

# IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH CO-CREATING TOURIST EXPERIENCE - WHAT DOES EXPERIENCE MARKETING HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

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# **IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH CO-CREATING TOURIST EXPERIENCE – WHAT DOES EXPERIENCE MARKETING HAVE TO DO WITH IT?**

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### ***Abstract***

*The paper explores the co-creation of the tourist experience with travel professionals and its impact on improving quality of life through satisfaction with the general trip experience. Hence, it adds to the existing body of literature by emphasizing the role of experience marketing in co-creating the tourist experience and its contribution to the quality of life. The paper builds on previous research concerning the concepts of tourist experience co-creation (Mathis, 2013) and quality of life (Neal, Uysal & Sirgy, 2007). A survey was conducted on a convenience sample of 422 Croatian residents, who had travelled at least once in the year prior to the study. The hypotheses were empirically tested and validated by implementing partial least square structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Findings indicate that the co-creation of tourist experiences does influence satisfaction with the general trip experience, which, in turn, impacts the perceived quality of life. The paper also provides implications for travel professionals on how to improve their offer by using the postulates of experience marketing.*

***Keywords: Co-creation, tourist experience, quality of life, experience marketing***

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Co-creating value in tourism refers to the participation of tourists in the experience co-creation process. The tourist experience is a vital element of any tourist travel and the direct result of the consumption of tourism products. Due to the mostly service-oriented and intangible nature of tourism, products/services in tourism are always experiential (Williams, 2006).

Tourist experience co-creation implies experiences that are actively shaped through the collaboration of tourists and a company. By intensifying the collaboration between tourists and the company, a higher level of interaction and consumer-orientation can be reached, resulting in a higher level of value created (Neuhofner, Buhalis, & Ladkin, 2013). In addition to creating added value for visitors and hosts, experience co-creation also helps to enhance the authenticity and distinctiveness of a destination (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Previous research has also shown that the co-creation of the tourist experience of a destination has a positive effect on satisfaction with the tourist experience (Prebensen, Kim & Uysal, 2015).

Numerous studies have confirmed the role of tourism in improving the quality of life of tourists (Kim, Woo & Uysal, 2015; Moscardo, 2009; Neal, Uysal & Sirgy, 2007; Neal, Sirgy & Uysal, 2004, Lončarić, Lončarić & Marković, 2015). However, the role of tourist experience co-creation in the perceived quality of life/subjective well-being and satisfaction of tourists has been poorly researched in the literature. Mathis et al. (2016) claim that experience co-creation has a positive effect on the travel experience and on loyalty to the service providers and that travel satisfaction has a positive effect on overall life satisfaction. Yet, there is a lack of empirical studies proving the positive effect of tourist experience co-creation on perceived quality of life. This paper seeks to fill this gap in research and to examine the role of satisfaction with the overall travel experience as a mediator variable between the co-creation experience and quality of life. Also, this paper highlights the importance of experience marketing as a solution for creating memorable tourist experiences.

The paper is structured as follows. After the introduction, the second section of the paper focuses on the theoretical background of tourist experience co-creation, quality of life and experience marketing. This is followed by hypotheses development and model specification. The fourth section explains the methods used and presents results, and the last section discusses the findings, contributions and limitations of the study, together with managerial implications.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1. Co-creation of tourist experience and the role of marketing

The search for experiences is something that is inherent to all interactions between tourists and tourist service providers. This search is guided by the desire to be involved in the creation of memorable tourist experiences (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick,

2012). These experiences are grouped into seven areas: hedonism, refreshment, local culture, meaningfulness, knowledge, involvement and novelty. Tourists seek not only to consume their vacation or trip but also to take something from it, in the form of an experience. This is all the more true given the contemporary shift from service-oriented to experience-oriented encounters (Pine & Gilmore, 1998).

Verbauskienė and Grišienė (2014), in their analysis of experience types, suggest that the experience of each person is individual, subjective and constantly changes the parts of a human life; it depends on the time factor, the phase of buying and the level of experience a customer is at (pre-experience, experience, post-experience) as well as on other factors: customer characteristics or stimuli, which are targeted by service providers, confrontations with a company or interaction with other customers. From the customer perspective, there are four realms of consumption experience (the 4Es): entertainment, educational, escapist and aesthetic (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), and the experience level is significantly correlated with happiness and, importantly, with perceived quality of life (Schmitt, 2010). Interestingly, entertainment is very important for life quality, whereas buying goods is the least important for both happiness and life quality (Schmitt, 2010). So, when a consumer experiences something as being important, this forms his/her life situations (Same, 2012).

