

The Role of Visitors' Co-creation Experience in the Sustainable Development of Cultural Heritage Sites: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract: Creative tourism increases intangible value-added and innovation to achieve the strategic goal of sustainable development at cultural heritage sites. During the journey, expectations of a personalized experience and the need for participation urge visitors to transform from observers to co-creators. Although co-creation is considered to be an important strategy for the sustainability of tourism, the relationship between the co-creation experience and tourists' sustainable behavior has not been explored. Place attachment as an intermediary variable is added to the study of related relationships. Therefore, a conceptual framework for sustainable development of cultural heritage attractions is established. This research fills the research gap and has practical and theoretical significance.

1. Introduction

As a new type of tourism, creative tourism not only meets the growing spiritual needs of tourists but also meets the strategic needs of the sustainable development of tourism destinations. Richards and Wilson (2006) proposed that creative tourism is influenced by the active participation of tourists, not only as observers, but also interacting and co-creating the entire experience, actively learning from the surrounding environment, and applying this knowledge to develop their skills. The role of tourists as stakeholders is emphasized because, without their active participation, the co-creation experience would not exist (Tan, Kung & Luh, 2013). Only when people not only interact and participate but also appear in the process of creation, design, and reflection, can the experience be creative and unique (Binkhorst, 2007).

Participation and interaction in the travel experience process will bring visitors a sense of control or possessing a certain power (Guo, Lotz, Tang, & Gruen, 2016). Therefore, tourists began to add new characteristics based on their characteristics (including culture, values, creativity, etc.), from passive audiences to active co-producers or even "actors" to transform their roles (Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013), blurring the traditional distinction between producers and consumers (O'Dell, 2007).

At the same time, the development of smart tourism provides more opportunities and ways to create a base for the needs of tourists for a personalized experience and optimize the tourism experience (Jin, Gubbi, Marusic, & Palaniswami, 2014; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019). The widespread use of smart devices and social media platforms can enrich the co-creation experience and become an important platform for the co-creation experience (Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2012).

In heritage tourism, creative tourism experiences provide visitors with opportunities to engage with history to make new meanings (Ross, Saxena, Correia & Deutz, 2017). Tourists' experience in cultural heritage sites can help protect cultural heritage and produce positive sustainable development behaviors (Moscardo, 1996). Sustainability is one of the most important issues in tourism and global environmental development (Powell & Ham, 2008). Encouraging tourists to engage in sustainable development behaviors that reduce environmental damage and even actively protect the environment is one of the biggest challenges facing the sustainable development of the tourism industry (Buonincontri, Marasco, & Ramkissoon, 2017).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Co-creation Experience

"Creativity" is used as a unique marketing gimmick to attract consumers to business (Richards, 2011). In the field of psychology, "creativity" is interpreted as "new", "novel", "original", "useful" and "appropriate" (Batey, 2012). At the same time, creativity is considered to be people's specialty, which is an important symbol of mental health and emotional happiness (Simonton, 2000).

The creative industry is very popular under the background of "Experience economy" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999), "Entertainment economy" (Amin & Thrift, 2002), and "Education tourism" (Bodger, 1998). Activities with the theme of creativity have different expressions in different places and fields (Ali, Ryu & Hussain, 2016). Different expressions such as "creative cluster", "creative class", "creative Street", "creative city", "creative life" and "creative tourism" gradually enter the market (Florida, 2002; Hitters & Richards, 2002; Landry, 2000; Tan et al., 2013; Ali et al., 2016).

In 2006, UNESCO clearly defined the definition of "creative tourism". Tourism includes participation and authentic experience, participation in learning the art, heritage, or other special characteristics of a place, and establishing contact with residents (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2006). Creative tourism advocates that tourists go beyond the static observation of culture and seek participation, education, and experience from their perspective (Ohridska-Olson & Ivanov, 2010), which is to encourage tourists to jointly create their own experience based on their interests, knowledge, and expectations (Prebensen, Vittersø & Dahl, 2013; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Binkhorst (2007) pointed out that creativity is expressed as "doing something by hand". Only through experience and transformation, consumers become so-called "products", and the process of experience and transformation is the process of co-creation. In the co-creation experience, visitors have the opportunity to directly and instantly participate in the creation and orchestration of their activities (Bertella, 2014; Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Co-creating experiences provides opportunities for visitors not only to see things, but to do things (Eraqi, 2011), engage in self-development activities, explore multi-sensory environments, and connect with others (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). This is a collaborative process, a new way to strengthen the relationship between tourism stakeholders psychologically and emotionally (Mathis, Kim, Uysal, Sirgy & Prebensen, 2016).

