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The Influence of Service MSMEs and Service Design on Value Co-Creation through Experiential Authenticity in Tourism MSMEs

Theresia Sinurat[1*], Santi Agustina Manalu[2]
[1]Institut Teknologi Del, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, theresiasinurat08@gmail.com
[2]Institut Teknologi Del, Sumatera Utara, Indonesia, santi.manalu@del.ac.id

*Corresponding Author: theresiasinurat08@gmail.com[1]

Abstract: This research aims to analyze the influence of Service MSMEs and Service Design on Value Co-Creation through the mediating role of Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency. The study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. Data were collected from 130 tourists who had interacted directly with tourism MSME services in Samosir Regency using purposive sampling techniques. Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The findings indicate that Service MSMEs have a positive and significant influence on Experiential Authenticity. In addition, Service Design was also found to positively and significantly influence Experiential Authenticity. Furthermore, Experiential Authenticity has a positive and significant influence on Value Co-Creation. The results suggest that the quality of service interactions, integration of local cultural values, and well-structured service designs contribute to the formation of authentic tourism experiences and strengthen tourists' participation in the value creation process. This research contributes to the development of tourism marketing literature within the perspective of Service-Dominant Logic by explaining the role of authentic experiences in encouraging Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs.

Keywords: Service MSMEs, Service Design, Experiential Authenticity, Value Co-Creation, Tourism MSMEs.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism destinations are increasingly shifting from product-oriented offerings toward experience-based value creation. In this context, tourists no longer seek only physical attractions or services, but also meaningful experiences that enable emotional engagement and authentic interaction with local culture. This transformation has encouraged tourism businesses, particularly tourism Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), to focus not only on delivering functional services but also on creating memorable experiences that strengthen tourist participation and engagement throughout the tourism journey. In cultural tourism destinations, tourism MSMEs become important actors because they directly interact

with tourists through culinary services, souvenirs, homestays, and tourism-related activities that shape tourists' overall experiences. In tourism destinations characterized by strong cultural identities, the integration of local wisdom into tourism services can enhance visitors' experiences and strengthen destination competitiveness (Raharja & Mahyuni, 2021).

Samosir Regency, one of the leading tourism destinations in the Lake Toba area, possesses strong cultural and natural tourism potential supported by tourism MSMEs operating across various sectors. However, despite this potential, tourism experiences provided by MSMEs in Samosir are still largely transactional and have not fully facilitated meaningful tourist engagement. The development of sustainable tourism experiences also requires collaboration among tourism stakeholders, including local communities, tourism businesses, and supporting institutions (Rubiyatno et al., 2020). Many tourism services continue to emphasize product delivery rather than experiential interaction, resulting in tourism experiences that are perceived as generic and less memorable. Consequently, tourists often act as passive consumers instead of active participants in the tourism experience. This condition may weaken the creation of competitive tourism value within the destination.

The phenomenon aligns with the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) perspective, which emphasizes that value is not created solely by service providers but emerges collaboratively through interactions between providers and customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Within this perspective, tourists are positioned as co-creators of value who actively participate in shaping tourism experiences during service encounters. Therefore, the quality of interaction and experience becomes essential in developing Value Co-Creation within tourism services.

Value Co-Creation refers to the collaborative process through which tourists and service providers jointly create value through interaction, participation, and shared experiences (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2017). In tourism settings, value emerges not only from service consumption but also from tourists' active participation throughout the service experience (Cahya Kurniawan, 2020). However, tourists' willingness to participate in co-creation activities does not occur automatically. Their engagement is strongly influenced by how authentic and meaningful the tourism experience is perceived during interactions with service providers. When tourists perceive experiences as emotionally engaging and culturally meaningful, they are more likely to participate actively in the co-creation process. According to Bridges and Fowler (2020), contemporary service research emphasizes that customer value is increasingly created through experiences, interactions, and collaborative engagement rather than through the delivery of tangible products alone.

From the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, customers are viewed as active participants whose involvement significantly influences the quality and value of service experiences (Laksmidewi, 2018). In this regard, Experiential Authenticity has emerged as an important concept in tourism marketing because it explains how tourists perceive experiences as authentic, emotionally meaningful, and closely connected to local culture (Latala et al., 2024). Unlike object-based authenticity, experiential authenticity emphasizes subjective tourist experiences developed through direct participation and social interaction. Similarly, Deng and Wong (2024) argue that authentic cultural experiences encourage tourists to become active contributors within tourism service ecosystems, thereby strengthening co-creation activities.

