

## Article

# A Model for the Development of Innovative Tourism Products: From Service to Transformation

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**Abstract:** This study sought to develop a conceptual model of innovative tourism product development, because the existing models tend to provide an incomplete framework for these products' development. The models presented to date focus on either the resources needed, the tourism experiences to be provided, or development processes. These models also tend to see the overall process as linear. The proposed model gives particular importance to the development process's design, as well as stressing a dynamic, nonlinear approach. Based on the new services or products' concept, project managers identify tourism destinations' core resources, select the stakeholders, and design transformative tourism experiences. This framework can be applied to innovative tourism products or re-evaluations of existing products in order to maintain tourism destinations' competitiveness. Thus, the model is applicable to both destination management companies and the private tourism sector.

**Keywords:** product innovation model; transformative tourism experience; development process design; core resource identification; tourism product development

## 1. Introduction

Competition among tourism destinations has increased substantially, intensified by changes in tourism demand, major markets' saturation, and the emergence of new information and communication technologies [1,2]. A wide range of studies have emphasised that the only way for tourism destinations to maintain their ability to compete internationally, especially as mature tourist destinations, is through innovation. While researchers explicitly acknowledge the need to innovate—in particular through new tourism product development—thus far, models for this type of development are surprisingly quite scarce [3]. Therefore, more research is needed on this topic [4].

Contrary to the industrial sector, in which the process of developing new products has been intensively studied [5,6], research in the services sector is much scarcer [7]. Steven and Dimitriadis [8] point out that this situation is unjustifiable given the service sector's growing importance in more developed economies. Researchers have confirmed that substantial differences exist between physical products and services, which are necessarily reflected in the way new service development has to be conducted. Menor et al. [9] argue that this lack of systematic research stems from how new services are thought to appear spontaneously as a result of intuition, flair or simply luck rather than being the result of properly organised development processes. The absence of structured procedures, weaknesses in preparatory work and the lack of customer involvement throughout these processes may also explain

the high failure rate of new service development [10,11]. With regard to tourism, only a few studies have sought to model how new tourism products or services are developed [4,12]. In addition, most models to date complement each other but lack sophistication and correspond to a large extent to the models for new service development created in the 1980s.

In this context, the present research's objective was to build a model of innovative tourism product development and thus to contribute to closing the aforementioned gap in tourism research. The proposed framework (see Figure 1) for the development of new tourism products is based on three fundamental components: (1) identifying destinations' core resources on which innovative tourism products should be based, (2) determining the transformative experiences provided by these products, and (3) establishing the design of product development processes.

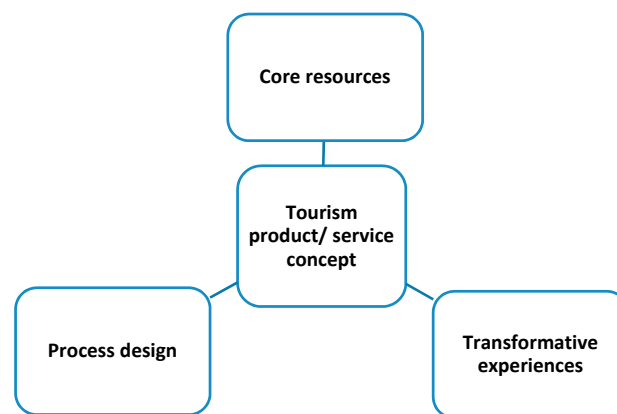


Figure 1. Framework for new tourism product development.

## 2. From Tangible Products to Transformative Experiences

An extensive literature exists on innovation models of tangible product development. These models' main aim is to present a sequence of steps whose primary purpose is to guide the process of developing new products in order to reduce the uncertainty inherent in innovation and help developers make the right decisions about continuing or abandoning projects. Rothwell [13] observes that, in the industrial sector, the models developed during the 1950s and until the mid-1960s were called linear models, reflecting the widespread conviction that innovation was a linear process starting with technological development and ending with market introduction. This first generation of innovation models was clearly driven by technological development and based on the conviction that more investment in research and development would result in a higher number of successful new products [14,15].

From the second half of the 1960s to the early 1970s, economic and social change contributed to an emphasis being placed on demand-related factors. This second generation of linear models was driven by the market, which, in turn, was perceived as the source of new ideas in product development. Research and development took on an overt reactive function. However, these models had various shortcomings. First, innovation was always triggered by fundamental research. Second, researchers failed to consider the possibility of technological knowledge preceding empirical knowledge. Third, models were hampered by an absence of feedback or interactions that occur throughout development processes. Last, these models did not consider design's fundamental importance in new products' effectiveness and success [16]. The early 1970s were marked by high constraints on demand, which drove companies to seek to understand more accurately how to carry out successful innovation with the least possible waste of resources. This quest was accompanied by intense research into new product development models. The resulting models suggest nonlinear approaches, and these frameworks characteristically present a sequence of functionally distinctive steps—but with high levels of interaction and interdependence [13]. The number of steps tends to differ between models, yet essentially they all aim to obtain and process simultaneously technical and market-related information,

with innovation conceptualised as a complex process of interaction between agents involved in the processes' different stages. Among the many models developed in the 1970s, Kline and Rosenberg's [16] chain-link or interactive model most closely represents the complex structures and diverse patterns that innovation processes involve. This framework provides an understanding of how to encourage continuous innovation, that is, how to apply old or new knowledge to satisfy individual or collective demands. In this decade, another model was developed by Cooper [17], which was known as the stage-gate model and which was an attempt to provide companies with a tool to minimise the risks inherent in developing new products. This model recognises that each phase encompasses various activities and progressing to the next phase is conditioned by passage through a 'door' that functions as a controlling entity. During the course of each step, information is collected that facilitates decisions about whether to move forward with the process, interrupt it or go back to the previous stage and reassess the situation. All company departments are called upon to comment on the process and confirm that the information collected is enough to make a safe decision possible. Based on a set of software development methodologies known as Agile, Cooper and Sommer [18] propose the Agile-stage-gate model, which is an improvement of the previous stage-gate model by introducing speed, agility, and productivity into the model and thus accelerating product cycles of new product development. According to Cooper and Sommer [18], the benefits of this hybrid Agile-stage-gate model are: "increased design flexibility; improved productivity, communication, and coordination among project team members; better focus on projects, resulting in better prioritization of time and effort; and raised team morale" (p. 20).

