Mapping co-creation and co-destruction in tourism: a bibliographic coupling analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study carries out a mapping analysis of published research on the topics of value co-creation and co-destruction in tourism, based on a review of 268 articles from 80 journals listed in the Web of Science database, published between 2011 and 2019. A bibliographic coupling method using VOSViewer application was carried out. The analysis suggests four distinct streams of research, including: (1) the intertwined relationship between information and communication technologies and destination management in improving customers' experience, (2) co-creation from a social perspective, (3) customer satisfaction and loyalty and, (4) co-creation experience in the sharing economy. The findings also show that co-destruction research in tourism is a topic that is still very much in the early stages.

Introduction

Over the past decades, there has been a remarkable evolution of the role of customers in their relationship with service providers, which has evolved from a conventional source of marketable needs to the co-creation of products and value propositions (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2000). The essence of co-creation lies in customer empowerment, which is earned through increased access to information and enhanced networking, transforming the consumption experience (Bendapudi & Leone, 2003; Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). Tourism is, essentially, an experiential activity, and therefore customers' value co-creation fits well the *modus operandi* of the tourism industry, where interactive behaviour is the centre of value creation (Cabiddu et al., 2013; Prebensen & Foss, 2011; Sfandla & Björk, 2013).

Different approaches have been used to explore co-creation in tourism, ranging from a traditional service supplier angle (Richard, 2017; Sthapit, 2018) to the impact of mobile technology on tourism (Linton & Kwortnik, 2019; Morosan, 2018) or the role of residents as value co-creators (Bertella et al., 2018; Reichenberger, 2017). However, co-destruction in tourism has also gained a certain level of attention among the academic community. Co-destruction – which is described as the failure of the resource integration process to co-create expected value (Smith, 2013) – has been focussed on the tourism and hospitality industry, owing to the fact that customers' interactions can have a negative effect (Järvi et al., 2018)

This study aims to understand the structural patterns of research in customer value co-creation and value co-destruction in tourism research areas, based on a literature review using a bibliographic coupling analysis. This research proposes new paths for the development of these structural patterns.

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Methodology

Bibliometric methods include an array of approaches that use statistical measures, which focus on congregating citations listed in other publications (Pritchard, 1969). Citations are considered acceptable proxies for the actual influence of other publications in a research article (Culnan, 1987). From among bibliometric methods, it was decided to use the bibliographic coupling (BC) research method in this study, based on its ability to unveil the intellectual structure of a research area using bibliographical data (Zupic & Čater, 2015). The relative emergent characteristics of co-creation and co-destruction in tourism suits bibliographic coupling better when compared with co-citation, which is preferable for the review of less-recent articles in mature research fields (Small, 1999).

Bibliographic coupling defines the relationship between two articles (Kessler, 1963), based on the number of shared references presented. The greater the number of common references, the closer the research paths are (Grácio, 2016). Science maps are drawn based on the strength of coupling documents, from which research scenarios can be deducted and analysed further (Cobo et al., 2011). Bibliographic coupling works by examining the relationship between bibliographic units, such as documents, authors, and journal oeuvre (Cobo et al., 2011). The unit of analysis chosen for this research is the article itself. Despite powerful bibliometric procedures, a further qualitative approach is recommended to explore the dynamics between clusters of research.

Accordingly, a content analysis followed the BC to fully comprehend the research streams and to transform nuanced insights into relevant directions for future research.

