



Full Length Research Article

CO-CREATING VALUE IN ECOTOURISM EXPERIENCES (TOUR GUIDES, CRAFT MAKERS AND TOURISTS IN DUNGA BEACH, KISUMU CITY)

***Joshua Otieno Wanga, Patrick Odhiambo Hayombe, Maria Onyango and Stephen Gaya Agong**

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, P.O Box 210-40601, Bondo-Kenya

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how a tourist co-creates experiences in various situations and with various people during visitation. Tourist experiences are explored in social (service provider and other consumers) and physical encounters ('servicescape'). The study reveals examples of co-creation strategies and the subsequent effects on tourist evaluations. The work provides experiences of a number of tourists on vacation to Dunga Beach. The researcher conducted a test tours, ordinary tour visits and engaged the participants in interviews after the experience activities to gauge their evaluation of the experiences. Systems dynamics is used to identify gaps in tourism satisfaction and appropriate interventions based on the tourists' feedback. The study proposes co-creation strategies that can be used improve tourists' experiences on visit to a particular destination.

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INTRODUCTION

Tourists visit destinations because they want to, and not because they have to, they travel to pursue personal interests, enjoy other environments and nurture personal needs and wants (Prebsen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013). Consequently, tourists will only travel to destinations that enrich their travel experiences and meet their expected quality (Baggio, 2008). The time and effort people put into tourist travel are therefore valued differently from other goods and services (Eide and Mossberg, 2013; Sundbo, 2009; Prebsen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013). However, tourists' role and resources in supporting of value creation need to be explored further. This study explores tourist inputs in value co-creation and tests the effect of those inputs on overall experience value. The new service-dominant logic (S-D logic) of marketing (Vargo and Lusch, 2006; Groenroos, 2008) acknowledges the consumer, i.e., the tourist role in value creation and co-creation. This logic includes the idea that in the process of value co-creation, the consumers—

in addition to firms and organizations—act as resource integrators (Arnould, Price and Zinkhan, 2002). Likewise, value is centred in the experiences of consumers (Prebsen and Foss, 2011). Hence, the foundational idea in the S-D logic is that the service encounter is a value exchange process of value between the customer and the service provider.

This perspective holds that the consumers and their skills and knowledge, depicted as operant resources, contribute to value creation by integrating physical, social and cultural resources (Prebsen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013). The study focuses on Dunga Beach and wetland, located in a peri-urban community that is getting caught up by the city development. It is part of the Nanga region and is an informal settlement with rural character. Due to the population pressure it is slowly becoming a part of the Urban Kisumu, with increased prizes of land as a result (Wanga, Hayombe, Agong and Mossberg, 2014). The area is going through a gentrification process, and the local communities, the majority of them fishing communities, are under threat of being moved/pushed away. Furthermore, the adjacent Dunga wetland is under constant pressure due to human activities such as farming, papyrus harvesting, waste disposal and human habitation among others

***Corresponding author: Joshua Otieno Wanga**
Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, P.O
Box 210-40601, Bondo-Kenya

(Wanga *et al.*, 2014). Numerous endemic bird species characterize the adjacent wetland, creating an attractive destination for educational tours. The wetland is predominantly papyrus thus creating a unique habitat for papyrus specialist birds such as the Yellow Warbler, which is very hard to find in other areas of Kenya. Eight of Lake Victoria Basin biome species have been recorded here, it is especially important for all papyrus endemics Papyrus Gonolek, White-winged Warbler and Papyrus Canary, Carruthers's Cisticola (Morrison, K'oyooch and Harper, 2010). Other notable wetland birds found on site include the kingfisher, little egret and hammer kop (Wanga *et al.*, 2014; Morrison, K'oyooch and Harper, 2010). The wetland also provides a perfect fish breeding grounds for the fish in Lake Victoria and hosts a breeding area for hippos (Wanga *et al.*, 2014; Morrison *et al.*, 2010).

The current state of the wetland is deplorable; encroachment almost at its peak, unsustainable papyrus harvesting and waste disposal in the wetland is a common practice. Though an upcoming tourism destination, little information concerning customer participation in value-co-creation has so far been documented, this paper sets out to explore key experiences currently available for educational tourists and co-creates value to the available products and services within the destination. Dunga Beach currently hosts various groups of tourists each day who come to enjoy the experiences and services offered at the place. These groups of tourists include; family visits, school tours, foreign tourists as well as other local tourist who visit the site.

Problem Statement

Dunga beach and wetland currently hosts numerous groups of tourists; student tourists, family tourists, children tourists, foreign as well as local tourists. To sustain constant flow of tourists to the site, the service providers need to incorporate the opinion and participation of the consumers in developing experiences that meet their expectations. Each category of tourists have specific expected quality of experiences they aspire to attain out of such visits. The tour packages as currently offered does not cater for the needs and interests of specific groups. This study aims to establish proper arenas and opportunities that promote the interaction to facilitate co-creation of experiences in this tourist destination.

Study Area

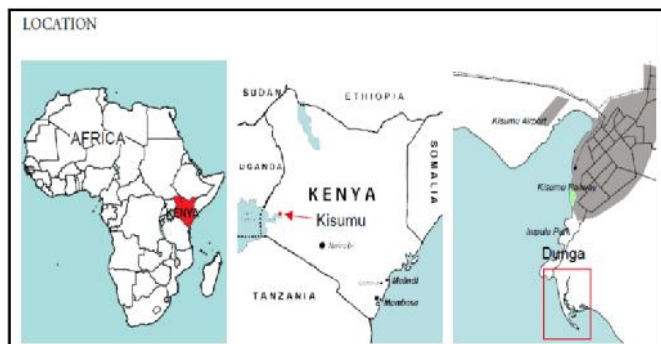


Figure 1. Study Area Dunga beach and wetland, Kisumu County, Kenya

Source: Falted, Reddin and Wanga, 2012

Study Objectives

- To explore co-creation of experiences by tourists in Dunga Beach and wetland during the travel experience
- Propose sustainable strategies and arenas for value co-creation in tourism experiences in Dunga wetland.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Value co-creation

Value co-creation is one of the cornerstones of the S-D logic (Prebsen, Vittersø and Dahl, 2013; Vargo and Lusch, 2010). Actors have different understandings of the nature of interaction required in the value co-creation process (Vargo and Lusch 2010). Service-dominant logic roots for exchanging one service for another as parties contribute to the creation process by sharing knowledge and resources. Through this interaction a more beneficial product or service is made, and value is added since resources are shared by both parties. Co-creation revolves around the idea that, the customer is always a co-creator of value (Eide and Mossberg, 2013; Cova and Salle, 2008). The concept of co-creation stems from many theories, especially goods-dominant logic transforming into service-dominant logic, systems theory, theory of planned behavior. As more focus is placed on the customer and less on the products themselves, tourist destinations must find ways to enhance the tourist experience and include them in the product/service delivery. In this manner, each interaction between the customer and organization/provider is different, therefore each delivery is unique and no two value-creations will ever be the same (Cova, 2011).

