

Co-Production Behaviors of Travel Agencies Customers: A Research on Local Cultural Tourists Visiting Istanbul*

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Abstract

This study it aims to determine co-production behaviors of travel agencies customers. The data was collected through the survey in İstanbul. The sample of study ise consist of local tourist who purchased cultural tour from travel agency through the co-production. These data were then analyzed by explanatory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. As a result of the analysis, seven factors have been determined. These factors are named as (i) personel interaction, (ii) advocacy, (iii) helping, (iv) feedback, (v) information sharing, (vi) adaptation and (vii) information seeking. Factors include personel interaction, information sharing and information seeking within the context of customer participation behaviour, while advocacy, helping, adoptation and feedback factors are evaluated in the axis of the customer citizenship behaviour.

Keywords: Co-production, Co-production with Customer, Travel Agencies, Cultural Tourism, Istanbul

1. Introduction

In the recent market structure, which is structured through the axis of relation and cooperation with the customers, the businesses can reach success to the extent that they correctly determine the requests and needs of their customers and design their products in accordance with customers' expectations. It is possible for these attempts of the businesses to result in success with customer-centered business model rather than traditional product-focused business model. This situation caused much management to make a transition from the traditional product-focused business models to the customer-centered business models. Customer centricity is an approach based on the cooperation and relation with the customers rather than the sales and profit focused approach (Vargo and Lusch, 2004:5). One of the strategies to which this customer-centered approach is applied is the subject of the study, that is, the co-production. The co-production, which predicates on the idea that the customers do not only consume but also produce, explains the transfer of customers' requests and needs to the production process (Genç, 2009: 153).

When considered through the axis of the tourism sector, the tourism has a labor-intensive functioning in which it is almost impossible to isolate the customers from the production processes and it is difficult to predict the requests and needs of the customers. The sectorial developments along with the distinctive properties of the tourism sector and especially the developments seen in the information and communication sectors ensure the customers to participate more actively in the production processes. However, this also causes some difficulties for the businesses in terms of understanding and satisfying the customers. At this point, the businesses in this sector adopt the strategy of co-production with the purpose of determining the complicating requests and needs of the customers correctly, providing a production coherent with the customers, decreasing the service problems, and developing the service outputs (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2015: 706). Applying the co-production strategy to the tourism sector is important in terms of the sectorial success, understanding the unidentifiable demands of the new tourist potential, and organizing touristic activities accordingly (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004).

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On the other hand, the fact that many different stakeholders contribute to the production of touristic services makes the holistic approach an important necessity for the application of the strategy to this sector.

Considering their sectorial position, the travel agencies, which are the main producers and providers of the products, are important stakeholders in terms of both understanding the customers and determining the future structure of the sector. For this reason, one of the main necessities for the collective success in the sector is making the co-production strategy to gain a ground in the practices of the travel agencies and understanding the participation behaviors of the agency customers to the production.

The function of co-production strategy in understanding the market in the tourism sector, determining the requests of the customers that are differentiating and getting more and more difficult to predict, personalizing the services within this framework, and increasing the competitive power of the businesses has attracted the attention of the researchers to this issue. Therefore, in the literature, the functions of the co-production in the travel agencies have been considered within different frameworks in terms of supply and demand (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Salvado et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2011; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Bertella, 2014; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014; Prebensen et al., 2015; Smaliukiene et al., 2015; Tseng and Chiang, 2016; Arica and Kozak, 2018). In the researches, the effect of the customer participation in production on the provided and perceived service outputs has been frequently examined (Wang and Fesenmaier 2004; Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Salvado et al., 2011; Wanget al.2011; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Prebensen and Dahl, 2013; Tseng and Chiang 2016). In the significant part of the researches, it was found that the co-production affected the service outputs in different aspects (Wang and Fesenmaier 2004; Salvado et al., 2011; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Prebensen and Dahl, 2013; Tseng and Chiang 2016; Arica and Kozak, 2018). However, it was determined in the literature that it was not a common practice for the travel agency customers to participate in the business processes all the way through, from the production to the consumption of the product (Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Tseng and Chiang, 2016). In some of the researches, it was pointed out that although the customers participated in the production, the structure of the participation behavior was ambiguous (MacLeod et al., 2009; Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer 2012; Campos et al., 2015). This ambiguity may limit the optimum benefit to be obtained through the strategy by causing growing problems in terms of applying the co-production strategy to the travel agencies. The ambiguity of the customer participation behavior in the travel agencies was the starting point of the research, which was prepared within this axis. The research problem structured within this framework is to determine the customer participation behavior in the travel agencies. The research contributes to the literature and the sectorial practitioners in different ways. First of all, a contribution will be made to the literature by examining the customer participation behavior in production in terms of tourism and travel agency. Second, it is considered that the results of the research will be a guide for the travel agencies in terms of understanding the co-production behavior and benefiting from the co-production strategy effectively.