Tourists may have different experiences during the event, so co-creating experiences can be conceptualized as a series of inherent psychological events and processes of tourists (Scott, Laws & Boksberger, 2009). Co-creation of experience comes from the process of individuals participating in activities and interacting with the subject in a specific experience environment (Larsen, 2007). The co-creation experience is an intangible and highly personal (O'Dell, 2007) subjective phenomenon (Morgan, 2007). Fuller, Hutter, and Faullant (2011) also define the co-creation experience as the subjective feelings or mental state of autonomy, ability, and enjoyment gained by visitors through participating in co-creation activities.

2.2. Place Attachment

Relph (1976) proposed the concept of "sense of place". He believed that the sense of place is a basic expression of human emotions. The sense of place is considered to include the emotional integration of people's attachment and detachment to a particular place (McCreanor, Penney, Jensen, Witten, Kearns, & Barnes, 2006). The term "attachment" comes from the field of psychology, expressing a one-way positive emotional connection with something, focusing on positive emotions (Trentelman, 2009). Tuan (1977) proposed that "people and place have a special attachment relationship" and called it "Topophilia". He believes that when a place is given a certain meaning, the geographical space becomes a place, transformed into an entity that can produce emotional attachment for individuals. Milligan (1998) explained place attachment from the material and social environment. He believed that the social environment is based on the material environment, and individuals give meaning to the geographical environment through interactive social activities, thus

forming a relationship between the individual and the material environment (ie, place).

Scannell and Gifford (2010) proposed a three-dimensional model of the attachment of Person-Process-Place. Among them, "person" refers to the definition of an individual or a collective, that is, the subject that is attached to a place; "process" includes three parts: emotion, cognition, and behavior; "place" means the natural physical and social environment of the place where it is attached. This three-dimensional framework systematically describes the subject relationship in place attachment and interprets the concept of place attachment intuitively and comprehensively. In a word, place attachment represents the positive connection between people and place, which arises from people's multifaceted experiences (participation in activities) in this place (Eisenhauer, Krannich & Blahna, 2000), and finally forms the emotional connection between the two (Kyle, Graefe, Manning & Bacon, 2003; Lee & Shen, 2013).

As a representative of activities that have multiple contacts between people and places, local attachment in tourism and leisure has also received the attention and research of many scholars, especially in sustainable tourism and destination competitiveness (Dwyer, Chen & Lee, 2019). Place attachment in the tourism field can be extended to personal emotional attachment to any service relationship that takes place in that place (Trauer & Ryan, 2005), which means that when tourists' activities in a tourist destination are meaningful, tourists will be more inclined Place attachment (Milligan, 1998; Dwyer et al., 2019).

2.3. Environmental Responsible Behavior

Environmentally Responsible Behavior is expressed by many scholars in different terms, such as Sustainable Behavior (Buonincontri et al., 2017), Pro-environmental Behavior (Daryanto & Song, 2021), Environmentally Friendly Behaviour (Mobley, Vagias & DeWard, 2010).

Many scholars have defined environmentally responsible behavior. Sivek and Hungerford (1990) pointed out that environmentally responsible behavior refers to any behavior taken by individuals or groups that can promote the sustainable use of natural resources, and can achieve the effect of protecting resources. Environmentally responsible behavior refers to personal behavior that promotes environmental sustainability and minimizes negative environmental impacts (Steg & Vlek, 2009). The environmentally responsible behavior of tourists is considered to be a key factor in ensuring the success and sustainability of ecotourism development (Lee, Jan, & Yang, 2013), as a priority response to advocacy to address environmental challenges (Barr, Shaw & Coles, 2011), is the best indicator of sustainable tourism in destination management (Kafyri, Hovardas, & Poirazidis, 2012). Environmentally responsible behavior reflects personal concerns, beliefs, and ecological knowledge about reducing environmental issues (Chiu, Lee, & Chen, 2014).