In an era of overwhelming information, tourists may be confused in their decision-making when choosing a tourism service provider or a destination to visit. Although consumers today have the opportunity to choose from a wide selection of products and services, they may still be dissatisfied if there is a lack of products or services that could enrich them with valuable experiences. As value shifts to experiences, the market is becoming a forum for conversation and interactions between consumers, consumer communities and firms (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). The idea of experience-seeking customers was first introduced by Hirschman and Holbrook (1982), and it popularized experience marketing in theory and practice. The main focus of experience marketing is on the customer as well as on experience co-creation (Same, 2012).

According to Same and Larimo (2012), experience marketing is the strategic customer-centric marketing of relevant experiences that take into account the affective, cognitive and conative perspectives of the consumption experience, so the key concepts of experience marketing are: offering or stimulus, interaction between the customer and company, experience and value co-creation, and value to customers, company and society. Experience marketing efforts are seen as one of the ways of motivating tourists to visit a specific destination, as tourists are ready to spend more on products and events that will provide them with different memorable, i.e. extraordinary, experiences (Schmitt, 2010). Experience marketing is approached as a form of customer-focused marketing activity that creates a relationship with customers, using: 1) experiential value, 2) different types of experiences, 3) the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary experiences, and 4) experience touch points (Schmitt, 2010). Experience marketing is based on the experience economy theory of Pine and Gilmore (1998), who claimed that experiences are a distinct economic offering, alongside commodities, goods and services. Firms provide experiences in which consumers can participate actively or

passively (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009), so the customer creates his/her own experiences with the help of different tools provided by the company (Same, 2012).

Experiences have value for tourists, rather than the vacation or trip *per se*. Accordingly, the principles of service-dominant logic (S-D logic) need to be applied in tourism, as S-D logic is based on the idea that consumers have an active role in creating value (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and that they act as value co-creators in the process of creating experiences. Tourists are engaged and involved in process of creating experiences as they act as value co-creators (Chathoth et al. 2013). Therefore, experiences are created through the interaction of service providers (travel professionals) and tourists who collaborate with them to create a memorable trip experience (Kim 2010). In context of this paper, the tourist experience is considered as an individual perception generated in the context of interactions and resource integration in a tourism context (Bjork & Sfandla, 2009 in Mathis et al. 2016, p. 63).

Interactions and resource integration areas associated with the co-creation process. When tourists and travel professionals collaborate in defining and designing the tourist experience, a value co-creation process is taking place (Prahald & Ramaswamy, 2004; Prebensen & Foss, 2011). Collaboration in creating experiences should be approached from the perspective of the individual tourist who is engaged with an event on an emotional, physical, spiritual or intellectual level (Pine & Gilmore, 1998). This implies that the tourist experience is subjective, related to individuals involved in this process of co-creation and to settings where experiences take place (Jennings, 2006 in Quinlan Cutler & Carmichael, 2010).

Moreover, tourist travel can enrich someone's everyday life as it involves new experiences (Neal et al. 2007) in visiting specific destination and experiencing destination offer like culture, history, gastronomy or natural landscapes. Experience marketing through enriching sensory, affective, creative, cognitive and physical tourist experiences (Schmitt, 1999) also enhances tourist satisfaction with visiting specific destination. Hence, travel satisfaction originates from different experiences in tourist destination and from co-creating and collaborating in organization of tourist travel.

Different processes take place behind value and experience co-creation on the tourist market. Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012) summarise them as processes related to cooperation between travel professionals and tourists in designing a travel experience, processes related to designing a unique experience for tourists, and processes related to sharing travel experiences via online platforms. Furthermore, this experience co-creation process underlines tourists as co-producers of services (Shaw et al., 2011).

