

PalArch's Journal of Archaeology
of Egypt / Egyptology

MODELING OF CO-CREATION IN ADVENTURE TOURISM:
EMPOWERING CUSTOMER PARTICIPATION TO STRENGTHEN
BEHAVIORAL INTENTION

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**Radeswandri, Ginta Ginting: Modeling of Co-Creation in Adventure Tourism:
Empowering Customer Participation to Strengthen Behavioral Intention -- Palarch's
Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 18(1), ISSN 1567-214x**

Keywords: Adventure Tourism, Co-creation Value, Customer Participation, Experience

Abstract

Adventure tourism is a rapidly growing sector, with a potential market estimated to provide 9% of the GDP of a country. However, this significant opportunity is yet to be optimized by entrepreneurs, particularly in Indonesia, which has natural resources that can be managed well to offer adventure tourism. Businesspersons, especially those in the tourism field, are challenged to encourage the growth of adventure tourism. Therefore, this study suggests a conceptual model of co-creation by involving customer participation to explore facts on the field regarding the extent of the role of consumer involvement as co-producer in creating value (unique experience). Co-creation becomes the key to the success of adventure tourism and remains a phenomenon and research gap that requires further evidence. Value co-creation through consumer participation will promote satisfaction and repurchase intention, which, in turn, will affect business sustainability. The conceptual model developed in this research is made on the basis of empirical study and can be used to conduct research in the development of the tourism industry. Empirically, the objective for this modeling can trigger further research on value co-creation by referring to a service-dominant logic paradigm especially in the tourism sector.

INTRODUCTION

Adventure tourism is a niche market in the tourism industry with potential for rapid development (Williams & Soutar, 2009). According to the Travel Industry Association, the tourism industry will grow to more than 15% (World Tourism Organization, 2014). Similarly, Peacock Brymer, Davids, and Dillon (2017) state that adventure tourism is a sector that grows very

rapidly, which can encourage the growth of the tourism industry locally and globally. Data from the World Tourism Organization (2014) indicate that the number of international tourists who traveled abroad in 2013 reached 1 billion people who can provide income for the local country about 9% of its GDP. Viewed from the perspective of development, the market potential of adventure tourism is immense for several reasons, including its ability to 1) attract consumers considerable funds and who are willing to pay for plane tickets, pay for luxury hotel costs, and engage in luxury activities; 2) directly support the local economy; and 3) encourage environmental sustainability as well as preserve the local culture of the site of the tourism object (World Tourism Organization, 2014).

Moreover, adventure tourism is a niche market niche in the tourism industry with remarkable potential regarding the risky exploration and travel that might require skill and physical activity. Muller and Cleaver (2000) assert, "*adventure tourism is frequently associated with participation in a risky physical activity in the outdoors*". Next, Sung (2004) claims that adventure tourism is known to have six important dimensions: activity, experience, environment, motivation, risk, and performance. Other experts (Miller, 2003; Patterson & Pan, 2007) describe two types of adventure tourism, namely, soft adventure and hard adventure, where the former is an activity that has low risk, requires low physical activity, and involves visiting exotic places. Conversely, hard adventure entails a high-risk activity that demands certain skills and competencies in challenging adrenalin (Williams & Soutar, 2009). However, Peacock et al. (2017) criticizes the opinion on travel adventure for remaining traditional. In the future, the term should be defined more dynamically by considering the ecological aspect of the relationship between human beings and the environment.

The psychological and behavioral aspects of adventure tourism are more prominent than its economic and functional aspects. Consumer motivation is affected by two forces: push and pull (Woodside & Martin, 2008). The pull factor is called extrinsic motivation (Robinson, Heitmann & Dieke, 2011). By contrast, the push factor is intangible, including factors that drive the consumer to utilize tourism service, such as gaining unique experiences, meeting new friends, socializing, building self-confidence, and getting away from daily routines (Patterson, 2006; Pomfret, 2006 and Bonera, 2008). Adventure tourism development is suggested to be influenced more by the push factor. Therefore, the creation of experience (that is, an impressive unique experience) becomes the important factor that creates competitive advantage. Co-creation experience considers the role of the consumer as co-creator, meaning the consumer and entrepreneur interact to co-create experience. The consumer can be involved in the business process such that they can co-create value and acquire experiences that are exceptional, that differs for every consumer according to their preferences, and that fulfill the need and capacity of heterogeneity consumers.

