

2nd International Conference

on Resilience and Sustainable Regions

TOURISTS' SUSTAINABILITY VALUES AND THEIR ROLE IN CO-CREATION PROCESSES

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Context and research aim



- Sustainability has become a core principle in contemporary tourism, influencing both strategic planning and consumer behavior.
- Tourists are increasingly aware of environmental, social, and ethical dimensions of their travel decisions.
- Co-creation, understood as the collaborative development of tourism experiences between tourists and service providers, has been widely recognized for its potential to enhance tourist satisfaction, engagement, and value creation.
- The tourism literature often assumes that sustainability-oriented tourists are also more likely to engage in co-creation activities.
- However, empirical evidence supporting this assumption remains limited and inconclusive.

Aim of the study:

To assess whether tourists' sustainability values influence:

- Their **perceived value** of co-creation experiences
- Their **intention to participate** in co-creation activities during travel

Theoretical framework

Co-creation and sustainability in tourism



- **Co-creation** in tourism is grounded in *Service-Dominant Logic* (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and posits tourists as active agents in shaping their own experiences.
- Tourists engage collaboratively with service providers, local communities, and digital platforms to create personalized, meaningful experiences (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009; Prebensen et al., 2013).
- Co-creation contributes to enhanced **psychological, functional, social, and experiential** value, increasing satisfaction and emotional connection with destinations.
- **Sustainability values** reflect tourists' commitment to responsible travel behaviors, encompassing environmental protection, support for local communities, and cultural respect (Loureiro & Nascimento, 2021; Steg & Vlek, 2009).
- Scholars suggest that sustainability-conscious tourists may perceive co-creation as aligned with their values. E.g., by supporting local artisans or participating in conservation projects (Elliot et al., 2023; Polat, 2022).

Theoretical framework

Co-creation and sustainability in tourism

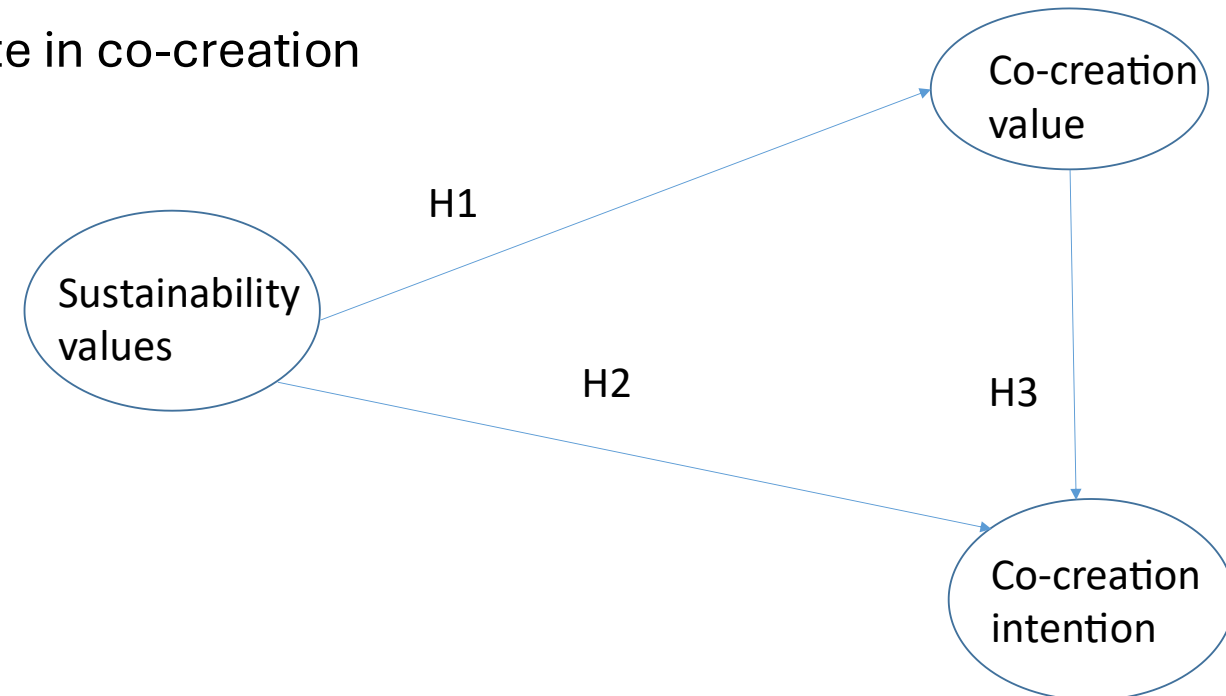
- Our conceptual model is supported by key behavioral theories:
 - **Value-Belief-Norm Theory (VBN)** (Stern et al., 1999): values guide pro-social and sustainable behaviors.
 - **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** (Ajzen, 1991): attitudes, social norms, and perceived control shape behavioral intentions.
 - **Cognitive Dissonance Theory** (Festinger, 1957): misalignment between values and actions leads to behavioral adjustment.
- Tourists with strong sustainability values are expected to:
 - Recognize greater **value** in co-created experiences;
 - Show stronger **intention to participate** in co-creation during travel.