## **2.2. Quality of life**

The concept of quality of life has been in the focus of numerous researchers for a long time. It is a multidimensional construct (Da Rocha et al. 2012), which can be observed from different perspectives. It can be analysed at the micro and macro level (Kirpalani, 1987, p. 205). At the macro level, we are

talking about the quality of life in a society that is determined by many factors from the environment. Quality of life at the micro level refers to the perception of the individual. In the same social, political and cultural environment, two different people will experience life and its quality in different ways (Kirpalani, 1987, p. 205). Thus, the World Health Organization defines the quality of life as "an individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns"(WHOQOL Group, 1995).

Instead of quality of life, other terms such as life satisfaction and well-being are often used in the literature, although there are not synonymous. Life satisfaction refers to the degree to which a person positively evaluates the overall quality of life as a whole (Veenhoven, 1996). It is part of the broader concept of subjective well-being, which includes life satisfaction as a cognitive component, along with positive and negative feelings as affective components. This involves judging the fulfilment of one's needs, goals and desires (Sirgy, 2012, p. 13).

In previous studies, researchers have identified different life domains in which quality of life is achieved (Andrews & Withey 1976; Campbell, Converse & Rodgers 1976; Cummins, 1996). It has been established that leisure time has a positive and significant impact on subjective quality of life, i.e. on general life satisfaction (Andrews & Withey, 1976; Campbell, Converse & Rodgers, 1976; Eusebio & Carneiro, 2014). The influence of vacationing, as a component of leisure time, has also been investigated by a number of authors (Dolnicar et al., 2012; Genc, 2012; Sirgy, Kruger, Lee & Yu, 2011). Also, numerous studies have confirmed the role of tourism in improving the quality of life of tourists (Kim, Woo & Uysal, 2015; Moscardo, 2009; Neal, Uysal & Sirgy, 2007; Neal, Sirgy & Uysal, 2004). The general conclusion is that tourist trips are an essential form of leisure time that has an impact on quality of life and life satisfaction.

Considering the above-mentioned, the current study explores the co-creation of the tourist experience with travel professionals and its impact on improving quality of life with the aim to highlight the importance of experience marketing in tourism.

### **3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT AND MODEL SPECIFICATION**

The main purpose of this paper is to explain the relationships between three main concepts: tourist experience co-creation, satisfaction with general trip experience and perceived quality of life. In the following section, relationships among the main concepts of this study are hypothesized and a conceptual model is developed.

If tourists find the results of the co-creation process to be satisfying, i.e. when travel arrangements cause them to be satisfied with travel, they are also

more likely to be satisfied with the whole trip experience. Bendapudi and Leone (2003) argue that customer, i.e. tourist, participation in the co-creation process has an influence on satisfaction with the organization or person with whom customers are collaborating. When it comes to the tourist experience, Mathis et al. (2016) proved that satisfaction with co-creation of an experience can contribute to satisfaction with the vacation experience. Hence, we propose that: *The degree of tourist experience co-creation is positively related to satisfaction with the general trip experience* ( $H_1$ ).

Previous research shows that, for many people in developed areas, time spent on leisure and tourism has become an essential part of their quality of life (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). Citing Richards (1999, p. 190), they state that the desire for more leisure and tourism consumption reflects the shift in the focus of consumption away from physical goods toward services and experiences, which means that quality of life is increasingly judged in terms of access to those experiences. Further, Kim et al. (2015) revealed that satisfaction with travel experience is a significant predictor of quality of life. Therefore, we propose that: *Satisfaction with the general trip experience is positively related to a traveler's perceived quality of life* ( $H_2$ ).

Further to the above hypotheses, we propose a conceptual model as seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. The conceptual model of this study

Source: Authors

Empirical research was conducted to test the formulated hypotheses and is explained in the following section.

## 4. METHODS

### 4.1. Sample and data collection process

A paper-and-pencil questionnaire was designed using previously established scales. Research was conducted from October 2014 to January 2015 in Croatia. A purposive sample was used. Initial number of questionnaires was 600. Questionnaires were distributed in two statistical regions according to the National Classification of Territorial Units for Statistics (NN 96/2012), 300 of them in the continental and 300 in the coastal part of Croatia. Thus, the survey

covered all Croatian counties and the capital of Zagreb. A total of 525 questionnaires were gathered, of which 513 were properly filled out (284 in continental, 224 in the coastal part of the country and five of them missed this information). A filter question was used to distinguish between tourists who had and had not travelled in the year prior to study and whose trip included collaboration with travel professionals. At the end, data analysis is based on a sample of 422 questionnaires, accounting for 80.38% of the collected questionnaires.

