or perform the work as long as you clearly attribute the work to its authors and publisher, that you do not use this work for any commercial gain in any form, and that you in no way alter, transform, or build on the work outside of its use in normal academic scholarship without our express permission. If you want to reuse or distribute the work, you must inform its new audience of the licence terms of this work. For more information, see details of the Creative Commons licence at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY:

- read and store this document free of charge;
- distribute it for personal use free of charge;
- print sections of the work for personal use;
- read or perform parts of the work in a context where no financial transactions take place.

UNDER THE CREATIVE COMMONS LICENCE YOU MAY NOT:

- gain financially from the work in any way;
- sell the work or seek monies in relation to the distribution of the work;
- use the work in any commercial activity of any kind;
- profit a third party indirectly via use or distribution of the work;
- distribute in or through a commercial body (with the exception of academic usage within educational institutions such as schools and universities);
- reproduce, distribute, or store the cover image outside of its function as a cover of this work;
- alter or build on the work outside of normal academic scholarship.



Acknowledgement: We acknowledge the wording around open access used by Australian publisher, **re.press**, and thank them for giving us permission to adapt their wording to our policy <http://www.re-press.org>

Small Tourism in a Big City: The Story of 5Bogota

Diana Guerra Amaya and Diana Marcela Zuluaga Guerra

Introduction

Before COVID-19, the tourism industry in Colombia was beginning to gain traction, even if it was an exclusive industry that has always favoured the same actors, hotels, and travel agency chains, most of them internationals. Its relatively slow growth traces its origins to the mid-twentieth century, when the first international organized trip to the country was documented. The growing political and social insecurity caused by drug trafficking and internal guerrillas, however, hindered the evolution of the industry.

In the new millennium, the creation of the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Tourism signified the government's commitment to a resurgence of tourism. Branding sought to minimize the safety concerns of potential visitors with the slogan "the only risk is wanting to stay." This helped to restore Colombia's status as a tourism destination on the world stage. However, given the country's permanent economic crisis and high unemployment rates, it has been difficult for any actors other than traditional providers to offer tourism services, thereby limiting the industry's impact on the general population. The official campaigns did achieve their desired end, which was increasing the number of visitors coming into the country. These travellers of the new millennium, though, have come in search of experiences different from those offered by traditional tourism suppliers. These visitors are aware of how their choices relate to recent domestic peace initiatives, and to the cultural consequences caused by Colombian years of isolation as a peripheral tourism destination.

Because of a limited number of airlines and routes, Colombia was traditionally accessible to international travellers only via the capital of Bogotá. From there, travellers could go on to Cartagena and Medellín. Recently, more tourism campaigns have opened up both of those cities to visitors, but it is still typical for them to connect through Bogotá. The capital is socially and culturally complex, with over seven million inhabitants spread over a vast land extension. Most of its population lives in financially vulnerable conditions, where they are viewed as a mass, closer to being numbers than persons. All this hardly made Bogotá a tourism destination. Still, it is under these conditions that small tourism can flourish as a tool for social inclusion, as well as an attraction for socially conscious travellers.

The secret formula to do this is more conspicuous than one might imagine: it is to be found in everyday life, in local people, in their routine and cultural practices, in the flavours, the colours, the crafts, the architecture, and the passersby. Intangible heritage is synonymous with the ordinary. That is why we at 5Bogota decided to create a project that opens the possibility for real and everyday people to break into the tourism industry through the concept of small, creative tourism, such as that offered through our company, 5Bogota, a private small tourism start-up located in Bogota, Colombia, co-founded in 2013 by Diana Guerra and Diana Zuluaga, who, in addition to being partners, are also mother and daughter.

Diana Guerra is a business administrator. For over thirty years, she worked as a financial and administrative consultant for entrepreneurs through entities such as Women's World Banking. She was also a university professor at the Colombian School of Hospitality and Tourism.