The research collected information from the Web of Science (WoS) Core Collection, which was selected due to the fact that this database includes high-quality journals that fit demanding criteria, including a rigorous peer-review process (Elango, 2019; Merigó & Yang, 2017). In addition, the WoS database enables the analysis of the influence of individual articles, using indicators such as the sample H-index, which is a quality measure that indicates that altogether there are at least H articles cited at least H times (Hirsch, 2005). Two key expressions were used in the literature search: "co-creat*" and "co-destruct*". To position the subject within the intended scope, the words "Tourism", "Hospitality", and "Leisure travel" were also used as research terms. The search produced 282 articles, 268 of which were related to the intended scope after the analysis of the article's abstracts. Figure 1 demonstrates a steady increase in the number of articles published on the topic and associated citations, which thus confirms the dynamic of the topic, particularly from 2017 to 2019.
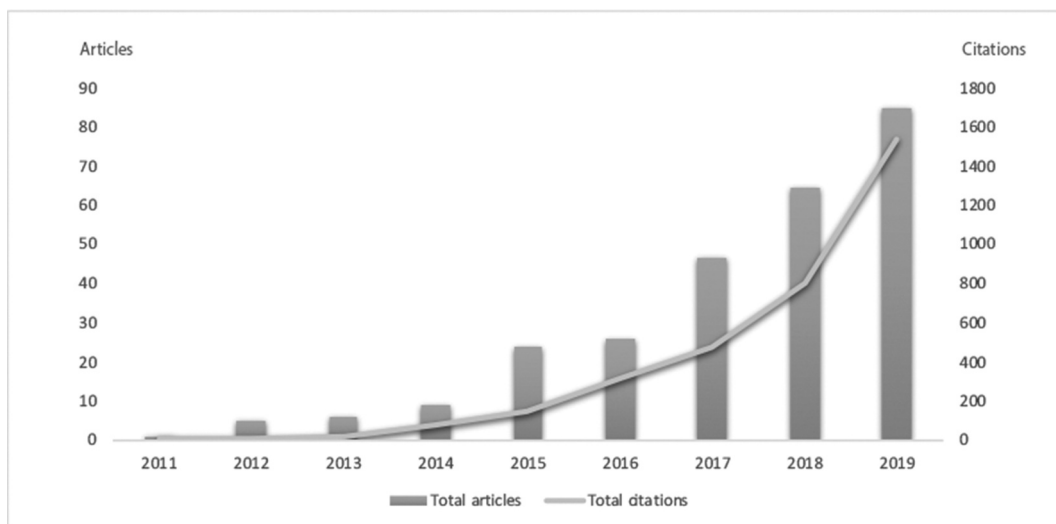
Figure 1. Publication and global citation of articles over the years. Source: The Authors, based on the WoS database.

The 268 articles were written by 595 authors and published in 80 journals, which represents an H-index of 33, totalling 3,390 citations. Leading journals which have published more than 17 articles on the co-creation and co-destruction fields include *The International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, Tourism Management*, and the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. A list of the top 10 articles, based on citation scores, is presented in Table 1. This table shows that, on average, these journals received between 9.6 and 23.4 citations per year since the publication date.

VOSviewer software (v. 1.6.13) was used in the analysis, based on its mapping technique of Visualization of Similarities – VOS (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014). Mapping routines, based on term co-occurrence matrix and similarity measure, are used to calculate the association strength between terms (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014) and also to identify clusters. The articles were evaluated individually, using NVivo 12, in order to define key codes that corroborate the mapping and clusters which emerged from the analysis. The frequency of words was used to confirm key codes. In addition, the focus of each group was established by looking both at the inside view of each cluster and also by means of a comparative analysis between clusters. Service-Dominant Logic (S-DL) and customer versus firm perspective were both used as specific lenses in the comparative analysis.

Results

The research first looked for prominent methodologies and theoretical backgrounds present in the sample. A minimum threshold of 20 citations per article was defined to assure the relevance of the coupling procedure. The results show that no particular method or technique dominates research into co-creation and co-destruction in tourism. On the contrary, the Experience Economy (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) and S-DL are often used to contextualize touristic co-creation practice.

The second step in the analysis included a proximity mapping design, which resulted in four distinct clusters, which are portrayed by different colours in Figure 2. The density visualization provided by VOSviewer confirmed the existence of four distinct clusters.

The bibliographic coupling linkage strength produced a list of ten articles (Table 2), which provides a fresh perspective on the most connected and fundamental research approaches that support the intellectual structure of co-creation and co-destruction in tourism. Recent articles on tourism destination management (Buonincontri et al., 2017) and on co-creation and co-destruction (Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017) are particularly relevant for the research area. Other works of reference, such as those of Neuhofer et al. (2012, 2014)) and Chathoth et al. (2013), contributed susbtancially to the field, showing both a high level of citations and coupling strength.

