



INNOVATIVE SERVICE APPLIES TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM: AN IMPLEMENTED STRATEGY

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Abstract

This paper aims to develop an implemented strategy when innovative service applies to sustainable tourism. The implemented strategy is investigated that encompasses a practical problem of how and why the psychological process within cross-cultural experience and value. An eco-innovation case of a farmer from a traditional rural community is presented to explore this unknown phenomenon. The results show how and why an eco-innovation strategy was successfully implemented. The first finding explains how to implement a practical framework, which consists of three phases: building the concept of service innovation and service design, tourist activity and experience in sustainable tourism, and personal psychological process construct. The second finding explains why personal cross-cultural value is built by experiential authenticity, which is affected by the psychological process of tourists and destination owners with greening perceptions who experience emotions, and act in response to their attitudes and values. Through examined case shows that small and medium tourism enterprises (SMEs) still has an emergence need since most managerial and

psychology model are not suitable for its complexity. The explored concept framework fits this emergence that provides a systematic approach which combines implemented strategy and eco-innovation strategy for SMEs. Its management implication includes co-creation tourist values can be managed and designed from the demand side to the supply side of service experience innovation in local destination.

Keywords: Authenticity, Service Experience, Tourism Psychology, Sustainable Tourism.

Introduction

Sustainable tourism has grown and developed significantly over the past two decades (Sharpley, 2009). It comprises fruitful knowledge and provides different specific products, such as ecotourism, food tourism, indigenous tourism, farm tourism, festival tourism, and cultural heritage tourism. These services connect environmental conservation more to tourism and hospitality marketing requirements, as well as to researched trends. "Sustainability and Marketing," a special issue in the Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, highlights this connection, and explains how service providers make tourists engage in more responsible behaviors. Several topics have been discussed, such as sustainable or green behavior (Baker, Davis, and Weaver, 2014; Lee and Oh, 2014), eco-friendly attitudes, customer involvement in

sustainable supply chain management in tourism (Sigala, 2014), and sustainable value in predicting travelers' choices (Turk, Baloglu, and Mercado, 2014).

However, sustainable tourism was defined as "a complex system and its best management described as a form of adaptive management" (Lu and Nepal, 2009, p.14). This implies that the sustainable tourism industry should develop an innovative strategy for the management of its complex system. Innovation in tourism (Hjalager, 2010) was categorized into five parts: product or service innovations, process innovation, managerial innovations, management innovations, and institutional innovations. Under different circumstances, tourism enterprises can select different innovations as competitive strategies. For example, a product-service innovation strategy combines fes-

tival tourism with sustainable local economic development. O'Sullivan and Jackson (2002) found a critical connection between local economic development and sustainability in the implementation of product and service innovations in a local community. Festival tourism has become an important contributor as it provides an opportunity to share local culture and environment and allows visitors to spend on the provided services and cultural experiences. That is also called "Going green" (Lynes and Dredge, 2006), since an internal policy-making process affects environmental commitment when tourists' green motivation and perception are enhanced. A case study on the Scandinavian Airlines (Lynes and Dredge, 2006) synthesizes that service and cultural experiences play a critical role in sustainable tourism for either tourists or service providers such as the Scandinavian Airlines (one of the stakeholders in the service system).

According to the above important message (that the tourism industry should develop an innovation strategy for the management of its complex system) from industrial case studies to researched trends, the Journal of Sustainable Tourism has also planned to publish a special issue titled "Critical

Thinking to Realize Sustainability in Tourism System: Reflecting on the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal" (Boluk, Cavaliere, and Higgins- Desbiolles, 2017). The "innovations for sustainability" has been categorized in Goal 9 for the future development of industry, innovation, and infrastructure. Thus, service innovation in sustainable tourism has an emerging direction to explore tourists' personal values in tourism products and service experiences (Lin and Fu, 2016; Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). An eco-innovation case in this paper is therefore an innovative strategy that aims to investigate:

1. "how and why" the role of sustainable service innovation is successfully implemented (Horng, Wang, Liu, Chou, and Tsai, 2016),
2. the need for the tourism industry to develop an innovation strategy for its complex system (Lu and Nepal, 2009, p.14),
3. how to achieve sustainability in tourism systems (Boluk, Cavaliere, and Higgins-Desbiolles, 2017).