2. Literature Review

In the existing market structure, the idea that it is wrong to consider the customer as a passive component of the production processes separate from the producer has been developing (Vargo and Lusch, 2004: 11). The shift of the customers' position in the production process from passive to active has also caused the consumption-oriented roles to differentiate (Bowers et al., 1990: 66). In this new role, since the customers are considered as a component of the production process, they can contribute to all phases of production process and therefore they get the co-producer role (Urban, 2014: 27). In the literature, The co-producing role of the customers was first explained by Alvin Toffler (1980) with the term "producing consumer" or "prosumer". Whereas Mills and Morris (1986) explained the co-producing role of the customers in terms of taking part in the business processes as the partial employees and full-time employees, some researchers associated the co-production role of the customers to the participation and referred to it as the direct and indirect participation of the customers in the production processes (Parks et al. 1981; Wikström, 1995; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003). In another point of view, the co-producing role of the customers was defined as the production partner (Mittal and Lassar, 1996; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Yang, 2015). The co-producing role of the customers explained with the terms employee, participator and partner had entered the literature with the term "co-production."

The term co-production has been explained as the way of minimizing the businesses' inputs and maximizing the customer's inputs regarding the products which are produced under the control of the businesses (Parks et al. 1981: 1001). According to Etgar (2008), the participation of the customers in one or more than one phase of production and their qualitative and quantitative performance at these phases explains the co-production.

In another definition, the co-production is defined as the way of providing inputs to the production by the businesses and the customers throughout the whole production process and maximizing both supply and demand outputs with these inputs (Arica and Emeksiz, 2016).

The foundations of co-production strategy were laid with the developments in the market in terms of supply and demand (Binkhorst and DenDekker, 2009: 311). When considered in terms of supply; the increasing number of businesses in the market and the competition, the growing efficiency problems in the market and changing competition conditions, business practices differentiating with the technological developments, and the strategic position the information gained in the market are the main factors which directs the businesses to the co-production (Parks et al., 1981; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Salvado et al. 2011; Shaw et al., 2011; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). When considered in terms of demand; the changes in the consumption culture, changing socio-demographic characteristics of the customers, and the differentiating and personalizing requests due to the increasing level of welfare necessitated the co-production (Etgar, 2008; Binkhorst and DenDekker, 2009; Shaw et al. 2011; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Cabiddu et al. 2013; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014). Together with these, the general assumption in many researches is that the developments in the technological instruments and internet technology are the underlying reasons for the systematical developments observed in the customer participation in production (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Li and Petrick, 2008; Salvado et al., 2011; Grisseemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Reay and Seddighi, 2012; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014; Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015; Smaliukiene et al., 2015). This assumption is explained in the researches as follows: The transition from the mechanical platform to digital platform with the developments in technology brought along drastic changes on the supply and demand side of the production and these changes affected the human, product, and business structures and the business processes. As a result of this, the roles of supply and demand in the market changed. Subsequently, the irrepressible development of internet technology, mass communication, portable technological devices, and finally the wearable technological devices increased the interaction between the customers and the businesses and expand the area of the co-production while allowing the customers to contribute to the production processes regularly (Parks et al. 1981; Hoyer et al. 2010; Salvado et al. 2011). This situation turned the business processes into a structure open to the customers and converted the customers from a consuming element to a producing element by differentiating the supply and demand roles in the market (Payne et al. 2008; Reay and Seddighi, 2012).

One of the sectors in which the customers actively participate in the phases of production and which is affected significantly from the technological developments is the tourism and travel sector. In this sector, it has been observed that the customers have taken part in the production process both actively and passively and have affected the process. In the open buffet services, which have been seen since the 1970's, the participation of the customer in the selection and carrying phases of food and drinks is an example of the active participation of the customers in the production processes (Mittal and Lassar, 1996: 97; Ford and Heaton, 2000: 226). In addition, the family debates or speaking loudly in a distracting manner etc. during the touristic trip explain the passive participation of the customers in the production processes (Wikström, 1995: 12). With the active and passive participation of the customers in the production processes and the technological developments, the structure and application areas of co-production in the tourism sector have changed. The internet services such as booking hotels, comparing touristic services and prices, buying airline tickets and carrying out check in procedures, making evaluations on the products and service are the practices where the customers participate in the production process in the tourism sector thanks to the opportunities provided by the technological developments (Bowers et al. 1990; Kelley et al. 1990; Mittal and Lassar, 1996; Ford and Heaton, 2000; Bendapudi and Leone, 2003; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014).

In the sectorial level, travel agencies are one of the stakeholders which are significantly affected by the technological developments. Due to their position between supply and demand functions, the agencies carry out the activities by which customers participate intensely in the production. In particular, with the transformation of manual systems to the automatic systems; adapting the business structures, business processes, and the models to the technological developments and the will to use the technological opportunities with the customers to their benefit

ended up with the practices where it became possible for the customers to participate in the production processes (Amadeus, 2012; Cabiddu et al. 2013; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014).

In the agencies, the co-production can be realized by going to the agency sales office and presenting information regarding the preferred tour or transferring resources to the production processes through the technological means. But the most common co-production relation in practice is the participation of the tourists in the production and evaluation phases of the experience through the technological means (Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012: 1484). The tourists search for tours, make reservations, buy tickets, compare the services and the prices by means of technological tools via internet.