The formation of experiential authenticity is closely associated with the quality of tourism services and the design of service interactions. Service MSMEs reflect the capability of tourism MSMEs to provide responsive, communicative, and culturally representative services that facilitate meaningful interactions with tourists (Thamrin & Kadarudin, 2023). Meanwhile, Service Design also facilitates the integration of customer participation into service delivery processes, enabling greater opportunities for value co-creation (Trianto & Novani, 2022). Both aspects are essential in shaping how tourists perceive authenticity during

their tourism experiences. Value co-creation also reflects the active integration of resources and collaborative participation among multiple actors, which contributes to the creation of mutually beneficial outcomes (Carlson et al., 2011).

Although previous studies have explored the relationship between tourism experiences and value co-creation, most studies primarily focus on direct relationships among variables and provide limited explanation regarding the mediating mechanism of experiential authenticity in tourism MSMEs. Furthermore, empirical studies integrating Service MSMEs, Service Design, Experiential Authenticity, and Value Co-Creation within a single framework remain limited, particularly in cultural tourism MSMEs. This limitation highlights the need to further investigate how experiential authenticity mediates the relationship between service-related factors and value co-creation in tourism contexts. Previous studies have also demonstrated that effective service design contributes to better customer experiences and stronger customer engagement within tourism services (Buana et al., 2019).

Therefore, this study aims to examine the influence of Service MSMEs and Service Design on Value Co-Creation through the mediating role of Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency.

This study is expected to contribute empirically to the development of Service-Dominant Logic literature, particularly in tourism marketing and customer experience research, by explaining how authentic tourism experiences encourage tourist participation in value co-creation processes.

Research Framework

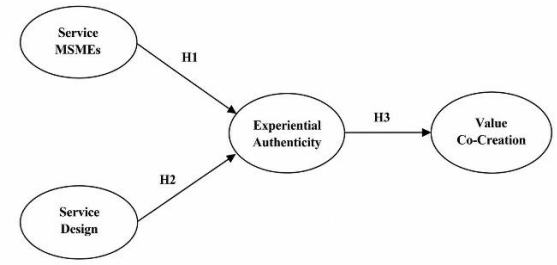

Figure 1. Research Framework

This study explains that Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs is influenced by the ability of tourism service providers to create meaningful and authentic tourism experiences through service interactions and service design. In the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, value is not only created from products or services offered by tourism MSMEs, but also through tourists' active involvement during the tourism experience. Service MSMEs and Service Design play important roles in facilitating interaction, emotional engagement, and meaningful tourism experiences that strengthen Experiential Authenticity. Furthermore, tourists who perceive tourism experiences as authentic are more likely to actively participate in the Value Co-Creation process. Therefore, Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs depends not only on functional service quality, but also on the ability of tourism MSMEs to create authentic and meaningful experiences for tourists. This perspective is consistent with Service-Dominant Logic, which views customers as active resource integrators who participate in value creation through interactions and experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2006; Vargo et al., 2023).

Hypothesis

H1: Service MSMEs have a positive effect on Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs.

Service MSMEs reflect the ability of tourism MSMEs to provide responsive, communicative, and culturally representative services during tourist interactions. In tourism activities, service interactions become an important element in shaping tourists' perceptions of authentic experiences. Tourism services that involve local cultural values and meaningful interactions are more likely to create emotional engagement and strengthen tourists' perceptions of authenticity. Therefore, better Service MSMEs are expected to positively influence Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs. The findings are also consistent with Widen et al. (2024), who emphasized that tourism services incorporating local cultural values can strengthen tourists' perceptions of authenticity and create more meaningful tourism experiences.

H2: Service Design has a positive effect on Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs.

Service Design refers to the arrangement of service processes, interaction touchpoints, and customer journeys that help tourists experience tourism activities in a more structured and meaningful way. In cultural tourism destinations, service design that is aligned with local values can help tourists better understand and engage with the tourism experience. Well-designed tourism experiences enable tourists to interact more naturally with local culture and tourism services, thereby strengthening their perceptions of authentic experiences. Therefore, Service Design is expected to positively influence Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs. This result supports the argument of Trianto and Novani (2022), who found that effective service design enhances customer engagement by creating structured interaction processes and improving overall service experiences.

H3: Experiential Authenticity has a positive effect on Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs.