Involvement in the Co-creation Process

Many types of experience environments may exist as the level of co-creation varies from individual to individual (Eide and Mossberg, 2013). Caru and Cova, (2003) give two ways in which tourists can become involved in the co-creation process: passively, or actively (Baron and Warnaby, 2011). The passive way refers to interactions which are generally controlled by the setting, but the tourist has some input in the overall experience, such as visiting a theme park. On the other hand, active participation allows the tourist to immerse themselves in an experience, taking on responsibility for each step in the process. Lee (2012) and Grisseman and Stokurger-Sauer (2012), argues that the degree of involvement has been shown to influence the effects of organizational support on the tourist's satisfaction with the service company, customer loyalty, and service expenditures. As a result, the studies found that the level of involvement in co-creation has a direct effect on both the willingness to participate as well as the outcome of the co-creation process.

Prebsen and Foss, 2011, identify various participants in coping and co-creation process: host-guest experiences, guest family experiences, guest-guest experiences and solitary guest experiences, they argue that a tourist copes and co-creates in various situations and with various people and subsequently develop coping and co-creating strategies. Customer interactions with personnel can be viewed from a number of perspectives. Within consumer behavior, as well as service marketing and management, the concept of the service

encounter has frequently been used and is often associated to service quality. A tour guide is the key frontline player in tourism (Ap and Wong, 2001) and several studies have shown that a tour guide's performance affects a tourist's satisfaction with both the tour as a whole and the tour operator (Mossberg, 1997).

Level of Involvement in Co-creation

Co-creation is largely about personalized experiences as tourists get to have a say in the final products or services created by organizations (Prebsen and Foss, 2011). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) use this concept by focusing on how designing and implementing such personalized products and services are complex tasks. Any decision a setting makes on how to handle and co-create with tourists is event-driven and context-specific, demanding personalized interaction (Lee, 2012); Grisseman and Stokurger-Sauer, 2012; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Without this personalized interaction, there would be no added value, and co-creation would be seen as a waste of time and effort. While interaction is essential to personalization, people are not yet in favor of co-creation and generally fight against it (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004). In order to get tourists willing to participate so that more value added services and products may be provided, the authors stress that any organizational focus must be on connecting the tourists to the setting's offerings (Pralhad and Ramaswamy, 2004).

Grisseman and Stokurger-Sauer (2012) used different degrees of co-creation and the effects they had on tourists' satisfaction and loyalty towards a service company. The authors also assessed whether the effects of co-creation on satisfaction, customer loyalty, and expenditures were moderated by the tourist's satisfaction with their co-creation performance. Through their experiment, the authors successfully proved that the degree of co-creation influences the effects of organizational support on the tourist's satisfaction with the Service Company, customer loyalty, and service expenditures. Similarly, Lee (2012) used high and low levels of intensity as well as radical and incremental scales for determining the affects each antecedent had on the intention to co-create. Although each antecedent was proven to be an indicator of the intention to co-create, not all antecedents were affected by the level of intensity. In the radical condition with both high and low intensities, ability to co-create and subjective norm were significantly impacted. In the incremental condition with high intensity, ability to co-create and subjective norm were again the only antecedents with a significant relationship with the level of intensity. In the incremental condition with low intensity however, perceived benefits, perceived costs, and ability to co-create were all found to be impacted with the degree to which participants were likely to co-create (Lee, 2012). Both studies showed that antecedents of co-creation are influenced by the degree of involvement.

Conceptual Model

The experience scape is a space of pleasure, enjoyment and entertainment, where interactions between people occur (Eide and Mossberg, 2013). The model used in this study explains types on customer interactions within experience scape. How the various types of interaction evolve, are related to each

other and contribute to the value creation for the customers. Involvement in co-creation process takes place in an experience scape through interactions (Eide and Mossberg, 2013). The visitors are directly influenced by the physical and social surroundings in this experience environment where both functional and emotional attributes play an important role (Prebsen and Foss, 2011). Mossberg (2007) elaborates on customer experiences by focusing on the experiences cape and three main interaction types, that is, with personnel, with other customers and with physical objects. This is however, partly dependent upon the theme framing of the experiences cape. The interaction within the experiences cape between the tourist and the personnel (tour guide), tourist and other tourists in the site, tourist alone contributes to value co-creation which is necessary for the success of a particular tourist's destination.

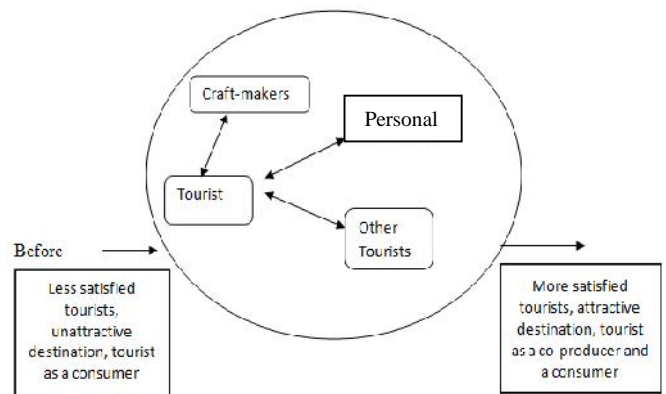


Figure 2. Conceptual Model for value co-creation in Ecotourism Experience

Source: Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used an explorative design. This design was chosen as a result of scarce theoretical insights touching on how tourists' incidents are experienced. Real-life experiences and observations were considered appropriate for gaining in-depth and rich data. A one-day package aimed at families (who are national tourist) was considered suitable for exploring a tourist's participation in co-creating experiences. This was exploration was done over period of six months with different groups of family tourists. Since Dunga Beach is one of the most visited destinations in Kisumu County, a typical family tour package that includes; Beach tour, boat tour, craft making and village walk was chosen. The pictures and descriptions illustrate the categories of experiences; beach tour, boat tour, craft-making and village walk that the tourists explored during the visit:

Tourist Experience Packages in Dunga

The Beach Tour

The package entails visiting different parts of the beach, the beach present various challenges and opportunities for ecotourism development. Motor vehicles and waste disposal presents the great threat to serenity of the environment during the visits, noise and oil leakages are a common phenomenon in the beach with solid waste disposal further compounding the problem. However, reuse of old bottles in constructing benches in the beach has provided useful lessons on how



Plate 1. Tourists exploring parts of the beach space
Source: Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

wastes can be used address local problems. Craft-making station at the beach has provided a useful arena for co-creating tourist experiences and products. The tourists join the craft-makers in designing and producing beautiful craft products such as earrings, necklaces, ropes, and visitors books made of water hyacinth. The beach tour experience involves the guides and the tourists exploring various sections of the beach. The places included; a stopover at the fish banda, observing the fish cleaning process, waste disposal point and a visit to crafts shop and exhibition. The beach space provides an arena for interaction among various players of tourism sector in Dunga.

