

Co-creation in tourism marketing: What does it mean?

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Objectives | The aim of the study is to analyze the current situation of tourism marketing literature regarding value co-creation, to be able to detect possible gaps in the literature and, in turn, move forward in future investigations. Thus, our research question is: what is co-creation in tourism marketing?

Methodology | We conducted an exhaustive and systematic literature review on co-creation (CC) in tourism marketing. The number of documents revised ascended to 131. They were descriptively and thematically analyzed following service-dominant logic (SDL) view of CC.

Main Results and Contributions | First, the results of the descriptive analysis reveal two different sub-contexts among the reviewed studies: destinations (64%) and tourism industry (36%). Both address CC in tourism/place marketing, but from different perspectives: the former from a holistic angle of destination marketing, and the latter referring to the strategic marketing applied by the tourism businesses. Second, the distribution of the scientific approaches and research methods show that there is a quite compensated allocation of studies: conceptual (34%), qualitative (34%), and quantitative (26%). Thus, quantitative studies, which predominantly refer to specific tourism services like hotels, restaurants, and travel agencies, exist; but descriptive papers still prevail.

Regarding the thematic analysis, we have mainly used deductive categories extracted from the last SDL contributions (Vargo & Lusch, 2016) to examine the resulting documents. This implies recognizing (i) actors and their relationships (service ecosystems), (ii) resources, and (iii) co-creation processes (service exchanges and resource integration).

Actors included in tourism marketing CC are: tourists, hospitality firms, residents, and public organizations, with special mention to destination marketing organizations. Although acknowledging networks and a multisided perspective, most studies focus on dyadic approaches of CC implying the consumer and the provider (e.g., Blazquez-Resino, Molina, & Esteban-Talaya, 2014).

The studies reviewed acknowledge the original importance put on operant resources and the emphasis on consumer resources. However, literature lacks on providing a compilation of essential resources that affect CC processes. Several provider and consumer resources are mentioned; the most relevant are: involvement, role-clarity, motivation, service quality, destination proposition, and market orientation. We

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believe that tourists' knowledge and skills require more significance (Prebensen, Woo, & Uysal, 2014). Finally, there is not a consensus in defining CC in tourism, and, in turn, in choosing a coherent measurement (the only paper that uses a contrasted scale of CC is Hsiao, Lee and Chen (2015). SDL presents CC processes as service exchanges and resource integration processes that imply interactions to obtain multi-party resources that are later integrated through internal processes by the consumer (tourist). However, findings reveal that the literature has not addressed CC according to these concepts, but using previously developed measures assessing partial approaches of CC. The most repeated include: co-production when arranging the trip (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012), customization of hotel features, participation in destination attractions (Chen, Raab, & Tanford, 2015), interactions with other tourists (Yang, 2015), citizenship behavior of employees, consumer's responsible behavior (Hsiao et al., 2015), or consumer's implication on service innovations (Santos-Vijande, López-Sánchez, & Pascual-Fernández, 2015).

Limitations | Due to the large number of documents and seeking more evidenced-based conclusions, thematic analysis was concentrated on analyzing quantitative studies (34 studies).

Conclusions | The emergent SDL and its value co-creation perspective support a challenging marketing paradigm change that, although theoretically developed, it remains halted regarding practical application. The performed literature review shows that tourism, a potential field for value co-creation, is the reflection of the general trend. Results reveal that tourism marketing addresses co-creation in a (i) descriptive, (ii) non-rigorous, (iii) heterogeneous, and (iv) limited manner. The incomplete progress on value co-creation makes difficult its translation to tourism. However, we should develop quantitative explanatory researches based on a complete SDL narrative that will contribute understanding co-creation processes in tourism from a holistic and unified approach. This will also enable detecting co-creation antecedents (resources) and outcomes (value-in-context).

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