Diana Zuluaga is a publicist; she studied and lived outside the country for more than eight years, and when she returned to Bogotá, as a result of an experience working in the historical district of the city, she had the opportunity to meet local artisans, cooks, and artists in states of economic vulnerability, who were trying to improve their income but who did not know how; although they were located in the most touristic area of the city, they could not find work within the traditional tourism sector.

The experience of Diana Guerra as an entrepreneurial consultant and tourism teacher, along with Diana Zuluaga's expertise in the creative field, gave rise to 5Bogota: they could see the gap between travellers looking for different and authentic experiences in the country and the locals who possessed this authenticity, and who needed work. They subsequently compiled

a business model that envisioned a marketplace that could shorten the chain and more directly connect travelers with local hosts. Due to the difficulties involved in operating a company in Colombia, the structure is quite simple: instead of direct employees, the organization has collaborators, specifically the same local hosts who are hired for each service that the traveller requires. At the national level, there are around twenty collaborators.

5Bogota is a small tourism start-up that connects travellers with local hosts who showcase the country realistically and uniquely. At 5Bogota, we design tours and experiences that are completely authentic, through which travellers learn about our culture and our people while supporting local development. This has the potential to transform the Colombian travel industry, making it more inclusive and participative. Gastronomy is a powerful bond between cultures, and of course, a well-known aspect of tourism. When they do anything related to food and beverage, travellers discover much more than a destination's cuisine. Through food, travellers can discover and understand social practices, local dynamics, and some of a location's values. For this reason, 5Bogota has focused on gastronomic experiences. Especially in Bogotá, gastronomy is marked by multiculturalism. As Bogotá is the country's capital, many Colombians regard it as a place of opportunity and make it their home, and these people bring their traditions with them. This makes it possible to sample the entirety of Colombian cuisine along the city's streets.

This chapter aims to share the methods we at 5Bogota have designed to reimagine tangible and intangible cultural assets and to build creative experiences around them, engaging travellers with endogenous aspects of small sections of a large city. Our strategy will allow anyone interested in gastronomy and creative tourism to craft experiences focused on the five senses, authentically representing neighbourhood culture and turning such experiences into a significant source of income for locals. We will share the process we use to highlight a neighbourhood and its inhabitants, and to design routes and tours with the everyday life of the host as a starting point. Bogotá offers enough space and variety for residents to represent their own spaces and to set their geographical limits as they wish. Each *Bogotano's* perception of the city and the relationship they have with it is unique, intimate, and personal. We share three of our local hosts' gastronomic small tourism adventures.

How to Deploy the Five Senses to Represent a Neighbourhood

For over seven years, we have designed tours for visitors based on the five senses and people's daily lives; we hope this establishes our credibility in offering Bogotá as a case study.

Our objective here is to craft small tourism experiences in which every individual matters, even in a city as large and complex as the Colombian capital. It is vital to convince the locals that their daily lives are important and worth sharing with others. One could say that each inhabitant creates their version of a place based on their relation to it and their experiences of it. Elements such as their area of residence, the cafés, pubs, and restaurants they visit, their usual meeting places with relatives and friends, their homes, and their particular urban landscape create the uniqueness of the destination, making it different for each individual. This is our first and most important principle.

Our senses are the means through which we explore our surroundings. Before you attempt to design a tourism initiative for small groups in a designated area—in our case, within a large city—you must immerse yourself in that micro-culture. We think of this as the road map of our community. How will you do that?

Walking

This involves getting to know the environment such that a mental map might emerge. Walking allows you to commit to memory every corner, every place and building, enabling you to understand the time and distances involved in each route. It is essential to know every street in order to identify new paths and urban sights. These walks should occur daily to ensure that the locals recognize you and allow you to become part of the community; only then will you be part of its daily life, able to share it with future guests.

Observing

This is about sharpening the senses. It is not just about watching but also about listening, smelling, tasting, and touching the cultural heritage of the local community. It is necessary to find the gems hidden in daily life, those recurrent traditions that distinguish a given destination from all others. The goal is to get to know the iconic locations in a route, as well as the locals,

finding out who they are and whether there are possibilities for visitor interaction with them.