Clusters analysis

### *Cluster 1 – ICT and destination management improving tourism experience*

This cluster includes 13 articles published from 2012 to 2017, corresponding to a total of 488 citations in 2018 and 2019. The items, depicted as red dots and lines in Figure 2, point to a focus of research into tourists' experience, organized into three different sub-patterns. First, and often supported by the Experience Economy theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), there is a stream of research which describes and discusses the factors which influence tourist experience, including hospitality intelligence (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013), culture and identity (Lugosi, 2014), and memorability and attention (Campos et al., 2016). A second sub-pattern addresses the transformative power of technology in the touristic experience, exploring how interactive information and communication technologies (ICT) enable tourist interaction, engagement, and relationship with different stake-holders, such as companies, staff, other consumers, destination resources, or the overall experience environment (Neuhofer et al., 2014).

Mobile phones with built-in applications, Internet access, and geo-location have profoundly changed the tourist experience. Buhalis and Foerste (2015) propose social context mobile (SoCoMo) marketing

Table 1. Most cited articles in value co-creation and co-destruction in tourism.

R	Title	Authors	Year	Total Citation	Average Citation/Year
1	Customer loyalty: a review and future directions with a special focus on the hospitality industry	Kandampully, Jay; Zhang, Tingting (Christina); Bilgihan, Anil	2015	117	23.4
2	Co-production versus co-creation: A process-based continuum in the hotel service context	Chathoth, Prakash; Altinay, Levent; Harrington, Robert James; Okumus, Fevzi; Chan, Eric S. W.	2013	160	22.9
3	Aspects of service-dominant logic and its implications for tourism management: Examples from the hotel industry	Shaw, Gareth; Bailey, Adrian; Williams, Allan	2011	200	22.2
4	A Typology of Technology-Enhanced Tourism Experiences	Neuhofer, Barbara; Buhalis, Dimitrios; Ladkin, Adele	2014	115	19.2
5	Conceptualizing technology enhanced destination experiences	Neuhofer, Barbara; Buhalis, Dimitrios; Ladkin, Adele	2012	139	17.4
6	SoCoMo marketing for travel and tourism: Empowering co-creation of value	Buhalis, Dimitrios; Foerste, Marie	2015	72	14.4
7	Conceptualizing Customer-to-customer Value Co-creation in Tourism	Rihova, Ivana; Buhalis, Dimitrios; Moital, Miguel; Gouthro, Mary-Beth	2015	68	13.6
8	China's smart tourism destination initiative: A taste of the service-dominant logic	Wang, Dan; Li, Xiang (Robert); Li, Yunpeng	2013	83	11.9
9	Customer co-creation of travel services: The role of company support and customer satisfaction with the co-creation performance	Grissemann, Ursula S.; Stokburger-Sauer, Nicola E.	2012	176	22
10	Social networks and customer involvement in new service development (NSD) The case of www.mystarbucksidea.com	Sigala, Marianna	2012	77	9,6

