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Customer Co-Creation on Revisiting Intentions: A Focus on the Tourism Sector

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Abstract: The offer of a wide range of services has given consumers several options to meet their needs. Therefore, in coherence with the competition between companies, they need to adopt processes and measures that they can perceive as consumers' needs to offer a service that is adequate for their requirements. This study aims to understand the impact of co-creation on services and what factors impact the intention to revisit tourism services, specifically hotel stays. In this sense, the search seeks to understand the influence of co-creation on the variables under study and, in turn, which variables impact the intention to revisit a tourist service. To this end, a quantitative investigation was conducted through an online questionnaire survey to 314 respondents, in August 2020, that stayed at hotels in Portugal. The study demonstrates the importance of co-creation as a mediator of factors such as customer experience and the company's orientation towards the customer and, in turn, building a long-term relationship with the customer (loyalty). However, there is no evidence to support the relationship between co-creation and revisit intention as this last one is influenced only by allegiance. This investigation contributes to the theme of co-creation and revisiting in the tourism sector of mainland Portugal and the islands, which is a recent topic analyzed in the literature, and significantly contributes to the application of business goals.

Keywords: co-creation; tourism services; customer participation; service experiences; perception of value; return visit intention

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1. Introduction

The diversity of products and services available to consumers poses some challenges when choosing. There are situations where satisfaction falls short of expectations [1]. The increasing intensity and competitiveness that affect the service sector represent a challenge for companies to orient themselves toward the customer and deliver a quality service of superior value [2].

Companies are adopting the co-creation process with customers to adequately meet customer needs and achieve high satisfaction levels through unforgettable experiences. This is the case in the tourism sector, where customer interaction is highly needed to provide a distinct and valuable experience. A superior value proposition is a source of competitive advantage, customer satisfaction, loyalty, and positive influence on recommendations and intention to revisit [3–6].

Value creation can arise through co-creation. In the tourism sector, the application of this concept, through interaction between the provider and the customer, can trigger

unique or personalized experiences, leading to higher satisfaction levels. Service providers aim to achieve this as one of their main objectives as reputation and profitability are directly linked [7]. When there is a co-creation process with the customer, it is expected to meet their needs and provide memorable experiences, leading to positive recommendations and an increased intention to revisit. However, in the tourism sector, it has been challenging to understand the motivations of consumers that lead to revisits. In this sense, this study seeks to understand how customer co-creation in the tourism sector influences the intention to revisit.

The service economy has been experiencing overwhelming competitive growth, and the pursuit of delivering superior value has become essential for companies [8]. Therefore, the success of companies relies on perceiving consumer needs and generating and promoting customer satisfaction and loyalty [9,10]. This assertion assumes even greater relevance in the studied sector because the tourism sector is characterized by high competitiveness and the need for greater involvement between the company and the customer. This customer orientation in tourism services arises mainly from the difficulty of achieving customer satisfaction; thus, companies are seeking new forms of long-term relationships [11].

Customer orientation plays a crucial role in the high competitiveness of the economy and the hotel sector. The goal is to maintain a long-term relationship with the customer, known as customer loyalty. To generate revenue and profits, one of the managers' most important tasks is ensuring and maintaining customer loyalty [12].

Value creation and its perception can also arise through interaction between the company and the customer through a co-creation process, where, for example, the customer can design and adapt a service to their needs, creating high levels of satisfaction. Several studies have demonstrated that perceived value is a precursor to customer satisfaction [13]. Thus, the perception of value resulting in satisfaction creates a greater propensity for repeat service consumption.

The hotel sector is one of the services that requires greater involvement, with the consumer experience being one of its strongest pillars. Therefore, companies must take measures to allow customers to have positive experiences. In this regard, co-creation will positively impact customers as allowing them to share their needs will be crucial for providing a service tailored to their requirements [14,15]. Like all the concepts mentioned earlier, this concept does not proceed differently and will impact the intention to revisit, even if it may be indirect.

The intention to revisit is one of the most essential concepts for service managers. With the availability of various service offerings, it sometimes becomes challenging to maintain a long-term relationship with the customer. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the strategic attitudes that should be adopted to encourage customers to reuse a service. Several authors relate the concepts to the intention to revisit, but there needs to be a perception of what leads to this behavior on the part of consumers. In other words, these concepts may only interfere as a moderating effect rather than a direct one as in the hotel service, the customer seeks a new experience and something of added value; if there is no novelty in the service, their intention to revisit is likely to be lower [16].

Initially, it can be concluded that all the concepts mentioned earlier have an impact on the intention to revisit, as well as co-creation being the focal point for the entire process of customer orientation, which, in turn, generates loyalty and has a positive role in experiences, satisfaction, and perceived value. However, it is impossible to conclude whether there is a direct relationship with the intention to repurchase the service [13]. Measuring the most impactful underlying variables is imperative for the intention to revisit. Co-creation processes observed in the tourism sector, due to their multicultural dimension, have specific characteristics. Therefore, it is also necessary to understand what is valued according to individual needs in order to meet them [17]. In conclusion, the aim is to investigate the influence of co-creation with customers in services, particularly in the tourism sector, to understand what leads consumers to revisit a tourism service.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Co-Creation, Experience, and Satisfaction in Tourism Services Sector

Services are known for their specific characteristics, which differ from products, making them unique. They are intangible, heterogeneous, perishable, and ultimately inseparable from production/consumption [18,19]. This implies that strategies for their delivery are more complex compared to products. The provision and consumption of a service depend on various dimensions, with the service provider and the consumer being the most impactful actors. The inability to deliver the same service consistently is related to customer needs and interaction during service consumption. Given this difficulty, service providers need a strategy oriented towards delivering a quality service as it can be a success factor [18–20]. To deliver a quality service, service providers need to understand the expectations and needs of consumers to offer a superior value service [20]. Customer expectations are essential for understanding their needs. They are dynamic based on factors such as the service provider's image, marketing processes, ideologies, and word-of-mouth [21].

Regarding another concept associated with services, satisfaction, authors Homburg, Wieseke, and Hoyer [22] refer to satisfaction as an outcome that confirms the consumer's expectations in a pre-consumption phase, where expectations are confirmed after service consumption. If the consumer is satisfied with the service performance, there is a greater probability of becoming a loyal customer, increasing the likelihood of a long-term relationship. A quality service generates a satisfaction effect on the consumer, and their intention to purchase is greater [23]. The higher the levels of quality and the customer's perception of superior value, the more significant the impact on customer satisfaction [24]. The probability of a customer intending to revisit a service is higher when their satisfaction is greater [25]. One way for customers to perceive the value of the service is by participating in its creation, that is, by engaging in a co-creation process with the service provider. For example, hotel chains are adopting co-creation processes in their services, allowing customers to tailor the service to their needs, resulting in high levels of customer satisfaction [13].