Exploring the Community's History

While texts, news reports, and written histories are helpful, oral traditions—the stories that inhabitants offer when asked and that only a few can tell and remember—are equally valid, perhaps even more so. The process that starts with walking and that includes observation must involve conversations with the locals. It is impossible to represent a community without knowing how the locals perceive it, especially not without understanding the features of the environment that locals wish to share and emphasize. The importance of the material heritage of the neighbourhood cannot be understated. To that end, any museums, churches, parks, monuments, and libraries in your chosen zone should be included in the route. However, as these locations are part of the traditional tourism circuit, it is vital to include voices that will describe them from a different perspective.

Establishing Relationships with the Locals

The mapping of iconic locations and must-see stops to represent a location must also include establishing relationships with principal and secondary parties. Do engage with local leaders, but also with those who work in trades that can be shared: the carpenter, the vegetable vendor, the baker, the architect, the cook, the writer, the butcher. They and all their spaces will be essential in the crafting of sensory experiences. Leaving your comfort zone and seeing beyond the obvious is key to discovering the wonders of a neighbourhood.

Interviewing Local Parties in Search of Allies

You will need to develop these relationships with locals in order to provide engaging experiences. These locals are the main way your visitors will engage with the everyday life of the community. Conduct interviews with possible partners and develop a specific questionnaire designed to discover their personal histories and their relationships with the location to help you understand their desires and intentions. What are they willing to share with visitors? This will also allow you to customize a proposal for them that encourages these potential allies to participate. Their needs and financial expectations, available time, and relevant personality traits should be identified in order to establish their trust and create long-term commitments. You may

well find some people are not interested in sharing their knowledge or tastes with visitors. They are still locals, and you will still see them. For this reason, it is essential to maintain good relationships and propose other options to them, not necessarily involving direct contact with foreigners. For example, a route may include a stop where these people work, and a short interaction without any responsibility beyond carrying on with their jobs as they usually do. At 5Bogota, the different stops at a farmers' market had precisely this objective: the individual preparing coffee or fruit juice was a fundamental aspect of the route but did not have any additional responsibilities with the visitors, unlike those whom we call local hosts.

Crafting Sensory Experiences

We build experiences that rely on the five senses through a series of creative lab sessions and conversations with our local hosts. Each host has the opportunity to select a sense they consider to be a prevalent aspect of their local experience, and then to create their offer with the input of the other hosts in the lab session. The key is to create stories instead of tourism products. With that in mind, each experience must include a series of moments that contribute to our ultimate goal: fostering memorable small-group adventures that deeply impact travellers' lives.

Mapping in the Lab Sessions

A map is the graphic piece summarizing the locally led planning we have described. Once the locations, the local parties, and the type of relationship the locals will have with your routes have been established, it is advisable to record the tour in a map; this will then be used to guide the visitor experience. The map thereby becomes a local guide, created by locals, about their community. It might be good to have a local illustrator design the map as this can function as both a promotional piece and a souvenir—and engage a local creative to make it.

Our Strategy for 5Bogota Experiences

Using the experience gained at 5Bogota, we have developed a methodology to create our offerings. The key here is that we work in, and design for, small groups.

First, it is essential to identify the aspects each local would be willing to share with travellers who match their interests. To this end, it is crucial to

listen to and witness their routines so that ideas may freely flow. Remember that the goal is authenticity.

Once the elements with the most excellent chance to become sensory experiences have been identified, the future host is invited to an experience lab, which features techniques that drive the creative process such that the result will stem from the work contributed by the potential host, ensuring their motivation and ongoing commitment. The lab is a collaborative and multidisciplinary session with the objective of reimagining local hosts' everyday activities and turning these into experiences that convey a sense of their community to a small group of visitors. Stimulating creative thinking is key if hosts are to understand what is worth sharing out of everything they do. During this phase, it is indispensable for hosts to look at their community and their skills through the eyes of a tourist. Every idea produced by this exercise is understood to be equally valid. Every word may become the trigger that gives birth to an experience. The expected result is a list of concepts that all the hosts can use, and which continually renews the basis for our routes. In this way, the lab not only produces the foundation of our visitor experiences, but also develops social capital, creates social inclusion, and sustains local culture.