An eco-innovation (Pujari, 2006; Hellstrom, 2007) case is presented to explore the abovementioned unknown phenomenon with a farmer from a traditional rural community. This study is

an industry-university cooperative project titled “The Plan of Community Culture in Tourism Experience” that was conducted from March to December 2016. This project aimed to develop an eco-innovation system as a tourism marketing strategy to attract more tourists to the Hakka Community to experience local agri-food and traditional Hakka farming culture. The core meaning in this case is not to present a short-term industry-university cooperative project, but to seek how to extend the concept of environmental conservation from the service supply and demand destination sides in an eco-innovation strategy in the countryside. The developed eco-innovation strategy is also defined as an eco-innovation service system. In the supply side of the service system, the farmer played the role of service provider who is the owner of an organic rice farm and provides and designs different eco-friendly experiential activities for tourists. In the demand side of the service system, students from the tourism department of Meiho University played the role of tourists and did not know about the traditional Hakka farming culture before the project.

Literature Review

An eco-innovation case is represented to observe this implicit phenomenon on a complex system and its adaptive management (Lu and Nepal, 2009). Therefore, literature was reviewed to understand this sign of construction as a complex service system. Background knowledge was reviewed and discussed such as service innovation and service design, tourism industrial needs and trends, and personal psychological processes in cross-cultural values and experiences.

Service innovation and service design

Innovation has been developed as a business competitive strategy that not only has broad applications for the manufacturing industry, but has also become a core strategy in the service industry. Tourism is an important service industry that uses different innovation strategies to ensure substantial revenues in the global market. Service innovation applied to tourism marketing has been broadly defined by different scholars of the tourism field (Randhawa, Kim, Voorhees, Cichy, Koenigsfeld, and Perdue, 2016). Such definitions provide different perspectives as a reference for tourism business aiming to develop their own competitive strategies. For example,

the study of Chen, Go, and Pine (1998) covers Hong Kong's service industries, such as hotels, restaurants, and other tourism segments.

The changed behaviors not only approach the customer requirements and satisfactions, but also more value-added creations from customer expending and consumption. That is why another definition for "product or service innovations are perceptible to tourists to the point of becoming a factor in the purchase decision" (Hjalager, 2010, p.2). This means that service innovation is a strategy for influencing changes in decision-making behaviors about purchases, procurement, expenditures, or consumption. For example, service innovation is emerging in ancient cities: "be global, go local" (Ratz, 2016) has been used as a strategy for alternative guide service in Budapest. Ratz (2016) contends that although alternative service fits alternative tourism development, such as in ecotourism or festival tourism, tourist value in Budapest has been created within co-creation of interaction in alternative guiding services, which makes the tourists' perceptions on common service experiences in the local community tend toward more satisfaction and economic development.

Therefore, service innovation is geared toward customer involvement across the supply chain management (Sigala, M.2014), from customer emotional attachment and loyalty (Jang, Kim, and Lee, 2015) to employee and customer satisfaction, as well as financial performance (Chi and Gursoy, 2009). It is a relationship that is maintained under the concept of understanding and managing the supply chain services (ElIram, Tate, and Billington, 2004). Another definition of service innovation that supports the above opinion is that "service innovation positions an organization to create and deliver anticipatory services that exceed several expectations and ultimately strengthens relationships (Chen, Go, and Pine, 1998, p.2)." An organization represents the service supply side of the destination, and the number of expectations ultimately represents tourists in the service demand side of destination. Service innovation is proposed to maintain the relationship between service supply and service demand. Although it is not easy to maintain a good relationship under dynamic circumstances, service innovation still plays a critical role in changing customer behavior and enhancing customer value regarding consumption

through customer relationship management (Rahimi, Köseoglu, Ersoy, and Okumus, 2017).