### 2.1. New Service Development Processes

Johne and Storey [19] conducted an extensive review of the literature on new product development and found that this term is often used as a synonym for 'new service development' [20,21]. In reality, the overwhelming majority of prior studies have focused on tangible product development. Although the terminology used can cover both tangible products and services, various authors have acknowledged that quite significant differences exist between the development of tangible products and services [10,19,20]. These divergences essentially arise from the characteristics attributed to services such as intangibility, heterogeneity, inseparability, and perishability [10,15,19,21]. Despite agreeing with this analysis, Sampson and Froehle [22] present an extremely critical view of how services are defined and categorised, arguing that what is or is not a service should not be determined by the aforementioned four characteristics but instead by information gathered from the perspective of customer involvement. The cited authors argue that the process of developing new services is only clearly differentiated from that of developing tangible products through clients' role in the process. Sampson and Froehle [22] argue that, in all services, customers provide quite significant inputs to service production, which can include clients' physical, mental, and emotional involvement, as they are always present in services that involve co-production. The inputs may further result from the tangible goods belonging to customers or clients' provision of information. Kitsios and Kamariotou [11] also report that customers are involved in co-creation during the service innovation process, because their ideas are often more creative and valuable than the innovations developed within organisations. In addition, Andreassen et al. [23] observe that innovation in service design is crucial for improving both customer satisfaction and service quality. Effective communication with clients helps providers understand their customers' needs and allows clients to participate indirectly in innovation processes, as well as reducing the time needed to introduce new services into the market [11,24,25]. Although differences have been found between how new tangible products and services are developed, a more careful examination of the available models of new service development did not reveal significant differences from the existing models of new product development since their structure and proposed stages are extremely similar [9,21]. Thus, Scheuing and Johnson's [26] model—often referred to as an example of a model of innovative service development [15,27,28]—does not differ substantially from Booz, Allen, and Hamilton's [29,30] model of new product development. More specifically, in the

initial versions presented in 1968, models consisted of five stages. However, Johnson et al.'s [31] model introduces some innovation by representing innovative service development in a circular way, thereby conveying the nonlinear and highly interactive character of this process. The cited model also emphasises that the main stages of the process of developing new services centre around service concept design and configuration and explicitly recognises the fundamental importance of specific features such as teams and tools throughout innovative service development. Therefore, despite the growing number of publications, new service development remains an immature field that requires further research [11].

## 2.2. New Tourism Product Development

Regarding the process of developing new tourism products, researchers commonly refer to a better understanding of this process as a way to avoid failure and increase both companies and destinations' competitiveness [32]. Nonetheless, relatively little progress has been made in this direction. According to Walder [28], advanced models of new tourism product development are rare, which led the cited author to create a model composed of 12 stages. Walder's [28] model offers an advance on previous research by recognising the process's nonlinearity and contemplating the need to return to previous phases to reassess the innovation. The cited author also admits the possibility that the development process can begin with ideas generated within companies or in their interactions with customers, suppliers or other partners. Pechlaner and Döpfer [33] proposed another approach to new tourism product development based on the assumption that innovation cannot be implemented in an ad hoc manner but instead is the result of a process involving various stages. Based on Scheuing and Johnson's [26] model, Pechlaner and Döpfer [33] identified three fundamental phases in new tourism product development: invention, adoption and diffusion. These phases can in turn be subdivided into a total of 14 steps. This model presents some shortcomings, namely, failing to clarify different actors' involvement in the process's stages and to acknowledge more explicitly the importance of service design phases. Haahti and Komppula's [34] work confirms these shortcomings, showing that a substantial part of research into tourism product development has focused on technical properties rather than on overall customer experience. The cited authors thus argue that methodologies should be developed that encompass design into the process of creating experiences that generate value for clients.

Benur and Bramwell [4] more recently contributed to this field by developing two conceptual frameworks for analysing relationships and strategic options related to tourism product development, such as primary products' concentration and diversification and their advantages and disadvantages for destinations. However, these frameworks are not centred around the process of new tourism product development. A related study by Divisekera and Nguyen [2] in an Australian context generated a model that examines the relationship between innovation inputs and institutional factors. The cited researchers concluded that the most important innovation inputs are collaboration, human capital, information technology and funding and that the most significant institutional factors are foreign ownership, market competition, firm size and business environment. Divisekera and Nguyen's [2] model of innovation in tourism products does not take tourists' experiences into consideration.

After reviewing the literature on new product and service development, the present study went on to create a model of innovative tourism product development. On the one hand, this model has the capacity to differentiate between tourism destinations in the maturity phase and their competitors. On the other hand, the proposed approach helps generate unique, memorable experiences for clients, thereby reinforcing destinations' competitiveness [35].

## 3. Model of New Tourism Product Development

Various authors have observed that tourism product development is especially complex due to the different levels at which companies need to think through the development process. In addition, unlike other sectors in which producers can focus essentially on either generating tangible or

intangible components of products, tourism product development must take into account both types of components. Given the new requirements created by tourists' demand and tourism destinations need to differentiate their offer from that of their most direct competitors, providers should also ensure that the products made available are perceived as enriching, memorable experiences [36–41].

The present study's literature review revealed that the proposed model of tourism product development had to include the following elements. The first is the resources necessary for product development [33,42–45]. The second element is an accurate determination of customers' needs so that the products developed correspond to what clients need and expect [10,34]. Last, based on the previous elements, the process should include design in the process of developing new products [33,34,42,43,45].