Part of our strategy is to create stories, not products. This calls for a practical exercise during the lab, during which hosts write a narrative describing the experience they will offer as if told by a traveller. The narrative includes their own name, age, place of origin, and general aspects of their personality—anything they are likely to share with visitors. Hosts will have to determine what they expect the tourist will find noteworthy during their visit. By having the host take the traveller's place, we seek to alter how the host perceives their community, and to revitalize its tangible and intangible cultural assets.

While the relationship between each host and traveller is unique, having clarity about how the experience is to be delivered minimizes the risk of unpleasantness or outright disappointment. It will ensure that the experience is always memorable. The final part of our methodology is to have the local hosts understand what we see as the three significant moments in the visitor experience. Every traveller will require variations on the plan laid out for each moment, which means we must be ready for any and every kind of response a traveller may offer, and always be ready to execute alternate plans. Still, a fairly uniform format makes the experience more fluid and easy.

It is worth remembering that this is not about following a script. Hosts must always act naturally while at the same time executing each activity with confidence and trusting the people involved in the route, being respectful of timings, and upholding the value proposition at play.

At 5Bogota, we have identified the following as critical moments.

Breaking the Ice

The meeting place, the greeting, and the first activity, and especially the first conversation, must be planned. The impressions created during the first few minutes will provide a better understanding of the traveller's expectations. In some cases, it will be necessary to explain the route and how it will be travelled. In other cases, the element of surprise may be your best resource. The host must read the travellers and quickly understand which aspects of the route need to be emphasized. This is why the first conversation may use specific questions.

The “Wow” Factor

This is the turning point, when you surprise and offer travellers an unexpected sensation. To achieve this point, it is crucial to select a predominant sense, one that will take centre stage owing to a specific activity. It may be an emotion, a flavour, a scent, an unexpected sight, or a turn of phrase. Whatever is selected, it must be sure to elicit a profound reaction from the traveller. This moment will become richer with every traveller you welcome. It is they who will inform your approach through their expressions and reactions as to what made an impression on them during the experience. Here again, the role of the local host is paramount as they must sharpen their senses to read travellers' emotions.

Brand Awareness

It is unlikely, although not impossible, for travellers to return repeatedly to your offering. The goal should therefore be to encourage them to recommend your experience to their relatives, friends, and social networks. How will you convert your visitors to become your leading promoters? One of our strategies is to ensure that they have a keepsake to remember us when they return home. In this sense, a souvenir is your best friend. However, just as your experience is different from traditional touristic products, your souvenir cannot be something that is available to anyone passing through the airport.

Each experience should produce a result, whether tangible or intangible. Small creative tourism enterprises frequently provide items such as a piece of handiwork that the traveller makes themselves. But not every experience will produce such a souvenir. The perfect example is cooking lessons, where the souvenir will be the recipes and techniques learned by the travellers.

Gastronomy as a Guiding Principle: Flavour Itineraries

Gastronomy is always present in any community as an element representing the local culture. Visitors are of course inclined to sample the cuisine of the places to which they travel. Even when breakfast, for example, includes the same basic ingredients from location to location, its presentation will vary. In some cases, it will include ingredients unusual for that time of day from another international perspective. Such is the case with all local customs surrounding food. Gastronomy represents the first, closest, most natural and vivid approach to local culture for travellers looking to immerse themselves in a particular enclave. Food and all its associated activities generate stories that become part of an oral tradition, and as such, are one way that culture is sustained. The ingredients used, where they are found, how they are combined, the traditional flavours and scents of the different kitchens, and the secrets each recipe has held through generations, are the culinary treasures that help provide a sense of place.