Although, service innovation has different definitions, but they have a common perspective that is increasingly considered a marketing or innovation strategy, especially applied to tourism products and service innovation (Dwyer and Edwards, 2008). This innovation strategy has undergone several changes to meet and satisfy customer needs and generate additional revenue from tourists (Furrer, Sudharshan, Tsiotsou, and Liu, 2016). Service experience is being considered following service innovation and is being transformed as projected slides into the tourist's memory. This means that an "experience" can be created, used, stored, and delivered as broken data and integrated together to become useful information and knowledge. Therefore, service design should manage the experiences that must be recorded and administered before and after tourists' arrival, as well as employ an effective approach to analyze the data needed to understand tourist behavior. This process is supported by any type of tourist evidence when service innovation is developed to explore customer value. This is why service

design (Furrer, Sudharshan, Tsiotsou, and Liu, 2016) is a complex process of service innovation management consisting of different statutes, such as problem surfacing, problem structuring, solution imagining, innovation creating, innovation optimizing, value proposition developing, and value delivering.

To sum up, a close relationship between service innovation and service design has been clearly described. Until now, the development of service innovation has not only resulted in broad applications as competitive strategies for individual tourism businesses but has also been extended to several small and medium enterprises (SMEs) working together.

Trends and needs of service experience innovation in sustainable tourism

Although sustainable tourism currently shifts from traditional ecotourism to different developments, it still maintains its trends and needs regarding three basic elements: sustainability, service innovation, and tourist experience. Several studies that have been briefly selected from sustainable tourism remain as particular topics on service experience innovation.

- Greening music festivals (Mair, and Laing, 2012) comprise different stakeholders, including festival managers or organizers, green- issue advocates, local community residents, designers, volunteers, policemen, visitors, or tourists. Stakeholders are devoted to delivering extensive service experience for a music festival, although they consider how to join low-carbon operations.
- Creative tourism (Chang, Backman, and Huang, 2014) provides tourists with a local cultural experience in the vein of crafts, arts, and workshops. It makes cultural and creative industries more connected to tourist activities.
- Green stores (Jang, Kim, and Lee 2015): a survey from a coffee shop in the United States has found an innovative service to enhance consumers' green consciousness by reducing environmental effects (e.g., recycled napkins). This effect does not lose consumers; instead, it makes consumers more attached and loyal to green stores. For example, they ask consumers if they identify with statements such as "I feel that this coffee is a part of me."
- Cruise vacations (Chua, Lee, Goh, and Han, 2015): cruise vacations become more interesting by integrating different travel services, such as casinos, spas, sports, restaurants, or even special services (e.g. wedding packages), which provide novel experiences and save time on transportation.

These studies have mapped the definition of service innovation in sustainable tourism as a dynamic and complex process but measurable by different sustainable activities (Rahman, Doroodian, Kamarulzaman, and Muhamad, 2015). For example, although drive tourism is not a new concept, the sustainable concept makes drive tourism an innovative element where service providers support their vehicles, and the key sustainable behavior is how clean energy is used before or after self-drive travels. Thus, a key point shows how service innovation presents the trends and needs in sustainable tourism, especially in relation to tourist experience and its value.

The concept of sustainability-oriented innovation (Admas, Jeanrenaud, Bessant, Denyer, and Overy, 2016) is concerned with the same point as this paper. It emphasizes the envi-

ronmental value of product, process, or practice, all involved with intentional changes, since sustainable tourism is one of the sustainability-oriented innovation industries; it is an extended form of traditional tourism that provides more natural-related products. Thus, the innovation put into sustainable tourism is not only a trend, but also a need for stakeholders in the entire tourism supply chain. This consists the meaning of a “greening experience” concerned with tourists’ sustainable behavior within environmental understandings. Beijing Olympic Green (Brown and Huang, 2015) is an important example to clarify what we should think critically about. The Beijing Olympics presented not only an intangible service but also physical innovation in architecture. This architecture provided visualized feelings when tourists or sportspeople came to the Beijing Olympics, especially in the imagination of sustainable buildings raised and made with a “greening experience” becoming part of the memory. This described tourist emotion is similar to that of green stores: “I feel that this coffee is a part of me” (Jang, Kim, and Lee, 2015). The Bird’s Nest and the Water Cube in the Aquatic Center presented examples of a designed interaction for tourist “greening