Co-creation is defined by the customer's participation in creating products/services. Through this participation, organizations gain knowledge and insights about customers, which can then be used to deliver personalized services with superior value [26–28]. Companies need a customer-oriented approach as all company behaviors should be aligned with customer needs to satisfy them [29]. Companies with this orientation "*prioritize customer needs and organize their activities to meet expressed and latent customer needs*" [30]. A customer-oriented approach often involves personalizing interactions and offerings based on individual customer preferences. Personalized experiences create a stronger emotional connection with customers, making them more likely to remain loyal [31]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Customer orientation positively affects loyalty.*

Co-creation is primarily an organizational process that involves the participation of managers, employees, and customers, but the customer always plays the final and essential role. Managers are responsible for designing processes that allow customers to take an active role, enabling organizations to make necessary adjustments to meet customer needs. Prahalad and Ramaswamy [32] proposed a model (DART) that can be considered the pillar of co-creation, consisting of dialogue, access, risk, and transparency. All interaction channels between customers and the company are essential for value creation as each touchpoint can be an opportunity to understand what can be "produced". Subsequently, managers have a decisive role in analyzing what has been learned and whether it should advance, leading the company to innovate in the service.

For a viable co-creation process to occur, the objectives of both parties must be aligned as this is the only way to create value for both the company and the customers. If this alignment is observed, the value creation process becomes futile, making it easier to reap the benefits of cooperation, which will ultimately result in wasted resources [33].

Co-creation is a process that many companies from various sectors have already adopted. However, there are services in which the level of co-creation is lower due to the characteristics of the specific area of operation [34]. However, in the tourism sector, the level of co-creation is higher due to the need for involvement [35]. The impact of co-creation on value perception can vary depending on whether the participants are residents or tourists. This implies that the influence of co-creation activities is context specific [36].

In tourism, the co-creation process begins with customers and the elements of the service they will enjoy, which can be in an online environment (such as during the booking process) and physical elements such as layout, equipment, and culture, among others. Additionally, interpersonal dimensions play a fundamental role in co-creation [37]. During and after the service consumption, the customer becomes a co-creator and the perceived value of the service increases, contributing to customer retention and increasing the likelihood of revisiting [38].

Mustak, Jaakkola, and Halinen [39] stated that customer participation leads to the conception of offerings more aligned with customer expectations and needs, resulting in superior value creation. In other words, customer participation is expected to positively influence the perceived value and experience obtained from a particular service [40]. From the customer's perspective, when co-creation is present, customers have a more excellent perception of the attributes of the products and services being created and, subsequently, offered. This increases the relationship and interaction with the organization and the likelihood of consumption as customers have certainty about the value of the product/service [41]. This is because customers' perception of the underlying value is higher when they participate in the service creation process. As a result, the experience is higher, customer satisfaction increases, and the likelihood of wanting to repeat the service is also higher. Therefore, some companies enable customers to co-create, for example, by allowing them to develop their own experience by choosing the destination, vacation days, and activities, among others. This is expected to result in a higher level of co-creation between the customer and the company and higher levels of satisfaction.

Tourism experiences typically occur in distinct stages, including pre-trip planning, service experimentation, and post-service evaluation upon return [42]. Consumers go through different experiences in these stages, forming diverse evaluations of the experience influenced by their daily lives and the complexity of tourism services [42,43]. Hence, customer participation can have an impact on the customer orientation of service providers. When customers actively engage in providing feedback, sharing preferences, and collaborating in the service design process, it enhances the service provider's understanding of their customers' needs and expectations [44]. The following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 2 (H2). *Customer participation has a positive impact on the customer orientation of the service provider.*

Intention to revisit is the customer's willingness to repeat a previously consumed service [45]. Creating a co-creation experience to meet the increasing demand for customer experiences and increase their intention to revisit is a highly competitive and effective strategy that managers should consider, especially in tourism where co-creation processes are more prevalent [46,47]. However, it is essential to understand the customer's experience in tourism. Thus, the concept is the subjective personal reactions and feelings associated with tourism activities [48]. The experiences of co-creation and their key components (the experience provided by the service, interaction, perceived value, and memorability) are critical factors influencing customers' intention to revisit the service [49]. Therefore, when perceived value is higher and the experience becomes more memorable, a more favorable attitude is created towards the intention to revisit the service. However, repeating a tourism service requires some novelty or the perception of superior value; otherwise, the intention to revisit tends to be lower [50–52]. Tourism managers must adapt their services

to provide customers with new experiences and, more importantly, understand their needs. Customers are increasingly seeking new add-ons to enhance their service experiences.

Tourism services are characterized by their complexity, distinguishing them from general consumption experiences. In tourism, the service provided and hospitality have a strong influence. It is essential to understand that tourism services are highly experiential and expressing their utility takes work [53]. There is a problem associated with tourism companies as they often believe they have a better understanding of the field than their customers, and thus, customer evaluations and revisiting decisions are rarely considered. Tourists are seldom invited to co-create a tourism experience [54]. A customer-oriented approach is crucial to identify customer needs and cultivate long-term relationships accurately. In tourism, customer satisfaction can positively influence customer relationships, loyalty, and willingness to repurchase services [55]. In fact, loyalty can play a role in influencing tourists' revisiting intentions in the tourism and hospitality industry. Hence, the following hypotheses is advanced:

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Loyalty influences revisiting intentions.*

2.2. Memorable Experiences

Reinforcing the previous ideas and in the same line of thought, Coudounaris, Sthapit [56], and Marschall [57] suggest that the intention to revisit a service is directly linked to the service experience. In other words, a memorable experience will influence the intention to revisit.

Memorable experiences can strengthen relationships by creating shared memories, fostering emotional connections, and deepening the bonds between individuals. These experiences often become the stories people share and reminisce about, reinforcing their social ties [58]. Memorable experiences can be influenced by a variety of factors, and they often play a significant role in shaping lives and relationships. Some of these factors are related to emotional intensity, as memorable experiences often involve strong emotions [59]; to novelty, as novel experiences are more likely to be memorable [60]; and to social interaction, as studies show that shared experiences with others, such as traveling with friends or family, can enhance the memorability of an event [58].