These are the applications in which the customer participation in production is commonly observed in the agencies (Baines, 1998; Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014). On the other hand, the active participation of the tourists with their ideas, knowledge, experience and resources to the planning, production, provision and evaluation phases of the vacation experience to be purchased explain that the customers can take the producer role in the different phases of the production processes of the agencies. Therefore, the co-production can be seen in the agencies in the form of participation of the tourists in the different phases of the production process such as reflecting their requests and needs to the tour plan before the trip, being active in the participation and decision-making processes during the trip, and making the travel evaluation after the trip. Cabiddu et al. (2013: 96) explains the participation of the agency customers in the production with the following example: In the trips organized by the agency to Sardinia, Italy; the tourists can participate in different phases of production by choosing the hotel and the rental car, making a selection between the places to visit, changing the hotel at any time, and creating the personalized trip plans. These are all applications of the co-production. According to Buonincontri et al. (2017: 274), the activities of the tourists visiting Italy such as sharing their opinions about their experiences with the touristic region managers and the businesses, from which they buy service, are the examples of the participation of tourists in the evaluation phase of the production process. In addition, the online travel planning (Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015) and the participation of the customers in the product design phase through the tailor made program used by the agencies exemplify the co-production in the agencies (Binkhorst, 2005).

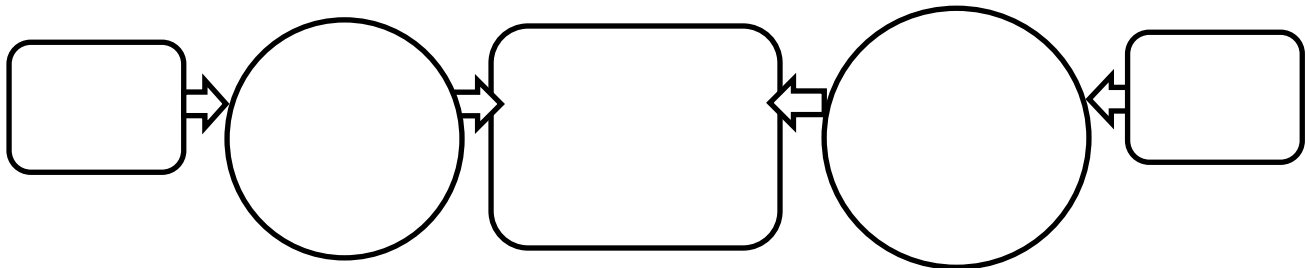


Figure 1: Co-production in Travel Agencies

Tourists can take part in all phases of the production process offered by the agents, from the planning to the evaluation of the travel experience (Sfandla and Bröjk, 2013). As seen in the figure, the co-production process in the agencies has a multi-dimensional and dynamic structure where the relational change takes place. In this process, both the agents and the customers transfer their resources and capabilities to the production phases (Blazquez-Resino et al., 2015: 708). The main objective of the process is to produce output for the businesses on one hand and for the customers on the other hand (Yi and Gong, 2013; Yang, 2015). Produced outputs can have the positive or negative features. However, as the main objective in the co-production is to provide a positive output both for the business and the customers, there are some critical points that need to be taken into account in order to obtain the positive service outputs at the end of the process (Kelley et al. 1990; Grissemann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012). According to Karpen et al. (2015: 103), the first of these critical points is the level of participation of customers in production, and the second is the customer participation behavior in production. Not every customer is expected to participate in all stages of the production. Therefore, the customers participate in the production in different forms and degrees (Hatami, 2013: 9). The form and degree of participation of the customers in the production process affect their participation behaviors (Flores and Vasquez-Parraga, 2015: 17). Thus, in accordance with their abilities and knowledge, the customers show participation behavior in the production and assume extra responsibilities (Büttgen and Ates, 2009: 28). The participation in the production bring along extra responsibilities and this may cause a differentiation in the behaviors of consumers in the process of participation in production.

Ennew and Binks (1999) evaluate the customer participation behavior in production in three parts. These are: *information sharing, responsible behavior, and personal interaction*. *Information sharing* refers to the sharing between the business and the customer in order to meet the needs. *Responsible behavior* explains the fulfillment of the duties and responsibilities by all stakeholders involved in the production process. *Personal interaction* refers to the interaction between the customer and the business during the process. Chau and Sweeney (2003) examines the participation behavior of the individuals in production in four dimensions.

These are; *Individual efforts, business efforts (instructional/educational efforts), efforts with other customers, and the extra efforts*. *Individual efforts* explain the efforts of the customers in the production process. *Business efforts* explain how the participation takes place with the instructional and educational directives of the business. *Efforts with other customers* are the efforts made in interaction with the other customers. *The extra efforts* are the efforts in which the individuals contribute to the production more than needed. In another research, Yi and Gong (2013) expanded the dimensions that explained the participation of the customers in production in the participation behavior scale developed by Ennew and Binks in 2003 and evaluated the participation behavior in two categories, that is, the *customer participation behavior* and *customer citizenship behavior*. The behavioral dimension of the participation in the production scale developed by the researchers is similar to the dimensions (See Table 1).