experience” within a cross-cultural platform. The “greening experience” thus happens in urban green tourism (Gibson, Dodds, Joppe, and Jamieson, 2003), as well as rural tourism toward community-driven development. Therefore, tourist experience makes sense as a “cultural broker” (Sidali, Kastenholz, and Bianchi, 2013) between the local environment, community, and humanity, providing significant benefits toward the experience economy. Lin and Fu (2016) defined this as tourist personal value, built by the tourist’s traveling experience along the networks of tourism products and services. The experience, therefore, brings personal value into authenticity. However, there is still limited research on tourist experience in personal authenticity (Wang, 1999). This paper follows such perspective, suggesting that tourist experience underpins the personal psychological processes presented by personal authenticity.

Personal psychological process in cross-cultural values and experiences

It occurs when cultural or cross-cultural values are identified, and personal experiences underpin personal beliefs and values on how to evaluate cultural context in a social phenome-

non. In doing so, personal experiences bring human beings closer to personal authenticity. Therefore, Wang (Wang, 1999) raised the topic “rethinking authenticity in tourism experience” in order to explain that personal authenticity is formulated by the intra-personal and inter-personal dimensions, especially regarding existential authenticity. The existential authenticity not only concerns object-related tourism experiences, but also includes activity-related tourism experiences, even doing nothing. For example, “doing nothing” as cultural experience or cross-cultural diversity is a type of lifestyle while at the destinations or during the tourism process, especially in heritage tourism. That is “looking for the real me,” Breathnach (2006) explained that locating tourist the self in the heritage tourism just nothing to do. Thus, existential authenticity is presented as a subjective psychological process (Quan and Wang, 2004) of searching for the real self from personal experiences. Therefore, the tourism has also become an escape from the real world for more transformation of the self through tourism (Bruner, 1991).

A subjective psychological process is seeking an unknown phenomenon under the social and cultural con-

texts. The psychologists Markus and Kitayama (1991) argued that the “self” has an implication on cultural and cross-cultural psychology, and it also reflects on independent and interdependent self-construals (Matsumoto, 1999). In addition, the concept of self-construals has also been applied on leisure theory and practice to explore how a personal self-construal takes place in intrinsic emotions, cognitions, and motivations. Therefore, based on the above psychological theories on existential authenticity, cultural and cross-cultural psychology, and self-construals, this paper proposes and debates the concept of cross-cultural experience and value in a psychological constructional process. In order to understand more information from tourism marketing on how to support service experience innovation in sustainable tourism, a number of tourism psychological studies was thus described and discussed for this emerged research direction as follows.

To summarize, the currently addressed question about the psychological process in tourism marketing is to discuss why the psychological process happens and how situations, as well as psychological implications, impact customer participation. Customer par-

ticipation is represented by how tourists engage in co-production with a destination host, destination organizer, or service vendors (providers). The service provider also acts as a designer when thinking what service innovations should be provided as tourism products when tourists come. Then when tourists join and play while participating (customer participation) in a psychological process, responsible behavior is involved at the cultural value appearance.

Methodology

The paper presents to a case study, which “case study is a research strategy which focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single setting”. The concept of eco-innovation is used to investigate innovation processes for sustainable development. Therefore, a case study is suitable to build an understanding of tourism research and knowledge. This examination comprised two steps: data collection and data analysis.

A participant observation approach to explore the Texas Renaissance Festival in order to understand the existential authenticity between intra-personal authenticity and in-

ter-personal authenticity. Their study provided directions on to investigate problems in tourism psychology. Therefore, their study was a reference for this paper as it used a qualitative research methodology and included participants and observations to explore the “how and why” of existential authenticity in sustainable tourism.

An eco-innovation case was based on the industry-university cooperative project entitled “The Plan of Community Culture in Tourism Experience,” conducted from March to December 2016. An in-depth interview was conducted with the owner of a farm and his wife. They played the role of service designers to answer why and how. They also provided some reports from magazines and news as secondary data. On the other hand, 51 students played tourists to experience the designed activity of traditional Hakka farming. Students’ data, such as reflective reports and oral presentations, were collected before and after the implementation of service innovation.