## **4.2. Measures**

The measurement scales were taken from the existing literature. The degree of co-creation was measured using five statements taken from a study by Mathis (2013) and referring to the collaboration of respondents with a travel professional. Three statements borrowed from Neal et al. (2007) were used to measure the respondents' satisfaction with the general trip experience. Furthermore, three statements that measure the travellers' quality of life were taken from Mathis et al. (2016). All scales used five-point, Likert scale anchored at 1 "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree".

## **4.3. Data analysis**

The descriptive statistics and reliability analysis of the collected data were performed using SPSS version 23.0. We assessed the demographic profile of the sample and the internal consistency of the constructs. The hypotheses formulated were tested using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equations Modelling (PLS-SEM) method. Since PLS-Path Modelling has been described as an important research tool in social sciences, especially for satisfaction studies (Mateos-Aparicio, 2011), we assessed the method as being applicable to this study.

# **5. RESULTS**

## **5.1. Sample characteristics**

The average respondent in the sample is a female (62.8%), aged 21-25 (36.5%), with higher education qualifications (48.6%) or secondary school qualifications (48.1%) and comes from Primorje-Gorski Kotar County (23.5%). The demographic profile of respondents is provided in Table 1.



Table 1

## Demographic profile of respondents (n=422)

<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Gender</i>	
Female	62.8
Male	37.2
<i>Age</i>	
18 – 20	6.4
21 – 25	36.5
26 – 30	19.0
31 – 35	9.7
36 – 40	3.8
41 and more	24.6
<i>Level of education</i>	
Primary school	1.9
Secondary school	48.1
Higher education	48.6
MSc and PhD	1.4
<i>County</i>	
Zagreb	12.6
Krapina-Zagorje	4.1
Sisak-Moslavina	1.0
Karlovac	2.1
Varaždin	4.5
Koprivnica-Križevci	0.4
Bjelovar-Bilogora	1.0
Virovitica-Podravina	0.2
Požega-Slavonia	3.1
Brod-Posavina	1.0
Osijek-Baranja	5.5
Vukovar-Srijem	2.3
Međimurje	6.4
The City of Zagreb	11.3
Primorje-GorskiKotar	23.5
Lika-Senj	1.6
Zadar	2.7
Šibenik-Knin	1.6
Split-Dalmatia	1.6
Istra	6.6
Dubrovnik-Neretva	5.7
Unknown	1.2

*Source: Research results*

Also, the respondent profile was analyzed with regard to travel behavior (Table 2).

Table 2

## Travel behaviour of respondents (n=422)

<i>Description</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Travel duration</i>	
2 days	16.6
3-7 days	57.3
8 or more days	25.1
Unknown	0.9
<i>Type of travel</i>	
City travel in Croatia	13.3
City travel abroad	26.1
Touring vacation	18.5
Outdoors vacation	3.8
Sun and sea vacation	16.6
Skiing and winter vacations	2.8
Cruise	0.9
Visiting friends and relatives	8.1
Business travel	4.7
Other	4.3
Unknown	0.9
<i>Accompanying person</i>	
Alone	7.6
Family	21.6
Partner	31.0
Friends	24.4
Organized group (tour, church, school, etc.)	13.5
Other	0.7
Unknown	1.2
<i>Organization of travel</i>	
Independent travel	52.4
Through a travel agency	30.3
Independent travel with some services provided by a travel agency	16.6
Unknown	0.7
<i>Travel professional with whom cooperation has been established before or during travel</i>	
Travel agent	17.3
Tour guide	13.0
Hotel staff	23.5
The accommodation owner	38.2
Other	8.1

*Source: Research results*

It is evident that the duration of travel for most of the respondents was from three to seven days (57.3%). Travel largely involved city travel abroad (26.1%) and touring vacations (18.5%). The respondents mostly travelled with a partner (31%), friends (24.4%) or family members (21.6%). More than half of the respondents were independent travelers (52.4%) who cooperated directly with the accommodation facility owner before or during travel (38.2%).