Table 1: Customer Co-Production Behaviors Categories

Customer participation behaviors	Customer citizenship behaviors
Information Seeking	Feedback
Information Sharing	Advocacy
Responsible Behaviour	Helping
Personal Interaction	Tolerance

Source: Yi ve Gong, 2013

While the customers' participation behavior in production refers to the fulfillment of what is expected from the customer in terms of his/her co-producer role, the customer citizenship behavior is related to the additional responsibilities the customers take, apart from their co-producer role (Yi and Gong, 2013; Cai et al., 2015: 4). According to Yi and Gong (2013), *Information seeking* refers to the search for information about how the customer can fulfill the responsibilities and the expectations imposed by the service process. *Information sharing* explains how the customers provide the necessary information to the production process as inputs. *Responsible behavior* emphasizes the necessity for customers to act responsibly in case they are informed such as compliance with the directives of the employees. *Personal interaction* is the interaction necessary for the common production process between the customers and the employees. *Feedback* is the evaluation of product and employee attitudes that arise as a result of co-production by the customer in order to provide better service to the customers. *Advocacy* explains the attitudes and behaviors that the customer exhibits for the successful co-production practices with his or her consent. *Helping* is the idea of eliminating the difficulties that other customers who bought the product experienced with a sense of social responsibility. *Tolerance* is showing patience when the customers' requests are not met by the business. The responsibilities that the customers will undertake by participating behavior in the production process cause them to affect the inputs and outputs of the production (Yi and Gong, 2013: 1280-1281). Considering the fact that the main objectives of the businesses are to improve both the business outputs and the outputs offered to the customers, it is obvious that understanding the participation behavior of the customers in the production and remedial initiatives of the businesses accordingly will provide a significant advantage for the businesses in the competitive environment.

3. Methods

3.1. Survey instrument

Data was collected based on a survey. The questionnaire consist of two sections: customer co-production behaviour and sample characteristics. Customer co-production behaviour items adapted by Ennew and Binks (1999); Chau and Sweeney (2003); Yi and Gong (2013). All the items were thoroughly reviewed by academic experts in tourism. After this process the questionnaire was modified and improved the final version was used for the research study. The scales for all constructs use five-point likert scale ranging from 1 (extremely disagree) to 5 (extremely agree). The last part of questionnaire examines the respondents' profile with factors such as gender, age, personal income, participation in co-production process and other factors.

3.2. Data collection

The customer co-production behaviour scale were empirically tested and validated in a travel agency customers context. The preliminary questionnaire is pilot tested with a 130 local tourist who purchased cultural tour from travel agency through the co-production in Istanbul in November 2016. Minor modifications in questionnaire wording are made based feedback provided by respondents in the pre-test.

After this, the study was conducted on a sample of tourists who visited Istanbul, Turkey Istanbul was chosen because it is one of the most famous business and cultural touristic destination in Turkey. The final questionnaire is distributed to participants between 10 April -03 July 2017. Survey yields 425 valid responses for further analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

In the process of preparing the data for the analysis, first of all, the questionnaires were reviewed and the forms having contradictory and incomplete answers were considered invalid. In the second phase, the mean and standard deviation values which were not within the possible limits were examined and the missing data were checked through the descriptive analyzes conducted for the data set. The questionnaires (16) that caused problems due to the missing data were removed from the data file. In the third phase, the extreme values that could cause critical problems in the analyzes were determined. Extreme values may arise from the errors in data entry and the situations in which the subject is different from the rest of the sample and is not a member of the population from which it is selected (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1996). The data set of the research was cleared from the extreme values which may disrupt the results of the statistical tests. Based on the recommendation that the data out of the ± 3 standard deviation values should be excluded (Çokluk et al., 2016: 12-13), the data, which had extreme means greater than + 3 or smaller than - 3 standard deviation, were excluded from the research sample. Finally, in order to prepare the data for the analysis, the distribution probabilities were evaluated with the normal distribution criterion (Alpar, 2010: 921). In the research, the conformity of the data to the normal distribution was examined with univariate normality, coefficient of kurtosis and skewness. Although there is no commonly accepted standards in the literature about the normal distribution, it is stated that when the skewness and kurtosis values are between -2 and +2, the normal distribution assumption is valid (Kalaycı, 2016: 6). When the data of the research were subjected to normal distribution test, it was seen that the skewness and kurtosis values of all questionnaire expressions were in the appropriate range. After these findings, the descriptive statistics such as percentage and frequency analysis were used primarily in the analysis of the data set in order to determine the characteristics of the tourists in the sample. Then, the factor structure of the data set was determined and confirmed by applying the Descriptive factor analysis (DFA) and second level Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to the data set.