### *3.1. Core Resources Needed for New Tourism Product Development*

In tourism planning contexts, Inskeep [46] asserts that attractions are the basis of tourism development as these are the most essential components of tourism products and they reflect the intrinsic cultural and environmental features that make tourism destinations distinctive and unique. That is, attractions are these destinations' differentiating elements. Swarbrooke [47] further points out that attractions are at the core of tourism products, motivating most tourists' trips. Gunn [48] has a quite similar opinion since the cited author's functional tourism model gives attractions a prominent place. Benur and Bramwell [4] report that primary tourism products that attract tourists to visit destinations consist of physical, environmental, and sociocultural characteristics. This set of attributes, which varies between destinations and constitutes their core resources, is crucial for the competitiveness of tourism destinations; [49] argue that new tourism product development should be based on these core resources. Pechlaner et al. [45] also point out that tourism products have a particularity that distinguishes them from other products. Unlike financial or other services, tourism product development requires a physical stage in the form of mountains, beaches, or infrastructure created on purpose (e.g., theme parks). Tourism products are thus linked to specific locations, so customers have to travel physically to those places to enjoy these products. Tourism product development is not only influenced by the actors involved in the process but also destinations' characteristics that give distinctive features to the tourism products developed. Similar to core competencies, only resources that have been identified simultaneously by the different actors involved in the development process (i.e., public institutions, companies, and residents) should be considered valid resources [43]. Once core resources have been identified using the methodology described above, thematisation can be carried out, according to Pechlaner and Döpfer [33] and Pechlaner et al. [43], based on the core competencies or, as in the present case, the core resources. In this way, the themes for developing core products are derived and defined by destinations' strengths. These core products should be understood as intangible services linking the core resources identified to the final tourism products. Themes can and should have specific connections with tourism sites and consist of natural, cultural, or social components. The present study took the position, however, that themes need to develop out of a combination of natural features with cultural or social components.

According to Gupta and Vajic [50], thematisation's application in Pine and Gilmore's [39] work is less clear. While the examples mentioned by the cited authors, such as Planet Hollywood, the Hard Rock Café, or the Rainforest Café are well-defined themes, this type of thematisation is limited to the physical environment, without considering the central activity. Gupta and Vajic [49] argue that this kind of thematisation is nothing more than themed entertainment provided for customers eating their meals. The cited authors suggest that the diminished success that some of these types of companies have begun to experience is not due to their inability to refresh periodically the products offered, as Pine and Gilmore [39] propose, but more essentially due to these firms' failure to anchor their thematisation in a central activity in which clients could be fully involved. Smith [51] presents a model of tourism products combining five elements represented as circles with a physical facility or resource in the centre. These elements are supported by services and hospitality from the destination or service provider's side and freedom of choice and involvement from the clients' side. Smith's [51] model shows clearly



that tourism products consist of a combination of elements. In this sense, the Austrian government's Amt der NÖ Landesregierung—Abteilung Wirtschaft, Tourismus und Technologie maintains that a route or trail, even if duly marked, does not yet constitute a tourism product. A product exists only when a chain of services is properly integrated, including car parks, equipment rental where applicable, reception areas, security in the form of necessary information, rest areas, guided tours properly planned, tourist attractions and gastronomy. These services are what transform routes or trails into tourism products [52].

As can be seen from the above example, no one organisation can provide all the elements needed to constitute a tourism product structured around an activity that involves customers and give them genuine experiences. Thus, those involved in tourism product development must determine which organisations are able to provide the essential elements of each product. To ensure that the products to be developed meet target market segments' needs, Haahti and Komppula [34] assert that the clients' needs at the heart of tourism products must be previously identified, around which different service providers can be associated. Various authors state that these needs should be defined based on collaboration in buyer–supplier relationships and be fulfilled in socially, environmentally, and economically responsible ways [53].

The present study's analysis up to this point focused on the resources on which the development of new tourism products should be based. In addition, tourism product development must involve a considerable number of actors or stakeholders [54], who contribute other types of resources, such as specific knowledge or skills. The need to add other types of resources to physical assets was previously confirmed by Froehle and Roth [42], who consider intellectual and organisational resources fundamental in business contexts. In the course of the current literature review, the conclusion was reached that new tourism products with the capacity to provide memorable experiences can rarely be developed without relying on networking within business clusters or other similar organisational structures [34,41,43–45]. Since these resources are inherent to the actors involved in tourism product development networks, Pechlaner et al. [45] suggest that integration into clusters requires specific organisational competencies, such as epistemic, heuristic, relational, and integrative skills.

The next step in the present study's elaboration of a model of innovative tourism product development thus took into consideration that the processes involved in the creation of each product or service module needs to be centred around the value created for customers by providing memorable experiences that meet clients' needs and expectations. This research, therefore, proceeded to analyse the concept of experience and, more specifically, sought to understand what memorable tourist experiences are, how they are created, and how they can be evaluated.

### 3.2. Transformative Tourism Experiences

According to Brunner-Sperdin [55], customers today want not only to consume tourism products but also to feel them and actively participate in their staging. The question of experiences has always been an extremely significant topic within tourism studies, because experiences are the essence of tourism [56] and tourism is an industry that sells experiences [57–60]. All situations in tourism can be seen as constituting experiences [61,62], even mass tourism based on sun and sea [63]. Stamboulis and Skayannis [63] suggest that more recent approaches to tourist experiences take into account that tourist experiences can be designed, intentionally produced (i.e., staged), organised, planned, calculated and, in many cases, sold. Scott et al. [64] also mention that human nature dictates that individuals constantly have a diverse set of experiences that are both positive and negative. However, a distinction needs to be made between 'wild' or unplanned experiences, which are usually serendipitous and the result of happy discoveries and fruit of chance or favourable, unexpected events and which produce different feeling in each individual, and 'staged' experiences that contain design elements. The latter experiences are in line with the approaches of Mathisen [65], Pikkemaat et al. [66], Rickly and McCabe [67], and Stamboulis and Skayannis [63] advocate regarding new tourist experience development. Peric and Dragicevic [68] suggest that there is a need to distinguish, on the one hand, between highly

individualized experiences and general experiences like the ones related to entertainment, and on the other hand, between special experiences that are dependent on the outcome of special events like sports events and the “guaranteed” experiences like the ones provided by amusement parks.

