



Exploring relationships between tourism experience co-creation, life satisfaction and behavioural intentions: Empirical evidence

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Abstract

This paper contributes to the debate about the relationships among tourism experience co-creation, satisfaction with vacation experience, satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life, life satisfaction and behavioural intentions. A survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 263 international tourists who visited several tourist destinations in Croatia. To test the proposed model, partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) was employed. All six hypotheses were confirmed. It has been established that co-creation of tourism experience significantly contributes to the satisfaction of tourists staying in a destination, which has a positive effect on life satisfaction and future behavioural intentions.

Keywords: tourism experience co-creation, life satisfaction, behavioural intention

1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to establish the relationships among degree of co-creation, satisfaction with vacation experience, satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life, life satisfaction and behavioural intention towards the visited tourist destination.

Co-creating value in tourism refers to the participation of tourists in tourist experience co-creation. An experience is a vital component of any tourist travel and results from the consumption of tourism products. Because of tourism's mostly service-related and intangible character, products/services in tourism are always experiential (Williams, 2006), and the visit stage of tourists in a destination is the stage with the greatest potential for creating tourist experience and generating value for tourists (Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin, 2012). Tourist experience co-creation implies experiences that are actively designed through the cooperation of tourists and companies. By intensifying their cooperation, a higher level of interaction and consumer-orientation can be reached as well as a higher level of created value (Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin, 2013). Experience co-creation contributes to the authenticity and uniqueness of a destination (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Previous research shows that tourism experience co-creation in a destination affects satisfaction with the tourism experience (Prebensen, Kim, and Uysal, 2015). Numerous other studies have also confirmed the role of tourism in improving the quality of life of tourists (Kim, Woo, and Uysal 2015; Moscardo, 2009; Neal, Uysal, and Sirgy, 2007). Furthermore, Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy, and Prebensen (2016) found that experience co-creation has a positive influence on travel experience and on loyalty to a service provider, and that travel satisfaction has a positive impact on overall satisfaction with life. There has, however, been little empirical research regarding the relationship between tourism experience value co-creation at the destination level, tourists' travel satisfaction and overall satisfaction with life, and tourists' behavioural intentions reflected in their loyalty to a destination. Hence, this study represents a contribution to the discourse on the correlations between the above mentioned concepts.

The paper is organized as follows. First, a theoretical framework supporting our study and model specification is presented. Then, the methods used are explained and research results, presented. The last section discusses the findings, contributions and limitations of the study and offers suggestions for further research.

2. Theoretical Framework and Model Specification

In the following section, relationships among the main concepts of this study are hypothesized and a conceptual model is developed.

The experience of leisure and tourism is considered as "a subjective mental state felt by participants" (Otto & Ritchie, 1996, p. 166). It is achieved through active engagement with and participation in the given context of tourism settings, as well as through the emotional senses of touch and affect (Park & Santos, 2016). By cooperating with service providers, consumers i.e. tourists co-create their own experiences. Hence, "co-creation of experiences is about the process through which customers interact with service providers, or settings, to create their own unique experience"(Mathis et al. 2016). There are many factors that influence the tourist experience. Da Costa Mendes et al. (2010) argue that the combination of inherent factors and associated satisfaction, in terms of acquired and consumed services during the holistic tourism experience, determines the overall satisfaction level of tourists. In recent studies it has been proved that tourist experience co-creation positively affects satisfaction with the vacation experience (Mathis, 2013). Moreover, the level of involvement and engagement in the co-creation experience intensifies the level of satisfaction with vacation

experience (Prebensen et al. 2015). Therefore, we propose that: *The degree of co-creation is positively related to satisfaction with vacation experience (H₁).*

Tourism experience represents a form of leisure time. Many scientists have explored and proved the impact of leisure time on subjective well-being or life satisfaction (Carneiro & Eusébio, 2012; Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal, 1999). A large number of authors have also studied the effect of vacation as a component of leisure time (Dolnicar, Lazarevski, and Yanamandram, 2013; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee, and Yu, 2011). For instance, Mathis et al. (2016) found that satisfaction with vacation experience is a significant predictor of satisfaction with the impact of the vacation on overall life. Further, a study by Kim et al. (2015) found that satisfaction with travel experience has a positive influence on overall quality of life. Hence, we posit that: *Satisfaction with vacation experience is positively related to satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life (H₂).*

