Key Dimension of Co-creation from Tourist Perspective:
A Review of Literature

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Abstract

This paper reviews the literature regarding co-creation of tourism experiences from tourist's perspective. The paper analyses and discusses key dimensions of the subject to understand participation and interaction. Presents knowledge that can be used by managers of tourism services to enhance the co-creation experience and provides future research opportunities in this area.

Key Words: co-creation, experience, participation, interaction

1.   Introduction

Tourism industry is mostly about selling experience, the experience is co-created and has a special role in experience creation. (Buhalis & O'Connor, 2006; Ihamäki, 2012; Kim, 2010; Ooi, 2010; Quan & Wang, 2004; Volo, 2009). The tourism industry becomes highly competitive around the globe, the destinations, tourism company selling services find it very difficult to differentiate and offer unique experiences to their customers. The opportunity before industry is to promote and sell themselves as services that creates memorable and long-lasting memories tourist (Mariani, Buhalis, Longhi, & Vitouladiti, 2014; Andrades & Dimanche, 2014; Lugosi & Walls, 2013; Ritchie & Hudson, 2009; Tung & Ritchie, 2011). A tourism experience serves the purpose to fulfil one's cherished dream and help the customer develop a beautiful and sharable narrative for the rest of the life, which become their story linked to the destination (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Morgan et al., 2009; Gretzel, Fesenmaier, & O'Leary, 2006). Tourism may act as a way for tourist to achieve their life goals (Gretzel et al., 2006; Kreziak & Frochot, 2011). These experiences are unique as they are partly creating them and not merely receiving them, the engagement of sense and multiple at same time while connecting to people and environment makes the experience one of its kind during its consumption and later on (Azevedo, 2009; Eraqi, 2011; Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Ihamäki, 2012; O'Dell, 2010; Rihova, Buhalis, Moital, & Gouthro, 2014).

This study aims to create a conceptual understanding of co-creation in tourism field, discussing its key dimensions (Prebensen et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2013). A secondary research of articles on the research areas (a) tourist experience management, marketing and promotion, (b) tourist attractions, (c) hospitality services and tourism marketing approved the association of tourist perspective. In this study, 61 articles were reviewed to generate the common understand on the tourist perspective. Based on this research, directions for future research on the topic are suggested.

The Review of Literaturewas limited to published work from year 2000 to 2014 due to availability of resources at the researcher's end. Publications analysed included 61 published in various journals, books, conference proceedings, and project reports.

2.   Review of Literature

There is huge repository of studies that have examined co-creation in the context of tourism (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Jager, 2009; Li & Petrick, 2008; Scott et al., 2009). Largely the degree of diversity in the analysis from being specific to being broad industry level in experience context is huge (Bertella, 2014; Kreziak & Frochot, 2011; Eraqi, 2011). Co-creation has been used to analyse the overall destination experience (Zouni & Kouremenos, 2008), and study new methods to marketing (Lichrou, O'Malley, & Patterson, 2008).

Tourism or vacation packages and natural setting are two main tourism contexts where co-creative interaction has been studied (Räikkönen & Honkanen, 2013; Mathisen,2013). Some studies have argued that for service provider's increased interaction during planning, delivery and consumption is key for providing a seamless delightful experience (Zouni & Kouremenos, 2008). It has found that for co-creation to be successful it is important that tourist is involved in the activities of their interest, and to activate what is called as involvement with space exploration of knowledge is a key, some studies have defined this as on-site experience (Andrades & Dimanche, 2014; Mathisen, 2013).

3.   The tourist perspective

The establishment of relationship between producer, who is supplier of services like tour operator and consumer, who is tourist is essential for co-creation experience. The consumers in this case are involved right from design to consumption stage of the service and hence are co-creators of value and in some cases sole creators of value (Li & Petrick, 2008; Rihova et

al., 2013). The tourist perspective analyses co-creation as it happens before, during and after the travel. The following sections discusses the key dimensions as found in the literature.

3.1. The tourist contributes pre-consumption. Co-creation is an all-encompassing phenomenon that is a function of interrelated activities which connects the tourist and to all other players before, during and post consumption (Andrades & Dimanche, 2014; Eraqi, 2011; Hjalager & Nordin, 2011; Prebensen et al., 2013; Jager, 2009; Volo, 2009; Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Neuhofer et al., 2012). To further understand this point from the tourist's perspective, initial thought and planning about destination, for

example is a co-creative activity as it deals with designing of experience before production and consumption; participating in a local activity or experiencing a thrill ride would represent co-creation during the visit, and sharing reviews, feedback, pictures and experiences over tripadvisor.com, virtual travel community is an example of co-creation of an experience in the post-travel phase. It is evident that the tourist is no more a passive consumer rather they add lot of value through their active participation using personal resources like intellects to create a memorable experience for themselves (Prebensen et al., 2013; Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2013).