Given the existence of so many ways of approaching tourism experiences, Ritchie and Hudson [69] carried out an extensive review of the literature in order to understand and make more explicit the diverse perspectives in analyses of tourists’ experiences. The cited authors applied a chronological approach to each stream. However, the present study sought to achieve more pertinent results by analysing the concept of tourism experience in terms of researchers’ perspective, that is, how different areas of knowledge tend to analyse these experiences. Quan and Wang [70] and Volo [71] observe that research related to tourism experiences can fit into two distinct approaches, namely, social science versus management and marketing approaches. Volo [71] states that the former approach includes research related to motivations, activities, interests, meanings, attitudes, searches for authenticity, and analyses of subjective experiences. Management and marketing-related disciplines, in turn, focus on tourists and examine tourists’ experiences from the perspective of consumer behaviours linked to designated supportive experiences. The latter experiences result from contact with different suppliers of tourism products and services, transport companies and accommodation and catering units, as well as other tourism services [71]. Regarding the methodologies used to evaluate experiences, Volo [71] reports that structured questionnaires, travel diaries, structured or semi-structured interviews, participant observation, travel narratives, and memory reports are traditional methodologies, but more recently—especially in the environmental sciences—video recordings, sensory devices, and global positioning systems have been used. These diverse methodologies clearly indicate that the field of study and its position regarding the chosen paradigm dictates the most appropriate methodologies. In addition, part of the literature on investigations of tourism experiences mentions that this research is based on a phenomenologist paradigm [72,73], which tends to favour qualitative methodologies. In contrast, the approaches related to management and marketing studies tend to rely on quantitative methodologies [12,36]. In psychology, experiences can be considered private incidents that occur in response to stimuli, involve the entire human nature, and often result from direct participation in and/or observation of real, surreal, or virtual events [74,75]. Müller and Scheurer [74] argue that researchers unanimously accept that experiences can be triggered by both internal stimuli such as physiological sensations and changes in the environment, which are captured by sensory organs and cognitive processes such as evaluation. The involvement of multiple senses in experiences contributes to richer sensory experiences and to destination loyalty [76]. However, experiences do not depend only on stimuli as they are equally conditioned by each person’s intrinsic characteristics and “can be defined as anything that stimulates the senses, heart and mind” [77] (p. 7). The determining factors are made up of physical and mental states, for example, motivations or physical conditions, and personality traits and other individual characteristics such as gender, age, and previous experiences [74]. Although experiences cannot be ‘produced,’ specific devices can be developed that create an external framework conducive to positive experiences for customers and/or tourists [74].

The management and marketing approach to experiences is associated with the concept of the experience economy. Pine and Gilmore [39] traced the evolution of different economic sectors in industrialised countries, concluding that, as economies mature, the highest growth rates are related to the consumption of experiences. Competition between companies and their efforts to ensure high quality products and services have led to a decrease in differentiation between products or services. This trend has forced companies to attach added value to their services or products by incorporating elements that provide unique, memorable experiences to customers or even have the ability to involve clients in ways that create these experience [78,79]. This interaction results in a transformation in the consumer. Pine and Gilmore [39] argue that, as goods and services have become increasingly undifferentiated, customers’ appetite for experiences that play a fundamental role in generating value has grown, becoming a distinct market offering both goods and services. For companies to be able

to design, stage, distribute, and communicate experiences more effectively, firms must gain more knowledge about the nature of experiences.

Within the experience economy, Pine and Gilmore [39] define experiences as events that involve individuals personally at an emotional, physical, intellectual, or even spiritual level. These events have four distinct dimensions defined along two axes. The horizontal axis is the degree of customers' participation in and influence on the unfolding of experiences, which can go from totally passive participation, for example, attending a show or sport event, up to an extremely active level of participation, such as playing a sport. The vertical axis represents how deeply customers get involved with the environment and context in which events develop, which ranges from simple absorption to total immersion. In this context, absorption means capturing clients' attention by bringing the experience into their minds, and immersion is understood as physically or virtually integrating customers into the experience. The combination of these two axes highlights four distinct types of experiences: entertainment, educational, escapist, or aesthetic. These experiences can be understood and communicated individually, but, according to Oh et al. [61], in tourism and leisure contexts, the boundaries between these four experiences are sometimes quite blurred. For instance, offers of edutainment also exist in which museums dedicated mainly to science combine knowledge transmission (i.e., education) with entertainment components. According to Pine and Gilmore [39], optimal experiences are the result of a simultaneous combination of the four different dimensions. Entertainment experiences probably constitute the oldest format and the most highly developed and prevalent. This type of experience consists of capturing and maintaining individuals' attention through their senses and occurs, for example, when clients watch a show, sport event, television show, or movie. Individuals are only passive participants limited to absorbing and apprehending the experiences' elements and reacting to stimuli [39]. Despite being an extremely common experience, in tourism, entertainment assumes a significant role, with many destinations offering different events, such as the classical music festivals that take place annually in Salzburg or Bayreuth. The latter is dedicated exclusively to Richard Wagner's operas. This type of offer is not limited to classical music as destinations currently organise festivals of all kinds of music ranging from the erudite to the traditional. Entertainment events are also linked to specific sport activities. These offers have the common denominator of involving spectators through experiences that are essentially entertainment [55]. Another more recent tourism product related to entertainment is theme parks such as the Disneyland Resort or Legoland Theme Parks.

In educational experiences, customers absorb events as they unfold through active mental participation or intellectual education, for example, by participating in seminars or activities simultaneously involving the mind and body such as skiing, horse-riding, or yoga courses. This type of experience is absolutely crucial to tourism as an increasing number of tourists consider learning something new during their holidays extremely important. Knowledge acquisition can be related to destinations' culture or may focus only on a particular topic [80,81]. Another aspect of educational experiences is visits to places where, for example, villages of particular historical periods are recreated so that visitors become aware of the way of life and activities specific to those times [61].