When customers perceive a memorable experience in tourism, they recall experiential feelings such as excitement, pleasure, and fun, among others [61]. In the study by Hirschman and Holbrook [62], these feelings were significant in consumers' service evaluation. Thus, when there is a favorable evaluation of the experience considering these feelings, the intention to revisit significantly increases. The experience in service consumption, perceived value, and the degree of co-creation influence the customer's intention to revisit. If the perceived value is higher, the memorability of the experience by customers is also proportionally higher. The experience can directly influence memorability. A differentiated experience that is noticeable, involving interaction with employees and the company's culture, contributes to memorable experiences [63]. With those above, it is perceived that memorable experiences influence the intention to revisit. However, more than this may be needed; therefore, it is necessary to understand how co-creation in a particular sector can develop customer interaction to encourage repeat services. The process that generates a co-creation experience involves the following stages: (1) consumption experience, (2) perceived value, (3) experience memorization, and (4) co-creation behavior. In other words, the experience influences the satisfaction and memorization of the experience [64–66]. So, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Customer experience positively affects memorable experiences.*

2.3. The Application of Co-Creation and Intention to Revisit in the Tourism Sector

A service's co-creation with customers has emerged as a highly relevant concept in the academic world, particularly in tourism and hospitality businesses. The hotel sector is characterized by its competitive environment, making it mandatory to create the highest possible value that differentiates customers. For example, hotels need to evolve from mere accommodations to providers of lodging services [13]. Before delving further into the research on co-creation in tourism, it is crucial to understand why this concept has been gaining increasing relevance in the tourism industry. Firstly, technological advancements have allowed customer participation in specific processes, altering the distribution of tourism. In the case of travel agencies, they have to face a process of re-intermediation, mainly due to mechanisms such as online bookings. Secondly, customers desire to take ownership and regularly control what they consume. In addition to increased customer power through online reservations, social media allows customers to share experiences and opinions about services easily. Finally, companies have realized that customers can be relevant and valuable co-producers in creating, communicating, and delivering products or services [67,68].

Customer experiences lie at the core of the tourism and hospitality industries. For example, allowing customers to co-create a trip can help companies provide ideal services tailored to customers' specific needs. This personalized service enables the generation of a unique experience [69,70]. It is essential to understand how the experience unfolds in tourism, namely the different stages that constitute the experience in this sector. Firstly, there is the event planning stage (with families and friends), followed by service consumption and experimentation, and finally, the perception of service satisfaction after consumption. Tourism companies play a different role in each stage [71–73]. Therefore, customer participation refers to the extent to which tourists actively engage in or contribute to various aspects of their travel experience. When tourists actively participate in planning their trips, making choices about activities, and customizing their itineraries, they feel a sense of ownership over their experiences. This co-creation of experiences can enhance overall satisfaction and make the trip more meaningful. For instance, tourists who plan their own adventures or select specific attractions are likely to have a more enjoyable time. Overall, customer participation can significantly impact the consumer's experience in tourism services by allowing for personalization, empowerment, and co-creation of memorable experiences. Service providers in the tourism industry often recognize the importance of involving customers in various aspects of their journey to create more satisfying and fulfilling travel experiences. So, the following hypothesis is postulated:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *The level of customer participation has an impact on the consumer's experience in tourism services.*

Several studies have concluded a significant relationship between satisfaction, loyalty, positive word-of-mouth (WOM), and higher intentions to revisit [74–76]. According to Rajaratnam, Nair, Pahlevan Sharif, and Munikrishnan [77], the perceived quality of the destination significantly influences consumer satisfaction in the tourism sector. Consumers' emotional experiences while consuming the service impact their satisfaction and, in turn, their intention to recommend the service to other consumers [78]. On the other hand, some authors have found that the relationship between destination satisfaction and loyalty does not necessarily imply an intention to revisit the destination but rather an extension of satisfaction [79–81]. Some authors have analyzed variables that impact the intention to revisit and positive WOM in the tourism sector. For example, Reitsamer and Brunner-Sperdin [82] found that tourists' well-being influenced their intention to revisit. At the same time, Lin [83] concluded that a gastronomic experience impacted tourists' willingness to revisit the service.

Regarding specific studies that approach co-creation and the intention of revisiting a tourism service, such as those by Cheng and Lu [84], Buonincontri et al. [85], González-

Mansilla et al. [13] and Sugathan et al. [86], the analyzed variables sought to understand the customer experience and the variables that influence it, as well as to determine what influences the customer's intention to revisit. In other words, how co-creation, perceived value, and satisfaction, among others, can positively or negatively influence the customer's experience with a tourism service and subsequently affect/influence their intention to revisit. The main conclusion to be drawn from both studies is that co-creation positively enhances the perceived value of an experience; when an experience is positive, satisfaction levels generally exceed expectations, and as a result, the intention to revisit is higher. Due to the complex context of the tourism sector, co-creation is an essential process to improve the customer experience and gain a better understanding of consumer behavior. As a limitation, the studies have data collection carried out in specific locations and sectors, such as Asian islands, which affects the generalizability of the studies to other contexts. In conclusion, both studies confirm the influence of co-creation on various concepts, such as the perceived value of memorable experiences, among others. Regarding the intention to revisit, it is observed that all variables contribute to this effect of a customer having the intention to revisit the service. However, none can affirm whether there is a direct effect with this variable.

Since co-creation is a complex process, it is vital to understand the level of co-creation and its implication on revisiting intentions. The search for novelty is why tourists are interested in revisiting a destination. Even after having a memorable experience, they may intend to return to a different place [87]. Positive experiences have pleasant outcomes, and consumers who have them consider repeating the consumed service in the future [88,89]. Tourism experiences affect consumer satisfaction, spending levels, and happiness [90]. This interaction involves active participation, pleasant memories, and affective reactions [89]. With those mentioned above, it can be understood and concluded that the customer's experience and motivation to return to a tourism service are strongly interconnected.