The success rate in co-creation is highly influenced by driver factors from the consumer side, both as co-creator actor (Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Verleye, 2015) and as a resource integrator (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). In essence, the active role of the consumer in participating is very important. In the marketing field, service-dominant logic (SDL) (Vargo & Lusch, 2008) is extremely popular in introducing the premise "*the customer is always a co-*

creator of value.” SDL views consumers as a proactive party that can be involved in creating value, whereas the company plays the facilitator in the co-creation process and is not merely a producer that determines the value standard (Payne et al., 2008 and Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010). Customer participation becomes a dominant factor in supporting the success of services offered by the company. Such participation is consistent with the term “*presumption,*” which is defined by Xie, Bagozzi, and Troye (2008) as the act of creating value that is performed by the customer and that will contribute to the production of a product/service that will be consumed by the customer to provide consumption experience.

In adventure tourism, a tourist needs a certain experience where she/he can play a role in production and consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Gronroos & Ravald, 2011). The bottom line is that customer participation is required to create an experience (value) that affects satisfaction and repurchase intention to maintain business sustainability. Previous studies (So, Wong, & Sculli, 2005; Fang, Qureshi, & Sun, 2014) support the assumption that satisfaction influences revisit intention. Hence, satisfaction perceived by a tourist is estimated to affect the will to reuse the adventure tourism service.

The role of the customer as a resource integrator through active participation in value creation has received much scholarly attention (Vargo & Lusch, 2008; Chan et al., 2010; Mustak, Jakkola, & Halimen, 2013; Ginting, 2016), but related research on tourism remains scarce. In addition, the popularity of the increasingly growing adventure tourism is not balanced, with scarce research results that can be used as references for developing the adventure tourism business. Thus, limited research is available on adventure tourism (Sung, 2004).

Given various phenomena and existing research gaps, proposing a modeling technique that can be used as a basis to conduct further research is vital. This modeling approach is important for application in the tourism industry, particularly in adventure tourism, so that consumer participation toward co-creation experience in adventure tourism can be identified. Therefore, behavioral intention can be steered such that the sustainability of adventure tourism can be improved.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Importance of customer participation to reinforcing value co-creation

According to SDL, consumers are proactive value co-creators and are not merely being passive recipients of the value offered by a company, whereas the company acts as a facilitator in value co-creation process (Payne et al., 2008). Customer participation is an effort of co-producing a product/service (Chan et al., 2010), which can strengthen the relationship between the company and the consumer, and result in profit increase (Bendapulli & Leone, 2003 and Payne et al., 2008). In essence, customer participation is an important element in value co-creation particularly for services that require high interaction on the customer side and low activity on the company side (Wunderlich, Wangenheim, & Bitner, 2013).

The concept of customer participation developed rapidly, particularly because of the emergence of investigations by experts (Vargo & Lusch, 2008 and Gronroos, 2008) in which the customer is an active participant in the co-production of service as a means to co-create value. Customer participation is an important concept because of the development of the SDL

paradigm, where a service process occurs when an interaction transpires between a service provider and a customer by sharing resources (knowledge and skills) to co-experience benefits. The latest study by Dong (2015) analyzes how consumer participation is involved in the process of co-creating value, namely “*I am producing*” versus “*I am Designing*.” If the consumer is physically involved in creating a service, then customer participation is classified as “*producer*;” if the consumer directly provides information for designing a service, then the customer participation is classified as “*designer*.” A concept developed with consumer participation in co-creating value proposed by Xie et al. (2008) states that “...*prosumption implies that buyers buy products for their own consumption...*” Prosumption combines the meaning of “producer” and “consumer.” This term emphasizes the fact that consumers in the value creation process also act as co-producers of a value when they add value to the product and use it. The role of consumer alters from merely buying a product/service to being a “pro-summer” who effectively participates in producing value.

Customer participation can provide benefits for consumers and for service providers, which are summarized by Wattanakamolchai (2009) as follows: 1) increasing productivity because consumers become company employees, 2) increasing communication between the company and the consumer, which consequently increases feedback, and 3) increasing service quality because a consumer actively involved since the early service process. In addition to the benefits, Wattanakamolchai (2009) also reveals several problems from the managerial side, namely, 1) failure to educate consumers to participate actively and effectively, 2) employees might face difficulty to provide the service wanted if the consumer fails, 3) frustrating consumers can affect employees, and 4) most experts claim that customer participation can cause uncertainty to the company.