Escapist experiences, in turn, presuppose clients and/or tourists' partial or even total immersion in events and customers' involvement in activities that enable these individuals to influence performances or occurrences, whether in the real or virtual world. Tourism research has a strong tradition of investigations focused on these experiences because various authors suggest that the act of travel translates into a form of escape from daily life and routines imposed by professional and/or family obligations. Many tourists seek physical and mental regeneration, chances to reencounter and gain a fuller understanding of other modes of existence or direct, deep contact with the natural world [82]. Given the multiple motivations for going on trips that involve a form of escape from everyday life, a huge variety of tourism experience offers have been developed to satisfy these motivations. These products include, among others, participating in religious ceremonies [63], doing extreme sports and taking trips to inhospitable places [83], as well as encounters with different cultures and ways



of life considered exotic [84]. The present discussion is not intended to be exhaustive but only to illustrate—based on tourism experience studies’ findings—some of the aspects that fit within the escapist dimension. The literature shows a general acceptance that one of the main motivations for travelling is the need to escape daily routines and for physical and mental rest. However, some researchers, as mentioned previously, argue that the theory of compensation, according to which people seek to do something different or even opposite to what they do in their daily lives during their leisure time, may not be the only valid theory. Evidence has been found that some people tend to engage in leisure activities similar to those they do in their work [85]. Richards’s [86] research corroborated this idea, revealing that surveys of cultural tourists have shown that many prefer activities related to these visitors’ professional duties. For instance, people who work in museums are the most likely to visit museums during their holidays, and musicians often attend concerts during vacations or leisure time.

According to Banner [85], any spillover or continuity and similarity between work activities and leisure pursuits may translate only into extremely ingrained habits. Nonetheless, studies conducted by Csikszentmihalyi [87] of musicians, athletes, chess players, and surgeons clearly show that people tend to occupy themselves with the activities they love most, simply for the pleasure of performing these tasks. Based on observations of these people’s feelings while engaged in their favourite activities, the cited author developed the concept of flow—a state reached by being so absorbed by an activity that nothing else matters. During these periods, all notion of time and space is lost, and the activity is performed continually even if this is associated with some kind of sacrifice. In this state, individuals feel an intense euphoria and deep sense of pleasure that are remembered for a long time afterward, becoming the standard against which they measure what their life should be [86]. In addition, according to Csikszentmihalyi [87], these rare moments are composed of optimal experiences during which happiness is achieved. Thus, the escapist dimension needs to include the possibility of clients’ and/or tourists’ total absorption in activities so that customers’ experiences become the best possible, as illustrated by Csikszentmihalyi’s [87] subjects.

The last dimension mentioned by Pine and Gilmore [39] is aesthetic experiences in which clients and/or tourists merge into the surrounding environment without interfering with or altering any features. These experiences have always been a decisive component of tourism as many tourists travel to specific destinations only for a particular landscape, building, or built environment’s aesthetic value [61]. For tourism destinations, natural and cultural elements should be considered the stage and scenario where aesthetic experiences occur [45]. Any components that can diminish the quality of these places, that is, have a negative impact on the environment, are obstacles to the successful development of this important type of tourism experience. When purchasing a car or other objects, customers are indifferent to the aesthetic dimension of the space in which they are produced because clients do not have to go to that place to take possession of the acquired object. In contrast, tourists have to travel to destinations to acquire tourism services and/or experiences. According to Pechlaner et al. [45] and Theiner and Steinhäuser [41], this means that tourists evaluate experiences holistically, including the aesthetics of the surrounding environment of accommodations and destinations in general [88]. This aspect is also highlighted by Müller and Scheurer [74], who report that, from the point of view of tourists’ demand, the cost of transport, accommodations, and food can be regarded as the payment made to gain access to specific aesthetic environments that characterise destinations. In addition, research conducted by Pikkemaat et al. [12] concentrated on the way in which visitors following wine routes evaluate their experiences in five different destinations and found that the dimension most valued by tourists is aesthetics.

Pine and Gilmore’s [39] model had previously considered tourists’ total immersion in experiences, opening the way for tourism researchers to explore the older theoretical construct of co-creation in terms of consumers’ physical and psychological involvement in their experiences. Prebensen and Xie consider that psychological co-creation is more important than physical co-creation in enhancing perceived experience value in tourism [89]. As a marketing concept, co-creation consists of ‘creating an experience environment in which consumers can have active dialogues and co-construct personalised

experiences' [90] (p. 8). In tourism, co-creation is specifically about integrating tourists as active partners in designing their experiences together with their hosts, with the ultimate goal of achieving tourists' overall well-being [91]. Co-creation can thus involve tourists' participation in the design, production, and consumption of experiences [58]. This approach can also be defined as tourism product development in collaboration with users [92]. Therefore, co-creation in tourism is about being open to new ideas, experiences, and concepts proposed by clients, but this strategy can only be effective if providers are open to innovative ideas, changes, adaptations, and viewpoints [92].

Another construct mentioned by Pine and Gilmore [39] is transformative tourism experiences, which is based on previous studies of transformative learning theory. Kirilova [93] suggests that transformative tourism experiences must be personally meaningful and conducive to self-actualisation. The cited author reports that these experiences involve a process of meaning making triggered by the experiences and continue after tourists return to their home environment, bringing new meaning to their lives [93]. Various authors have observed that peak tourism experiences elicit strong emotions, increase self-awareness, and lead to existential transformations by causing visitors to question personal values and re-evaluate their existential priorities [94]. In addition, Kirillova et al. [94] affirm that "transformative experiences are those especially extraordinary events that not only trigger highly emotional responses but also lead to self-exploration, serve as a vehicle for profound intra-personal changes, and are conducive to optimal human functioning" (p. 498). According to the cited authors, peak, extraordinary, and transcendent experiences can potentially lead to transformative experiences, which are triggered by introspection, unity with nature, unity with others, self-development, aesthetic experiences, or spontaneity and novelty [94].

Given the above findings, the present model was based on a management perspective because the ultimate goal is to 'stage' tourism experiences according to various authors [12,39,44,63,66,78,80]. Zatori, Smith, and Puczko [95] report that, through higher-quality interactions, interactive experience environments and customisable services, service providers can create favourable external environments in which deeper, more memorable experiences can occur. Müller and Scheurer [74] developed a model of how to stage tourism experiences in a given environment, which assumes that, although experiences cannot be 'produced,' their occurrence can be triggered and influenced by planned events. This model focuses on how visitors' experiences are triggered by environmental stimuli in a given context and can be positive or negative [74]. The way different people perceive particular events or situations is strongly influenced by determining factors inherent to each person and their personal involvement in experiences [95]. Thus, different people perceive the same situation in totally different ways, and the resulting experiences are equally diverse.