The Lake Boat Tour

Lake Environment is a crucial attraction in Dunga, people travel to Dunga to have a view of different islands, to watch hippos at close range, engage in sport fishing. These boat rides start from Kisumu's Dunga beach and Osienala landing bay, Kiboko bay beach resort or Yatch club. These rides lead you to the islands on Lake Victoria which includes Ndere island national park, Rusinga, Magana and Takawiri Islands for Leisure not to mention the magnificent sandy beaches of Takawiri islands which are famous for honeymoon and wedding holidays. The other excursion trips are those trips which last few hours, the likes of rides from Dunga beach into Lake Victoria for educational purposes and Hippo hunting not to mention just having a ride on Lake Victoria for leisure purposes and returning back to the shore. The other most preferred Lake Victoria excursion is the birthday picnic on the boat inside Lake Victoria. Lake Victoria is the largest fresh water lake in Africa and the second fresh water lake in the world. Inside lake Victoria there are so many touristic sites which includes wildlife islands which have been turned into national parks, there are also touristic islands like those one you can do surfing, camping and lodge accommodation not to mention snorkelling on lake Victoria.

The islands which are having wildlife on them include Ndere Island on the side of Kenya and Ngamba islands on the Uganda side. Birding is in abundance, you will find most of the birds in Africa live on the islands of Lake Victoria. The other islands which have touristic expedition adventures includes, Magana, Rusinga and Takawiri islands in Kenya and also Ssesse islands in Uganda. On Ngamba islands, a chimpanzee sanctuary has been developed for touristic

purposes and also as an orphanage for the same. The boat tour provides opportunity for bird watching at different points of the wetland, as well as learning different methods of fishing practiced by the local fishermen in Lake Victoria. The boattour experience in Dunga as a tourism package involves the guides and the tourists exploring various sections of the lake. The expedition include: hippo watching at the hippo point and other various part of the lake, bird watching at the Dunga wetlands, lake expedition that includes sport fishing and swimming, as well as watching fishing experiences. The organized boat tour package is one of the favorite attraction for the tourists in Dunga. The package involves the use of traditional fishing boats mounted with petrol engines to enhance speed during the tour. The guides are well informed on the history of the lake, cultural rites performed before the boat is allowed into the waters as well as the basic first aid procedure in case of a water accident. The tour usually involves various stopovers at strategic points within the lake such as; the hippos breeding areas, fish cages, water intake points, animal sanctuaries and eco lodges at Impala Park.



Plate 2. Tourists enjoy the boat tour in Lake Victoria, Dunga
Source: Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

Takawari Island is a sandy beach, likes of Mombasa beaches inside Lake Victoria. It can be reached by road from Kisumu via Homabay to Mbita and by ferry from Luanda Kotieno beach-45 minutes ride on the lake ferry. It has cottages which can accommodate 16 people sharing a double room. It is famous in fishing activities and the amazing sunset on Lake Victoria. Tourists can enjoy walks through lush vegetation on top of the hills or along the lakeshore. For those interested in culture, there is the possibility to visit a luos family and experience their day-to-day life or the school in the next village. The Mbasaa and Mholo islands are a few meters apart. Both are famous for abundance of bird life. Uninhabited by man, the islands have many bird species including egrets and the fish eagle. There are also many monitor lizards, which feed on eggs and birds, wild goats and sheep.

Craft-Making- Tourists and Tour Guides

Craft-makers in Dunga attempts to use unwanted materials to create products. This creates employment for the people involved as well as conserving the environment. Local artisans make handcraft gifts and products from locally sourced materials which they distribute and sell to those who visit the site as well as the market beyond Dunga and Kisumu. They use the income to uplift their standards of living.



Plate 3. tourists and craft-makers engaging in co-creation
Source: Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

The products are created from recycled materials and water hyacinth. Plastic bags are the most noticeable waste problem in Kenya. An estimated 4,000 tons of plastic bags are produced each month for shopping purposes, the bags are discarded after use and cause a huge eyesore in both urban and countryside areas. Plastic bags also block gutters and drains, choke farm animals and marine life, they pollute the soil as they break down. The craft-makers collect plastic bags, organize and reuse them to weave strong durable products such as bags.

Kisumu has a specific problem in relation to water hyacinth. Kisumu is situated on the banks of Africa's largest lake, Lake Victoria. The lake is the source of livelihood for the majority of people in Kisumu in the form of water supply, but also provides employment for many in terms of fisheries and trade across the lake to neighbouring Uganda. Water Hyacinth is a highly invasive native South American plant which was introduced to the lake. It has rapidly spread across the edges of the lake, choking native species, trapping waste and environmental hazards from factories which are disposed of into the lake on the shoreline, and thus into the part of the lake people use for drinking and bathing. This species needs constant management and attention to stop the detrimental effect on the people of Kisumu. The craft-makers help to deal with this issue by regularly removing water hyacinth from the lake, and using the material to form products which can be of use to the local population in the form of furniture and sold to generate income for our community. The craft place experience in Dunga tourism system involves the craft makers and the tourists making craft products. The materials included; visitors' book made from recycled paper, ropes, earrings, necklaces and baskets. This is an arena where the visitors are involving co-creating various craft products.

Community Village Tour

The community tour focuses on the Indian settlers that came to build the railway; Dunga is mentioned that it was an Indian word for "Deep place of water. This is a forum for discussions between the tourists and guide on this part, and it provides an arena useful arena for interaction. The village walk provides an opportunity for the guests to understand the culture and traditions of the local luo people. The structure of a luo homestead and the position of different wives for those who are polygamous is clearly observable. The tour reveals specific places of importance among the luo people such as the *ngowo* (fig tree), where the elders used to convene their meetings,

yago (sausage tree). This tree carries a lot of significance in luo community as it reported to be buried in place of a dead and lost relative to appease the spirits.



Plate 4. Tourist and tour guide during the Dunga village walk
Source: Wanga: 2014 (unpublished)

Study Population

The study targeted a population of approximately 200 families visiting Dunga Beach each quarter. The study used a sample of 40 respondents, reflecting approximately 20% of family tours to this site each quarter. The two families travelling on this package were interviewed at the end of the tour to give their views reflecting the lived experience by acknowledging their inner thoughts and feelings. The respondents provide detailed data concerning their experiences. To avoid biases, the interviewees provided data of their experiences. By choosing an exploratory framework where interactions in tourism were the only guide for the field study, the interpretation was quite open-ended. During the interview, the interviewee gave descriptions of the situation (places, products and people) as well as of the feelings, atmosphere and communication (including body language) at the scene. The interviews were the matized into various tourist situations and activities i.e beach tour, boat tour, craft making, and village tour. The responses revealed various social interactions. Since the interview aimed establishing the significance of interaction settings in co-creating tourists experiences, extracts from the interview were classified according to host-guest, guest-guest, guest-family, guest alone settings.