In the context of adventure tourism, consumer participation indicates how far the tourist is willing to share information, provide an opinion, and be involved in decision making about products/services from the service provider (Chan et al., 2010, Wattanakamolchai, 2009 and Gallan, Jarvis, & Brown, 2013). This consumer participation can be identified through sharing information, expression, and suggestion. Several studies (Wattanakamolchai, 2009 and Chan et al., 2010) show that customer participation is a strong driving force of value co-creation.

The value co-creation concept has developed rapidly since the assertion of Vargo and Lusch (2008) regarding the paradigm shift from goods-dominant logic (GDL) to SDL. The involvement of consumers and other parties in value creation enables the integration of knowledge and skill, and can thereby promote the development of a new and important capacity (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). By involving consumers, the company can ascertain their needs/wants, which can reduce the cost and energy to meet customer satisfaction. The organization must also facilitate active consumer participation through a specific process so as to reduce investment level that must be fulfilled (Payne et al., 2008). In short, “...*SDL suggests that all participants in the value creation process be viewed as dynamic operant resources. Accordingly, they should be viewed as the primary source of firm and national innovation and value creation...*” (Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

Therefore, consumers can become one of the important resources for companies to create value.

SDL views the importance of calculating the resources (knowledge and skill) owned by other parties (customers, suppliers, and stakeholders) that become the basis for the creation of competitive advantage. SDL considers the significance of consumers, suppliers, and other authorities as operant resources to enable collaboration, co-production, and co-creation through marketing plans and strategic programs developed by the company (Lusch, Vargo, & Wessels, 2008). The co-production concept implicitly affirms the consumer as co-producer, which is an important part of the entire manufacturing process; moreover, consumers must be able to study how to use, maintain, fix, and adapt various manufacturing components to fulfill needs, situations, and behaviors (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Gronroos, 2008). According to Lovelock and Wirtz (2011), “*blueprinting*” involves consumer participation in co-production that can be used to specify the role of consumers in service delivery by identifying interface spots between service providers and consumers as well as assessing participation according to three levels (low, middle, and high). SDL also provides an important contribution by proposing the concept of co-creation that emphasizes the importance for a company to involve consumers in co-creation; as Vargo and Lusch (2008) claim, “...*the customer is always a co-creator of value...*”. However, Gronroos (2008) asks “...*if customers are co-creators of value, what is the role of the firm? are firm the main creator of value or what are they?*” Gronroos (2008) stresses more the concept of value in use as an important aspect of the occurrence of exchange because consumers add skill, knowledge, and processes.

Several experts (Zhang & Chen, 2008; Grace & Iacono, 2015) assert that consumers are active players in value co-creation and can increase the effectiveness and efficiency of that process. The value obtained through co-creation can provide consumer satisfaction and benefit the company, as well as encourage repeat purchase. The key to co-creation is integration with consumers, which Agrawal and Rahman (2015) claim is not easily accomplished and provides challenges to companies because of several things: heterogeneity, determining consumer tasks, recruitment, and consumer selection, and managing the various results of co-creation from consumers. One of the important factors that must be met by the company for efficient value co-creation is obtaining specific profiles and consumer data that will be involved in co-creation. Further, Agrawal and Rahman (2015) explain the process of “value co-creation” (see Figure 1).