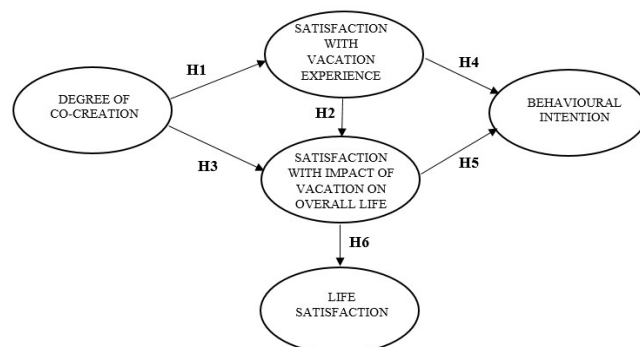
Neal, Sirgy, and Uysal (2004) revealed that satisfaction with tourism services affects travellers' quality of life through the mediating effects of satisfaction with travel/tourism experiences and satisfaction with leisure life. Starting from the fact that tourism experience co-creation contributes to satisfaction with vacation experience (Mathis et al., 2016) we propose that: *The degree of co-creation is positively related to satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life (H₃).*

Further, scientist proved that tourist satisfaction is a determinant of destination loyalty. Thus, Da Costa Mendes et al. (2010) revealed that satisfaction positively affects tourist loyalty intention measured by revisit intention and willingness to recommend. Also, Kim et al. (2015) found out that satisfaction with travel experience has a positive influence on revisit intention. Therefore, we propose that: *Satisfaction with vacation experience is positively related to behavioural intention (H₄).* Further, Kim et al. (2015) in their study show that leisure life satisfaction, as an evaluation of a specific sub-life domain, is a significant predictor of revisit intention. Therefore, we posit that: *Satisfaction with the impact of vacation on overall life is positively related to behavioural intention (H₅).*

Numerous studies have established the role of tourism in improving the quality of life of tourists (Kim et al., 2015; Moscardo, 2009; Neal et al., 2007; Neal et al., 2004). For example, the study by Neal et al. (2007) confirms that tourism is an important aspect of leisure life, which is an important factor in overall life satisfaction. Therefore, we propose: *Satisfaction with the impact of vacation on overall life is positively related to life satisfaction (H₆).*

The presumed relationships form the model seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The conceptual model of this study



3. Methodology

The survey method was applied to collect data. Therefore, a questionnaire was designed. In addition to demographic questions and those concerning the behaviour of tourists, the questionnaire included five constructs which were measured by items taken from the existing

literature. The following constructs were involved: the degree of co-creation (Grisseemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012), satisfaction with vacation experience (Prebensen et al., 2015), satisfaction with impact of vacation on life overall (Mathis et al., 2016), satisfaction with life in general (Neal et al., 2007). Behavioural intention was measured by items that refer to revisiting a destination (Neal, et al., 2007), intention to recommend (adapted from Kim, Chua, Lee, Boo, and Han, 2015), and sharing of experience (one item borrowed from Buonincontri, Morvillo, Okumus, and van Niekerk, M. 2017). All items were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. The questionnaire was created in English and translated into Croatian, German and Italian. The research was conducted in summer 2017. The respondents were international tourists who visited several destinations in Croatia, in the broader Kvarner region. A total of 263 valid questionnaires were collected. Data processing and analysis applied univariate and multivariate statistical methods in SPSS ver 25. The hypotheses are tested and confirmed using the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Results of the research are presented below.

4. Findings

Most respondents were female (58.2%), between 26 and 35 years old (24.7%), who came to the destination for the first time (44.1%), with a partner (34.2%), organized the trip individually (75.3%) and stayed 4-7 nights (37.6%) in private accommodation (42.6%).

An evaluation of the hypothesised model started with verification of the measurement model. PLS-SEM results for the measurement model are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: PLS results for the measurement model

VARIABLE	ITEM	λ^*	CR	AVE
DEGREE OF CO-CREATION (COCR)				
cocr1	I have been actively involved in the packaging of my trip.	0.880	0.912	0.721
cocr2	I have used my experience from previous trips in order to arrange this trip.	0.874		
cocr3	The ideas of how to arrange this trip were predominantly suggested by myself.	0.881		
cocr4	I have spent a considerable amount of time arranging this trip.	0.756		
SATISFACTION WITH VACATION EXPERIENCE (SVE)				
sve1	I am satisfied with the decision to participate in this experience.	0.722	0.903	0.609
sve2	It was a wise choice.	0.791		
sve3	It has been a good experience.	0.803		
sve4	I will participate in similar types of experiences in the future.	0.790		
sve5	I will recommend this experience to others.	0.798		
sve6	I enjoy discussing this type of holiday with my friends.	0.775		
SATISFACTION WITH IMPACT OF VACATION ON OVERALL LIFE (SVOL)				
svlo1	All in all, I feel that this vacation has enriched my life. I'm really glad I went on this trip.	0.819	0.929	0.686
svlo2	On this trip, I accomplished the purpose of the vacation. This experience has enriched me in some ways.	0.842		
svlo3	This vacation was rewarding to me in many ways, I feel much better about things and myself after this trip.	0.844		