Reliability and Validity

The work aims to meet the requirements of validity such as authenticity, plausibility and criticality (Golden-Biddle and Locke, 1993). To ensure the requirement of *authenticity*, i.e. the ability of the text to convey day-to-day self-experienced stories by the respondents, the study puts forward quotes reflecting various situations and settings. By studying the various interaction settings, 'co-creating' aspects of the vacation came forward. These thoughts are presented and discussed in the analysis and are also further validated by referring to existing research

RESULTS

In this section, quotes from the interview with the respondents (including participation observation, discussions and lived experiences) of the various vacation experiences are presented. The co-creation process is narrated through one-day

excursions/experiences; an organized beach tour, Lake Excursion through boat tour, Lunch at the restaurant, craft-making and a village tour in Dunga community. The findings are organized into five major sections of co-creation, depending on the package of interaction: beach tour, Lake Excursion, lunch at the restaurant, craft-making and the village tour.

Co-creating Experiences in the organized beach tour

The beach tour experience involved the guides and the tourists visiting various sections of the beach. The places included; a stopover at the fish banda, observing the fish cleaning process, waste disposal point and a visit to crafts shop and exhibition. The tour guide–guest experience of the organized beach tour in Dunga beach is described in the following ways by different tourists:

E1: “The tour guide seems to have great mastery of the local environment, he commands a lot of authority among the fish mongers who are predominantly women, and he samples their fishes sometimes without their consent in an attempt to explain the details of a particular fish to the tourist, it provokes in me some kind of a mixed feeling; treating the tourist to the desires of their vacation while at the same time appearing insensitive to the rights of the women fish mongers. The guides provide detailed information concerning variety of bird species that we find on the site, and this for the children, mainly school going that were part of our team, this information was quite useful”.

The extract shows that the tour guide for this session is thoroughly knowledgeable on his work, providing details of the beach environment and explaining details of various species of fishes in Dunga beach, the tourist is able to gather necessary information about birds’ species in Dunga beach and wetland. In this case the tour guide is the actor and the tourist primarily playing the role of the audience, there are limited instances of shared experiences that make the act of consumption in this case interactive and co-creative in nature. He reflects the character of the guide and considers him good in treating the visitor; the tourist however, observes that some of his actions are a bit insensitive to the rights of the fishmongers.

E2: “At the craft display point, everything just looked amazing, from the way the items were arranged, to the guide providing details about each item on display, it was a perfect reminder of what young people could do with their talents. I however, found this offending since majority of items on display were not identical to Dunga context, these items I could buy in any curio shop within Kenya or even in Africa, I mean we want to see something more reflexive of the local culture, made from local materials and the likes. But I must commend the artists for the way they have converted the local menace, the water hyacinth to something useful, they have made fabulous products out of it. Some craft products seems appealing than others, I look at a particular product; Maasaisculpture, I contemplate buying this one for my friend!, we are reminded of the need to hurry up, “we only have limited time yet there more packages to be experienced”, the tour guides remind us”.

The respondent in this extract prefers more of local craft products that reflect the image of Dunga as opposed to what is

displayed. As seen from the extract, the narrator co-creates certain experiences through reflection, improving the experience by providing more products that reflect the image of Dunga as a destination. The excerpt point to the need for a tour guide-guest relationship as crucial arena for co-creation of tourist experience. Crucial factors in this relationship are the time, the tourist interest and motivation.

E3: “From the craft shop we went straight the point where women were cleaning the fish, I didn’t want to, reason being that it makes me sick when I see the fish intestines, actually I would have preferred running straight to the playing ground to play with my friends. At the reception someone mentioned that going to the children playground would form part of the package, however, it didn’t happen”.

The respondent in this excerpt is a child tourist, he prefers going to the playground instead of observing the fish cleaning process. The narrator expresses the disappointment over the playground package proposed at the inception and later fails to materialize. The excerpt point to the need that tourism service providers practice honesty with the guests and recognize the fact that tourist preferences may vary based on age, culture, and background.

E4: “The hygiene is poor and no sign to signal this important site. So it is necessary to have a gate, some fencing, sign-posts, sculptures or carvings of important animals in the area like hippopotamus, and expected important scenes or tourist attractions, probably posters of the same.”

Here the comment shows the appropriateness of the planned new gate, as well as it brings up the important issue of the road, which has come up several times during workshops, focus group discussions and interviews. Before the road gets tarmac ked, it would be good to think of how it could be used not only for cars and buses but for pedestrians and bikes, as well as how the surroundings could be planned in order to encourage a lively community and an interesting ride or walk to Dunga. This could give an opportunity of planning for a packing space outside the beach.

E5: “In the pedagogical centre and shop, the guides talked to us about the products: paintings made of egg shells, postcards and key rings made of water hyacinths, and bags made of recycled polythene bags. The talk was good but we were not introduced to Dunga nor were we introduced to what they were to do during the day. One of us showed an interest in some of the products and asked for the price on a bag made of recycled plastics, saying that he had never seen this kind of recycling before. It was wonderful to see the gorgeous end products from waste materials”

In this quote the narrator commends the memorable experience provided at the pedagogical school, and the tour guide knowledge on the products displayed. The narrator, however, suggests that a more detailed presentation of Dunga and the kind of packages to be offered during the day should have been provided. This excerpt points to the need for information brochures to the guests providing detailed tourism products and packages offered. This underscores the need for arena to facilitate more host-guest interactions during the vocations.

E 6: “It is good that the environmental friendly products were shown and told about at the pedagogical school, but it might be better to do this activity at the end of the tour. The lady tourist mentioned and repeated it all through the day that her daughter wanted to go to the playground.

This excerpt points to the need efficient utilization of time during the vacation exercise. This reduces boredom among tourists as it ensures that variety of experiences is provided within the allocated time.

E7: “On the way to the beach, the guide stopped by two sausage trees to explain how they are used for traditional and medical purposes, making brews and burial ceremonies. The story of the sausage tree is interesting and a possibility is to thoroughly go through the story and how it could be told so that visitors get the full picture”.

This quote from one of the tourists reveals the interest the visitors have in listening to the local stories. Here the story of the sausage tree brings out the history and cultural beliefs of the local community around Dunga. The emphasis from the tourists is that story telling as a package can be a crucial attraction to the beach.

E8: “As we were standing by the sausage tree someone offloaded hot charcoal in a pile and put a hot stove on top. One of the kids could easily have burnt him/herself on it”

This incident sheds light on the importance of safety being part of the guide’s job. The safety and the welfare of the visitor is a critical factor in determining the attractiveness of the tourist destination. Tour guide training on safety and customer handling becomes necessary in realization of a sustainable tourist destination development.

E9: “Our next stop was the Yellow *Oleanda* tree, here the story was told that if you get bitten by a snake you can use the milk that comes out from the bark of the tree when you knock on it, which the guide showed, and the participants showed great interest in it. Down by the beach the guide mentioned to us that just as the coffee that in the past was imported from Uganda so is the coal today, pointing to the charcoal bags and the shipping boat that was docked by the pier?”