## 5.2. Measurement model

An evaluation of PLS-SEM results started with verification of the measurement model. As the measurement model has three constructs with reflective indicators, the evaluation comprises internal consistency, indicator reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity testing (Hair et al., 2014). PLS-SEM results for the measurement model are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

PLS results for the measurement model

Constructs	Variable	Item	$\lambda^*$	CR	AVE
<b>THE DEGREE OF TOURIST EXPERIENCE CO-CREATION</b>	cocr1	Working alongside a travel professional allowed me to have greater social interaction, which I enjoyed.	0.810	0.892	0.623
	cocr2	I felt comfortable working with a travel professional during this activity.	0.846		
	cocr3	The setting of the vacation environment allowed me to effectively collaborate with the travel professional.	0.744		
	cocr4	My vacation experience was enhanced because of my participation in the activity.	0.749		
	cocr5	I felt confident in my ability to collaborate with the travel professional.	0.761		
<b>SATISFACTION WITH GENERAL TRIP EXPERIENCE</b>	sat1	All in all, I feel that this trip has enriched my life. I am really glad I went on this trip.	0.850	0.895	0.739
	sat2	On this trip, I accomplished the purpose of the vacation. This experience has enriched me in some ways.	0.854		
	sat3	This trip was rewarding to me in many ways. I feel much better about things and myself after this trip.	0.874		
<b>QUALITY OF LIFE</b>	qol1	Overall, my experience with this trip was memorable, having enriched my quality of life.	0.810	0.866	0.683
	qol2	My satisfaction with life in general was increased shortly after the trip.	0.844		
	qol3	Overall, I felt happy upon my return from that trip.	0.825		

Note:

\*All factor loadings were significant at  $p < .001$

CR stands for composite reliability; AVE stands for average variance extracted.

Source: Research results

Table 3 shows that all item loadings of the reflective constructs exceed the recommended value of 0.708 (Hair et al., 2014, p. 103). The composite reliability values, ranging from 0.866 to 0.895, demonstrate that all three constructs have high levels of internal consistency reliability. Semantic redundancy was not an issue since there were no loadings exceeding the threshold of 0.95 (Hair et al., 2014, p. 102). Convergent validity assessment is based on the average variances extracted (AVE). The AVE values of all three constructs reflect the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct. All values are well above the cut-off of 0.50 (Hair et al., 2014), indicating convergent validity for all constructs.

Discriminant validity “refers to the degree to which different measures designed for similar but conceptually different constructs are measurably unrelated” (Kim and Ritchie, 2013). It was assessed using cross loadings and the Fornell-Larcker criterion, which recommends that the square roots of AVE values for all constructs should be above the constructs’ highest correlation with other latent variables in the model. The cross loadings are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

## Cross loadings

INDICATOR	THE DEGREE OF TOURIST EXPERIENCE CO-CREATION	SATISFACTION WITH GENERAL TRIP EXPERIENCE	QUALITY OF LIFE
cocr1	0.810	0.220	0.264
cocr2	0.846	0.267	0.245
cocr3	0.744	0.174	0.218
cocr4	0.779	0.247	0.264
cocr5	0.761	0.315	0.193
sat1	0.304	0.850	0.552
sat2	0.288	0.854	0.564
sat3	0.241	0.874	0.682
qol1	0.205	0.544	0.810
qol2	0.264	0.509	0.844
qol3	0.265	0.663	0.825

*Source: Research results*

It is clear that the outer loadings of all indicators on the associated construct are greater than their loadings on other constructs. In addition, the square roots of AVE values for all constructs are above the construct's highest correlation with other latent variables in the model (Table 5). The results confirm the discriminant validity of the measurement model.

Table 5

Discriminant validity

CONSTRUCT	CO-CREATION	SATISFACTION	QUALITY OF LIFE
CO-CREATION	0.789		
SATISFACTION	0.321	0.859	
QUALITY OF LIFE	0.298	0.702	0.826

Source: Research results

5.3. Structural model and hypotheses testing

After evaluating the measurement model we assessed the structural model and tested the proposed relationships. Figure 2 presents the results of analysis.