The totality of environmental stimuli in specific contexts generates specific emotional impacts, which Müller and Scheurer [74] designate as atmosphere. The cited authors also suggest that these stimuli can be shaped or influenced by staging, that is, through the planning and developing given offers. This principle is also promoted in Pine and Gilmore [39] and Schmitt's [75] work. However, certain environmental stimuli cannot be manipulated, such as climate or atmospheric conditions [74]. More specifically, Müller and Scheurer [74] state that staging involves seven different strategies that can be used to stage offers of particular tourism products. The theme is the guiding strategy, which is a decisive factor in ensuring products' consistency and which makes making the products appealing to different market segments. These themes must be authentic and rooted in destinations' culture, history, legends, or myths. In tourism destinations, managers should be able to identify a large number of relevant topics that can later be ordered hierarchically and interconnected with a core theme. The remaining staging elements are developed to fit that theme. Using thematisation in product or service development to provide memorable experiences is also advocated by several authors [33,39,43,75]. The second strategy is staging, namely, planning and coordination, whose main function is to harmonise the other elements. The first step is analysing the target market segments to understand their expectations, behaviours, and needs. The remaining staging elements require strategic and operational planning. This strategy also provides an excellent platform on which to coordinate the

different actors involved in order to optimise the staging of experiences. Haahti and Komppula [34] also argue that the entire process of developing tourism products should start with an analysis of the target tourists' needs and characteristics and that the entire process of service development must be based on the findings.

Attractions and activities constitute the third strategy, which serves as the triggering element. Based on various attractions and activities, events can be created that facilitate experiences that should be appropriate in terms of the theme and visitors' expectations and needs and be supported by the remaining staging elements. This strategy appears to be closely related to the four dimensions of experiences discussed earlier from Pine and Gilmore's [39] perspective and complemented with other authors' views on the scope of tourism experiences. The fourth strategy is scenery or the aesthetic dimension of tourism destinations, which is greatly influenced by the stimuli generated by the natural environment, such as the landscape, atmospheric conditions, and light. However, architecture, lighting, interventions in the landscape, and urban built environments can also contribute to improving or destroying tourism scenarios. Visitor management is a fifth strategy that consists of an adequate regulation of tourist flows mainly by providing information and signs. These flows can also be driven through created elements, for example, the placement of access doors, resting places, or viewpoints, which must be compatible with visitors' well-being. In tourism research, this aspect of product development is often discussed in the context of carrying capacity, and its significant impact on tourism destinations' competitiveness [96–98] needs to be highlighted. However, according to Müller and Scheurer [74], visitor management should also be considered a fundamental element in the development of tourism experiences. Visitors' well-being or support strategy is considered by Müller and Scheurer [74] to be the sixth strategy in this context because experiences are more likely to receive positive evaluations if customers feel good. Basic physiological and safety needs must always be ensured in tourism settings. Managing tourists' well-being involves planning bathrooms' locations, providing places for visitors to purchase food and drinks, and the necessary tranquility to take pictures. In all situations, this strategy is closely linked to the management of visitor flows. Visitors are the last strategy as they provide the component of evaluation and tourists determine whether the events provided are great or memorable experiences. Visitors have needs that change from segment to segment and different expectations induced by the selected theme that must be matched or exceeded through activities and attractions, scenery, flow management, and well-being. Managers also need to bear in mind that visitors sometimes integrate their own attractions and activities and even have the ability to influence event performance, as mentioned previously in relation to certain types of experiences. Müller and Scheurer [74] suggest that the order in which these strategies are implemented should not be regarded as rigid, especially since this last element can initiate the entire staging process.

### 3.3. Process of Developing Innovative Tourism Products

Before conducting an analysis of how the process of innovative tourism product development can be managed and staged so as to encourage the creation of memorable and transformative experiences, Johnson et al.'s [31] work deserves further discussion. According to the cited authors, the development process's design is substantially different depending on the type of innovation. That is, incremental innovations require less attention and allocation of resources in the development and launch phases and less attention in the planning and analysis phase. In contrast, radical innovations need intensive investment during development, and the planning phase is extremely important, requiring an in-depth study of the resources essential to their development.

As mentioned previously, one of the present research's objectives was to propose a model of new tourism product development, which can also be used to reassess existing tourism products and, at a more fundamental level, to *reevaluate* the design of processes through which these products are made available to customers. In the first case, innovation takes place in products and, in the second case, innovation involves processes. Both cases may require introducing innovation at the organisational

structure level as this is where new tourism products are developed. Innovation can also occur in the channels used for disseminating or introducing new tourism products to the market.

The present literature review covered the literature on the development of both tangible and intangible products and, more specifically, the staging of tourism products in order to induce memorable experiences. Based on the discussed results, the proposed model of new tourism product development has the following configuration (see Figure 2).