From this excerpt, a connection between the two stories could be made. A continuation might be to connect to environmental issues that are related to the use of coal, perhaps also in relation to solar energy and the potential use of biogas or briquettes made of water hyacinths.

E10: “We now moved down to the beach where the fishmongers were working. The fishmongers were present but the guides were talking, showing catfish, lungfish, and ibis birds. We thought the fishmongers would have done the story telling by themselves so as to involve them in the process. From the children comments we find them noticing that the Nile perch is the queen of the lake (while hippo is the king), tilapia is the most preferred, and lung fish can survive for three weeks without being in the water. A water hyacinth plant was also pulled out of the water by the guide and the problems with the plant explained. This is a nice way of talking about the water hyacinth, making it possible for the tourists to take a closer look at the plant.

This comment reveals the powerful role the tourist play in co-creating experiences, according to the respondent, it would more satisfying to involve and let the fishmongers narrate the fish stories by themselves. Training the fishmongers on story telling skills and knowledge on variety of fish species, breeding methods and economic importance is therefore necessary for the tourist satisfaction.

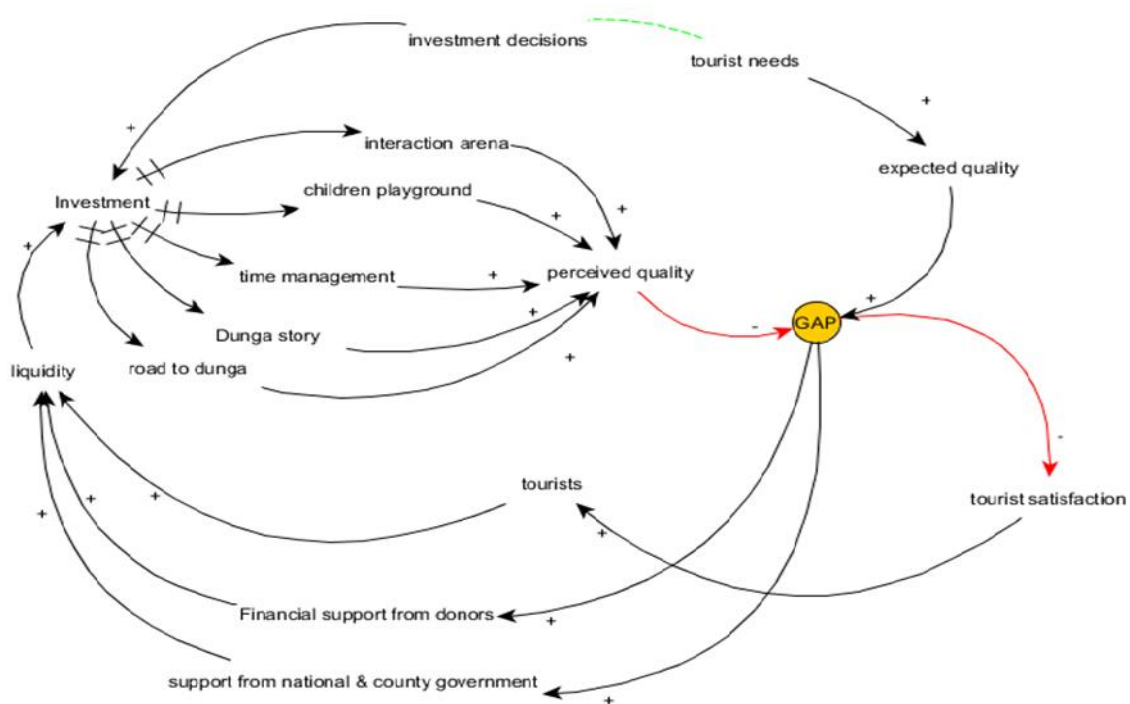


Figure3. Causal Loop Diagram for the beach package with respect to Co-Creation. Source, Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

Key: + (same direction), - (opposite direction), // (delay)

Analysis of the Beach tour excerpts based on systems approach

The sentiments from the tourists during the beach tour package reveal the important role of providing an arena for interaction between the hosts at the guest in experience co-creation process. The tourists excerpts (E1-E10) provide feedbacks to the tourist experience providers in Dunga on what they consider appropriate to enhance ecotourism experiences performance at Dunga tourist destination.

Co-creating Experiences during the Boat tour

The boat tour experience involved the guides and the tourists exploring various sections of the lake. The expedition include: hippo watching, bird watching, lake expedition, and watching fishing experiences. The tour guide–guest experience of the organized boat tour in lake Victoria at Dunga beach is described in the following ways by different tourists:

E11: “It was now time for the boat ride, and everybody were given life jackets and helped to put them on by the guides. Some drinks (water and soda) were carried on the boat in a bag made out of recycled polythene bags. An international student group was also on the beach and some of the boys from that group started throwing stones on the birds and in the water. This indicates that it is important that tourists show respect to the place, which is an issue that is integrated in the ecotourism concept, and that the responsibility for safety information lies on the guide if there are no other people in charge”.

In this comment, the tourist quickly recognizes that the bag used to carry refreshments during the boat tour was made of recycled paper. The comment however, faults another group of tourists at the beach for showing cruelty to the birds. The tourist proposes more awareness on the need to respect the destination and its resources to promote ecotourism concept in the beach.

E12: “It was not until we were in the boat and out on the water that it was mentioned that they we would see hippos. “Oh, once we were chased by a hippo” one of the ladies said. The guides talked about the wetlands and its flora and fauna, and during the trip hippos were spotted.

The respondent in this excerpt expresses disappointment, the failure to disclose the details of the boat tour the tourists before they embark on the tour. Some tourists openly express fear when the hippos are mentioned. The emphasis is on disclosing the details of the tour experience before the actual trip.

E13: “One of the boys in our team wrote: “At first I was very scared because I thought the Hippo would eat the boat. Then we went near Hippo, we were told that it was friendly”. Unfortunately there was no storytelling or singing about the hippos, which the kids would probably have liked. The mother wrote in her comments of the tour, including the boat tour, that the guides are familiar with their environment but that more emphasis could be on knowledge about different needs and interests of different categories of tourists. She also mentioned that their approach was mainly educational, but that tourism also serves other needs.

The tourists yearn for than just watching the hippos, he proposes storytelling and singing about the hippos. This as it suggested would appeal more to the children.

E14: “Out on the water it was nice and cool and the boat ride went well, except that it was hard to hear the guides from the back of the boat when the engine was going. It seems as though everybody enjoyed the ride, and the mum said “that was a long ride into the water, you feel so natural”. She said she had never been out for such a long tour before: it was almost two hours, and it seems that she thought the longer the better. The father wrote in his comments of the tour:

This excerpt point to the need to improve boat tour which is a marvelous package for the tourist to Dunga. The tourist reports of the special feeling he gets during and after the boat tour, he however, complains that the boat engine was so noisy for them to hear the words of the tour guide.