Stern (2000) divides environmentally responsible behaviors into four types: Environmental activism, Non-activist behaviors in the public sphere, and Private-sphere environmentalism, other environmentally behaviors. Vaske and Kobrin (2001) divided environmentally responsible behavior into two dimensions: site-specific environmental responsible behavior and general environmental responsible behavior. Halpenny (2007) believes that this division depends on whether the behavior is targeted at a specific location, which helps to better understand the behavior of tourists (Lee et al., 2013). The scale is currently used in many studies to measure environmentally responsible behavior (Cheng & Wu, 2015; Buonincontri et al., 2017; Li, Li, Chen, Su & Yu, 2020).

3. Hypothesis Development

Cultural heritage tourism can be understood as a combination of past cultural products and people's lifestyles today (Richards, 2001). Cultural heritage attractions are usually considered to be the stage where people face and participate in co-creation and unforgettable experiences (Schröder, 2015; Willson & McIntosh, 2007). Kastenholz & Gronau (2020) pointed out that tourism in cultural heritage sites should not only be passive "Tourist Gaze", and co-creation is a powerful way for tourists to contact services, places, and cultures, and generation meaningful results. Calver and Page (2013) believe that co-creating experiences can well balance the entertainment and protection of cultural heritage attractions.

Patwardhan, Ribeiro, Woosnam, Payini & Mallya (2020) deduce and elaborate on the relationship between tourism experience and local attachment from the perspective of religious tourism. They believe that religious tourism has a unique experience-oriented "authenticity" (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), it will connect visitors' personal experience with social meaning and physical environment, thus creating place attachment.

In some empirical studies, people with higher place attachment were found to be more likely to engage in environmental responsible behaviors (Stedman, 2002; Walker, Leviston, Price & Devine-Wright, 2015; Ramkissoon & Mavondo, 2017). Daryanto and Song (2021) believe that people's attachment to a place can produce positive behaviors to protect the place, because it makes individuals feel responsible for the place, and tends to adopt measures that contribute to environmental sustainability. Alonso-Vazquez, Packer, Fairley, and Hughes (2018) verified the relationship between place attachment and environmentally responsible behavior at music festivals. The study showed that place attachment is related to on-site environmentally responsible behavior.

Bertella and Rinaldi (2020) proposed that co-creation of experience in tourism development and management is a way of combining understanding, feeling, and action, realizing common values through specific procedures and tools and achieving sustainable development. They believe that since the co-creation experience contains the characteristics of learning, it has special significance for sustainable development. Mijnheer and Gamble (2019) proposed that heritage attractions provide tourists with the greatest travel experience while creating value for stakeholders in the community and effectively promoting the sustainable development of heritage attractions.

Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H1: The co-creation experience in heritage tourism has a positive impact on place attachment.

H2: Place attachment in heritage tourism has a positive impact on environmental responsibility behavior.

H3: Co-creating experiences in heritage tourism has a positive impact on environmental responsibility behaviors.

4. Conclusion

In the traditional sense of tourism, tourists are usually regarded as passive receivers of information, playing the role of "observation" (Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott, 2015). With the development of the experience economy, driven by values such as creativity and self-realization (Richards, 2018), consumers pursue a more personalized spiritual experience, and tourists expect more sense of participation during the travel process (LaSalle & Briton, 2003).

Just as Kastenholz and Gronau (2020) believe that the co-creation experience of cultural heritage attractions can not only improve the attraction and competitiveness of tourist attractions but also effectively promote the sustainable economic, cultural and social development of destinations by tourists and other stakeholders. The combination of local resources, communities, residents, tourists, and intangible cultural heritage can not only increase the economic benefits of tourism, but also strengthen people's cultural identity and cultural pride, and enhance creativity (Carvalho et al., 2016; Duxbury et al., 2019).

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