



VALUE CO-CREATION SIGNIFICANCE OF TOURIST RESOURCES

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Abstract: How important are individual tourist resources for the overall value of tourist experiences? This study argues for including tourist resources as a value-adding element in tourist experiences. Service quality measures typically include the value of (1) personal service, (2) the surrounding natural environment and (3) other tourists. They do not typically include the value of individual tourist resources. A survey with 505 respondents was conducted. The study reveals that tourist resources, in addition to personal service, environment and other visitors, enhance the experienced value of a trip significantly. These findings are discussed in light of the service-dominant logic, identity and self-worth theories and the imperative of including the customer resources in understanding of experience value. Practical implications are also presented. **Keywords:** tourist resources, time spent, effort, involvement, value perception. © 2013 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Tourists travel because they want to, and not because they have to. They travel to pursue personal interests, enjoy other environments and nurture personal needs and wants. This simple, but major, aspect of travelling matters. The time and effort people put into tourist travel are therefore valued differently from other goods and services. Nevertheless, tourists' role and resources in terms of value creation have attracted little research. Accordingly, the present work explores tourist inputs in value co-creation and tests the effect of those inputs on overall experience value.

The new service-dominant logic (S-D logic) of marketing (Grönroos, 2006; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008) acknowledges the consumer, i.e., the tourist role in value creation and co-creation. This logic includes the idea that in the process of value co-creation, the consumers—in addition to firms and organizations—act as resource integrators (Arnould, Price, & Malshe, 2006; Dabholkar, 1990; Holbrook, 1996, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2006). Likewise, value is centered in the

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experiences of consumers (Pralhalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Prebensen & Foss, 2011; Richards & Wilson, 2006). Hence, the foundational idea in the S-D logic is that the service encounter is a value exchange process of value between the customer and the service provider. This perspective holds that the consumers and their skills and knowledge, depicted as operant resources, contribute to value creation by integrating physical, social, and cultural resources (Arnould et al., 2006).

The present work argues that since experience-based consumption to a large extent focuses on hedonic value for the customer (Holbrook, 2005), the time and effort spent on such travels (before, during and after) are operant resources in such co-creation situations. Caru and Cova (2007, p. 7) observe that it is “widely accepted within an experiential perspective that consumers are not passive agents reacting to a stimulus, but instead, the actors and producers of their own experiences...”. Experience value for the tourist, then, lies in being at the destination and taking part in producing and enjoying various experiences while there (Sandström, Edvardsson, Kristensson, & Magnusson, 2008).

Planning, discussing and choosing vacation travels might be seen as positive activities in themselves, enhancing the overall experience value of tourist trips (Hoch & Deighton, 1989). They should therefore not be treated solely as costs in consumer behavior. Furthermore, travelling involves encountering unfamiliar scenes and people, rendering coping and co-creating valuable experiences as situational and dependent on the skills and knowledge of the tourist (such as socializing, discussing, receiving information, re-scheduling planned activities) (Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Consequently, the more the customer puts into a tourist experience, the more that person experiences positive and memorable experience value (Kim, Brent Ritchie, & McCormick, 2012). Kim et al. (2012, p. 14) developed a scale of memorable tourist experiences (MTE) based on the premises that “affective feelings, such as being sociable, pleasant, happy, irritated, guilty, sad and worried” (cit. Larsen & Jensen, 2004; Writz et al., 2003) affect the tourist experience. Despite these efforts to acknowledge experience value in tourism with the new service-dominant logic (see Vargo & Lusch, 2004), there is still a need to recognize “customer value” and the costs and benefits customers bring to value co-creation processes in tourism.

Co-creation of experiences, as a theoretical construct, considers the consumer an active agent in the consumption and production of values (Dabholkar, 1990), and regards customer involvement as essential for defining and designing the experience. In addition to participation and involvement, co-creating experiences during a vacation involves interaction with other people (e.g., host and guest) and with products and services in various servicescapes (Bitner, 1992), and results in increased (or decreased) value for themselves and others, in that it is an “interactive, relativistic, preference experience” (Holbrook, 2006, p. 715). This perspective emphasizes the emotional state of consumption (Kim et al., 2012).

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