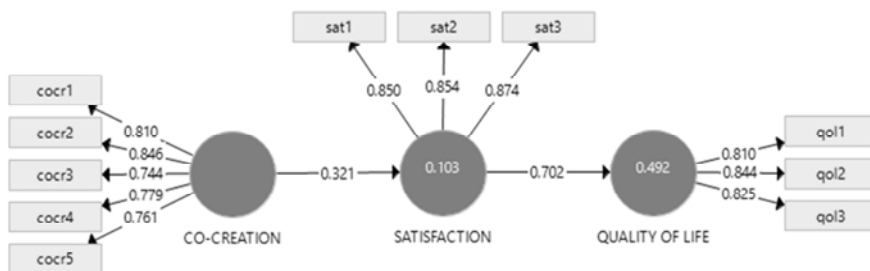


Figure 2. Structural model results

Table 6 presents the standardized path coefficient estimates, their respective t values and p values, and summarizes the results of hypotheses testing.

Table 6

Significance testing of the structural model path coefficients

Path	Path coefficients	t values	p values	Hypothesis
CO-CREATION → SATISFACTION	0.321	8.317	0.000	H <sub>1</sub> : supported
SATISFACTION → QUALITY OF LIFE	0.702	24.897	0.000	H <sub>2</sub> : supported

Source: Research results

It is evident that both relationships are statistically significant. In relation to hypothesis H1, the results show that the degree of co-creation positively influences satisfaction with the general trip experience (path coefficient=0.321,  $t=8.317$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This finding supports H<sub>1</sub>. Satisfaction with the general trip experience positively influences quality of life (path coefficient=0.702,  $t=24.897$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). This result supports H<sub>2</sub>.

The most commonly used measure to evaluate the structural model is the R<sup>2</sup> value which “represents the amount of variance in the endogenous constructs explained by all of the exogenous constructs linked to it” (Hair et al, 2014, p. 175). The R<sup>2</sup> value obtained for satisfaction with the travel experience is weak (0.103), while the R<sup>2</sup> value for quality of life (0.492) can be considered moderate.

#### 5.4. Mediation analysis

In addition to the previous analyses, a mediation check was performed. In the proposed model, satisfaction with general trip experience is proposed as a mediator between the degree of co-creation and quality of life. The unmediated path between degree of co-creation and quality of life had a significant path coefficient of 0.304 ( $t=6.988$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and produced an R<sup>2</sup> of 0.092 for quality of life. When the mediation relationship with satisfaction with general trip experience was added, the new paths were also significant. The degree of co-creation to satisfaction with general trip experience had a path coefficient of 0.314 ( $t=7.126$ ,  $p=0.000$ ) and satisfaction with trip experience to quality of life had a path coefficient of 0.673 ( $t=19.584$ ,  $p=0.000$ ). The strength of the mediation was assessed by using the variance accounted for (VAF) which determines the size of the indirect effect in the relation to the total effect (Hair et al, 2014, p. 225). The indirect effect size was 0.211 and the total effect had a value of 0.515. The VAF value was 0.590, indicating that 59% of the co-creation effect on quality of life is explained via satisfaction with general trip experience as a mediator. Since the VAF is between 20% and 80%, it can be considered as partial mediation (Hair et al, 2014, p. 224). Therefore, we can conclude that the degree of co-creation first enhances satisfaction with general travel experience, which leads to an increase in quality of life.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study tested a model that proposed relationships among three constructs: tourist experience co-creation, satisfaction with general trip experience and quality of life. The findings indicate that the degree of tourist experience co-creation positively influences satisfaction with the general trip experience. This is in line with the findings of Mathis et al. (2016) and suggests that travel professionals should engage in the travel experience co-creation process together with tourists as this will positively influence the latter's travel

satisfaction. Furthermore, research also pointed out that satisfaction with the general trip experience positively influences quality of life. This contributes to the importance of creating experiences, as they influence value co-creation, purchase decisions and behaviour (Same & Larimo, 2012). Therefore, the suggestions for marketing managers are provided.