E15: “It was an adorable site to see the birds how they co – exist with other ecosystems available at the lake. The way some of the birds did swim was good to behold. The boat ride was an excellent experience, feeling the cold breeze and viewing the Islands of Ndere and distant Homa Bay hills. It was psychologically healing to get into the cold breeze propagated by the water weaves. It was also scary to think of what would happen if the wind became boisterous.” One of the teenage girls wrote in her comments: “...it enabled us to capture the spectacular view of the lake and its surrounding landforms. This was quite entertaining since the ride was also enjoyable”.

Quite interesting feedback from the tourist in this excerpt, emphasis on the inclusion of this package as part of tourist experience during vacation to Dunga. The comment uncover spectacular experiences that appeal to tourists, giving the memorable experiences. The comments by the tourist regard the boat tour as a memorable experience, watching the birds, a view of some islands, the healing breeze and the surrounding landforms. Dunga is undoubtedly a destination to reckon.

Analysis of the Boat Tour Experience Based on System Approach

The boat tour package provided an important arena for tour guide–tourist interactions. The tourists identified a number of critical issues that they consider necessary in enhancing the package experience. The issues include; storytelling about the hippos, the hippo dance, the need for tourists to respect the environment, avoiding cruelty to birds, safety of the boats and disclosing the tour itinerary to the tourist before commencement of the tour package. Time delays in the investment in documentation and narration of hippo stories during the boat hindered tourists who participated in the tour package from attaining maximum satisfaction from the tour experience. The tourists proposed that including hippo dances, safety of the boats and occupants and tourist awareness creation for the respect of the wetland birds as part of the boat tour package would create an extraordinary experience of it. The tourists regard boat as a memorable experience, exposing the participants to the refreshing breeze from the lake and perfect opportunity to see the beautiful islands of the Lake Victoria. From the tour guide’s narration, the tourists are informed the names and location of the islands.

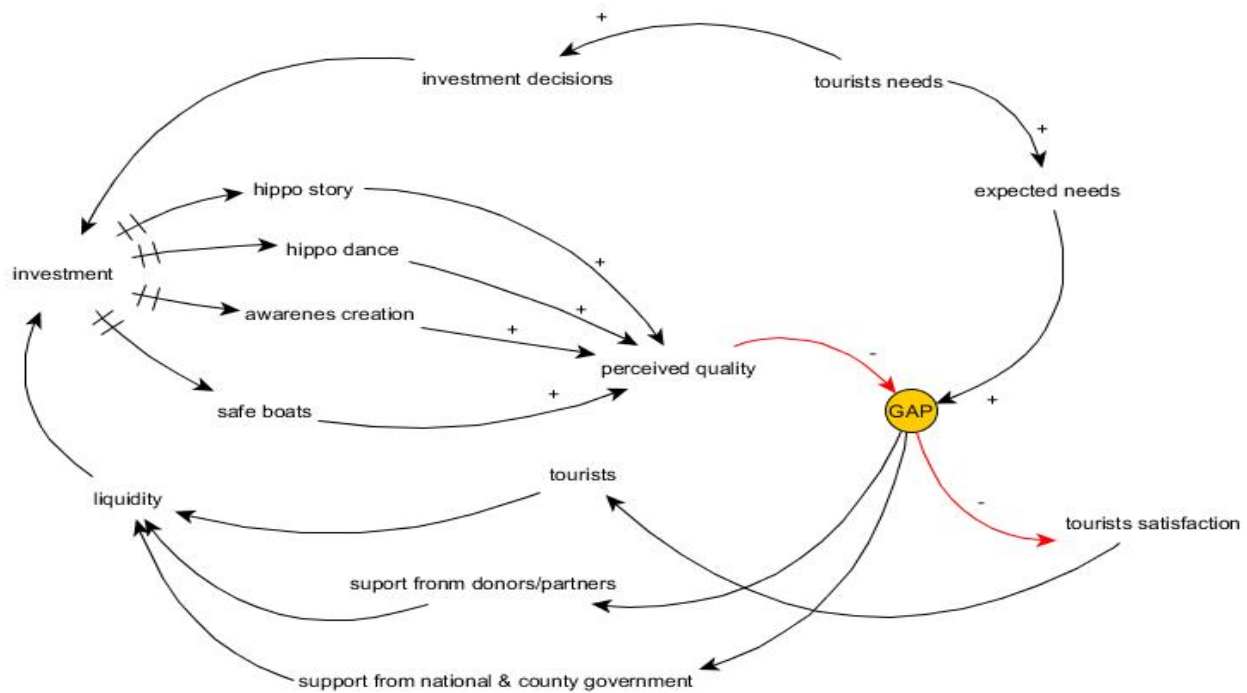


Figure 4. Causal Loop Diagram for the boat tour package with respect to Co-Creation. Source: Wanga, 2014 (unpublished)

Co-creating Experiences at the Craft Place

The craft place experience involved the craft makers and the tourists making craft products. The materials included; visitors' book made from recycled paper, ropes, earrings, necklaces and baskets. The craft man–guest experience of the organized craft place package at Dunga beach is described in the following ways by different tourists:

E16: “After a while the craft guide came up to the restaurant and took us to the activities by the craft station. He had placed out water hyacinth plants, ropes and water hyacinth products. He spoke with a strong voice and interacted with the group by asking them questions: “Have you seen these nice flowers?” and “Do you know what we use the water hyacinth for?” He told the story of how the water hyacinth was introduced to the lake, saying they were planted to give hide and protection to the fish, but that it went all wrong. “When using the plant for crafts you take one part of the plant”, he said, and took the part off to show. The group did not get the opportunity to touch it themselves, though.

Here the comments show proof of a well-intentioned decision that went utterly wrong. Water hyacinth introduced to help protect the threatened fish species, but ended up being the worst nightmare of the Lake Victoria. It reveals the possibility of converting a problem into an opportunity as they use the water hyacinth to make handcrafts which they sell to earn a living.

E17: “The guide then turned to introduce some of the locally made water hyacinth products, and the children got to try the hats. The guide mentioned that they are working on “Dunga products” where they mix the water hyacinth with polythene bags. One of the tourist, who is an ecologist, asked what kind of chemicals are used for the ropes, showing an interest in knowing if the chemicals are environmentally friendly or not. Then the guide showed the trays and explained how they use

old polythene plastics or yarn to wrap around the steel structure to prevent rust. “Feel it, it is soft” the guide said to the children and let them touch the yarn. He continued: “This is going to give the picture of Dunga which is all about fishing and the lake”.

In this comment, a tourist is interested in understanding the process of making the attractive products made of water hyacinth, however, the tourist concern on the type of chemical used reveals the need to employ methods that are environmentally friendly as much as the products are made from locally available materials. Environmental conservation is a crucial pillar for ecotourism promotion.