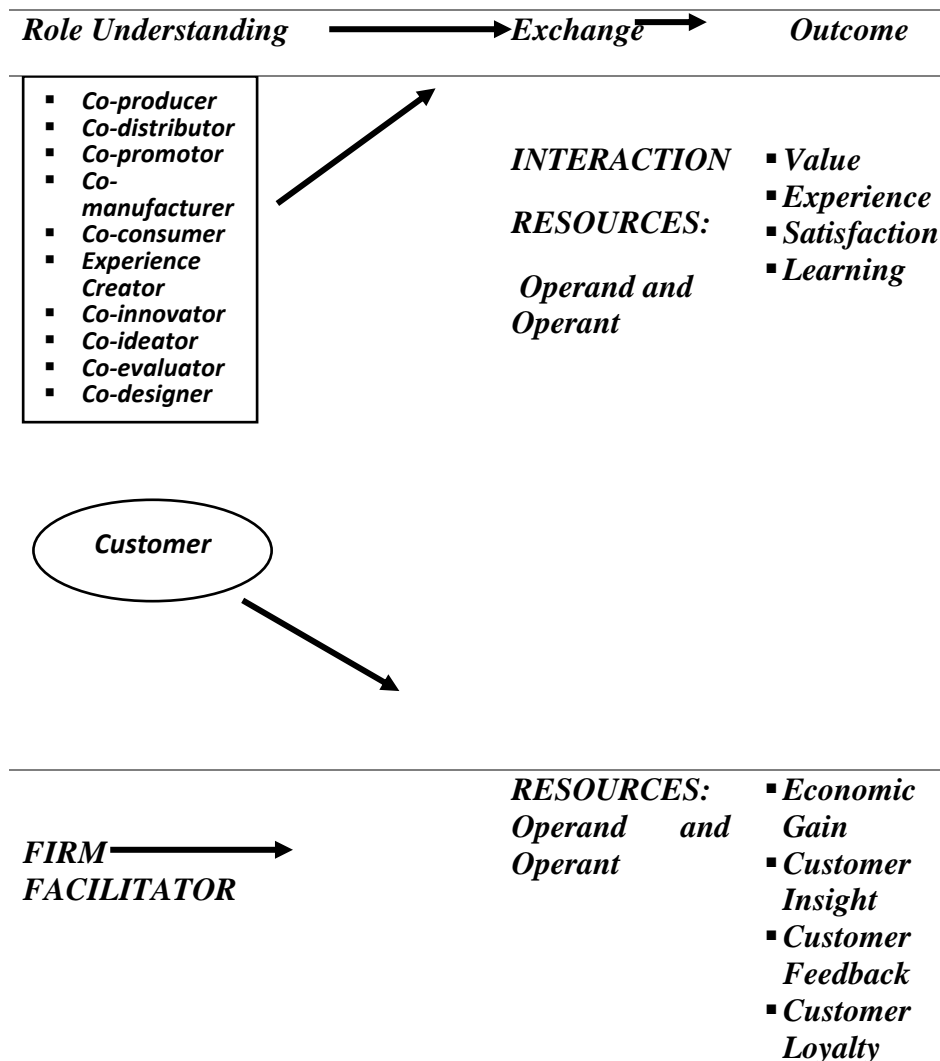


Figure 1. Value Co-creation Process (Source: Agrawal & Rahman, 2015)

In value co-creation, the company should accurately determine the role of consumer, whether as co-producer, co-manufacturer, and co-designer. The important role of the company is as a facilitator. In the exchange process, the interaction will occur between the resources owned by the consumers and producers. Resources are classified into 1) operant resources: financial, physical, social, technology, and culture; and 2) operand resources: economy and human. Then, the optimal interaction in the exchange process will provide positive benefit from the consumer and the company. From the consumer side, value co-creation will affect the increase in value, experience, satisfaction, and learning. From the company side, the effects will involve several aspects: profit, understanding consumers, obtaining inputs and gaining loyal consumers. In short, co-creation involves interaction, involvement, and a relationship with consumers. In today’s era, every business actor wants consumers to participate in product development because it will build loyalty and faith among consumers. Co-creation is widely accepted as an innovation model and a satisfaction-related concept.

Payne et al. (2008) affirm that customer experience and value creation are more emphasized than the product itself. They also assert that value co-

creation with consumers must be viewed as something that is dynamic and interactive. Several experts (Gronroos, 2008; Gummesson & Mele, 2010) also highlight that for value co-creation to be implemented well, many important factors are required, such as resource integration, interaction, and joint value creation. Therefore, the consumer becomes an important party whose relationship with the company must be managed. In short, the company must be able to facilitate interaction optimally so that the consumer becomes willing to use resources they own (knowledge, skill, and time) to create value. Bharti, Agrawal, and Sharma (2013) suggest driving factors for consumer willingness to be involved in co-creating value, namely: 1) dispositional factors, such as training, role clarity, the ability to contribute, commitment, needs, empathy, knowledge, and reputation; 2) situational factors such as financial incentives, level of dependability, community, opinion leader, social capital, and interaction. The measurement of value co-creation, among others, is proposed by Ranjan and Read (2016) who divide such measure into two sub-variables: 1) co-production consisting of three dimensions (knowledge, equity, and interaction); and 2) value in use consisting of three dimensions (experience, personalization, and relationship). Moreover, Gronroos (2008) proposes the concept of value in use as an important aspect of the exchange as the reason consumers add skill, knowledge, and processes. In the context of adventure tourism, value co-creation is co-creation between consumers and business actors that can create value (a unique, dynamic, and interactive experience).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Propositions