Findings

4.1. Sample characteristics

When the findings about the demographic characteristics of the tourists who participated in the research are examined, it is observed that their ages vary between 19 and 68, but the majority (39.1%) is in the age group of 30-39. Also, the ratio of female (47.3%) and male (52.7%) participants are close to each other, and the findings regarding their educational status indicate that the education level of the participants is high. 5.6% of the tourists participating in the research had a lower level of education than the high school, 21,2% of them had high school education, and 73,2% of them graduated from an associate degree, graduate or postgraduate program. Also, when the employment status of the participants was considered, it was observed that almost 80% of the participants were employed either in public or private sector. Although the participants had a substantially varying income structure, it was found that 5.2% of them had minimum wage or lower income. A significant part (90.0%) of this aforementioned 5.2% is composed of the housewives without income. When the findings about the respondents' participation characteristics in production were examined, it was observed that nearly 80% of them were involved in the planning of production (28.7%), planning and production (25.4%), planning and evaluation (24.9%) phases.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage
19-29	114	26.8
30-39	166	39.1
40-49	93	21.9
50 and above	52	12.2
Gender		
Female	201	47.3
Male	224	52.7
Education		
High School and Below	114	26.8
Associate Degree	71	16.7
Graduate Education	195	45.9
Postgraduate Education	45	10.6
Occupation		
Private Sector	140	32.9
Public Sector	193	45.4
Business Owner	25	5.9
Retired	28	6.6
Housewife	20	4.7
Independent Business	19	4.5
Marital Status		
Married	249	58.6
Single	176	41.4
Personal Income		
0-1404 TL	22	5.2
1405-2808 TL	48	11.3
2809-4212 TL	198	46.6
4213 TL and above	157	36.9
Participation in Co-production Process		
Planning	122	28.7
Production	17	4.0
Provision	7	1.6
Evaluation	2	0.5
Planning and Production	108	25.4
Planning and Provision	28	6.6
Planning and Evaluation	106	24.9
Production and Evaluation	3	0.7
Planning, Production and Provision	8	1.9
Planning, Production and Evaluation	14	3.3
Planning, Provision and Evaluation	7	1.6
Planning, Production, Provision and Evaluation	3	0.7
Total	425	100

4.2. Measurement Model

In order to determine the factor structure of the measurement model used in the research, the data set was examined with DFA. In order to determine whether the data set fulfilled the assumptions of conformity for the factor analysis, the correlation coefficient values were evaluated by the Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) coefficient and the Bartlett Sphericity test. First, the correlations between the expressions were examined and the correlation coefficients in the correlation matrix were found to be over 0.30. Second, the KMO value was calculated in the test for the suitability of sample size for factorization and the KMO value of tourists' participation behavior in production was

determined as 0.784. In order to get meaningful results from the factor analysis, the KMO sample value should be higher than 0.60 (Worthington and Whittaker, 2006: 816). Based on this information, it was proved that the sample was sufficient for the factor analysis. Another assumption in determining suitability for factor analysis is the result of Bartlett's Sphericity test. $p < .000$ in the results of Bartlett's Sphericity test explains the significance of the test results and the significant relationship between the data. The measurement model of the research was calculated as $p < .000$.

This finding shows that the data of the research come from the multivariate normal distribution and that the Bartlett Test is meaningful. In order to see the factor structure of the data collection tool and to interpret the factorization results, the varimax rotation method was preferred. In the research, the eigenvalue coefficient was taken as a reference in determining the factor numbers. According to the Kaiser criterion, factors with an eigenvalue of 1.00 or more than 1.00 are considered important (Erdoğan, 2003). Considering the eigenvalues, in the participation behavior of the tourists in production, an eight-factor structure was obtained. These factors are personal interaction, advocacy, helping, feedback, information sharing, tolerance, adaptation, and information seeking. The contribution of the determined factors to the variance is 66.585%.

Confirmatory factor analysis was applied to confirm the factor structure. In addition, in order to determine the reliability and validity of the measurement model, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, convergence and discriminant validity and fit indices were used. Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficient was used in order to determine the internal consistency of the data set obtained from the main application. According to this; the coefficient α of all the expressions in the data set was determined as 0.917. Convergent validity and discriminant validity techniques were used in order to determine the consistency and validity of the scale. Convergent validity was evaluated by considering the variance explained by the measurement models. The variance which was explained in the participation behavior of the tourists in production was calculated as 0.46. In the literature it is argued that it is acceptable for the explained variance to have a value of 0.40 and above (Huang et al., 2013). In the second stage, the Fornell-Larcker criterion was used for discriminant validity. According to this, when the multiple correlations of the structure do not exceed the square root of the explained variance, the distinctive validity is achieved (Fornell and Larcker, 1981: 45). The value obtained from the analysis shows that the discriminant validity is achieved for this research (See Table 3)

Table 3: Means, Standard deviations and correlations of the constructs

	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Personal Interaction	4.42	0.55	1						
2. Advocacy	4.33	0.52	0,547	1					
3. Helping	4.25	0.46	0,613	0,652	1				
4. Information Sharing	4.20	0.53	0,475	0,462	0,373	1			
5. Feedback	4.28	0.50	0,531	0,694	0,585	0,495	1		
6. Adaptation	4.49	0.52	0,616	0,567	0,559	0,287	0,532	1	
7. Information Seeking	4.26	0.56	0,394	0,497	0,481	0,457	0,519	0,438	1

The integrity and compatibility of the scale were evaluated with compatibility indices. The compatibility values obtained are as follows: $\chi^2/sd=2,131; p=.000; NFI=0,857; NNFI=0,905; CFI=0,918; RMSEA=0,005; GFI=0,922; AGFI=0,901; SRMR=0,005$. When the compliance values are examined, it is seen that there is no difference between the covariance matrix of the theoretical relational model and the sample covariance matrix. In other words, theoretically determined model with latent variable suits the sample data. Besides, the measurement model was examined with the CFA in order to test the findings of DFA, to correct the model when necessary, and to make the model more useful and valid (Erkorkmaz et al., 2013: 210).