Source: The Author, based on WoS data.
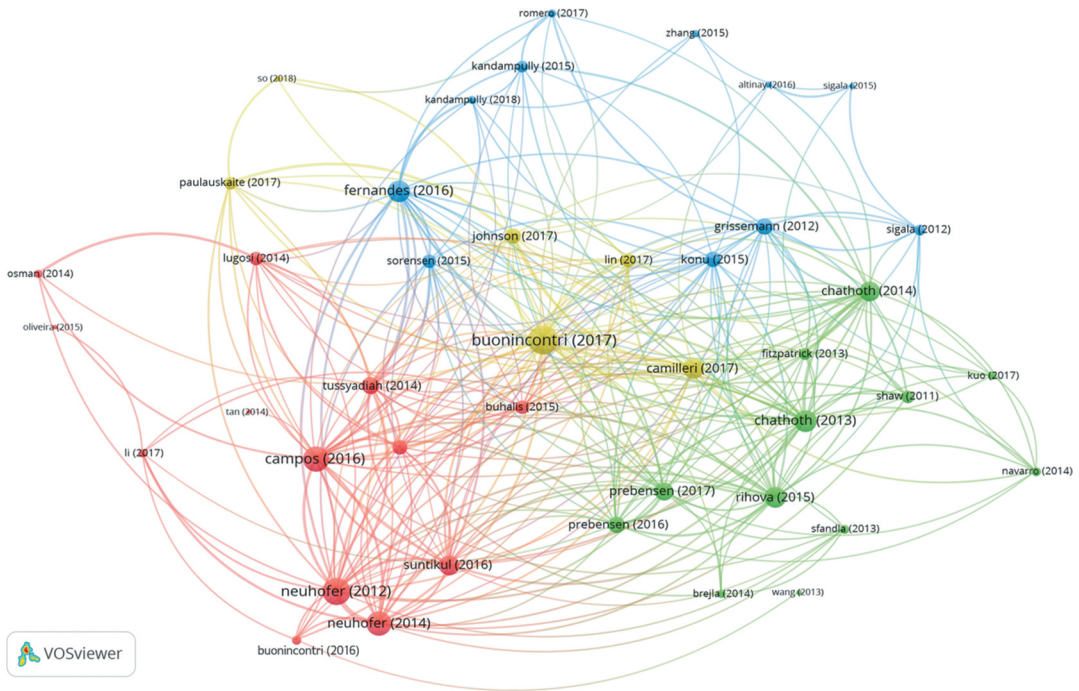
Figure 2. Bibliographic coupling of documents (lines limited to 300 to enhance visualization). Source: The authors via VOSviewer mapping analysis

as a new framework, which enables marketers to increase value for all stakeholders. The last sub-pattern looks at the intercept of co-creation and destination management, where the latter concerns value co-creation in tourism from the firm's perspective. Destination management organizations require social media platforms to stay connected in the day-to-day interactions in the virtual world and recognize that they have virtually no control over user-generated content (Li et al., 2017). This approach adds to tourism development by shedding light on the fact that experience co-creation is currently not as disconnected in the *pre, during*, and *post* stages of the tourism process. These boundaries are less visible today, with experiences occurring at both physical and virtual levels (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016).

Various promising research avenues can be derived from this cluster, including the smart tourism approach, how this influences the tourism experience and confirms the direct interaction with tourism services providers, and also active customer participation and sharing as antecedents of experience co-creation (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016). Understanding the impact of social networks on tourism is also very much unexplored. Social networks are new ways of interactive and dynamic consumption, which include co-creation between consumers and producers and peer-to-peer interaction. In effect, everybody is a consumer and a producer of information (Buhalis & Foerste, 2015). Accordingly, the question of how to develop social marketing skills has gained particular relevance for both tourism players and academics alike.

Cluster 2 – co-creation and social approach

The second cluster, named *co-creation and social approach*, which is coloured green in Figure 2, is formed by 12 articles which resulted in 207 citations from 2018 to 2019. This cluster embraces most of the research on co-creation in tourism, mainly based on the S-DL. In this cluster, understanding the co-creation interaction becomes the major research focus. An initial managerial trend of co-creation, using S-DL premises in hotel contexts was established, which most-likely originated from

Table 2. Top 10 link strengths articles.

R	Title	Authors	Year	Total Citation	Total Link Strength
1	Managing the experience co-creation process in tourism destinations: Empirical findings from Naples	Buonincontri, P., Morvillo, A., Okumus, F., & van Niekerk, M.	2017	31	244
2	Conceptualizing technology enhanced destination experiences.	Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A.	2012	139	230
3	Co-Creation Experiences: Attention and Memorability	Campos, A. C., Mendes, J., do Valle, P. O., & Scott, N.	2016	35	206
4	A Typology of Technology-Enhanced Tourism Experiences	Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D., & Ladkin, A.	2014	115	202
5	Co-production versus co-creation: A process- based continuum in the hotel service context	Chathoth, P. K., Chan, E. S. W., Okumus, F., Harrington, R. J., & Altinay, L.	2013	160	174
6	Dimensions and outcomes of experience quality in tourism: The case of Port wine cellars	Fernandes, Teresa; Cruz, Mariana	2016	35	170
7	Conceptualizing Customer-to-customer Value Co-creation in Tourism	Rihova, Ivana; Buhalis, Dimitrios; Moital, Miguel; Gouthro, Mary-Beth	2015	68	161
8	Value co-creation and co-destruction in the Airbnb sharing economy	Camilleri, Jeannette; Neuhofer, Barbara	2017	42	161
9	Barriers affecting organizational adoption of higher order customer engagement in tourism service interactions	Chathoth, Prakash K.; Ungson, Gerardo R.; Altinay, Levent; Chan, Eric S. W.; Harrington, Robert; Okumus, Fevzi	2014	50	159
10	The co-creation/place attachment nexus	Suntikul, Wantanee; Jachna, Timothy	2016	40	157

