



Photo by Ben Jessop / Unsplash

Creating value from the Azure Window

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The Azure window was formed by the erosion of Lower Coralline Limestone, through wave erosion over the years. One senses the might of the sea on a spectacular day, let alone on a rough day. Past photos reveal waves raging and hitting against the Azure window. Our forefathers recall days when the waves overflowed the Azure window. The erosion was constant and, in all probability, other external environmental factors hastened the wearing down, and although the damage was noticed, the erosion never stopped until the Azure window became weaker and on the fatal day of 8th March 2017, it collapsed. Figure 1 shows the cliff where the window used to be. Three years have passed and the stream of sympathy

has never ceased.

EMPATHY

One would like to re-imagine the Azure Window in all its splendour! However, this is only the aspiration of every person who admired the unique site. In the past the Azure window was famous as one of Malta's main tourist landmarks, and it was a popular backdrop in photographs. In a way, it is still used today even though it no longer exists. One can comment that the Dwejra window stood as a brand of a destination and in itself had a high celebrity pull with a corresponding high emotional pull. These themes need to be more structured to justify the once natural edifice today as the emotional pull is still there!

The authorities have made an announcement of a launch of an international initiative on the future of Dwejra. To date there has been minimal development. The main development so far has been the naming of a road. On the other hand, one notes the response from the general public through trip advisor, which is encouraging even though the structure is no longer there. One has to remark that even individuals who never saw the site, feel the need to visit the location.

DWEJRA WINDOW STREET

The naming of a road in the nearby village of San Lawrenz is a fitting gesture, a posthumous tribute to the Azure Window



Dwejra window stood as a brand of a destination and in itself had a high celebrity pull with a corresponding high emotional pull

which serves as a lasting memory. The window is gone but its memory lives on. One should exploit this gesture further to mark a statement even in areas which might be distant from the site. A replica of the window in a public building which is open to all types of visitors, would also further exploit the celebrity status of the site.

TRIP ADVISOR

Since the collapse of the window, there has been an endless voice echoing amidst the tripadvisor participants on how much they have missed it. There are specific individuals visiting the place to make sure they did not miss something. This is the pure voice of the consumer which confirms the interest that this site instills and overflows in others. The experience that the site elicits should be exploited for further value derivation.

MEMORABILIA

An interesting point was noted that during a visit to the Dwejra Marine Environmental

Education Centre as one comes across a jigsaw puzzle of the picturesque Azure window. This is one of the few items that can be sought from the area as a take away notion of the feeling born in this wonderful place. One believes that additional memorabilia can be made available to those interested to purchase as books and virtual reality pictures depicting an image of oneself or family next to the Azure window or the depth of the sea beneath where the Azure window stood.

AN APP FOR DWEJRA

An app would also enable one to enjoy better and explore the area to the fullest. One comes across a map, which is well past its time and should be updated. This will further boost the experience that the place generates.

In addition to this there are some shabby buildings, which should be either converted to a worthwhile purpose instead of left an

eyesore. Such buildings could be used to house different trades and skills that our forefathers used to employ to earn their living, maybe even those that were used in the area of Dwejra.

PROVOCATION

In accordance with Edward de Bono's terminology the Azure Window should be classified as a "po". A "po" is a word coined by de Bono implying a provocation. Indeed the Azure Window is a provocation. Its absence is a provocation, an idea which instigates thinking forward to a new place. Now that the window is no longer there, it requires such forward thinking. It is not only the absence of the Azure Window, but also other aspects which one might not pay attention to.

Indeed the place makes one imagine different shapes and different sculptures. Now that the window is no longer there, one sees a lion face out of the cliff. Not too distant from the shore one sees the crocodile battling with the waves, Figure 2 illustrates the site. Staring at the location one tries to imagine again the Azure Window! Maybe one needs to go into the deep blue to see the new arch that has been reborn out of the collapse.

No matter how fond we are of the Azure window, can the locals recall the window like the foreigners who visited the sight over the years? How many films have included the backdrop of the Azure Window? Amongst younger generations, it is attributed to Game of Thrones, however many other films have made use of the site in their production.

Fig 1: Where the Azure Window stood



Fig 2: Crocodile Rock



So, why not make a concert for the Azure window? This could either be carried out in the open air near the location, or in one of the theatres in Gozo. In such a concert, music from the films is performed with a live orchestra.