Result and Discussion

Background - An eco-innovation case

An example of an eco-innovation case is the owner of an organic farm in

the countryside of Neipu Township, Pingtung County, Taiwan, who wants to promote traditional Hakka farming approaches for cultivation of organic rice and agricultural products. This is important because traditional farming culture is losing its significance, and only a few farmers still follow an eco-friendly approach. This farm owner tried to grow rice using this natural approach, but some such approaches are not effective for farming productivity. Farmers often faced opposition from others who complained that the natural approach led to their farms being attacked by insects. However, the farm owner still tried other ways of using organic and natural approaches. Because most of the Hakka people have been living and working in the Hakka village since 1721, traditional culture is conserved and the people honor the place represented by the village. However, with time, the living style has rapidly changed, and most farmers do not to use traditional approaches but instead use chemical pesticides to grow agricultural products. This is a trade-off problem, and the farm owner has begun thinking of eco-friendly approaches for his farm and its effect on the local community. On the other hand, eco-innovation activities are also adapted to the organic farm, where

they serve to raise environmental perceptions and actions. The first thing is they did is to join World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF), which provides living arrangements and local food for international volunteers in exchange for volunteers' working efforts. It is a very similar concept to a working holiday, and until now the farm has accepted volunteers from different countries, such as Singapore, China (Hong Kong), USA, Spain, France, Switzerland, and Sweden. Since the farm owner opened the door for international cross-cultural exchange, which has made the local community a part of a global context, the international friendships enhance the farm owner's willingness to provide more opportunities to promote the local farm as a Hakka farming cultural destination.

Implementation of service experience innovation

The real problem is seeking how to gain economic benefit from effective promotion of the organic farm. An idea for the Hakka farming cultural experience emerges from the action plan of eco-friendly activities. There are three phases in the action plan of an eco-friendly activity. The first phase is

to design services that can be implemented as a product of sustainable tourism. The second phase is to invite tourists to experience the designed service. The third phase is to analyze and construct psychological processes from experiential reflective reports of tourists and farm owners.

Phase 1: Service innovation and service design (supply side of tourism service supply chain)

Building a scarecrow is considered an activity of service design. The concept of a touchpoint assists the service design process. The touchpoints were included before and during the experience in this destination. Before the experience, the farm owner has to consider when it is suitable for tourists to visit. The farm cannot be open all the time since growing rice has a specific period, such as spring or autumn. Therefore, time is an important factor as is experiential place. On the other hand, the farm owner has to prepare teaching materials, such as a PowerPoint, to explain task guidelines for the tourists. In this paper, the task is to build a scarecrow, and the tourists have to use recycled clothing and bottles. The experience process was difficult since the tourists sometimes were chil-

dren or the elderly, and thus it was important to pay more attention to their safety. Therefore, in this part, the farm owner usually needed his wife's assistance. The experiential touchpoints were initially face-to-face, to recognize what local Hakka farming culture is, how to build a scarecrow, to tell a story about the scarecrow, and to put up a scarecrow in the field. The innovative point is that the activity is the first of its kind to be used in the local Hakka community. On other hand, all recycled materials are used to build a scarecrow, such as clothing and bottles; this delivers an important concept about environmental responsibility in the supply side of the tourism service supply chain.

Phase 2: Tourists' experience in sustainable tourism (demand side of tourism service supply chain)

In the designed activity, the farm owner played the role of a service provider. The farm was not only an experiential destination, but also provided an opportunity in environmental education for people who learn from local cultural and traditional wisdom. A total of 51 students were destination tourists as they joined in all of the designed service processes. The two photo-

graphs below explain the process of the tourists' experience in innovative service.

Phase 3: Personal psychological process construction – existential authenticity

Existential authenticity is used to explore cross-cultural life perceptions in tourism research. In “The travel industry” explains that a cultural experience is “humanistic reasons such as cross-cultural exchanges, experiencing how other people live, and fostering international understanding may be a form of pleasure travel to satisfy curiosity about other cultures, lifestyles, and places.” Therefore, the eco-innovation case study is separated into two parts of personal existential authenticity in tourism research. One is intra-personal authenticity, and the other is inter-personal authenticity.