Source: The Authors, based on WoS data.

Shaw et al. (2011). The analysis shows that it is important to differentiate between co-production and co-creation in tourism. Chathoth et al. (2013) defend that co-production and co-creation are in a continuum and are essentially apart according to the initial point of origin – with the firm's side for co-production, and the customer's side for co-creation.

The challenge is to go beyond the traditional co-production approach of tourism players, accepting that a significant part of tourists' experience results from co-creation. Further research could thus explore the organizational transformation that is necessary to facilitate co-creation (FitzPatrick et al., 2013; Navarro et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2013). Additionally, an evolution towards a more comprehensive co-creation interaction, covering not only firm-customers interactions but also customer-to-customer (C2C) co-creation is also of interest (e.g., Brejla & Gilbert, 2014; Chathoth et al., 2014). Notably, the importance of the customer's experience perspectives and the sociological approach is gaining momentum. Initiatives, such as the conceptualization of a Customer-Dominant Logic to replace the S-DL (Rihova et al., 2015), and the perception of co-creation as an effective moderator of the relationship between experience value and customer satisfaction (Prebensen et al., 2016), are pushing co-creation forward. Some concerns regarding value co-destruction have also been raised (Brejla & Gilbert, 2014). Indeed, customers' motivation to destroy value is a promising area of research in the future. By applying the notion of social practices, researchers could potentially unveil the nature and the appeal of shared tourism consumption (Rihova et al., 2015).

Cluster 3 – customers' collaboration and satisfaction

The *customers' collaboration and satisfaction* cluster, in blue in Figure 2, consists of 11 articles representing 393 citations in 2018 and 2019. This stream of research has been fairly consistent over time, exploring the relationship between customer experience and customer collaboration in tourism service development. Topics within this cluster include co-creation related ideas, such as co-production, co-design, and co-innovation (Kandampully & Zhang, 2010; Sigala, 2012), and also research into the antecedents and consequences of service development (Grissemann & Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). Some studies focus on employee interference and facilitation of value creation during encounters with customers (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Sørensen & Jensen, 2015), while others looked at customer experience quality and customer satisfaction as drivers of loyalty and advocacy (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016; Kandampully et al., 2018).

New research in this cluster could explore how to improve the interrelation between customers and employees to enhance service offers, promoting active customer engagement and satisfaction and, ultimately, loyalty. Interrelations could combine both physical and virtual encounters, exploring channels and social networks as well as their creative qualities to enable a proper flow of customer-employee interactions (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015). Alternatively, research could explore an entirely different approach, such as the consumer-to-consumer interaction, by proposing better measures and tools to deal with customer experience management (Kandampully et al., 2018).

Cluster 4 – co-creation in the sharing economy

The final cluster, represented in yellow in Figure 2, comprises less but relatively more recent articles. A total of 6 articles published in 2017 and 2018 are included in the analysis, which nevertheless represent 194 citations in 2018 and 2019. These articles address the sharing economy, which is a recent topic in economics and in consumer behaviour research. The link between the sharing economy and tourism was identified early on by Johnson and Neuhofer (2010) and was reinforced recently by Paulauskaite et al. (2017). Most articles on the sharing economy targeted the Airbnb environment to observe the co-creation phenomenon. A research stream which emerges in this cluster is the resident-tourist interaction as a co-creation initiative, either by describing its enhancing or degrading potential, or by exploring the "living like a local" authentic experience (Paulauskaite et al., 2017). This adds a new dimension to the co-creation interaction, whereby hosts adopt a different role when compared with other tourism players.