svlo4	Overall, my experience with this vacation was memorable having enriched my quality of life.	0.839		
svlo5	My satisfaction with life in general was increased shortly after this vacation.	0.813		
svlo6	Overall, I felt happy upon my return from this vacation.	0.809		
LIFE SATISFACTION (LS)				
sqol1	I am generally happy with my life.	0.914	0.929	0.813
sqol2	Although I have my ups and downs, in general, I feel good about my life.	0.913		
sqol3	I lead a meaningful and fulfilling life.	0.878		
BEHAVIOURAL INTENTION (BI)				
rev1	Revisiting the destination would be worthwhile.	0.808	0.930	0.655
rev2	I will revisit the destination.	0.795		
rev3	I would like to stay more days in the destination.	0.755		
shex2	I will tell others about the tourism experience I have had during this trip.	0.779		
rec1	I would like to recommend others to visit the destination.	0.854		
rec2	I would say positive things about this summer destination to others	0.832		
rec3	If someone is looking for a good summer destination, I will suggest to him/her to patronize this destination.	0.836		

* All factor loadings were significant at $p < .001$, CR stands for composite reliability; AVE stands for average variance extracted

Source: Research results

Table 2 shows that all item loadings of the reflective constructs exceed the recommended value of 0.708 (Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2014, p. 103). The composite reliability values, ranging from 0.903 to 0.930, demonstrate that all five constructs have high levels of internal consistency reliability. Convergent validity assessment is based on the average variances extracted (AVE). The AVE values of all five constructs reflect the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct. All values are well above the cut-off of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014), indicating convergent validity for all constructs.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Table 2).

Table 2: Discriminant validity

CONSTRUCT	COCR	SVE	SVLO	LS	BI
Degree of co-creation (COCR)	0.849				
Satisfaction with vacation experience (SVE)	0.476	0.780			
Satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life (SVOL)	0.501	0.688	0.828		
Life satisfaction (LS)	0.305	0.492	0.462	0.902	
Behavioural intention (BI)	0.478	0.722	0.660	0.376	0.809

Source: Research results

The square roots of AVE values for all constructs are above the construct's highest correlation with other latent variables in the model. Hence, the results confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 3 presents the standardized path coefficient estimates, their respective t-values and p-values, and summarizes the results of hypotheses testing. It is evident that all relationships are statistically significant, thus supporting all six hypotheses. The R^2 value obtained for satisfaction with vacation experience (0.226) and satisfaction with life in general (0.213) is weak while the R^2 value for satisfaction with impact of vacation on overall life (0.513) and behavioural intention (0.572) can be considered moderate.

Table 3. Significance testing of the structural model path coefficients

Path	Path coefficients	t-values	p-values	Hypothesis
COOCR → SVE	0.476	7.514	0.000	H ₁ : supported
SVE → SVOL	0.309	10.801	0.000	H ₂ : supported
COCR → SVOL	0.224	3.635	0.000	H ₃ : supported
SVE → BI	0.510	5.495	0.000	H ₄ : supported
SVOL → BI	0.309	3.663	0.000	H ₅ : supported
SVOL → LS	0.462	7.998	0.000	H ₆ : supported

Source: research results

5. Conclusion

The study confirms the positive effects that the vacation experience and the satisfaction of tourists with their stay in a destination have on satisfaction with life and on future behavioural intentions. The tourism experience is more memorable when tourists take part in co-creating their own experiences, a finding also confirmed by the research of Prebensen et al. (2015). Namely, this study confirms the correlation between satisfaction with the vacation experience and overall quality of life, which is in line with the findings of Kim et al. (2015) and Mathis et al. (2016). Furthermore, satisfaction with the vacation experience has a positive influence on future behavioural intentions, reflected in revisit intention, sharing experiences and recommendation, as also confirmed by Kim et al. (2015). The study further proves that satisfaction with the impact of vacation on overall life has a positive effect on life satisfaction, a finding consistent with that of Neal et al. (2007).

The above findings present a starting point for making marketing decisions and marketing strategies at the destination level and service-provider level. For tourists to gain an unforgettable tourism experience, they should be enabled to co-create experiences, take part in various activities, and share their tourism experience using information technology. A destination's marketing managers can contribute towards the creation of memorable tourism experiences for tourists by undertaking adequate marketing activities, such as the organisation of special events, and by holding training programmes for employees and residents. This will help to enhance the loyalty of tourists to a destination and to improve the promotion of the destination.

This study has certain limitations. As research was conducted on a convenience sample, future studies should include a larger number of tourists and encompass a wider spatial area. Although the methodology used in this study was appropriate to its needs, other research methods should be applied in future studies to ensure that the effect of tourism experience co-creation on quality of life and future behavioural intentions can be studied in even greater depth.

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