The concept framework

A conceptual framework has been examined by the eco-innovation case to explain how service experience innovation works in sustainable tourism. Figure 1 shows the proposed concep-

tual framework for eco-innovation strategy in sustainable tourism. It presents a destination contained between the service supply side and demand side. Destination is a complex service system and should be analyzed and managed from the B2B service supply chain to the B2C service supply chain. The supply side service experience management is focused on service innovation and service design (Randhawa et al, 2016; Furrer et al, 2016; Chang, Backman, and Huang, 2014). It creates an experiential idea and process for tourists involved in the co-production and eco-friendly activity. The demand side service experience management is focused on tourists' experience in sustainable tourism (Brown and Huang, 2015). It implements a real tourists' experiential activity, and controls and manages this activity based on observed environmental behavior. Therefore, personal psychological process construction is important in order to find and understand existential authenticity. In particular, it can help reflect on individual recognitions, emotions, and motivations for suitable service experience innovation.

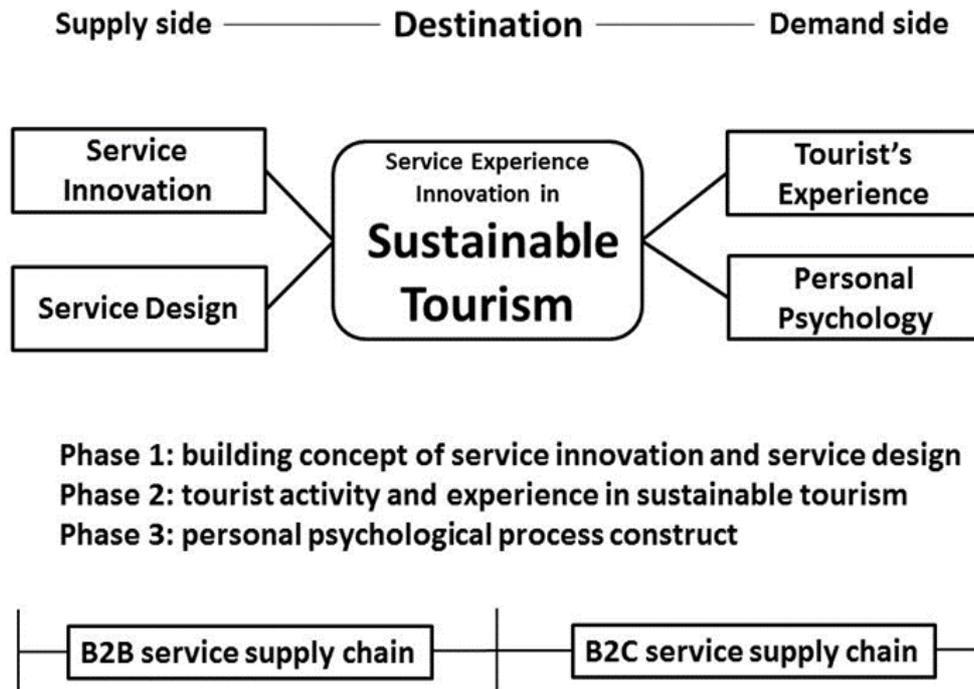


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for eco-innovation strategy in sustainable tourism

Conclusions

This paper proposed a practical approach for the implementation of service experience design and innovation in local agri-food and the sustainable tourism experience. Although the proposed conceptual framework cannot fit all industrial circumstances, it has considered real problems from the upstream to the downstream of service supply chain.

In conclusion, this paper makes us think about the nature of “well-being”. The concept of well-being is highly debatable and requires much brainstorming to find a near authentic answer. This is a real problem when we put in different efforts in pursuit of a near authentic answer to this debated question. However, the related problems are fast changing and many, and it becomes difficult to answer this question. In this paper, this question is partially answered, because we used a different perspective to analyze social situations. That is, psychological theory can be broadly used for tourism

practice; especially in-service experience innovation in sustainable tourism and cross-cultural service encounters.

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