Experiential Authenticity describes tourists' perceptions of meaningful and authentic tourism experiences formed through direct interaction and cultural engagement. Tourists who perceive tourism experiences as authentic are more likely to participate actively in tourism activities, share experiences, and engage in collaborative interactions with service providers. In the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, tourists' active participation is an essential component in the creation of value. Therefore, stronger Experiential Authenticity is expected to positively influence Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs. The finding is in line with Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), who argued that customers create value through active participation and interaction rather than merely consuming products or services. Similarly, Deng and Wong (2024) highlighted that authentic tourism experiences encourage tourists to engage more actively in collaborative value creation processes.

METHODS

This study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to analyze the influence of Service MSMEs and Service Design on Value Co-Creation through the mediating role of Experiential Authenticity in tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency. A quantitative approach was used because this study aimed to examine the causal relationships among variables using statistical analysis based on Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). In the perspective of Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), tourists are positioned as co-creators of value who actively participate in the value creation process through service interactions and tourism experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

The population in this study consisted of tourists who had visited and used tourism MSME services in Samosir Regency, including culinary businesses, handicrafts and souvenir businesses, homestays, and tourism services. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling with the criteria that respondents had directly interacted with tourism MSME services in Samosir Regency.

The minimum sample size was determined using a priori power analysis through G*Power 3.1.9.4 with the linear multiple regression: fixed model, R^2 deviation from zero approach. The sample size calculation was based on Cohen's effect size formula as follows:

$$f^2 = \frac{R^2}{1 - R^2}$$

According to Cohen (1988), the effect size values are classified into small effect (0.02), medium effect (0.15), and large effect (0.35). This study applied a medium effect size ((f^2 = 0.15)), a significance level of 5% ((\alpha = 0.05)), a statistical power of 0.95, and two predictor variables. Based on these parameters, the minimum sample size required was 107 respondents with an actual power value of 0.9518. To improve the reliability of the analysis and anticipate incomplete or invalid responses, the number of respondents was increased to 130 respondents.

Data were collected through questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The research instrument was developed based on indicators adapted from previous studies related to Service MSMEs, Service Design, Experiential Authenticity, and Value Co-Creation. The questionnaires were distributed both online through Google Forms and offline in tourism areas within Samosir Regency.

Data analysis was conducted using SEM-PLS with the assistance of SmartPLS software. The analysis consisted of two stages: outer model evaluation and inner model evaluation. The outer model evaluation was conducted to assess the validity and reliability of the constructs through outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's Alpha. Furthermore, the inner model evaluation was performed to examine the relationships among variables, determine the R-Square values, and test the proposed hypotheses based on path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the results of data processing using SEM-PLS, the structural model in this study explains the relationships among Service MSMEs, Service Design, Experiential Authenticity, and Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency. The model was developed based on the Service-Dominant Logic (SDL) perspective, which emphasizes that value is created through interactions and experiences between service providers and tourists (Vargo & Lusch, 2017).

The findings indicate that Service MSMEs and Service Design positively contribute to the formation of Experiential Authenticity, while Experiential Authenticity positively contributes to Value Co-Creation. These results suggest that tourism experiences are influenced not only by the functional quality of tourism services but also by tourists' perceptions of authenticity developed through service interactions and tourism experiences.

Overall, the structural model provides empirical evidence that Experiential Authenticity serves as an important mechanism linking service-related factors with Value Co-Creation. This finding supports the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, which views tourists as active participants who contribute to value creation through interaction, participation, and shared experiences (Vargo & Lusch, 2017; Vargo et al., 2023).

