

9 Co-creation of value: Valorization of local identity through creative tourism

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Introduction

In the globalized world, businesses are increasingly linked to the service and network concepts. The paradigm shifted from a dominant logic based on physical goods to one based on service (Service-Dominant Logic) introduced by Vargo and Lusch (2004). The authors recognize knowledge and skills as the object of exchange and state that these dimensions generate benefits and value for the actors involved, defining a modern concept of value co-creation.

Following the Service-Dominant Logic model and the fundamentals of Service Research and System Thinking, service logic promotes the concept of value co-creation, considering the customer as an active player in the service and able to contribute to the creation of a sustainable competitive advantage. This vision integrates the contributions of several parties in the value creation process, enabling the sharing of insights, values and resources of different actors (Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

In this context, the concept of co-creation was initially introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), who highlighted how value creation is linked to the company's interaction with the customer. For them, co-creation is *"the joint creation of value by the company and the customer, allowing the customer to co-construct a service experience that suits their needs"* (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004: 5). The co-creation of the experience focuses on customers as active participants in building their experiences through personalized and direct interactions with the organization (Barnes et al., 2020).

In recent years, value co-creation has been considered from different perspectives. It is commonly conceptualized as a process of resource exchange and interaction between the actors involved. Over the years, value co-creation has become a central topic in tourism studies. Indeed, an increasing number of theoretical (Lin et al., 2017; Mathis et al., 2016) and

empirical studies (Bertella, 2014; Campos et al., 2016; Mkono, 2012) have applied co-creation to the tourism context.

This contribution has been organized in the following way: after an introductory part, literature studies have been examined in depth to explore the perspective of the destination in creative tourism, the perspective of the tourist, and the co-creation of value in the tourist experience. The final part of the chapter examines five different case studies of value co-creation through the tourism experience. In particular, the locations Loulè Agave (Portugal), Empordanet (Spain), Namur Province (Belgium), Quito (Ecuador), and Bangkok (Thailand) are analyzed. The analysis of the cases shows how these territories were able to identify an available social capital that was able to define a differentiated and integrated tourist offer in terms of contents and values, meeting the current demand for tourism and holiday consumption that translates into a new 'style of consumption' oriented to relationships, encounters, exchange, and experience. Based on the gathered evidence, conclusions and practical implications are presented in the final part of the chapter.

Theoretical background

An increasing number of theoretical and empirical studies have examined co-creation in the context of tourism. Co-creation has been used to clarify current changes in the tourism supply chain and to analyze the overall experience of the destination as well as to study new marketing approaches.

The main areas of research on co-creation in tourism are:

1. Design, management, and marketing of the tourism experience;
2. Tourist activities and events;
3. Hospitality; and
4. Tourism management and marketing.

Within these research areas, two general perspectives on value co-creation have been identified: organizational/destination (Neuhofer et al., 2012) and tourism (Prebensen et al., 2013a; Tan et al., 2013). Value co-creation can be defined as a process of interactions and related activities connecting the tourist and other actors, and experiences are the context in which such interactions occur (Rihova et al., 2019). This strand includes the studies carried out by Bertella (2014), Bharwani and Jaugari (2013) and Mossberg (2007). These interactions and activities generate value for the client. Value co-creation can take place before the trip, during the stay in a destination, and after the trip (Zhang et al., 2018). This approach to co-creation is predominant in the literature on tourism.

A second perspective focuses on the particular tourist experience where value co-creation takes place with the active participation of the tourist with others during the consumer experience (Prebensen & Foss, 2011). This approach is closely related to the current ideas of qualified consumption and creative tourism, the way tourists express themselves through their own experiences. These studies focus on the subjective experience of the tourist as a set of psychological processes and events that occur during performance-based activities and interaction with people during the experience. In this perspective, the experience is conceptualized as a phenomenon involving cognitive processes, which are linked to different phases of the overall tourist experience (Larsen, 2007).

A lack of consensus on the elements that generate value co-creation has been found in the literature, due to the absence of a specific conceptualization of value co-creation. The variety of contexts and perspectives in which it is applied has certainly contributed to the divergences in the tourism research field. The academic contributions in the field of value co-creation in the tourism context, as mentioned, have been divided by Campos et al. (2014) in its bibliographic research focusing on the destination/organization side (Kjær, 2011; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Minkiewicz et al., 2014; Morgan, 2007) and in others, focusing on the perspective of the tourist/visitor (McIntyre, 2011; Morgan, 2006, 2007; Olsson, 2012). Research that considers the two perspectives together is rare (Zouni & Kouremenos, 2008). For example, Della Corte et al. (2009) applied the theory of value co-creation to the production of services related to archaeological and cultural sites, demonstrating the opportunities for innovation deriving from the interaction with consumers in terms of enrichment of the main cultural product with auxiliary products (cultural activities), but dwell on a partial analysis of the phenomenon, highlighting the appropriation of value by suppliers only.

The following paragraphs examine the aspects of co-creation of value by the organization and the tourist perspective, with an in-depth examination of co-creation of value in on-site experiences.

The organization/destination perspective

Co-creation was addressed from a supply-side perspective, both at the destination and organization level. The main role of value co-creation in this perspective is to increase the competitive activities according to a typical marketing management approach. In these studies, we analyze a series of mechanisms shared by both the company and the destination, for which value co-creation is a competitive strategy that consists of providing tourists with a memorable experience. The studies that adopt the perspective of the enterprise and destinations attribute to co-creation the main role of increasing

competitive capacity according to a typical marketing management approach (Dolan et al., 2019; Eraqi, 2011; Hsieh & Yuan, 2011; Li et al., 2008; Lugosi, 2009; Neuhofer et al., 2012).

From an operational point of view, this type of co-creation considers the participation of the tourist in the design, production, or consumption of an experience, or collaboration in product and service innovation. In this sense, value co-creation can be considered a phenomenon that occurs before, during, and after the trip (De Jager, 2009), and is influenced by all the networks and processes that the organization or destination uses to encourage consumer participation in the creation of value (Chen et al., 2020). In organizations that adopt value co-creation, the service staff assumes a fundamental role. With their skills and competence, they have the mission of interacting with the tourist and facilitating the experience (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013). At the destination level, co-creation is necessary to compete with other destinations.

The tourist perspective

Studies that adopt the perspective of the tourist are specifically concerned with analyzing their behavior and psychology when involved in co-creation activities. In these studies, value co-creation generally recognizes a central role in the relationship between producers and consumers. In this perspective, visitors are creators of value, who design, produce, and consume.

Four different areas of investigation can be considered in this context. The first one concerns the tourist who participates in the value co-creation in one or all phases of the experience. In this perspective, co-creation involves interaction processes and activities that connect the tourist and other actors before, during the stay, and after the trip. For example, the generation of ideas can be considered as co-creative participation in the planning of the experience before traveling and consuming; craft activities carried out during the vacation in a destination are an example of co-creation during the visit; sharing of memories and experiences on social networks, on a blog or in a virtual community is an example of co-creation of an experience in the post-travel phase. This approach emphasizes the active role of visitors in the tourist experience and underlines their role as producers and actors and no longer as passive visitors, as they possess valuable personal resources (cultural, intellectual, and physical) that add value to the consumer experience (Prebensen et al., 2013b). Binkhorst and Den Dekker (2009) adopt this vision of co-creation and define the set of these phases as the Tourist Experience Network (TEN).

The second area of investigation focuses on the type of experience that tourists have in the destination. In this context, value co-creation is related to