Tourist motivation refers to the underlying reasons and factors that inspire individuals to travel and engage in tourism activities. Understanding these motivations is crucial for businesses and destinations to cater to tourists' desires and create appealing travel experiences [91]. Also, the demotivation of tourists, which refers to factors or barriers that discourage or hinder individuals from traveling or participating in tourism activities such as economic constraints, safety concerns, environmental issues, health issues or language barriers [92], can influence the co-creation environment and the revisit intention. In summary, the quality of experiences in tourism services has a direct and lasting impact on tourists' intentions to revisit a destination. Positive experiences tend to enhance revisiting intentions, while negative experiences can deter tourists and harm the destination's reputation. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 6 (H6). *Experiences in tourism services have an impact on revisiting intentions.*

In an environment where the level of co-creation is low, the perceived value of revisiting intentions will be lower because the consumer already has an acquired experience of that service [93]. As mentioned before, novelty attracts tourists to repeat a service but if there has been previous contact, repeating experiences in the same place will reduce customer satisfaction. However, it is essential to highlight that the customer's expectations will be higher in a future visit due to the previous contract. Consequently, the effect of the experience will result in a reduced revisiting intention [93]. This highlights the fundamental importance of co-creation because service providers need to seek to understand customer satisfaction with the service enjoyed to be able to meet their needs correctly. Most of the time, in the case of revisiting, the exact services will be offered, resulting in a very high percentage of customers having the same experiences and satisfaction levels decreasing towards the destination.

When the co-creation environment is higher, expectations are assumed to be even higher because co-creation has already occurred. Customers have used their knowledge and

efforts to improve the service, leading to a memorable experience [94–96]. When customers utilize resources to co-create, they are expected to have a better perception of the value of the experience and, consequently, a reinforcement effect on their revisiting intentions. Therefore, Sugathan and Ranjan [86] conclude that revisiting intentions are higher in high co-creation environments. In conclusion, the level of co-creation will impact revisiting intentions. However, if there is no co-creation, novelty and memorable experiences may not be sufficient for the customer to intend to use the same service again. With this in mind, the following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 7 (H7). *The level of co-creation that a customer has in the service positively influences revisiting intentions.*

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Proposed Model

After the development of the first part of this research in which, through the literature review, it was possible to analyze relevant investigations for the topic at hand, it led to the following theoretical model, composed of seven hypotheses, for testing (Figure 1).

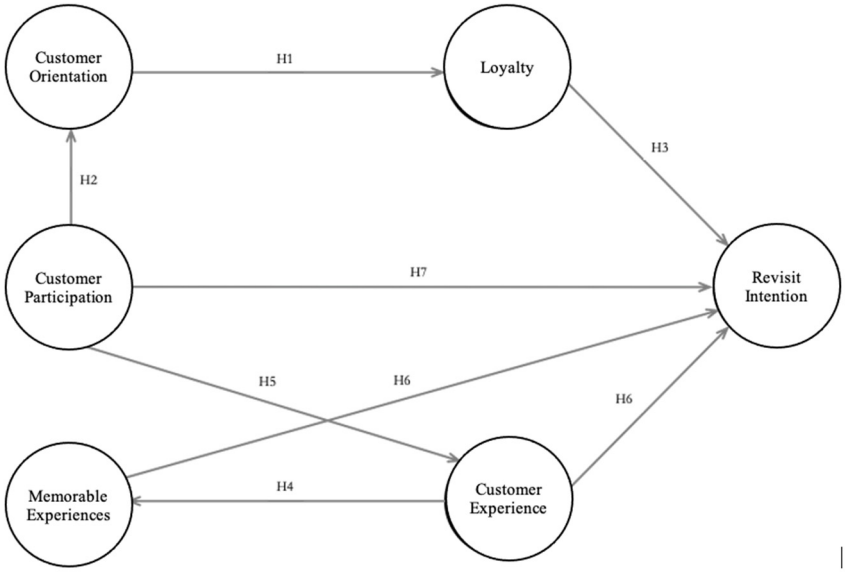


Figure 1. Proposed theoretical framework.

3.2. Data Collection

This research aims to analyze customer co-creation in services and its impact on the intention to revisit. Through the analysis, the objective is to determine whether variables such as customer participation, customer orientation, and customer satisfaction, among others, positively impact the intention to revisit the tourism destination. The research has the particularity of studying the tourism destination of Portugal, although most of the findings may apply to other destinations with similar characteristics.

Contextually, the main objective of this study is that it is essential to have efficient data collection to construct a solid database. Therefore, the most suitable methodological approach for this study is a quantitative methodology. A questionnaire survey was constructed, shared, and disseminated online and distributed in person, using databases, to guests who stayed in hotels in mainland Portugal and the islands.

The questionnaire was constructed and divided into three main sections—the first section aimed to gather all sociodemographic data, such as gender and age range. The second part aimed to collect data related to the travel profile, including questions about the type of reservation and travel companions. Finally, we there were questions related to the concepts under analysis, in which the developed hypotheses were validated. To

measure the degree of agreement/disagreement of the respondents regarding the questions (items), a 7-point Likert scale was used, where 1 corresponded to "Strongly Disagree" and 7 corresponded to "Strongly Agree", thus allowing for a higher level of assertiveness and ensuring greater response ease [97].

The questionnaire was made available online and offline. Through the Google Forms platform, the questionnaire was shared on social media, particularly in groups representing a potential profile for the sample of the subject matter. It was also emailed to customers who have stayed in hotels in Portuguese territory. So, to obtain richer data, the questionnaire was made available in the languages of the primary source markets for Portugal (German, Spanish, English, and Portuguese). It was available online for data collection from 12 August to 6 September 2020.

After analyzing the main measurement scales used in the literature review to measure the variables present in the study, a selection and respective translation were made for the various languages in which the questionnaire was made available. Some items were adapted to the hotel stay's services to improve respondents' understanding (Table 1). Due to the current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, two self-developed questions were included in the questionnaire to assess the extent to which the pandemic affected the connection with the tourism destination under analysis.

Table 1. Questionnaire structure.

Dimension	Authors
Variables in the Model	
Customer Experience/Customer Satisfaction	Ahn, Lee, Back, and Schmitt [33]; Buonincontri, Morvillo, Okumus, and van Niekerk [85]; Zatori, Smith, and Puczko [52]; Yang, Chen, and Huang [11]; Campos, Mendes, Valle, and Scott [51].
Customer Orientation	Yang, Chen, and Huang [11]; Meng and Choi [47].
Customer Participation/Co-creation	Ahn, Lee, Back, and Schmitt [33]; Hsiao, Lee, and Chen (2015) [15]; Yang, Chen, and Huang [11] are just a few examples.
Revisit Intention	Meng and Choi [47].
Memorable Experiences	Meng and Choi [47]; Zatori, Smith, and Puczko [52].
Loyalty	Yang, Chen and Huang [11].
Control Variables	
Perceived Value	Ahn, Lee, Back, and Schmitt [33]; Meng and Choi [47].
COVID-19	Own elaboration.