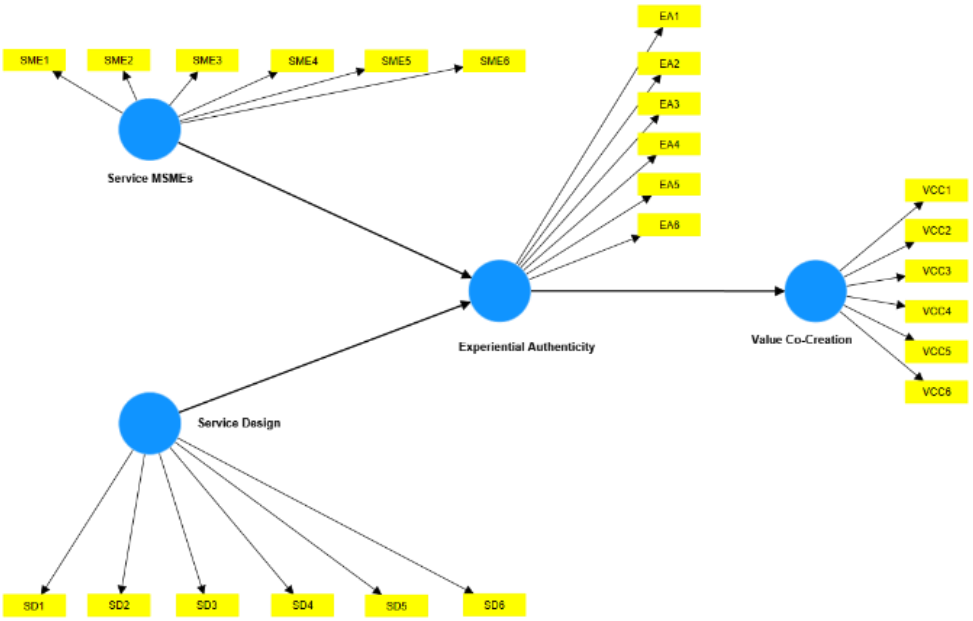

Figure 1 SmartPLS Structural Model

Figure 2 presents the structural model developed in this study using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The model consists of two exogenous variables, namely Service MSMEs and Service Design, one mediating variable, namely Experiential Authenticity, and one endogenous variable, namely Value Co-Creation. Each construct was measured using reflective indicators adapted from previous studies. The structural model was developed to examine the relationships among the proposed variables and to evaluate the significance of each hypothesized relationship.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in this study was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure in SEM-PLS to evaluate the significance of the relationships among variables in the proposed structural model. The evaluation was based on the values of path coefficient (Original Sample), T-statistics, and P-values. The path coefficient reflects the direction and strength of the relationship among variables, while T-statistics and P-values indicate the significance level of the proposed hypotheses. A hypothesis is considered accepted when the T-statistics value is greater than 1.96 and the P-value is less than 0.05. The results of hypothesis testing for each relationship among variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Connection Between Variables	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Results
H1	Service MSMEs -> Experiential Authenticity	0.503	9.886	0.000	Accepted
H2	Service Design -> Experiential Authenticity	0.452	7.633	0.000	Accepted
H3	Experiential Authenticity -> Value Co-Creation	0.684	15.633	0.000	Accepted

The results of hypothesis testing indicate that Service MSMEs have a positive and significant influence on Experiential Authenticity, with a path coefficient value of 0.503, a T-

statistics value of 9.886, and a P-value of 0.000. The positive coefficient value demonstrates that better service quality provided by tourism MSMEs contributes to stronger perceptions of authentic experiences among tourists. Indicators related to hospitality, responsiveness, clarity of service information, and the integration of local cultural values within tourism services contribute to strengthening tourists' perceptions of authenticity. These findings indicate that tourism MSMEs that are able to provide meaningful interactions and culturally representative services tend to create more authentic tourism experiences for visitors. Therefore, H1 is accepted.

In addition, Service Design was found to positively and significantly influence Experiential Authenticity, with a path coefficient value of 0.452, a T-statistics value of 7.633, and a P-value of 0.000. This finding suggests that the way tourism services are designed also contributes to tourists' perceptions of authenticity. Indicators such as clarity of service flow, effectiveness of interaction touchpoints, relevance of service solutions, and opportunities for tourist participation enable visitors to engage more actively in tourism activities and experience destinations in a more meaningful manner. Consequently, well-structured service processes strengthen tourists' perceptions of authentic tourism experiences. Therefore, H2 is accepted.

Furthermore, Experiential Authenticity was found to positively and significantly influence Value Co-Creation, with a path coefficient value of 0.684, a T-statistics value of 15.633, and a P-value of 0.000. This relationship represents the strongest effect within the structural model. Indicators associated with emotional experience, local connectedness, active participation, collaborative interaction, and shared experiences demonstrate that authentic tourism experiences encourage tourists to become more actively involved in value creation activities. These findings indicate that tourists who perceive tourism experiences as authentic are more likely to participate in collaborative interactions and contribute to the overall tourism experience. Therefore, H3 is accepted.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Experiential Authenticity plays an important role in connecting service-related factors with Value Co-Creation. Tourism experiences perceived as authentic encourage tourists to become more actively involved in tourism activities and interactions with tourism MSMEs.