Table 4: Confirmatory Factor Analysis Values of the Participation Behavior of the Tourists in Production

Factors and Expressions	CFA	R ²	Error Coefficients	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)	Square root of the AVE
Personal Interaction				0.83	0.62	0.787
I was helpful to the agency staff.	.841	0.71	0.29			
I treated the agency staff friendly.	.867	0.75	0.25			
I followed the instructions of the agency staff.	.631	0.40	0.60			
Advocacy				0.82	0.60	0.775
I recommend the travel agency to others.	.849	0.72	0.28			
I encourage the others to use the travel agency.	.753	0.57	0.43			
I convey positive opinions to others about the travel agency.	.720	0.52	0.48			
Helping				0.69	0.36	0.600
When I felt that my tour friends had problems, I helped them to solve these problems.	.533	0.28	0.72			
When my tour friends needed, I gave advice to them.	.656	0.43	0.57			
I told my tour friends how to use the service more properly.	.612	0.38	0.62			
At any stage of service production I helped my tour friends when they asked for help.	.587	0.35	0.65			
Information Sharing				0.62	0.30	0.548
I clearly expressed my expectations to the agency staff.	.550	0.30	0.70			
I provided the necessary information for the employees to perform their duties in the production process.	.618	0.38	0.62			
I paid attention to how my tour friends who participated in the co-production process behaved in order to benefit better from the services produced.	.403	0.16	0.84			
I answered the questions of the employees about the production of the service.	.568	0.32	0.68			
<i>Confirmatory Factor Analysis Values of the Participation Behavior of the Tourists in Production (countined)</i>						
Feedback				0.63	0.36	0.600
I pay attention to make evaluation about the service I get from employees.	.568	0.32	0.68			
When I had a useful idea to improve the service, I shared it with agency staff.	.649	0.42	0.58			
When I had any problems, I informed the agency staff about it.	.573	0.33	0.67			
Adaptation				0.66	0.79	0.889
I was not rude to the agency staff.	.834	0.70	0.30			
I was respectful to the agency staff.	.780	0.61	0.39			
Information Seeking				0.47	0.63	0.793
I got information about the content of the services produced from the people who previously received those services.	.786	0.62	0.38			
I did a search on where the service to be produced was provided.	.565	0.32	0.68			
Total Varyans Explained; 0,46; Composite Reliability; 0,95; Goodness of fit statistics; $\chi^2/sd=2,131;p=,000;NFI=0,857;NNFI=0,905;CFI=0,918;RMSEA=0,005;GFI=0,922;AGFI=0,901;SRMR=0,005$						

Note. All variables were measured on a five-point rating scale (1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree)

The effect of each expression on explaining the measurement model was evaluated by taking the squares of standardized values (R^2) determined in CFA, which was conducted for the scale of participation behavior of tourists in production. The expressions which explain the measurement model of participation behavior of tourists in the production best are; '*I treated the agency staff friendly* ($R^2 = 0,75$)' under the personal interaction factor and '*I recommend the travel agency to others* ($R^2 = 0,72$)' under the advocacy factor.

The statement that contributed the least to the measurement model was '*I paid attention to how my tour friends who participated in the co-production process behaved in order to benefit better from the services produced* ($R^2 = 0,16$). ' In general, it is observed that the effects of the expressions in the measurement model on explaining the participation behavior of the customers have different and remote values from each other.

After examining the compatibility values of the model and proving its significance, the composite reliability (CR) and the variance explained by the factors were calculated in order to evaluate whether the expressions which belong to the factors describe their related factor. In order for the structure in the measurement model to be reliable, the structure value should be above 0.70 and the explained variance should be above 0.50 (Hair et al., 2010). On the other hand, Huang et al. (2013) argues that a value of 0.40 and above for the explained variance is acceptable. The structure reliability of the measurement model of the participation behavior of the tourists in production was calculated as 0.95, and the explained variance was calculated as 0.46.

5. Conclusions

5.1. Discussion

The primary focus of the research is to determine the participation behaviors of the customers who purchase the touristic products from the travel agencies through the co-production. When the related literature is examined, it is seen that, in the researches on the travel agencies, the co-production was questioned in terms of the participation type (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Park and Ha, 2016) and the level of participation (Grisseman and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Prebensen et al., 2015; Tseng and Chiang, 2016). In this research, going beyond the existing researches, the participation behaviors of tourists in production were evaluated from a holistic point of view. According to the results of the research in which the participation behaviors of the tourists, who purchased the cultural tours in Istanbul, were examined, there is a seven-dimensional structure which explains the participation behavior of the tourists in the production in the travel agencies. According to their explanatory levels for the participation behavior, these are *personal interaction, advocacy, helping, feedback, information sharing, adaptation and information seeking*. While the personal interaction, information sharing, and information seeking refer to the factors that affect the participation behavior of customers in production; advocacy, helping, feedback, and adaptation explain the participation process of the customers in the production and then the sense of belonging to the business. These results show that the tourists pay attention to the interaction with the employees in the co-production process; the tourists participating in the co-production are not sensitive in terms of showing tolerance towards the agents about the problems that may be encountered throughout this process. In their study examining the participation behavior of the customers in the production in the service sector, Ennew and Binks (1999) defined the *information sharing, responsible behavior and personal interaction* as the factors that explained the participation behavior in production. In addition, Yi and Gong (2013) conducted a research on a sample which benefited from the restaurant, coiffeur, health and travel sectors. They determined factors which reflect the participation behavior of the customers to production. In order of importance, these factors are; *helping, feedback, advocacy, information sharing, information seeking, responsible behavior, tolerance and personal interaction*. These findings indicate that the research results are supported in the relevant literature.