4. Results

4.1. Sociodemographic Profile

Through the characterization of the sample, it is possible to describe the profile of the respondents. In the first instance, it is worth noting that a total of 314 responses were obtained, of which 304 responses belong to residents in Portugal, 4 in France, and 5 from other European countries. The acquisition of these results is related to what has already been mentioned in this research where the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the investigation. Therefore, the sample's representativeness focuses more on respondents residing in Portugal. According to Table 2, about 73% of respondents were female, aged between 25 and 34 years (33%), primarily single (52%), with a university degree (48%), and with a monthly net household income between EUR 501 and EUR 1000 (27%). Regarding travel characterization, the region that respondents last visited the most was the North region of Portugal (33%), with the primary purpose of the visit being leisure (88%), lasting 2 to 4 nights (48%), mostly booked through online travel agencies (48%), and 45% of respondents stayed in hotels at least two times in the last 12 months (Table 2).

Table 2. Sociodemographic and travel characterization of the sample.

Variable	%	Variable	%
Gender		**Region of the last trip**	
Female	73	North of Portugal	33
Male	27	South of Portugal	28
Age		Centre of Portugal	22
15 to 24 years old	23	Madeira Islands	13
25 to 34 years old	33	Azores Islands	4
35to 44 years old	22	**Main reason for the trip**	
45 to 54 years old	14	Leisure	88
55 to 64 years old	7	Business	7
>65 years old	1	Visiting family/friends	5
Marital status		**Travel duration**	
Single	52	<2 nights	12
Married	43	2 to 4 nights	48
Divorced	5	5 to 7 nights	30
Academic degree		8 to 10 nights	7
Basic school	4	>10 nights	3
High school	24	**Hotel reservation method**	
Bachelor's degree	48	Online travel agency	48
Master's/Doctorate degree	24	Directly on the hotel website	23
Household net monthly income		Phone	19
<500 EUR	3	Offline travel agency	6
501 EUR to 1000 EUR	27	Hotel reception desk	4
1001 EUR to 1500 EUR	21	**Number of hotel stays in the last 12 months**	
1501 EUR to 2500 EUR	23	2	45
2501 EUR to 3500 EUR	13	2 to 4	36
3501 EUR to 5000 EUR	10	5 to 7	11
5001 EUR to 7500 EUR	2	8 to 10	4
>7500 EUR	1	>10	4

4.2. Measurement Model Validation

So, to assess the quality of fit of the conceptual model to the correlational structure of the variables, a factor analysis was conducted, which is known to be a technique of multivariate analysis applied in structural equation models [98]. Through the Bootstrapping tool of SmartPLS, sub-samples were generated. This tool provides the best-estimated solution for each parameter after combining all estimates [99].

The internal consistency of the variables was tested, confirming the reliability of the results through the calculation of Cronbach's Alpha (α), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1, but only constructs above 0.6 should be considered acceptable [98]. Table 3 shows that all variables are consistent as their Alpha values are above 0.9, indicating excellent internal consistency. Composite Reliability (CR) values are considered acceptable from 0.7, which is observable in all variables as the recorded values were above 0.9 [60]. AVE values should be above 0.5 to consider that factors explain a significant proportion of the total variance of the

original data [99]. Except for the CP factor (Customer Participation), all the others have an AVE above 0.7. Regarding the factor weights, Hair et al. [99] determine that values above 0.5 are acceptable, but only values equal to or above 0.7 signify and indicate a well-defined structure; here, items in the Customer Participation dimension have values between 0.5 and 0.7.

Table 3. Measurement scales, dimensionality, and reliability.

Itens	Loading	t-Value	CR	AVE
Client Experience (α = **0.964**)			0.965	0.757
CE1	0.803	42.795		
CE2	0.866	71.834		
CE3	0.875	50.864		
CE4	0.714	20.205		
CE5	0.901	124.175		
CE6	0.893	73.327		
CE7	0.934	153.901		
CE8	0.877	52.321		
CE9	0.943	115.531		
Client Orientation (α = **0.953**)			0.953	0.744
CO1	0.898	61.048		
CO2	0.829	48.075		
CO3	0.846	64.407		
CO4	0.842	68.464		
CO5	0.887	67.475		
CO6	0.908	92.968		
CO7	0.824	33.688		
Client Participation (α = **0.974**)			0.973	0.605
CP1	0.910	34.524		
CP2	0.852	36.272		
CP3	0.858	39.873		
CP4	0.776	45.429		
CP5	0.885	38.244		
CP6	0.821	36.526		
CP7	0.765	34.090		
CP8	0.698	35.574		
CP9	0.679	35.999		
CP10	0.842	53.676		
CP11	0.763	42.210		
CP12	0.689	33.504		
CP13	0.715	29.950		
CP14	0.714	35.118		
CP15	0.817	24.844		
CP16	0.858	42.380		
CP17	0.722	26.256		

Table 3. *Cont.*

Itens	Loading	t-Value	CR	AVE
CP18	0.834	30.496		
CP19	0.746	30.4893		
CP20	0.527	13.421		
CP21	0.832	30.210		
CP22	0.845	36.837		
CP23	0.797	34.358		
CP24	0.610	27.071		
Revisit Intention (**α = 0.953**)			0.955	0.812
RI1	0.940	208.332		
RI2	0.963	146.05		
RI3	0.960	175.433		
RI4	0.724	21.709		
RI5	0.897	76.473		
Memorable Experiences (**α = 0.974**)				0.826
ME1	0.909	55.946		
ME2	0.876	71.112		
ME3	0.877	70.498		
ME4	0.904	112.617		
ME5	0.965	88.092		
ME6	0.927	167.196		
ME7	0.933	157.714		
ME8	0.870	63.342		
Loyalty (**α = 0.966**)			0.966	0.825
L1	0.945	88.069		
L2	0.965	188.251		
L3	0.931	84.305		
L4	0.906	82.699		
L5	0.841	43.722		
L6	0.856	89.466		
Perceived Value (**α = 0.941**)			0.941	0.842
PV1	0.913	89.253		
PV2	0.923	210.630		
PV3	0.918	140.800		

In the discriminant validity analysis, it was found that this was not confirmed with this initial model. Because, in order for discriminant validity to be established, the correlations between constructs must be lower than the square root of their Average Variance Extracted (AVE) [100].