As such, gastronomy is one of the crucial elements to research if you want to share with your visitors the customs of local culture; meals can foster moments of profound connection with locals and their customs. These moments happen organically as visitors and residents enjoy the flavours and scents of a meal, snack, or beverage. During these activities, language barriers are also reduced for both foreigners and locals, increasing social inclusion for all.

Owing to the many domestic in-migrations in the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries, caused mainly by insecurity in intermediate cities and rural areas, Bogotá is now home to many internal migrants, which has caused the city to almost double since the end of the previous century. These circumstances have turned Bogotá into a gastronomic centre where people from all Colombian regions offer their traditional dishes using equally traditional ingredients and recipes. The city's gastronomic mix is so rich that it is no stretch to say that here it is possible to taste the cuisine from every Colombian region without visiting those places. Small tourism experiences based around gastronomy can flourish where individuals from different

places and customs meet. There are neighbourhoods in the city where restaurants from different regions converge, providing a strong level of purchasing power for restauranteurs. The historical neighbourhoods usually play host to these food communities. This is where Bogotá has laid its food routes.

Indigenous Cuisine

The Colombian Indigenous and Black communities have been working for centuries to preserve their cultures, often using gastronomy as a fundamental component to do so. For the country, these communities' ingredients and recipes are a valuable and respected heritage. Additionally, domestic and international travellers have contributed to the appreciation of this heritage in recent years, finding in gastronomy an element of cultural immersion. Corn, for instance, is native to Mexico and was transported south, becoming one of the main ingredients of Central and South American Indigenous cookery. Corn is used in a variety of ways and is present in many dishes and meals. Endemic herbs, with medicinal, magical, and/or culinary properties, contribute flavour, scent, and magic to meals, as Indigenous communities attribute otherworldly powers to their plants.

Farmers' Markets as Cultural Spaces

During the era of colonialism and the transition to independence, and even into the twentieth century, farmers' markets were urban spaces where rural food producers met with local city dwellers. Farmers' markets were the meeting point to exchange products brought in from the countryside, and to share customs.

For many years these marketplaces were located outdoors in town squares, until local governments stepped in, building spaces to contain the markets in hopes of improving their cleanliness. As marketplaces grew more popular, smaller satellite markets appeared in various city neighbourhoods, making it easier for buyers to access them. This led to many more of these spaces in urban areas. Bogotá was no exception. Many farmers' markets were established in neighbourhoods, where they became a relevant part of the traditions of the city. They assumed the status of iconic places where different kinds of products were offered, not only foodstuffs, but also artisanal utensils for the home and kitchen made by locals. As time progressed, a few small businesses offering prepared meals appeared in the marketplaces. Now, these historical farmers' markets host real food courts. What is more, the areas surrounding

the markets saw many small businesses spring up, offering a wide range of products and services. This phenomenon took place around all the marketplaces, turning their neighbourhoods into iconic sectors of the city.

Unfortunately, since the late twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries, farmers' markets have deteriorated as a result of abandonment by local governments, as well as by the emergence of new, modern grocery stores that have taken centre stage, rendering traditional farmers' markets less competitive, and even causing them to disappear in some cases. The few remaining are attractive sites for small-group tourism experiences, not only because they represent local culture, but also because surrounding businesses are eager to counter their degradation, leading to multiple route allies. This scenario provides marketplace labourers who tell their own stories or those of their products, as well as their origins or uses; local hosts who share thematic anecdotes; locals who demonstrate how the farmers' markets function nowadays; and store owners or service staff available in spaces that are open to the public, both within and outside the marketplace.

5Bogota Experiences

Colombian gastronomy is the product of the cultural mixture resulting from the Spanish conquest, the arrival of the African slaves, and the ingredients endemic to our lands. The richness of the meals produced by this mixture is now influenced by new migrations from Colombian regions currently taking place. This has turned the country into a gastronomic centre, with autochthonous and diverse cuisines that rely on their origins, the climatic conditions of each region, and its ingredients.