Likewise, why not extend a link between the area and those who would appreciate visiting a gallery where various artists have expressed their imagination on the Azure Window?

TWO TIER ACTIVITY ON LAND AND SEA

THE BOAT TRIP

The sea has a tremendous potential of providing a vivid experience by a boat trip taking off from the inland sea and meandering into the open waters. One is able to sense the potency of the waves and admire the blue sea, the corals on the sea bed and the intriguing caves which are constantly sculpted by the waves. One can imagine where the Azure window stood for many years, and its new location beneath the sea.

DIVING

Then there are the divers who descend into the depth of the blue waters, challenging the immensity of the waters to catch a glimpse of another world. The site is reckoned to be one of the top dive sites in the Mediterranean. The inland sea serves as a meeting place for various divers coming from different parts of the world to admire the sights below. Maybe the heavy population of motor vehicles visiting the area may also be solicited to be reduced, preserving further the majestic remains.

TREKKING AND NATURE WALKS

The area has a strong affinity to the sea; however it can offer activities on land such

as trekking and nature walks across the garigue areas. Picnic and chill out areas will further enhance the visitors' sense of enjoyment. At the same time one can make use of certain unused buildings. The development of a hiking track between the Chapel, the Tower and the bay opposite Fungus Rock will surely enhance the viewing experience. One has to make sure that both the area and visitors are protected. The former from excessive trampling and the latter, from sudden bursts of wind or the slippery rocks that cover the area.

MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CENTRE

One can only praise the initiative of the science centre. It is in the right place and it could be instrumental to spearhead the vision of the Azure Window. Since the area has a lot of geological attractions, it would also be worth exploring the area. A video trip into the depths of the sea where the Azure window lay can be impressive for those who do not dare venture below the waves. Another activity that might be astronomical observations due to the areas' clear skies and lack of light pollution.

One should consider fusing this centre's visit with that of a boat trip. Both activities are complimentary, and will ensure a more complete experience.

The collapse of the Azure Window was a great loss of a unique geological asset and it will remain so for many years. However, in such circumstances one has to view the situation and look at the silver lining to notice the attractions that still exist. In this situation one can only seek the opportunities that exists to create something from the absence of the Azure Window.

The Azure Window can never be built or created again. The only thing that remains is the memory and the

experiences that one can take from such a magnificent place. Every visitor should benefit from such an experience. The table below summarises the various elements that should be taken into account to ensure the creation of a value for the Azure Window. The experience should be interpreted and backed to ensure a new stream of creative value from the Azure Window and its surroundings. The major innovation that this scenario can provide rests on the value that the various elements can provide. This is a source for Experience Economy!

Figure 3 shows what is left of the Azure window today. This is the new site one needs to get accustomed to, until further erosion sculptures a new image out of the rock.

The Azure window is not a Phoenix and will not rise again from the sea. It sunk on the 8th March 2017, and we should make sure that its memory is not lost in the depths of the deep blue sea.

This study has been developed from a group assignment for the Leadership and Innovation study unit as part of the MBA in International Hospitality Management, a post- graduate degree course by ITS



Fig 3: Where the Azure Window stood in the background stands the Fungus Rock

in academic affiliation with the Emirates Academy of Hospitality Management.

Some of the arguments presented were taken into consideration, whereas others were integrated in the final version. The author wishes to thank the participation of the class members namely Ms C Camilleri, Mr D Peplow and Mr G Mangion.

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ELIMINATE	REDUCE
• Polluting elements such as high density of motor vehicles in the area • Remove dilapidated constructions or put them to appropriate use	• Unrelated activity to the azure window • Danger next to the cliffs
CREATE	RAISE
• An app for the Dwejra • On land adventure activity • Virtual photography for visitors with a backdrop of the Azure window • A concert for the Azure window in one of the theatres in Gozo using the musical themes of the films set at the site • More memorabilia depicting the Azure window	• Link the boat trip to the visit of the Marine Environmental Education Centre • Enhance the Marine environmental education centre with links to geology and astronomy • Link to other areas in Gozo that have relevance to the Azure Window • Link to galleries where artists exhibit their creative work on the Azure window

Source: Adapted by the Author from Blue Ocean Strategy by Kim & Mauborgne