Given the above, it was necessary to restructure the measurement model. Thus, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. The Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test is an index used to assess the adequacy of the sample and factor analysis, determining usable components [98]. Values between 0.5 and 1 indicate that factor analysis is appropriate, while values below 0.5 may be inadequate [98].

The varimax rotation method was applied to interpret the results better as it allows for obtaining a factor structure in which only one of the original variables is associated with a single factor [98]. Subsequently, the PV dimension (Perceived Value) was eliminated, along with some items—21 items across other dimensions. Within the CP dimension (Customer Participation), an exploratory factor analysis revealed the existence of two components, which could be divided into Participation in Experience and taste and propensity for co-creation. In the final model, only the items related to participation in the service experience were used, excluding the items corresponding to taste and propensity for co-creation (GPPC), as these had no impact on revisit intention. Table 4 presents the data concerning the final measurement models.

Table 4. Dimensionality and reliability.

Dimension	α	CR	AVE
Client Experience (CE)	0.964	0.965	0.757
Client Orientation (CO)	0.953	0.953	0.743
Client Participation (CP)	0.950	0.949	0.610
Revisit Intention (RI)	0.953	0.955	0.812
Memorable Experiences (ME)	0.941	0.941	0.843
Loyalty (L)	0.957	0.957	0.818

According to the final measurement model, the results for the discriminant validity are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity.

	CE	CO	CP	L	ME	RI
Client Experience (CE)	0.870					
Client Orientation (CO)	0.869	0.862				
Client Participation (CP)	0.769	0.831	0.782			
Loyalty (L)	0.835	0.845	0.781	0.905		
Memorable Experiences (ME)	0.868	0.802	0.768	0.876	0.918	
Revisit Intention (RI)	0.798	0.771	0.771	0.861	0.805	0.901

In Table 5, it can be observed that the discriminant validity is confirmed as the distinct variables are associated with different factors that do not overlap.

4.3. Validation of the Structural Model

After confirming the measurement model in the previous section, the hypotheses under study were tested to validate the structural model. Using the Bootstrapping tool in the smart PLS v2 software, beta coefficients (β) were determined.

The results presented in Figure 2 indicate that the dimensions "customer participation", "customer experience", and "memorable experiences" linked to the "revisit intention" dimension are not significant as their p-value > 0.05. However, all other connections are significant, with p-values < 0.05. The connections with the highest weight are "customer orientation" with loyalty (β = 0.822), "customer participation" to "customer experience" (β = 0.734), as well as "customer experience" with "memorable experiences" (β = 0.636). Conversely, the weakest connections are "customer participation", "customer experience", and "memorable experiences" with "revisit intention" (β = 0.184, β = 0.183, β = 0.099, respectively).

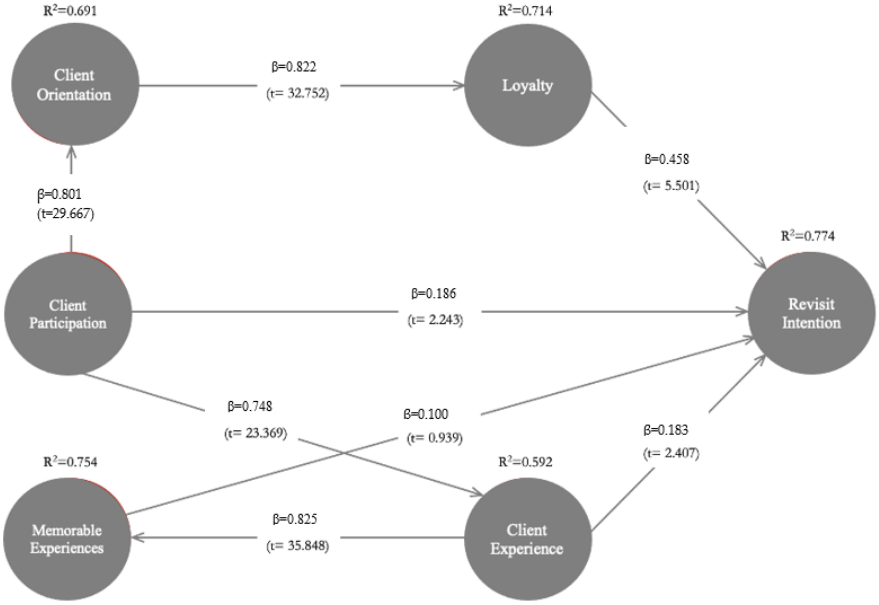


Figure 2. Structural model.

It is also noteworthy that the conceptual model explains 71.4% of "loyalty", 77.4% of "revisit intention", 59.2% of "customer experience", 69% of "customer orientation", and 75.4% of "memorable experiences".

As mentioned earlier, when addressing the issue of the final structural model, it is essential to note that the impact of the connections related to taste and propensity for co-creation towards revisit intention was evaluated; however, these connections were not taken into account because their weight had minimal impact ($\beta < 0.1$) and their connections were not statistically significant (p-value > 0.05).

5. Discussion

The main objective of this research is to understand the impact of customer co-creation in the tourism sector and to comprehend what drives a customer's intention to revisit a particular service.

To achieve this, factors such as customer orientation, loyalty, customer participation, and emotional elements such as experiences have been analyzed to gauge their influence and interaction with the consumer's revisitation intention. These findings will enable businesses to adopt strategies that enhance consumers' desire to return for the service.

The structural model estimation results analysis concludes that all hypotheses, except for H6 and H7, have been confirmed (see Table 6).

Table 6. Hypotheses validity index in the study.

Hypotheses	Result
H1. Customer orientation positively affects loyalty.	**Confirmed**
H2. Customer participation has a positive impact on the customer orientation of the service provider.	**Confirmed**
H3. Loyalty influences revisit intention.	**Confirmed**
H4. Customer experience positively affects memorable experiences.	**Confirmed**
H5. The level of customer participation impacts the consumer experience in tourism services.	**Confirmed**
H6. Experiences in tourism services impact revisit intention.	Not confirmed
H7. The level of co-creation a customer engages in with the service positively influences revisit intention.	Not confirmed

The empirical study confirms the significance of co-creation as a factor intertwined with all the variables under investigation. Regarding revisitation intention, this is directly influenced only by one variable, loyalty, while the others may exert an indirect effect, which nonetheless contributes to the revisitation intention of a service.