Theoretical framework

Tested Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Sustainability values → Perceived value of co-creation
- **H2:** Sustainability values → Intention to participate in co-creation
- **H3:** Co-creation values → Intention to participate in co-creation



Methodology

- **Approach and analysis technique**
 - Quantitative study using **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)**
 - Data analysis conducted with **SmartPLS 4.0**
- **Data collection**
 - **Sample size:** 401 valid responses
 - **Target group:** Tourists visiting the **Lisbon region**
 - **Period:** February to April 2024
 - **Method:** Self-administered digital questionnaire on tablets
 - **Sampling strategy:** Convenience sampling at **13 tourist locations** (e.g., cultural sites, city viewpoints, and transport hubs)
- **Measurement instruments**
 - **Sustainability values:** Adapted from Buerke et al. (2017)
 - **Perceived value of co-creation:** Based on Sweeney & Soutar (2001), Roy et al. (2023)
 - **Intention to co-create:** Adapted from Casaló et al. (2010)
 - **7-point Likert scales** used for all constructs
 - Instrument reviewed by two marketing experts for content validity



Measurement model validation

Construct validation:

- All indicator loadings ≥ 0.70 , **except one**, which was excluded
- All remaining indicators **statistically significant** ($p < 0.01$)
- Reliability and validity indicators:
 - **Cronbach's Alpha** > 0.70
 - **Composite Reliability** > 0.70
 - **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** > 0.50
- **Discriminant Validity** confirmed (Fornell–Larcker criterion)



Structural model and hypotheses testing

- All hypotheses confirmed.
- The effect of **co-creation value** on intention is **strongest**.
- Sustainability values exert **modest but significant influence** on both value perception and behavioral intention.
- **Tourists with strong sustainability values:**
 - Perceive **greater value** in co-creation
 - Show **higher intention** to co-create
- **Perceived value of co-creation** has the **most substantial impact** on behavioral intention
- Sustainability influences co-creation both **directly** and **indirectly**

	Path coefficients	T statistics	P values	f-square
H1: Sustainability -> Co-creation value	0,109	1,978	0,048	0,012
H2: Sustainability -> Co-creation intention	0,101	2,601	0,009	0,015
H3: Co-creation value -> co-creation intention	0,554	9,612	0,000	0,453

Theoretical interpretation

- The findings support key assumptions of **Service-Dominant Logic** (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), whereby tourists act as active co-creators, particularly when they perceive experiential and functional benefits.
- **Perceived value of co-creation** has a **strong direct effect** on intention (H3), validating prior research (e.g., Prebensen & Xie, 2017; Sugathan & Ranjan, 2019).
- **Sustainability values** play a **modest but significant role** in:
 - Enhancing the perceived value of co-creation (H1)
 - Motivating intention to co-create (H2)
- However, these effects are **weaker than expected**, suggesting the influence of additional factors such as situational motivations and technological enablers.
- The study contributes to bridging sustainability values with **participatory travel behavior**, highlighting the mediating role of perceived experiential value.



Practical implications

- Tourism stakeholders should **not rely solely** on sustainability messaging to foster co-creation.
- Instead, **co-creation strategies** should be:
 - **Authentic, personally meaningful**, and clearly **valuable** to tourists;
 - **Aligned with tourists' sustainability values**, responding to tourists' desire for involvement, identity expression, and unique experiences.
- Emphasize the **experiential benefits** of co-creation (e.g., sense of ownership, uniqueness, emotional connection);
- Integrate **sustainability-related content** within interactive and immersive activities, rather than presenting it as a separate or didactic element.
- Examples of implementation may include:
 - Participation in eco-friendly workshops (e.g., sustainable crafts or gastronomy);
 - Engagement in cultural preservation initiatives (e.g., traditional storytelling, heritage interpretation);
- By embedding sustainability within **participatory and co-created experiences**, tourism destinations may enhance emotional engagement and promote more responsible travel behaviors.



Conclusions

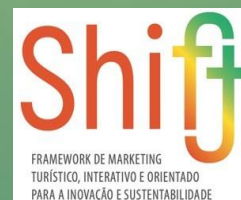
- The study empirically confirms that **sustainability values influence** both the **perceived value** of co-creation and the **intention to engage** in co-creation activities.
- However, these effects are **modest**, suggesting that sustainability alone may not be a strong enough driver of participatory behavior.
- **Perceived value of co-creation** is the **strongest predictor** of intention to co-create, reinforcing the importance of designing meaningful, valuable experiences.
- The findings support and expand theoretical frameworks such as **VBN**, **TPB**, and **Service-Dominant Logic**, by demonstrating how ethical values and experiential perceptions jointly shape tourist behavior.
- From a managerial perspective, the results highlight the importance of **experience design** and **value communication** in fostering sustainable co-creative tourism.
- Future research should explore additional drivers of co-creation (e.g., emotional engagement, technology, destination image) and test the model across **different cultural contexts** and **tourist profiles**.



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Thank you



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