Bogotá could very well be considered the gastronomic capital of Colombia, a qualifier with an unprecedented and regrettable origin. Forced displacements, brought about by the violence caused by guerrillas and drug trafficking, have precipitated the migration of people from all over the country to the capital. As a result, Bogotá has become a showcase for national gastronomy. As is the case in most cultures, one of the main ways Colombians connect with foreigners is to share their rich cuisines. Sharing a meal is considered one of the most effective methods of bonding, whether at home or at a restaurant. 5Bogota broke into the tourism-provision market with little competition, as most tourism services providers focus on typical products like beaches, festivals, and adventure tourism. Our approach, based on local culture and customs, focused on the strong bonds gastronomy creates between

strangers, and so we chose it as our guiding principle, with the possibility of adding other themes and topics as appropriate.

Our tenets were as follows:

- To transform places common for traditional tourism into creative spaces. To this end, we introduced the use of the five senses as a fundamental tool.
- To implement the concept of small tourism in a city as large and complex as Bogotá. We sought to have offers available in different neighbourhoods, thus turning them into creative hubs outside the traditional tourism circuit.
- To create thematic links between the outskirts and the inner city through an urban tourism offer with hints of countryside tourism in nearby zones.
- To foster social inclusion by bringing wealth created by tourism to communities usually overlooked by the industry.

These tenets are most evident in the experiences detailed below. We have crafted these small experiences in collaboration with local hosts. We have selected examples where innovation is the leading factor.

El Regateo, La Ñapa y La Vaca

Location

This route is in the 7 de Agosto neighbourhood. This is an emblematic location for two reasons: first, it is one of the most traditional commercial sites in the city, where it is possible to find just about anything, though it is especially famous for its numerous automotive shops; and second for its farmers' market. While farmers' markets are usually frequented by tourists visiting Colombia, the one in the 7 de Agosto serves primarily local customers due to its status as a place customarily considered dangerous, and thus outside the traditional tourism circuit. At first glance, the location did not seem to have great potential because of its visual and noise pollution and its primary commercial function. However, the route has flourished.

Local Hosts

The hosts are the Amapola Cartonera, a collective of visual artists and writers who create artistic books using recycled materials such as discarded cardboard. It operates a bookshop located in the 7 de Agosto neighbourhood. This social enterprise promotes reading through fair and accessible prices for the most vulnerable communities. Since cardboard is their primary material, the farmers' market is their supplier.

The Experience

The hosts take visitors to the historic 7 de Agosto farmers' market. The name of the experience is taken from local expressions used in the farmers' markets, which the members of Amapola Cartonera encourage visitors to use during the route.

Register (haggling): Asking for a lower price is a long-standing practice at farmers' markets that distinguishes the social dynamics of this cultural space.

Ñapa (freebies): Asking for an extra unit as a present after completing a large purchase at one of the marketplace's stands is typical.

Vaca (whip-rounds): This is the name given to the money collected by a group of friends or relatives to purchase something, usually an alcoholic drink. For the experience, the purpose of the whip-round was the purchase of a fruit salad for everyone.

The Gastronomic Element

Participants taste local fruits, fresh coffee, and typical neighbourhood dishes. They also stop at stands selling fresh herbs and listen to descriptions of their different uses. The world of medicinal and cooking plants—and those with mystical properties—is a central aspect in Colombian farmers' markets.

Itinerary

The travellers visit the marketplace accompanied by a member of Amapola Cartonera, stopping at coffee shops, at fruit and local specialty stands, and at artisan shops to experience various textures. It is an opportunity to perceive tastes, scents, colours, and sounds. The last stop includes purchasing the cardboard that the traveller will use to create their keepsake.

The travellers walk through the neighbourhood for a few blocks until they arrive at the bookshop, disproving the neighbourhood's reputation as a dangerous place. Once at the bookshop, travellers are guided by the artists at the collective to construct a handmade cardboard book from scratch—a book the visitors will take with them. The book's content records their experience at the farmers' market, including drawings of the fruits and their names, and records their feelings and their most significant experiences. At the end, the traveller leaves a space blank to record their later reflections.