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Service MSMEs significantly influence Experiential Authenticity. This result indicates that authentic tourism experiences are not solely shaped by tourism attractions themselves, but also by the quality of interactions between tourists and tourism MSMEs. Responsive services, clear communication, and the integration of local cultural values within tourism services can strengthen tourists' emotional connections with destinations and enhance their perceptions of authenticity. This finding is consistent with the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, which emphasizes that value emerges through interactions and experiences between service providers and customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Furthermore, tourism services that incorporate local cultural elements can enrich visitors' experiences and strengthen perceptions of authenticity (Widen et al., 2024; Thamrin & Kadarudin, 2023).

The study also found that Service Design positively influences Experiential Authenticity. This finding suggests that the design of tourism services plays an important role in shaping tourists' experiences throughout their tourism journey. Well-structured service processes, effective interaction points, and opportunities for participation allow tourists to engage more deeply with tourism activities and local communities. As argued by Yu and Sangiorgi (2017), Service Design facilitates the creation of customer-centered experiences by organizing service interactions in ways that enhance customer engagement. Similarly, Buana

et al. (2019) and Trianto and Novani (2022) emphasized that effective service design contributes to more meaningful customer experiences and encourages greater participation throughout the service process.

Furthermore, Experiential Authenticity was found to have a significant influence on Value Co-Creation. This result indicates that tourists who perceive tourism experiences as authentic are more willing to participate actively in creating tourism value. Authentic experiences encourage tourists to share experiences, provide feedback, engage in interactions, and contribute to the overall tourism experience. This finding supports the argument of Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) that value is created through collaborative participation between customers and service providers. From the Service-Dominant Logic perspective, customers are viewed as active resource integrators who contribute to value creation processes (Vargo & Lusch, 2006; Laksmidewi, 2018). The findings also support Deng and Wong (2024), who highlighted that authentic tourism experiences strengthen engagement within tourism service ecosystems and facilitate value co-creation activities.

Overall, the findings reinforce the Service-Dominant Logic perspective by demonstrating that value is generated through interactions, participation, and shared experiences rather than through service delivery alone (Vargo et al., 2023; Bridges & Fowler, 2020). The results further indicate that the integration of local wisdom, meaningful service interactions, and effective service design can enhance experiential authenticity and ultimately encourage tourists to participate in Value Co-Creation within tourism MSMEs. These findings are also in line with Carlson et al. (2011), Raharja and Mahyuni (2021), and Rubiyatno et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of collaborative interactions and stakeholder involvement in creating sustainable tourism value.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This research concludes that Service MSMEs and Service Design have positive and significant influences on Experiential Authenticity within tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency. The findings indicate that better service interactions and well-designed service processes contribute to the formation of authentic tourism experiences among tourists. Furthermore, Experiential Authenticity was found to positively and significantly influence Value Co-Creation, indicating that tourists who perceive tourism experiences as authentic are more likely to participate actively in collaborative value creation activities.

These findings highlight the important role of authentic tourism experiences in connecting service-related factors with Value Co-Creation. The study contributes to the development of tourism marketing literature within the Service-Dominant Logic perspective by providing empirical evidence that Experiential Authenticity serves as an important mechanism in encouraging tourists' participation in value creation processes within tourism MSMEs.

Limitations of the Research

This research has several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the findings. First, the study was conducted only within tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other tourism destinations with different characteristics and cultural contexts. Second, this study focused only on three main variables, namely *Service MSMEs*, *Service Design*, and *Experiential Authenticity*, in explaining *Value Co-Creation*. Other factors that may influence tourists' participation in the value creation process, such as tourist satisfaction, destination image, and customer engagement, were not included in the research model. Third, the data were collected using a cross-sectional approach, which reflects tourists' perceptions only at a specific period of time. Therefore,

future studies are recommended to use broader research contexts, include additional variables, and apply longitudinal approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of *Value Co-Creation* in tourism MSMEs.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this research, tourism MSMEs in Samosir Regency are encouraged to improve the quality of service interactions through better hospitality, responsiveness, and clearer service information to strengthen tourists' perceptions of authentic experiences. Tourism MSMEs should also integrate local cultural values more consistently into tourism services and develop more customer-centered service designs to encourage tourists' active participation in the value creation process. For future research, it is recommended to expand the research scope to different tourism destinations and include additional variables related to tourism experience and customer behavior, such as tourist satisfaction, destination image, or customer engagement. Future studies may also apply longitudinal or mixed-method approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Value Co-Creation in tourism MSMEs.

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