In the second stage, the demographic characteristics and participation characteristics of the participants, who purchased the touristic products from the travel agencies for the purpose of cultural tourism through co-production, were determined. Accordingly, it was concluded that the participants were mostly clustered in the middle age group and in the young age group the participation in production was low. At this point, there are different findings in the related literature. While, in the research conducted by Wang et al. (2011), it was determined that the tourists who participated in co-production activities in the tourism sector were mostly in the young age group, Buonincontri et al. (2017) found that the tourists who purchased services through co-production in the tourism sector were mostly in the middle age group. These results show that the results obtained in the research are also supported by different researches. According to another finding in the research, among the tourists participating in production, the number of the males is higher than that of the females and the number of the married people is higher than that of the singles. It was also concluded in the research that the education and income levels of the tourists who participated in the production were high.

Similarly, in the researches conducted by Wang et al. (2011) in Taiwan, by Park and Ha (2016) in the United States, and by Buonincontri et al. (2017) in Italy, it was found that the education and income levels of the tourists who purchased the touristic products in the tourism sector through co-production were high. Within this context, it can be concluded that the results of the researches carried out in the United States, Italy, and Taiwan are relatively similar to the results of this research. This situation provides clues about that the tourists' participation behavior in production and the demographic characteristics of the tourists who participate in production are relatively similar in different geographies and cultures.

After confirming the measurement model used in the research and determining whether the findings obtained in the research were in line with the other researches in the literature, the evaluations were made focusing on the effects that could be created by the production of touristic products by the travel agencies through the co-production strategy.

5.2. Results, Implications, Limitations and Future Research Directions

The speed of development in tourism market and the variability of touristic demand are quite high. This leads to an increase in sectoral uncertainty and competition, and makes tourists' preferences, requests and needs more complex day by day. At this point, the production strategies of the travel agencies that have a producer role in the tourism industry are changing and the traditional production is being replaced by the innovative production approaches. Co-production, which is the focus of the research, is one of the innovative production strategies that enable to respond the touristic demands with the personalized and specialized services rather than the pre-designed products. Co-production is a production strategy through which the agencies can obtain extensive information about the differentiated and personalized touristic requests and needs, transfer this information to the production processes, and create the personalized experiences with the customers. This strategy has an important function in developing both the business and customer outputs (Grissmann and Stokburger-Sauer, 2012; Tseng and Chiang, 2016). According to Grissmann and Stokburger-Sauer (2012), the co-production in travel agencies contributes to the positive development of the non-financial service outputs and the financial performance indicators. Thus, in many researches in which the co-production in the travel agencies was examined, it was confirmed that the participation of customers in production has improved the service outputs (Wang and Fesenmaier, 2004; Prebensen and Foss, 2011; Salvado et al. 2011; Wang et al. 2011; Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014, Buhalis and Foerste, 2015; Prebensen et al. 2015; Tseng and Chiang, 2016). However, there are some critical points in the development of service outputs in co-production. The first of these is that the agencies should configure their production in line with the personalized requests and needs of the customers. Second, the agencies should manage the factors that contribute to the participation behavior of the customers in production.

In the research, seven factors that affect the participation behaviors of tourists in production were determined. These are the *personal interaction, advocacy, helping, feedback, information sharing, adaptation and information seeking*. Configuring their initiatives within the framework of these factors is important for the agencies in order to obtain positive outcomes from the co-production process. Within this context, according to the results of the research, it was determined that the most effective dimension explaining the participation behavior of the customers in production was the personal interaction. Personal interaction explains the communication and interaction between the customers and employees (Yi and Gong, 2013). Therefore, the travel agencies should primarily focus on managing the interaction between the employees and customers in the context of managing the customer participation behavior in production. Within this context, in the selection process, the agencies should prefer the personnel who have high level communication and interaction skills and improve the communication skills and abilities of their existing employees through the seminars and training programs. These issues are important for the efficiency of co-production. According to another result of the research, the information seeking and information sharing are important factors in explaining the participation behavior. Customers seek information in order to fulfill the responsibilities and expectations that the co-production process bring along and share the information they obtain as the inputs in the co-production process. Sharing the data obtained by the customers as a result of their attempts to access the information with the agency employees, analyzing the requests and needs of the customers in accordance with this information and transferring them to the production processes and production correctly will be determinant in the success of the co-production process.