Becoming a Salt Artisan in Zipaquirá

For years, one of the most popular and traditional tours offered to international and domestic travellers has been visiting the Salt Cathedral at Zipaquirá, located forty-two kilometres from the capital. In the mid-twentieth century, this church was built inside a salt mine, which constitutes its main appeal. The surroundings of the cathedral boast a solid tourism infrastructure, an excellent artisanal offer, and many traditional restaurants, hotels, and parks, among other amenities.

Local Hosts

Our partners here are La Maloka Moderna, a cultural project located in Zipaquirá. Their objective is the creation of artifacts using salt as raw material. Employing ancient techniques, the artists at La Maloka Moderna pay homage to the Muisca, one of the Indigenous tribes that inhabited the high plateau of Bogotá. These artists design interior decor objects with salt at the core, producing artifacts for the home, which feature the added value of the well-being and prosperity thought to be induced by the chemical properties of this mineral, as well as the historical property of the value salt held for bartering among our ancestors. Their products range from lighting and decoration artifacts to medicinal and relaxing bath salts.

The Experience

A La Maloka Moderna member accompanies a small group to the famous Salt Cathedral in Zipaquirá. In addition to completing the established tour, the traveller also spends time with a salt expert who shares the role salt played in the Indigenous economy. This is an inspiring space as there are many structures and sculptures made of salt along the way.

The Gastronomic Element

This experience presents a gastronomic challenge as the location is often the object of over-tourism, which affects the authenticity of the gastronomic offer and the quality of the restaurants, which are often quite crowded. The answer to this challenge is a picnic using regional, endemic ingredients with the company of the hosts, which is ideal as the cathedral is surrounded by nature. With that, travellers are removed from the tourism mainstream and have the opportunity to try food prepared in an artisanal manner—with a little salt!

Itinerary

A guided tour of the cathedral is led by the location staff and the local host. Once travellers leave the church, they go to the picnic area to enjoy their locally based meal. At the end of this activity, visitors follow the artisan to the workshop, where they are shown the different tasks necessary to create salt sculptures. They are then given face masks and gloves and, with the guidance of one of the La Maloka Moderna members, create a salt sculpture to take back home with them.

Bar Experience: Ethnic Rituals

Location

The Quinta Camacho neighbourhood is a symbol of the mid-twentieth-century capital city, and was declared a heritage site in 2000. It is considered to be an open-air architectural museum integrated within the modern city. Over the last fifteen years, the location has earned a reputation as a gastronomic and cultural hub, boasting a wide array of restaurants, art galleries, antiquaries, theatres, unique cafés, and themed hostels. These businesses were initially conceived for the local population as the neighbourhood was not included in traditional tourism circuits, being located away from the historical centre. The traffic in Bogotá is known to be slow and difficult. Quinta Camacho was therefore not recognized in the tourism world as a possible destination for travellers, and little effort was made to promote it.

Local Host

Enter Mauricio Pardo, a young bartender born in Ubaté, a township just outside Bogotá. For Mauricio, who goes by Mao, it was not easy finding his

way into the bar scene, as the profession had at this point barely gained traction. Looking for new opportunities, Mao decided to share his knowledge by crafting a 5Bogota route, where the traveller moves undetected through the neighbourhood's nightlife.

The Experience

Our host hinges this experience on sacred rituals as the protagonists in this route are the liquors of our ancestors. These liquors are often credited with magical powers and were used in group ceremonies to pay homage to deities or to heal the body and the soul.

The Gastronomic Element

Visitors taste artisan-produced ancient liquors using recipes from the Indigenous peoples of different regions: Chirrinchi from the Caribbean, Viche from the Pacific, and RC (*rompe calzón*, or “knicker breaker”) from the Amazon.