E18: “We had a great time listening to how wastes are turned into useful materials, for instance polythene papers are recycled at Dunga to make different types of products”

The tourist is quite satisfied with the service provided at this section. The recycling of waste materials to useful products provides a memorable experience for the guest. This kind of feedback reveals how environmental conservation and efficient use of resources is key for sustainable tourism destination development. The service and experience providers receive accurate feedback from the tourists on what gives them maximum satisfaction during the travel experience.

E19: “The first thing I learnt was you can make beautiful things out of waste products e.g. polythene bags and plastics. Polythene bags were used to make things like bags and hats.”

The tourists seemed interested in every bit of this package, the information about ways of using waste material for making products, indicating that this is an activity that could be developed further.

E20: “The guide turned to the kids and asked if they wanted to make their own products; necklaces, bangles and earrings. He had prepared pendants out of water hyacinths, and laid out

beads in the colours of the Kenyan flag. There were also mussel shells from the lake. The thread was fishing line which had been destroyed by roots and hooks and thereby unusable for fishing. The dad seemed a bit hesitant at first and said "By the time we finish it will be dark". The guide helped them to get started: "Hold that! Try that!" The kids seemed to really enjoy it and showed the guide what they had done. "Wow!" he said. Both children and adults were totally immersed in the activities for almost two hour".

The comments in episode reveals the importance of providing children experiences as part of tour package. Dunga is predominantly children destination thus enhances their visit experiences is critical for sustainable destination development.

E21: "This is the most enjoyable, because it is an activity, in the other ones they were not involved"

The comment underscores the strong relationship between tourist involvement in co-creation and their satisfaction. The respondent terms it the most enjoyable because they were involved unlike many others.

E22: "The boys were excited to be involved in such activity. It reminded me of the fact that when I do, I do not forget. This together with the *souvenirs* we made gives us the memory and freshness of the test tour. It is my humble submission that a tour will always be printed in the minds of those involved if activities are included where participants are involved in the actual process of doing what that particular tourist site is known for. It is also worthwhile to note that it can make one to discover a hidden talent."

The comments express are a clear indication of satisfaction derived when the tourist are made part of the production process, a part from having a permanent mark in your memory, the tourist gains experience and learns how to make certain product.

E23: "This was my best part of the treat – the curio work. I was able to view various products made of things that may be considered as waste. This showed the art of invention in man. Also, we were able to make something for ourselves. Here we were able to learn the art of patience and also had something tangible to remember this great day."

The respondents appreciates the curio as it gives more satisfaction to the tourist during the travel experience. Converting the waste products to useful curio products underscores the importance of promoting a tourist destination within the enclaves of ecotourism principles and practices.

E24: "The beads were very small, and for elder people this kind of activity might be tricky, but for this group it worked out fine. The mother mentioned that her girl wanted to bring some material home to continue making things, but the guide said they were not for sale. However it might be a good idea to develop craft packages that tourists can buy and bring home".

The comment from the tourist is crucial for tourism experience providers, the comments reveals the need for setting up experiences based on age, gender, and background.

Experiences that appeal to children may not necessarily do the same to adults.

E25: "The group spent quite some time at the craft station (two hours) and after a while some of the kids stopped making craft and started to run around the beach. It also took a bit too long to round the event off, making the following community tour delayed".

The respondent in this excerpt brings out the element of time management during the travel experience. The comments shows that despite excitement and satisfaction derived in a given experience package, taking too less time or too much time on a particular experience would create boredom and dissatisfaction. Effective time management thus become a crucial element in promoting tourist satisfaction.

Community Tour

The community tour focused was on the Indian settlers that came to build the railway; Dunga was mentioned that it was an Indian word for "Deep place of water. There were much more discussions between the tourists and guide on this part, and it provided as a useful arena for interaction. These were the comments from tourists, tour guides and other participants during the experience:

E26: "We passed an old Indian house and the father touched it. When he did that, some others did as well. The guide said the Indian houses look different from the Luos' inside. The father revealed some thoughts about the habitats in his comments afterwards: "The one thing I wondered was why this Indian settlement and architectural design was not preserved as a historical site as it has been done elsewhere." He also found the homesteads interesting to develop"

The comments reveal interaction during the community tour. The tourists see a lot of potential in declaring the old Indian houses in this community a historical site, the buildings reflect the Indian settlement pattern and architectural design.

E27: "It would be a very good thing to explore how to involve some of the homesteads as part and parcel of the Dunga community tourist site. This will see a corporation that will be beneficial to the Dunga community as well as the community running the Dunga tourist site."

The respondent provides the necessary feedback for the tour service providers in Dunga on how to conduct the community walk. The comments emphasize the need to involve the homesteads to be part of the community tour.

E28: "It is important that everybody in the community is sensitized, understands the value of the place and is part of the development of tourism".

Stakeholder participation is a crucial tool in sustainable destination development, the comments from the respondent emphasize the need for capacity building of all the involved parties to enhance understanding and appreciation of the value of the tourist destination. Consequently, higher level of awareness promotes environmental conservation in the site.

E29: “Dunga environment has a great potential for ecotourism from existing natural habitats and ancient homes and people and other activities. However, this area must be gazetted to protect it from haphazard development...”

In this excerpt, the respondents provides necessary information that would add value to the tourist destination. A proposal on how to protect the site is put forward that the area should be gazetted by the government as a tourist destination to protect from haphazard development.

E30: “At one homestead there was a small house, a burial place for the village guide’s relative. He had eight wives and was therefore very rich. Sometimes the house is used for meetings with the dead person, the guide explained. The story went that if you call the name of the dead person you are able to get in touch with him. Another Luo tradition is the naming of their children after what time of the day they are born. A boy born in the day is named Onyango and if it is a girl her name will be Anyango. The guide asked one of the tourists what time of the day she was born. She said at one o’clock in the night. “Then your name would be Atieno”. He gave the story of himself being a little baby. He used to cry a lot, so he was named Owiti. This close interaction and involvement in the guide’s own life made the participants feel a connection with the place and the guide”.

The guides’ stories about their families and relatives were rewarding and strengthened the understanding of the customs of the Luo people. Reinforcing these stories as part of the village walk will certainly add value to the village walk experience.

E31: “During the tour there was also a stop under a fig tree in the village where it was told that it is an important meeting point where the village solves disputes and conflicts. Sometimes there are monkeys climbing in the tree and eating the fruits. The guide also mentioned the fig tree on the beach (which we passed before) and just next to that tree they built the community hall as a continuation and symbol of the old days”.

The excerpt show the symbolic value of the fig tree to the Dunga community, something that fascinated the tourist who participated in the village walk. This emphasize the need for conservation of the indigenous species of trees as they form part of major attractions to Dunga beach.