Improving customer participation in production is seen as a way of improving service outcomes. However, the expectations of the tourists, who undertake additional responsibilities by participating in production, are increasing. Therefore, the skills of the agency and its employees may be insufficient to meet the demands of the customers. For this reason, the customer participation in production may also have the negative effects. Thus, the results of the research show that tourists will not tolerate the problems encountered in the co-production process and will not be patient when their requests are not met by the business. This result shows that the more the customers participate in production, the more their expectations from the tourist services increase. At this point, the efforts of the travel agencies to manage the co-production process and the participation of tourists in production will be effective on the ultimate outcomes of the co-production process. Agencies may encounter the opportunities and problems when taking initiatives compatible with the co-production.

However, there is a number of requirements to provide optimum benefit from the co-production activities. The most important of these is to improve the active participation of the tourists in production (Wang et al. 2011; Tseng and Chiang, 2016).

According to the research findings in terms of the production phases in which the customers participate, although the customers actively participate in the planning, production, provision, and the evaluation phases of the production process, the participation in production mostly occurs in the planning and evaluation phases. This result indicates that the participation of customers in the production in travel agencies is limited and the active participation of tourists in the production and provision phases should be improved. As Chau and Sweeney (2003: 215) emphasized; the co-production phases are the parts of a whole and constantly interact with each other. For this reason, the agencies should ensure the active participation of customers in the entire production process from the planning to the evaluation for the efficiency of the co-production process. At this point, it is essential for the agencies to make changes at the operational level in order to increase the participation of customers in the production phases and to make a transition to the organization systems that will improve the participation behavior of the customers in production. When the implementation of the co-production strategy in the agencies is considered, it is seen that the participation of tourists in the production takes place in the form of agency-customer interaction in the physical environment and the participation in production in the internet based web applications (Schmidt-Rauch and Schwabe, 2014; Buhalis and Foerste, 2015). The fact that the tourists use the opportunities provided by technology efficiently and the co-production is highly suitable for the applicability of the technology necessitate the agencies to adapt the internet based technological infrastructure to the business processes. Adaptation of technology to business processes in the context of co-production will bring along the changes in the employment and hierarchical structures of the agencies. In the light of these developments, the agencies will need to work with the teams that have a high technological knowledge and awareness, manage their own business within their responsibility and jurisdiction, have a high level of communication skills, have the team spirit and create synergy.

In summary, the co-production in the agencies is a strategy that enables the personalization of the touristic products in accordance with the requests and needs of the customers. The personalization of touristic products through the co-production improves the service outputs of the agencies. The personalized touristic products also allow the agencies to make sales in the markets consisting of the tourists with high levels of education and income and this helps the agencies gain the long-term competitive edge and ensure the continuity. However, for the successful applications of the co-production in the agencies, the agencies need to make some changes both in the operational level and in the employment structures. Within this context, in terms of the efficient operation of the process, it is essential for the agencies to integrate the innovations required by the co-production applications to the business and production processes and to employ the employees who have the sufficient knowledge and skills in co-production.

In spite of the opportunities offered by the co-production, the relative proportion of the number of the travel agencies adopting the co-production strategy is quite low compared to the total number of agencies. At first glance, it is thought that the co-production strategy is a suitable way of doing business for the boutique travel agencies which have limited resources and it is believed that it is not a suitable business method for the travel agencies that organize the mass tours and have relatively bigger market shares. However, in today's market in which the demands of the tourists have become personalized and the segmentation in touristic services has been an unstoppable process, it is obvious that the co-production in today's market will be an important production strategy in the specialization and the touristic product differentiation not only for the boutique travel agencies but also for the travel agencies organizing the mass tours. Furthermore, the production strategy is not sufficiently adopted by the agencies. The underlying reason for this is the uncertain and low demand for the co-produced touristic products.

At this point arises the question of how the agencies will create the demand for the touristic products that they will co-produce by including their customers in production. For the significant portion of travel agencies operating in Turkey, there are vast business opportunities in the periods when tourist demand is high, but in the periods when the demand drops there is scarcely any business opportunity. Therefore, it can be said that the application of the co-production strategy by the agencies in the periods when the demand is low will increase the operational efficiency and help to extend the touristic activities over a 12-month period. In addition, one of the concrete indicators of the future agencies is that the production will be transferred to the technological environment.

Today, when there is a transition to the non-portable, portable, mobile and ultimately wearable technologies and the digital age has dominated all stages of life, the transfer of production to the technological environment will undoubtedly affect the participation of the customers in co-production and will also improve the initiatives of agencies in this regard. At this point, it is obvious that having co-production modules that will support the processes before, during and after the trips, supporting these processes with the technological devices and systems will provide new opportunities for the agencies in the future.

In this research examining the participation behavior of the customers in production, the responsibilities of the agencies and tourists were discussed. Although the research reached some important results in general, there are also some limitations. It is possible to test the measurement model used in the research in different sample sets and at different times in the tourism sector. Thus, the scope of the research results can be expanded. In addition, the study examines the participation behavior of the customers in co-production. However, the support of the business which is the other stakeholder of co-production is also important. Therefore, examining the co-production in the axis of travel agencies is thought to be important in terms of providing a holistic view to the issue.

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