3.2. The tourist has moved from gaze to 'roll-up the sleeve' and participates in on-site experience activities. The traditional view of tourist states that the tourist is a passive entity and is mostly directed towards visual appealing things (Perkins & Thorns, 2001, p. 187). Some studies in 1990s proposed that activities were mainly directed at sights that could be found at sites (Pagenstecher, 2003). Examples of such activities are visiting temples, museums, and other historical places, attending local festivals. This view took tourist as passive spectator. Over the year's tourism has evolved and is passing through maturing process (Richards, 2011). Tourist are now seen as highly motivated with higher needs, such as personal identity and growth (MacLeod et al., 2009).

The modern research finds that travel to destinations are more complex and holistic that involves participation (Edensor, 2000) which would be stimulating, out of routine and meaningful (Tan et al., 2013).

Tourists have an urge and desire to participate and do things rather than just seeing because one's participation is more believing (Eraqi, 2011; Mkono, 2012). A tourist wants to interact, and apply their knowledge to the environment, they want to be creator and actors in the experience rather than be observers (Tan et al., 2013; Tan et al., 2014; O'Dell, 2007).

3.3. Activities are involvement physically, emotionally, or mentally. Activities create experiences and participations and participations may be physical, emotional, or mental

engagement (Morgan, 2007) (Aho, 2001; Mkono, 2012; Bertella, 2014). Such tourism is sometime referred to as alternative tourism based on active participation, the new concepts calls for physical or intellectual challenges attracting tourists (Buhalis, 2001; Rihova et al., 2014). These new seeked out area mostly are found in extreme sports, cultural, adventure, and creative tourism (Azevedo, 2009, p. 4).

3.4. The tourist interacts with others during consumption. Tourist connects with other stakeholders in the environment during the consumption space, they interact or engage with their co-tourists, other tourists, locals, and suppliers (Verhoefet al., 2009), (Mansfeldt et al., 2008; Morgan, 2007; Mossberg, 2007). There are certain types of interpersonal interactions that a tourist gets involved into. They could be classified as planned, un planned, formal and informal interpersonal interactions. For instance, an interaction with an expert in botany on visit to a botanical garden is a formal interaction, whereas an interaction and communication with fellow tourist the same park is unplanned one. On the other hand, during the check-in process the interaction between hotel staff and tourist is an example of formal interaction and a chance encounter between a tourist and a local resident in a bar is an example of informal interaction. All the above interaction is part of co-creation experience that a tourist is going through at destination (Cutler & Carmichael,2010; Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009).

When tourist interaction takes places the communication mostly involves sharing of information, and emotions (Surra & Ridley, 1991). In services the encounters come about during delivery and the interactions relate to entire servicescape including all actors (Shostack, 1984). As we understand that interactions are at the core of experience, there is a social dimension to it. The social angle comes in force because tourist's motivation in enjoying the destination is driven by socializing with others and creation of emotional moments during the delivery (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; De Rojas & Camarero, 2008; Kreziak & Frochot, 2011; Correia & Crouch, 2004).

3.5. The tourist engagement creates highly subjective co-creation experiences. Tourism creates different perceived experiences for the same activities. As it is an individualistic experience which are intangible and subjective the co-creation experiences become a personal phenomenon (Morgan, 2007; Cutler & Carmichael,2010; O'Dell, 2007).

The subjectivity during work or leisure comes into picture defined by heightened happiness, self-awareness, and extreme concentration (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Along with, Tourism experiences are characterized by expectation, perception, and memory, and connected to different stages of the overall tourism experience (Larsen, 2007). Co-creation and tourism experience subjectivity depends on the type of tourism and interaction it has with others during consumption (Ihamäki, 2012; Morgan, 2007). As discussed above, it depends upon

how tourist engages and co-creates either actively or passively that will decide the quality of tourism experience (Richards, 2010; Richards & Marques, 2012).

4.   Conclusion

It is evident form this study that both participation and interaction as important for co-creation tourism experience. It calls for more participative behaviour from tourist to create memories for life-long. Co-creation is a strategic choice that tour operators and destination managers need to consider when marketing tourism services, it calls for all the management and marketing attention (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Jager, 2009; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2003; Cabidduet al., 2013; Füller, Hutter, & Faullant, 2011).

Co-creation experiences start from the designing and planning stage and last after the tour is over, but the on-site experience is at core of the overall tourism experience and for that to be positive it is important that tourist participates and engages with the destination environment. Moreover, when tourist find themselves in a new, unique, challenging and motivation environment that is when the most memorable memories are created.

The future research that could be done include a) a comparative study on dimensions for participation between different types of tourism; b) finding tourist motivators based on active participation for high involvement co-creation experiences. This review was done to find the tourist perspective of co-creation experiences and helping managers in tourism sector to design such elements in service planning phase.

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