According to SDL, consumers are proactive parties while the company plays a role in facilitating the process of value co-creation (Payne et al., 2008). Customer participation indicates the effort to support the production activities of a service (co-producing a service) (Chan et al., 2010), and this participation provides the company with a closer relationship with consumers, which affects profit growth (Bendapulli & Leone, 2003; Payne et al., 2008). Therefore, customer participation is an important component in value co-creation. Value co-creation is a core concept of SDL and becomes the main premise of customer participation which can provide a good value for consumers themselves or for the company (Dong, 2015 and Chan et al., 2010). The value that is co-created contains two values, extrinsic value (economic and relational) and intrinsic value (enjoyment). Results from Etgar (2008) can be used as empirical evidence which indicates the relationship between customer participation and value co-creation. Hence, consumer participation in the adventure tourism business can encourage value creation, and the company must facilitate such value to run optimally. Consumers are service co-producers, and marketing review is directed to the collaboration between the company and consumers (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). This collaboration will create value that can provide opportunities for the company to design service experiences. Interaction requires consumer participation so that consumers are actively involved in production and service delivery. Consumer participation can be in the form of sharing knowledge and skills and providing input. Thus, the company that can involve its consumers to participate actively will be able to get close to or

build relationships with customers that will encourage positive customer behavior (Bendapulli & Leone, 2003; Payne et al., 2008). The results of several empirical studies form the bases for the following proposition:

Proposition 1: Successfully increasing value co-creation must be supported by customer participation

Generally, the success of the company can be identified as consumer satisfaction, which will affect the finances of the company (profit) (Zeithaml & Bitner, 2006). Vega-Vazquez, Revilla-Camacho, and Cossío-Silva (2013) confirm a relationship between value co-creation and customer satisfaction from the consumer side (consumer). Their research also proves that consumer satisfaction due to involvement in value co-creation will have a positive effect on retention and profit. Theory on consumer protection refers to the confirmation–disconfirmation paradigm, which suggests that the satisfaction perceived by the consumer is a comparison between hope and reality (Oliver, 2009). Generally, the construct of consumer satisfaction is closely related to consumer behavior. Involvement in the development of services will give consumers the feeling that they are part of the company, which will certainly affect satisfaction. This condition will also encourage positive behavior, namely enhancing their will to repurchase. Consumers and entrepreneurs in adventure tourism collaborate in creating experiences that can encourage repurchases and recommendation to others. Hence, tourists who use adventure tourism services will be satisfied and will revisit if they are involved in the co-creation experience. On the basis of such opinions and given the support of prior empirical investigations, the following propositions are made:

Proposition 2: Customer satisfaction in adventure tourism must be supported by value co-creation

Proposition 3: Revisit intention in adventure tourism must be supported by value co-creation

Several studies (Chan, Yim, & Lam, 2010; Mustak et al., 2013) prove the relationship between consumer participation and behavioral intention. Consumer participation is an affective response whose intensity depends on time and important aspects related to the purchase and consumption by consumers (Giese & Cote, 2002). As mentioned, if the consumer is involved in the development of services, they gain a feeling of being part of the company, which will certainly influence satisfaction. This condition will also encourage positive behavior, namely a willingness to repurchase. As stated by Cronin, Brady, Brand, Hightower Jr, and Shemwell (1997), repurchase intention shows a person’s consideration regarding repurchasing a product/service from the same company by considering the various situations faced when purchasing. These results could be used as references of empirical evidence that indicate the relationship between customer satisfaction and repurchase intention. Thus, tourists who use an adventure tourism service that makes them feel satisfied will be encouraged to reuse the service. On the basis of the above opinions and given the support of prior empirical research, the following proposition is made:

Proposition 4: Revisit intention toward adventure tourism is influenced by the efforts of the company in developing customer satisfaction

The Conceptual Model

Based on these propositions, the modeling of co-creation in adventure tourism with regard to empowering the role of customer participation to strengthen behavioral intention is depicted in Figure 2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Adventure tourism is a niche market of the tourism industry that keeps growing significantly because it involves entrepreneurs and tourists locally and globally. As a country rich in natural resources, Indonesia has not been responsive in meeting the needs of the new tourist trend of requiring an emotional touch (experience) and uniqueness in tourism service. Adventure tourism can become one of the tourism services that can accommodate the new phenomenon of tourist needs. The need for this adventure tourism has made caused some entrepreneurs in the tourism industry to offer various tourism objects.

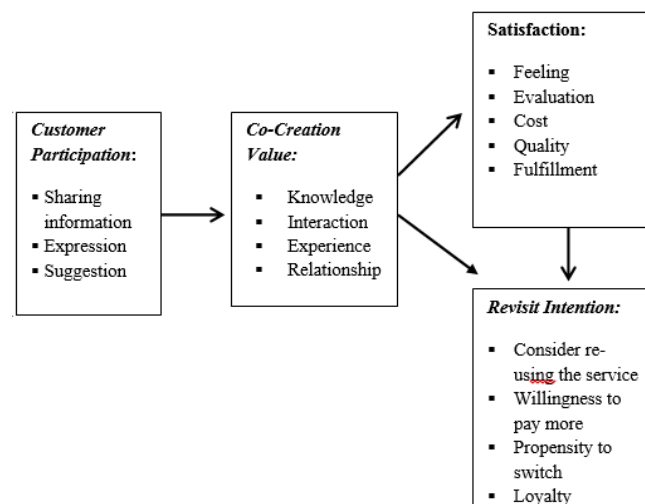


Figure 2. Conceptual Model (Source: Author)

The important thing in adventure tourism is that tourists want to visit adventure tourism sites to gain memorable experiences. The modeling of this co-creation can be used as a reference for exploring facts on the field about the phenomena and problems in the tourism industry. The proposed modeling of value co-creation involves consumer participation in tourism services. Value co-creation is the dynamic and interactive joint creation of value by consumers and service providers (Gronroos, 2008; Gumesson & Mele, 2010; Bharti et al., 2013; Ranjan & Read, 2016). Customer participation shows how far tourists are willing to share information/knowledge, provide opinions, interact, and be involved in decision making about products/services offered by adventure tourism service providers (Wattanakamolchai, 2009; Chan et al., 2010). Consumer involvement entails the role of a co-producer collaborating with service providers to create value and a role in extracting and producing value. Consumers/tourists will gain

benefits, such as enjoyable experiences, gain knowledge and skills, socialize, and gain friends, as well as to be able to meet desired lifestyle changes.

The benefit perceived by tourists in adventure tourism is the happy feeling of experiencing a memorable vacation. Customer satisfaction indicates the contentment perceived by tourists when using adventure tourism services because they were actively involved physically and emotionally in co-creating experience with service providers and their needs and hopes were fulfilled from several aspects, including feelings, evaluation, cost, quality, and fulfillment (Oliver, 2009). Next, the valid behavioral intention perspective has proven the effect of consumer satisfaction on repurchase intention or the intention to use the services provided by certain service providers (Cronin et al., 1997). In the context of adventure tourism, repurchase intention is the possibility of a tourist reusing an adventure tourism service, being loyal to such service, and being willing to pay for more expensive services, as well as a small chance to change services.

CONCLUSIONS

The conceptual model proposed in this paper can be used as a reference for future studies to explore more accurate facts on various fields, particularly regarding consumer involvement in collaborating with service providers to create value (specifically impressive and unique experiences) as an important factor for the success of adventure tourism. This modeling is based on the paradigm of service-dominant logic which is still inchoate and shows a research gap as few empirical research exist on adventure tourism. This co-creation modeling is a development of previous empirical study and is thus expected to facilitate scientific studies that will have a real practical effect for entrepreneurs in the tourism industry. Empirically, this modeling can provide a stimulus for developing studies on co-creation through empowering customer participation, which is a new paradigm in marketing that needs further systematic investigations that can subsequently be employed as the basis for practitioners (service provider) to develop businesses.

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