The concepts of customer orientation and loyalty, emphasized in the literature review, had their connection substantiated, specifically through the significant results of research hypothesis H1. As already established in the literature review, when a company places the customer first, it prioritizes all its activities around the customer to fulfill their needs [29]. Therefore, customer orientation can be recognized as an effort to satisfy the customer [101]. In other words, if there is an effort to satisfy the customer's needs, it follows that customer orientation fosters an identification with the company and creates customer loyalty. The findings of this study indicate a positive influence of customer orientation on customer loyalty in the tourism sector. Consequently, a long-term relationship with the hotel is expected to develop, potentially leading to revisits to a service that has been experienced before [22].

The first hypothesis measured the relationship between customer orientation and loyalty. Research hypothesis H2 explores the impact of customer participation on customer orientation. The literature suggests that greater customer participation leads to more information exchange, enabling a better understanding of their needs and subsequently adapting offerings with higher value. This study concluded that customer participation significantly contributes to the hotel's customer orientation. In other words, customer participation implies the company has a customer orientation. This research verifies that greater customer participation leads to more customer orientation. The previous research hypothesis shows that if customer participation influences customer orientation, the higher the orientation, the greater the customer loyalty toward the company. These results are consistent with the findings of Yang et al. [11], who concluded that customer participation positively influences customer orientation and, consequently, long-term relationships.

It was found that there is a positive relationship between customer participation, customer orientation, and customer loyalty. This leads to research hypothesis H3, which aims to understand if there is a direct influence between loyalty and revisitation intention. Satisfaction and loyalty are associated with positive recommendations and appropriate word-of-mouth (WOM) usage, which, in turn, are linked to customers' revisitation intentions [74–76]. Conversely, some authors have suggested that loyalty may not necessarily translate to revisitation intention but could be an extension of satisfaction with the service [79–81]. Revisitation intention is often more closely tied to experiences. The investigation of this study concluded that there is a positive relationship between loyalty and revisitation intention, indicating that "loyal" customers are more inclined to use the service again. However, this inclination is often associated with novelty or convenience in the context of hotel services. For example, revisitation intention might be driven by the need for a convenient stay, where loyalty becomes a vital and sufficient factor in using the service [86].

Customer experience and memorable experiences are highly interrelated concepts, as previously suggested by the reviewed literature, with several authors having established their influence [64]. In research hypothesis H4, we seek to understand if the customer's experience with the service influences the creation of memorable experiences. Though the experiential process is complex and often prolonged, experiences can become less favorable. Satisfaction is directly tied to experience as a customer can be satisfied with the service, yet the experience might be less memorable. Companies aim to create memorable experiences as these have a much more significant impact on customer interaction and relationships. However, achieving this requires working on the overall service experience as the perception of a unique and memorable experience can be formed only afterward.

Following the previously studied and analyzed hypothesis, research hypothesis H5 emerges to examine the relationship between customer participation and their experience. Customer participation allows them to perceive the value of the service better, thus gaining

a deeper understanding of how it should be consumed along with its attributes, ultimately leading to a superior experience. The present study confirms the positive relationship between customer participation and their experience. This is because involving the customer in the service is crucial for understanding their needs and adapting the service, ultimately resulting in a heightened experience [102]. Prahalad and Ramaswamy [32] argue that experiences often depend on the level of customer involvement in the co-creation process. In other words, the more engaged the participation process, the greater their satisfaction with the service experience.

Experiences and their memorability are often associated with revisitation intention in the tourism service industry due to their highly involved nature [86]. Research hypothesis H6 aims to confirm those above. However, the previous assertion needed to be substantiated in this study. In other words, no evidence supports a direct impact between revisitation intention and experiences. This is because, according to the literature, in tourism services, what attracts consumers the most is the experience.

Nonetheless, for those who have already experienced a specific service, revisitation intention is proportional to the level of novelty in that service [85]. This suggests that more than customer experience and memorable experiences alone are needed for revisitation intention, at least not directly and not in this sector, which demands high involvement and significant value-added services. Customers are always seeking new experiences.

Throughout this analysis, the significance of co-creation (customer participation) in tourism services has been discerned. Research hypothesis H7 was proposed to measure this assertion. Various authors, such as Prebensen et al. [49], mention that co-creation plays a crucial role in the intention of revisiting a service. However, the results of this investigation did not confirm this. In other words, no evidence supports a direct impact between co-creation and revisitation intention.

On the other hand, as discussed in the analysis of other variables, revisitation intention in tourism services is complex due to factors like novelty in existing services. One possible reason for these results is that the co-creation process with customers might need to be more efficient, and companies might need to address customer needs or encourage their participation effectively. In low-level co-creation processes, the perceived value is lower than the customer's intention to revisit [86]. As mentioned in the development of the structural model, only items related to customer participation in the consumed service were selected. Items related to the variable taste and propensity for co-creation (GPPC) were removed due to a lack of support for the study. However, when measuring the impact on respondents who demonstrated GPPC, they intended to revisit something other than the consumed service.

In contrast, respondents without GPPC had revisitation intention. This could suggest that customers without GPPC, when motivated for co-creation, perceive the actual value of the service and their involvement in the service creation process, leading to the desire to revisit the service. However, there is no basis to substantiate this possibility so it was not considered.

After analyzing the research hypotheses, they confirmed what the literature indicated. However, there is no evidence confirming hypotheses H6 and H7. Nonetheless, several authors in their studies have highlighted experience and co-creation as critical factors in revisitation intention for a service. However, one must consider the highly involved nature of the sector under scrutiny. Studies have warned that these factors might not be sufficient with a well-defined and aligned strategy. Factors like service novelty and customer interaction are crucial for the expected revisitation of the same service [86].

The study reveals that co-creation has a highly significant effect on all the variables under analysis. In other words, customer participation in the service creation process leads to companies exhibiting a higher level of customer orientation, which influences customer loyalty to achieve higher levels. Customer participation positively influences the customer experience and the experience gained by the customer with the service impacts the creation of memorable experiences. Therefore, co-creation is a pivotal process in the strategy of any

hotel company, and all the variables studied should be aligned and worked on together to increase consumer revisitation attention.