E32: “From a viewpoint further in the village, we could see the wetlands spreading out beneath. The guide explained that the papyrus fields in the wetlands are big, stretching all the way to Nyakach, making an important breeding area for many types of fish. Someone asked if there is a risk of harvesting too much papyrus, but the guide said they are fast growing and that he didn’t think there is a problem. If you take one up, there is a new one coming, he said. However the mother’s concern for this is shown in her notes. She sees the development taking place as a great threat to biological sustainability in forms of habitats, animals and plants: “Sooner or later all the plants of tourist interest will be gone”. She stated that the county government must see to that there are physical development plans and that people are “sensitized on environmental issues”.

The comments in this reveals lack awareness on the side of the tour guide on the need to sustainable papyrus harvesting. The feedback from the comments indicate a gap on tour guide training. The tourist raises concern threats to biodiversity in Dunga something that the tourist treats with contempt. Efforts should therefore be made upscale tour guide training on topics that covers environmental conservation and the importance of wetland in protecting biodiversity.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to conduct an in-depth exploration of how a tourist, tour guide and craft makers co-creates tourist experiences. A narrative strategy was chosen to divulge real, in-depth, self-experienced examples of how experiences are co-created. By keeping a diary of day-to-day events and experiences, participating in observation and discussions with tourists, in an organized beach tour, boat trip, craft-making and a community tour, it was possible to reveal varieties of co-creating behaviors and the subsequent evaluation of experiences

The findings in this study indicate that the co-creation of value in tourism is, largely a product of tourist participation in producing the experience through involvement and effort in producing the experience. In this study, tourist were involved in producing experiences at the beach tour, boat excursion, craft-making and during the community/village walk. Tourist resources such as involvement, time, and effort, are important inputs in our measures of overall experience value. One of the fundamental ideas in the service-dominant logic suggested by Vargo and Lusch (2006) is the idea that people participate in producing their own well-being, and in tourism they do so because it is appealing to the tourist. Since time and effort affect overall experience value positively, this study supports the idea of Prebsen, Vittersø, and Dahl (2013); Vargo and Lusch (2006) that operant resources—the knowledge and skills that provide good experiences—matter. It is because they influence tourist well being that they should be considered as operant resources.

With the growth of experience concept in tourism practice, tourism experience providers have reached a point where they need to look for ways to enhance and differentiate their experiences offered. This study has revealed the powerful influence of consumer participation in experience co-creation at Dunga. The findings reveals how a tourist contributes to the development of experiences that enriches their travel expectations. The study provides evidence that due to the power shift in company-consumer relationships taking place, the strategic staging of experiences has become increasingly criticised (Prebsen and Foss, 2013). The experience consumers have become more active and powerful, and the traditional creation of tourist experiences should be transformed (Prebsen and Foss, 2011; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). The process of experience staging in tourism is perceived to be highly business-oriented, uni-directional, superficial and thus no longer suitable to meet the needs of contemporary, dynamic and empowered consumers (Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen, 2007). The findings support the ideas of Binkhorst and Den Dekker, 2009; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004) that tourism experiences have moved towards consumer centricity, in this, individual tourists play

the key role in shaping the creation of their personal experiences and value. Consumers ask for a balance between the company staging the experience and their role in co-creating the experience (Prebsen and Foss, 2013; Ramaswamy and Gouillart, 2008). This has thus led to a shift in the distribution of roles between the tourist service and experience providers and the consumers who are the tourists.

Co-creation is about tourist participation in the production of one's own well-being. Altogether, two of the five involvement factors, self-identity and attraction involvement, explain substantial experience value variance. This suggests that tourists are concerned about amassing pleasurable experiences while in the role of a tourist (Kim, Ritchie, and McCormick (2012), and they are motivated to express the importance of their experiences to others. Self-identity and attraction values might be seen as fundamental tourism motivations, particularly for those travelling off the beaten track (Desforges, 2000). For many tourists, work and everyday life entail obligatory and monotonous routines in which individuals may find it difficult to pursue self-realization (Giddens, 1990). In experience co-creation, the individual human being is regarded as the new starting point of the experience (Prebsen and Foss, 2013; Boswijk, Thijssen and Peelen, 2007). This study demonstrates that it is important for businesses to enter in a dialogue with consumers to co-create experiences and value together (Prebsen and Foss, 2013).

The personal meaning derived from the co-creation experience is what determines the value to the individual (Van Limburg, 2012; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Consumers are constantly in search of experiences that are particularly valuable to them and co-creation has been proposed as the means to offer a unique value proposition for consumers (Boswijk *et al.*, 2007). Through co-creation, Dunga tourism service and experience providers would enter a new paradigm of value creation which fosters growth, innovation and competitive advantage. Co-creation of value can occur anywhere throughout the service and experience chain (van Limburg, 2012). With the availability of new tools this process can be reinforced, as tourists are more involved in every part of the system to proactively co-create experiences and value in every step of the consumption (Prebsen and Foss, 2012; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004). Co-creation tourism experiences can be considered as experiences that are not only passively staged but rather actively shaped and created by the tourist consumer in conjunction with the company. With the increasing intensification of co-creation, the tourism experience becomes more consumer-oriented and interactive resulting in a higher level of value being obtained. However, in the current understanding of co-creation experiences, as defined in literature (Ramaswamy, 2011; 2008), co-creation lacks in the integration of technology. Co-creation is the interactions and engagement in the real world and offline spaces.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study set out to conduct an in-depth exploration of how a tourists, tour guides and craft makers co-creates tourist experiences. A narrative strategy was used to reveal, in-depth, self-experienced examples of how experiences are co-created. Through interviews, writing of personal journal based on

events experience, participating in observation and discussions with tourists, in an organized beach tour, boat trip, craft-making and a community tour, it was possible to reveal varieties of co-creating behaviors and the subsequent evaluation of experiences. This study shows how tourists co-creates in various packages that develops co-creating strategies and opportunities. This co-creation approach indicate important aspects for the experience providers in Dunga know in order to provide quality experiences for the guests. As a learning experience, co-creation improves the vacation competence of the tourists. The study findings raises the question of the role that host and service providers have in providing activities that improve emotional well-being and provide emotional support for the tourists by engaging the in experiences that enrich their satisfaction and subjective wellbeing.

The tourists expresses feelings such as anger and boredom, which should draw the attention of the experience providers in Dunga. Disappointing experiences, can lead to dissatisfaction and ruin the whole experience which eventually affects the attractiveness of Dunga as tourism destination. The experience providers should focus on experience delivery from the tourist's viewpoint and adjusting it to become a successful and memorable experience. The key to this should be to involve the tourist in participating and engaging in producing experiences of her satisfaction. The present study shows that introspection on lived experiences is an effective method for exploring how a consumer participates in the creation of experiences. Thus, it also contributes to research focusing on the new service dominant logic which recognizes the consumer as an active, involved and participating part (Vargo and Lush, 2006). This study uses systems approach to analyses co-creation activities with various stakeholders in Dunga. The methodological contribution of this study the use of systems approach to analyse consumer's introspective account revealed through interviews and keeping personal journals to qualitative studies in consumer research.

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