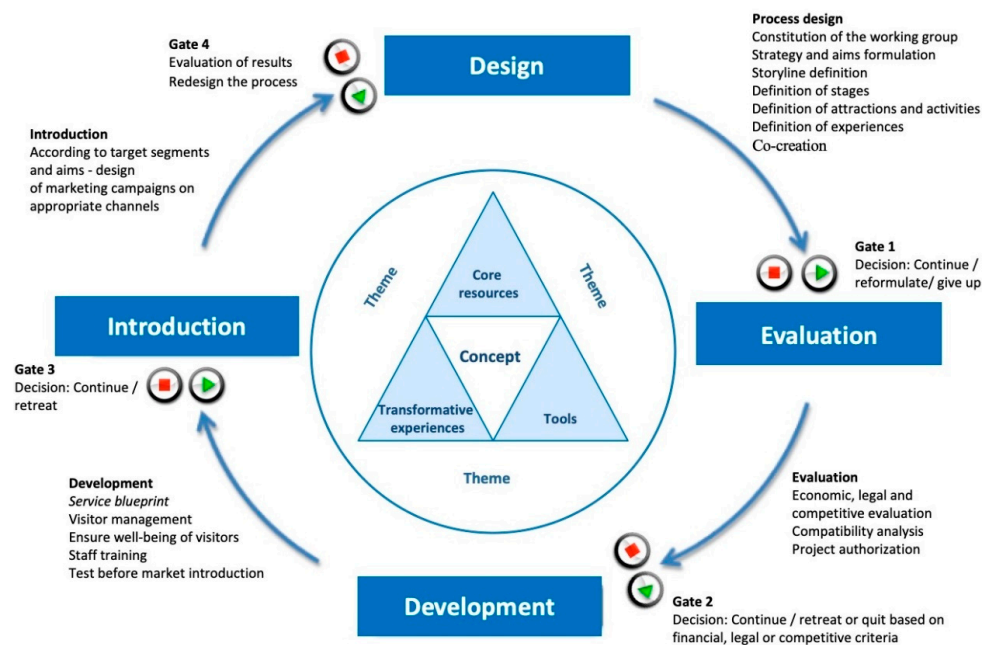


Figure 2. Model of new tourism product development.

### 3.4. Results

The model's centre consists of the concept of service, which must always keep in mind that the goal is to provide the necessary framework based on staging that provides the ideal conditions for memorable and transformative tourism experiences. According to Goldstein et al. [99], how service is conceptualised plays a central role in the process of developing new services. This concept not only defines the form or 'how' and the content or 'what' of service design, but also ensures the necessary integration between form and content and mediates as needed between companies' strategic intentions and customers' needs. Goldstein et al. [99] assert that one of the reasons for services' failure is the mismatch between what organisations intend to provide (i.e., strategic intention) and what customers need and expect (i.e., customer needs). This gap can be the result of inappropriate marketing or development processes that have not taken into account clients' needs. Edvardsson [100] offers a similar perspective, highlighting the concept of service's importance in terms of establishing the link between primary and secondary customer needs and the central and support services offered. Based on Edvardsson [100], Goldstein et al. [99] and Johnson et al.'s [31] research, the present study defined the concept of service as the integration of customers' needs with destinations' resources. These are both tangible resources such as built heritage, museums, monuments, beaches, mountains, and intangible resources such as image, identity, lifestyle, atmosphere, narrative, creativity, equipment, and other resources necessary for services or particular themes' development. Once the concept of service incorporates clients' needs, the destination resources available, and the selected theme, the development process can be designed. In this first phase (i.e., the design phase), the working group and objectives to be achieved must be defined, and the storyline must be developed so that this narrative can be used to guide all stakeholders and ensure that they develop the remaining service components within the spirit of that narrative.

### 3.5. Design Phase Process

Some authors [13,101] highlight the importance of involving different stakeholders in all phases of new product development. However, this perspective is not commonly found in the literature on new product or service creation or in models that have served as a reference point for innovative tourism product development (e.g., Scheuing and Johnson's [26] model). The question of involving different stakeholders or defining project teams to develop new products is not explicitly addressed. However, Müller and Scheurer [74] suggest that, in the first phase of staging tourism experiences, a working group that can coordinate the entire development process should be formed. In addition, the cited authors assert that the project team needs to involve all stakeholders who can contribute to the process. If a single organisation is able to carry out the product's full development process, the identification of relevant departments and employees is easier. When several organisations are needed to develop the tourism product, establishing the working group is much more complex, potentially involving public and private sector organisations. In all cases, the process leadership should be clearly defined, and external experts need to be recruited who can contribute specific know-how and coordinate the overall process [74].

Regarding the definition of strategies and objectives, Scheuing and Johnson [26] observe that these two steps are decisive because they drive and direct the entire service innovation process and infuse this with the required effectiveness and efficiency. The other topics listed under the design phase of the tourism product development process were proposed for the present study, including the definition of the storyline, scenarios, attractions and activities and dimensions of the experiences to be achieved. These items are not usually present in models of tangible product or service development, because they do not focus on how products or services can generate memorable and transformative experiences for customers. At this point in the process, the level of customer involvement and co-creation should be analysed and addressed.

Various authors such as Trott [15] agree that stage-gate models do not have to be applied to new service development, arguing that their sequential nature is a limitation, as "each stage of the process is needed to be completed before proceeding to the subsequent stage" (p. 535). However, the present study found that applying stage-gate and Agile-stage-gate [18] models' principles can offer added value to tourism product development that depends on several independent entities during the creation process. Formal meetings with all stakeholders involved in the project can be used to analyse the information collected and the measures taken during the previous phase, as well as providing support for decision-making regarding sending the project on to the next stage. Notably, stakeholders may also want to consider retreating to the previous phase for re-evaluation or even abandoning the project. If the decision is made to move on to the next stage, these meetings will also serve to define the tasks each intervener should carry out during the subsequent phase [102]. Thus, the present proposed model includes that the process's design phase needs to end with a formal meeting of stakeholders, in which they deliberate on the process's evolution and the tasks to be accomplished in the next stage, namely, the information to be collected.

### 3.6. Evaluation Phase

This phase is part of most existing models, regardless of whether they focus on the development of tangible products, services, or tourism products [28,31,42,102], but the components integrated in this phase can vary between models. Johnson et al. [31] and Scheuing and Johnson [26] assert that the analysis phase should include business or economic analysis and project authorisation, while Cooper and Kleinschmidt [102] subdivide this phase into a preliminary evaluation and a more detailed assessment. The preliminary evaluation includes a rapid appraisal of the project's technical, financial, legal, and market aspects, and the detailed assessment consists of a definition and justification of the product, as well as a description of the project plan, market research, and competitive, technical, production, and financial analyses.