### **6.1. Implications for experience marketing management**

The meaning of value and the process of value creation are rapidly shifting from a product- and firm-centric view to personalized consumer experiences (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004), so experience marketing can help companies improve interaction with customers to develop relationships that will ultimately lead to customer loyalty, co-creation of value and growth for the company (Same, 2012). For customers to become involved in the process of co-creating value, experience marketing must offer something extraordinary (Schmitt, 2010) that can create meaningful experiences, composed of what the consumer knows, feels and wants (Same & Larimo, 2012). Value can be created for the consumer through interaction with other people, such as friends and family members, through a collective consumption experience (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009), as informed, networked, empowered and active consumers are increasingly co-creating value with the company (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004).

As satisfaction is related to continuing doing business with a company, it is essential that travel professionals engage in co-creating trip arrangements and, consequently, in creating travel experiences together with tourists. Modern tourists are looking for authentic memorable tourist experiences (Kim, Ritchie & McCormick, 2012). So, tourist and travel professional involvement is needed in co-creating a tourism supply. By effectively allocating their resources to the co-creation process, travel professionals can create memorable tourist experiences. To do so, from a managerial perspective, travel professionals must establish a specific way of communicating with tourists, because informed, networked, empowered and active tourists are more likely to increase co-creating value with companies (Pralhad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In this way, tourists become a valuable source of innovation and ideas for travel professionals by adding value to their tourist programs.

The experiences created should have a personal relevance for the customer, have to be novel, and offer an element of surprise (Poulsen & Kale, 2004) to engage a customer in the process of experience co-creation. In designing experiences, travel professionals should consider Schmitt's (1999) suggestions on experiential modules that encompass sensory experiences, affective experiences, creative cognitive experiences, physical experiences, behaviours and lifestyles, and social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group or culture. Hence, experiences can be related to different sensory modules and in

that way contribute to the overall trip experience and add to quality of life perception among individuals.

## 6.2. Limitation and further research

Like other researches also this is no without limitations. The limitations of this paper are visible in the following. Firstly, purposive sample has been used with substantial proportion of young travellers. To solve this, a structured sampling method should be applied. As the respondents travelled in different countries, their responses are not related to just one country. Hence, there is a possibility that factors other than travel satisfaction also influenced quality of life. In addition, as the sample comprises of young tourists, it would be interesting to examine the views of tourists belonging to older age groups, concerning the co-creation process and quality of life. Also, some insights could be different if sample would consist of international tourists in different accommodation units or to explore influence of different travel destinations. So, this could be also included in further research. Focusing on one travel professional or one destination could provide more insights into how co-creation influences travel satisfaction and quality of life. As experience marketing is closely related to experience co-creation further research should also focus on exploring influences of different experience marketing elements.

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## **UNAPREĐENJE KVALITETE ŽIVOTA UZ POMOĆ SUKREIRANJA TURISTIČKOG DOŽIVLJAJA – KAKO JE TO POVEZANO S MARKETINGOM DOŽIVLJAJA?**

***Sažetak***

*U radu se istražuje povezanost sukreiranja turističkog doživljaja s turističkim djelatnicima i utjecaj istoga na unapređenje kvalitete života kroz opće zadovoljstvo putovanjem. Ovaj rad pridonosi postojećim teorijskim spoznajama s naglaskom na ulogu marketinga doživljaja u procesu sukreiranja turističkog doživljaja i njegov doprinos kvaliteti života. Rad se temelji na prethodnim istraživanjima koncepta sukreiranja turističkoga doživljaja (Mathis, 2013) i kvalitete života (Neal, Uysal i Sirgy, 2007). Istraživanje je provedeno na uzorku od 422 ispitanika iz Republike Hrvatske, koji su najmanje jednom putovali u posljednjih godinu dana. Hipoteze su empirijski ispitane i provjerene korištenjem strukturalnog modeliranja uz pomoć parcijalne regresije metodom najmanjih kvadrata (PLS-SEM). Rezultati istraživanja pokazuju da sukreiranje turističkog doživljaja utječe na zadovoljstvo općim doživljajem putovanja, što utječe na percipiranu kvalitetu života. U radu su dane preporuke turističkim djelatnicima za unapređenje ponude primjenom načela marketinga doživljaja.*

***Ključne riječi:*** sukreiranje, turistički doživljaj, kvaliteta života, marketing doživljaja.

***JEL klasifikacija:*** L83, M31, Z33.