6. Conclusions

In a global and highly competitive sector such as the hotel industry, the price factor ceases to be pivotal and often takes a back seat [13]. Competitiveness revolves around value proposition, customer co-creation, and experience. González-Mansilla et al. [13] further suggest that hotels must evolve from mere places to sleep into providers of differentiated accommodation experiences. Therefore, customer orientation becomes crucial to achieve this as only through customer participation can suitable and exceptional experiences surpass customers' expectations and needs.

Given the dynamics mentioned above, long-term relationships (loyalty) have become crucial for survival and competition in the hotel industry. Loyalty is an essential factor in the intention to revisit a tourism service. Co-creation can play a significant role in shaping loyalty; it can be a vital tool in promoting customer loyalty and increasing the perceived value of services [13]. Many authors argue that co-creation has a positive effect on revisitation intention. This study highlighted that customer participation does influence the customer's inclination, but not directly. In other words, customer participation positively influences customer orientation, which, in turn, affects loyalty and memorable experiences. This demonstrates that customer participation indirectly affects revisitation intention.

The research hypotheses of this study aimed to understand, in a co-creation context, (i) whether service providers exhibit a level of customer orientation, (ii) whether customer participation impacts experience, and (iii) whether co-creation directly or indirectly affects revisitation intention.

This study aimed to bridge the gap in academic research on the subject, particularly in the analyzed market. As such, the research initially involved a review of the existing literature on all the mentioned concepts. Subsequently, it moved to the empirical phase, where the proposed hypotheses were tested. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey based on the adaptation of previously validated scales.

The study has demonstrated strong evidence that a customer-oriented strategy positively influences the revisitation intention. This conclusion further elucidates what has been discussed throughout this investigation: customer participation (co-creation) is pivotal for consumers to value companies that prove to be relevant and authentic. Customer participation (co-creation) plays a fundamental role in crucial variables such as emotional sentiments, service experience, memorable experiences, loyalty, and customer orientation. Consequently, it can be affirmed that service providers in the tourism industry, especially in hospitality services, should consider customer participation to be a critical component of their strategy. Even though this process may not directly impact revisitation intention, it has a highly relevant influence on all other variables contributing to superior customer satisfaction and perceived value. This, in turn, indirectly affects revisitation intention.

Furthermore, as previously reviewed in the literature, the study found that experiences influence revisitation intention [56,57], but not directly. In other words, if the novelty factor in the service is absent, revisitation intention has a negative effect. In the tourism sector, novelty is a relevant factor in revisitation behavior.

The study confirmed that loyalty is a factor that drives revisitation behavior. It is also evident that all the other variables under study positively affect revisitation intention. Thus, a positive experience, memorable experiences, and customer participation alone are insufficient to drive customers to repeat a service. However, these concepts positively and indirectly influence the attitude of consuming the service again. Only when all these factors are aligned can consumer interest in revisiting the service arise.

This research contributes to theory in two aspects. First, it provides a quantitative study regarding co-creation and revisitation intention that had yet to be applied to mainland Portugal and its islands. Second, the study addresses gaps identified in the literature by seeking to confirm whether co-creation and experiences are pivotal variables for revisitation

intention, as many authors have suggested they are critical pillars for such behavior. While it was not confirmed that they are the only variables, this study has opened a new avenue for theory to explore the connection between GPPC (taste and propensity for co-creation) and revisitation intention.

Regarding management, this study contributes by providing knowledge and guidance to companies, particularly in the tourism sector. However, the conclusions may be applicable across sectors that are not overly specific and immersive, like the tourism sector. Therefore, companies can incorporate the findings into their strategies, offering insights into customer relationship management, fostering long-term relationships, encouraging customers to share their needs and suggestions for superior value services, and increasing the likelihood of repeat consumption. Novelty is crucial for revisiting a location, even if a memorable experience has been had. Thus, co-creation is a vital process underpinning all of the concepts the study addresses.

In alignment with the conclusions, these findings support the significance of customer co-creation as it brings the service closer to the customer, fostering loyalty and making them less sensitive to competing tourism service offerings. This is because companies gain a deeper understanding of customers' needs and expectations [27].

However, the comprehensive analysis presented in this study has some limitations, which will now be enumerated along with suggestions for future research.

Firstly, a limitation is using a convenience sample due to the limited time frame imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The sample is not intended to be representative but reflects accurate data collected during the pandemic. Future studies could include a more representative sample. It would be interesting to examine the impact in other geographical locations given that the questionnaire was only applied in mainland Portugal and its islands. Additionally, distinguishing between the mainland and the islands would be worthwhile considering that the Madeira and Azores islands have a significant representation of the tourism sector in their regional GDP compared to the mainland and the tourist profile differs between the islands and the mainland. Furthermore, a more representative and equitable sample of age and gender is needed as this study had a significant percentage of female participants and a younger age group. The multicultural aspect of the sample is limited and exploring more multicultural perspectives would be valuable, particularly in understanding differences among various regions. Also, the time of year when individuals stayed in hotels can also influence the relationship between co-creation and the intention to revisit as it can also modify the visitor's profile, which can also lead to an impact on the level of service participation, for instance. In future research, this variable may be included as a control variable.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collection had to be entirely shifted to an online method, where the service consumption might have occurred over a certain period, potentially introducing some deviations in the results. The initial objective was to conduct in-person distribution of surveys in hotels after the service consumption to obtain more accurate responses. Since this was not possible, it remains a suggestion for possible future research.

It would be interesting to study the impact of taste and propensity for co-creation on the intention to revisit. Additionally, exploring the factors that drive individuals who have never co-created or shown interest in co-creation to want to use the service again would be valuable. Given that the literature consistently highlights a positive link between co-creation and intention to revisit, assessing whether the intention to revisit carries more weight according to the taste level and propensity for co-creation would be essential.

Another suggestion is to apply this study to other sectors with varying levels of customer involvement, both high and low, to understand whether concepts such as loyalty, orientation, experiences, and customer participation are primary drivers for service revisits and how they behave in different contexts.

As observed in this study, customer experiences and memorable experiences alone are insufficient to drive intention to revisit, particularly in the case of hotel services where

customers seek novelty. Thus, it would be interesting to introduce the variable of new experiences and examine its impact on the intention to revisit.

Finally, a qualitative methodology approach could prove advantageous as it would validate and identify the most important key aspects to investigate within the main concepts for subsequent quantitative evaluation. This type of analysis could offer significant contributions to management as it would enable assessing and identifying the most relevant factors for the intention to revisit a service [40].

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