The final decision to move on to the development phase is based on financial criteria. As Johne and Storey [19] point out, a good idea is not in itself a guarantee that the new service will succeed, so the current proposed model followed Cooper and Kleinschmidt [102], Johnson et al. [31], and Scheuing and Johnson's [26] suggestion that this phase should include an analysis of the project's economic viability. According to Cooper and Kleinschmidt [102], an analysis must also be conducted of the legal constraints that may affect the project's development, in addition to competitive analysis, in order to verify that no similar products exist in the market. The present study's model further adds an analysis of how the new product can be integrated into existing products, given that Tax and Stuart [103] consider understanding new products and services' potential impacts on the existing offers important at this stage. The last topic listed within the proposed model's evaluation phase is the project's authorisation, which can be done in a formal meeting with the characteristics mentioned in the preceding paragraph. In addition, the decision to authorise the project's transition into the development phase must be based on the information collected during this phase on legal and competitive aspects, as well as the assessment of the project's economic viability.

### 3.7. Development Phase

Shostack [104] argues that, although processes can be reduced to steps and stages, these should be understood as interdependent and interactive systems and not as disconnected or isolated parts. The researchers are in agreement that specific techniques can make analyses of the process of new service development more objective and enable more effective and efficient management. According to Shostack [104], one useful approach to visualising service systems is a mapping technique called 'service blueprint,' which is also advocated by other authors [9,15,74,103]. In essence, a service blueprint is a diagram that shows all the elements that constitute the service under study and whose main purpose is to facilitate more objective analyses of the service process. This technique documents all the steps and points of divergence in a specific service, identifying weaknesses and anticipating the occurrence of any problems that may have a negative impact on the way customers will perceive that service [104,105]. The results can provide important insights into how best to manage tourist or visitor flows and ensure their comfort and well-being. Shostack [104] notes that service blueprints must not be generic but rather quite specific, as a separate blueprint needs to be prepared for each service. In addition, Laws [105] states that the service should be mapped based on clients' explicit actions that allow them to receive the service and that the blueprint needs to include the moments of contact between people and internal procedures for providing the service.

Services in general and tourism in particular are characterised by an inseparability of consumption and production, clients and/or tourists' close involvement throughout service processes, and the issue of spatiality. Therefore, the necessary elements for staging experiences must also be present at this stage (i.e., clearly defined scenarios, attractions, and activities and dimensions of experience). According to Müller and Scheurer [74], these aspects need to be dealt with both strategically and operationally. The relevant strategies should be implemented in the process's design phase, and the development phase should focus on the operational side of the process. At a more advanced stage of the development phase, training needs to be offered to employees in direct contact with clients [21,26,28,31,103], that is, service providers who interact with customers in the co-production of experiences. Direct experience with the tourism sector also suggests that employees involved in selling these products should also receive special training after the prelaunch test and before the new products are introduced to the market. Destination management organisations and tour operators customarily invite key personnel to visit the destination and experience new products directly, especially people who are linked to outgoing travel agencies, so that they can become more at ease with selling these services. Tour operator representatives begin their training at the destination by watching and participating in all products sold to customers (e.g., excursions or theme park tickets) in order to be able to explain to clients the types of experiences that the products can provide.

The development phase ends with a prelaunch test [21,26,28,31,103]. However, this test is not always conducted, but, according to Tax and Stuart [103], it may be performed in different configurations, such as surveys or experimental offers in selected branches.

### 3.8. Market Introduction

Before moving on to the launch phase, the proposed model requires another formal meeting with all relevant participants. Based on analyses of the information collected during the development phase, in particular the service blueprint and the prelaunch test of the service—if this has been run—the decision is made to move forward or go back to the previous stage to reassess possible weaknesses [102].

The last phase consists of the market launch. Depending on the target tourist segments, the project team selects the most appropriate distribution channels [33,43]. Despite the decisive importance that this phase has in new products' or services' success or failure, the planning, execution, and launch of marketing campaigns fell outside the scope of the present study, so they were not subjected to further analysis. After the launch, the working group needs to meet again to re-evaluate the entire process. Following Johnson et al.'s [31] lead, the proposed model emphasises the circular nature of the process (see Figure 2 above), as a main objective of the current study was to demonstrate the dynamic nature of new tourism product development and the constant need to re-evaluate these products. Contrary to Johnson et al. [31], however, the arrow linking the launch and design phases cannot be represented as dashed as this would indicate only a possibility of redesigning the process. The entire process of developing new products is based on destinations' resources and customers' needs, which are both constantly changing, so an accurate model of innovative tourism product development must include continuous re-adaptations of these services.

## 4. Conclusions

This article sought to offer a comprehensive explanation of the different components that need to be integrated in an accurate model of new tourism product development. This study differs from other studies on the development of new tourism products by proposing a circular and not a linear model and by offering an innovative approach built around the design, evaluation, development, and introduction of innovative tourism products in a way that the new tourism product can be continuously re-evaluated, improved, or discontinued. Furthermore, the process is based on the core resources of the destination.

The starting point is the concept of service, that is, the type of products that should be developed or re-evaluated, in order to identify the resources required to create the new services, which must correspond as much as possible to destinations' core resources. Concurrently, project managers have to define the needs of customers for whom the products are intended.

The development process must ensure that the new services do not present shortcomings, although considering only the products' quality is not a guarantee that they will provide memorable experiences, because customers in many situations will take for granted that the service quality will be flawless. Thus, the working group should deliberately proceed with designing scenarios and ensuring indispensable conditions for visitors' well-being to ensure that new products exceed customers' expectations and foster unique, memorable, or transformative experiences. Contrary to what has been repeatedly stated elsewhere, experiences cannot be created as these occur within each individual and they are influenced by multiple factors related to personalities, previous experiences or expectations.

After the resources on which products are based are determined and customers' needs are identified, the design of the process of new tourism product development begins, respecting the information gathered in each phase and always taking into account that the process is nonlinear. Sometimes, the project team must return to previous stages to conduct reformulations that more fully respect the assumptions made in order to validate the project's continuation. The process does not end with the new or re-engineered products' introduction into the market because, after every launch, an evaluation must be carried out and, based on the results, the development process then restarts.

This model fills a gap in the existing literature, providing destination management companies and private businesses with a comprehensive conceptual framework for innovative tourism product development, which is urgently needed to ensure interfirm and destination competitiveness.

This study's main limitation is that the proposed model of innovative tourism product development has not yet been tested empirically. This will be a challenge for future research.

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