Itinerary

The meeting point is the first bar. There, the traveller must provide the bartender with a clue they received previously. The bartender will then recognize them and will initiate the ritual by preparing the cocktail. At the same time, and as the traveller drinks, the bartender tells them the myths surrounding the liquor in question. The traveller then receives a new clue they must provide at the next bar, where the next bartender will present them with a new ritual and tell them the story of the liquor being used. This route includes three or four stations.

How Is 5Bogota Doing?

Since the creation of 5Bogota, revenues have been showing a growth trend. To illustrate, in December 2019, before the pandemic, 385 travellers engaged in different experiences with our local hosts. This number of travellers generated income that positively impacted the value chain, and we succeeded in our objective of allowing tourism income to reach people outside the traditional circuit, who achieved a positive economic impact by sharing their daily lives. During this period, the income generated corresponded to a value greater than fifty minimum monthly wages in force in Colombia for that year, which,

according to the Ministry of Labour, was US\$285 per month. The sales behaviour had achieved stability and continued its upward trend; in other words, it was expected that 2020 would exceed our expectations. 5Bogota was on the top list for local experiences. It was in the first position in gastronomic experience on Tripadvisor in Bogotá for more than three years and listed in printed guides such as *Lonely Planet* and *Bradt*. Reservations as of March 2020 exceeded twenty minimum wages in value, in addition to pre-paid advances that helped our cash flow and made it possible to project sales for double the value of 2019.

That said, the impact of the pandemic on the industry, and in particular, on tourism ventures, is undeniable.

The post-pandemic financial situation is critical. The business was suspended for more than a year. And just in the first quarter of 2022, 5Bogota slowly started resuming its activities, with just seven to ten travellers per month, a volume that does not allow the required operational stability.

It is worth mentioning that tourism ventures did not receive government support during the pandemic, which is why many of them, including 5Bogota, had to suspend their economic activities until the arrival of international travellers becomes normalized.

The future continues to be uncertain for 5Bogota. Although the network of hosts has remained active, the number of international travellers arriving in the country is still insufficient to make any economic forecasts.

Conclusion

We built 5Bogota from scratch in a large, complex, majestic city full of striking social phenomena. In that context, it was no easy task to implement a small creative tourism concept. It posed a significant challenge, because at first glance, it did not seem possible to offer small, bespoke tourism in a destination with over seven million inhabitants. However, we found that the city functions differently in each neighbourhood, and even within micro-cultures in each location. A farmers' market can feature specific dynamics that distinguish it as a self-contained community. Building micro-tourism experiences based in the belief of the importance and attractiveness of local culture—such as those practised at local farmers' markets—allowed us to rescue the life stories of the inhabitants of these locations and provide visitors with the opportunity to experience them.

From a sustainability perspective, tourism must be seen as a social phenomenon, a bonding space for people. Benefits for locals should transcend financial profit, and in the same way, the ultimate goal for the traveller must exceed mere leisure. In our experience, the implementation of creative, slow, and small tourism reclaims the dignity of the daily life of locals while at the same time impacting the lives of visitors in profound and moving ways. We believe in community-led tourism planning that creates social capital by integrating local communities as hosts, and including under-recognized locations as tourism territories. We hope our concept can help spur a social phenomenon: locals reasserting a sense of ownership of their own community, creating cultural sustainability. Crafting visitor experiences based on the traditional and everyday occurrences of the hosts and their cultural heritage revitalizes and stimulates the recognition of their own cultural wealth, playing a central role in preserving intangible urban heritage assets. As well, our small tourism business model allows for the social redistribution of wealth, with earnings from these services going back into communities that would not receive them otherwise. Offering these activities in a domestic in-migration capital like Bogotá allows travellers to interact with cultures far from their chosen destination. Small tourism can integrate small zones, small products, and small areas that exist within a large territory. Perhaps the chaos COVID-19 has caused in the traditional and largely unsustainable tourism industry offers us a positive way forward: travellers have the opportunity, through small tourism in small places, to engage with local lives and practices that, in the long run, can help redefine the image of a country. We hope we have provided a potential way forward for locally focused, small tourism providers in the model of 5Bogota.