These hosts look for economic advantages, but do not show other firm-related behaviours, such as structured policies or added services. This type of relationship does not fit properly with business-to-business (B2C) or customer-to-customer (C2C) interactions, and thus has been labelled "peer-to-peer interactions" in the sharing economy scenario.

The discussion on value co-destruction emerged in a limited sample of articles, either as an indirect appeal (e.g., Buonincontri et al., 2017), or as the main topic (Camilleri & Neuhofer, 2017). The latter study describes both co-creation and co-destruction and explores value co-recovery, such as when, for example, the homeowner resolved a negative event, and value co-reduction, when an unpleasant host reinforces the value erosion. However, co-destruction research in tourism is still insufficiently investigated and is as important as the co-creation function (Uratnik, 2016).

Further research in this topic could advance the understanding of motivations for resident-tourist co-creation. An example could be identifying value-in-experiences and rewards for residents and tourists alike as a result of their co-creation process (Lin et al., 2017). In addition, more research is needed to study the negative aspects of tourism co-creation when tourists' engagement is part of the experience (Buonincontri et al., 2017).

Conclusion and implications

Earlier studies on co-creation in tourism focussed more on customer-firm interaction than on other parts of the supplier value chain (Shaw et al., 2011). The touristic activity is of an experiential nature, depending on co-production dynamics for collecting information and customers' impressions during encounters. Lesson learned resulted in the rearranging of the tourism offer in accordance with new service development or a co-innovation approach (Bharwani & Jauhari, 2013; Sigala, 2012). Consequently, previous research aimed at raising the awareness of tourism players of the need to encourage customer participation and what players could gain from co-creating with customers.

This research shows that four research clusters emerged from 2011 to 2019, namely: the intertwined relationship between ICT and destination management in improving customers' experience (Cluster 1); the study of the co-creation phenomenon, including C2C value co-creation and the social approach to this phenomena (Cluster 2); the pursuit of customers' satisfaction and loyalty, involving customer experience management and types of customer collaboration (Cluster 3), and; the co-creation experience in the sharing economy, including the study of tourists-residents and peer-to-peer interactions (Cluster 4). No clear path was identified which specifically addresses the question of value co-destruction, which in itself represents a very interesting opportunity for further research.

Two interaction scenarios seem to focus researchers' attentions. First, the interactions between customers and frontline agents, be they employees or engaged in a peer-to-peer role. Second, interactions between customers in a co-destruction perspective. Even though the *pre, during* and *post* consumption stages are not separated as they were in the past (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016), each stage represents an interesting research agenda. Analysing firms' and customers' perceptions in each of these stages would be very promising future research. From the firm's point of view, these three stages have already attracted the attention of academics. For example, some studies debated the *pre*-visit stage, including how technological components in a smart travel destination can be set up to improve the co-creation of tourism experiences (Buonincontri & Micera, 2016), whilst others explored social media and employee creativity *during* the visit stage (Sigala and Chalkiti (2015), and, finally, other studies analysed the *post* visit impact of value-creating assets in tourism management (FitzPatrick et al., 2013). On the other hand, research from a customer perspective has focussed mainly on the moment of truth and on-site co-creation experience (Campos et al., 2016), as well on the *post* stage experience, including customer engagement behaviours (Romero, 2017). Limited focus has been dedicated to the preparation or *pre*-stage in tourism, although some studies have examined the antecedents and consequences of tourism co-creation (e.g., Buonincontri et al., 2017) or the role of ICT in the visit preparation, however insufficient research is available which specifically focusses on how value co-creation during travel preparations is carried out, be it positive or negative, and its implications on customer decision making.

The bibliographic review shows evidence of increased academic interest in co-creation in the tourism industry. However, certain topics are not fully covered in the literature that was reviewed. For example, sustainable tourism development (Altinay et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2017) is a topic which hardly featured in the sample, and additionally, there was only one study on creative tourism (Tan et al., 2014), although creative tourists are described as being active co-creators of experiences.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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