A quasi-experiment to map innovation perception and pinpoint innovation opportunities along the tourism experience journey

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A R T I C L E   I N F O

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to analyse the role of perceived innovativeness along the travellers' journey and, in particular, during the planning phase. The main determinants of perceived innovativeness of the tourism experience are in the focus of this study: the level of co-creation, authenticity, potential negative events, like unexpected long queues and the effects of surprise gifts. 116 responses in four different online scenarios were collected during the quasi-experiment. Each scenario resembled a distinct type of tourism experience journey by manipulating the above listed four determinants of perceived innovativeness. This way, a clearer understanding could be gained about the determinants' influence on expectations, purchase intention and willingness to pay. The findings confirmed positive correlation between all the determinants and two of the outcomes: expectations and purchase intention, but not the willingness to pay. This latter does not change significantly due to customer reviews/ updates about the tourism experience authenticity, neither as a result of negative or positive surprise events during the journey.

1. Introduction

Innovation in tourism is still a relatively new and under-researched area (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010). Most studies on tourism innovation focus on the tourism organization (Divisekera & Nguyen, 2018; Thomas & Wood, 2014), on the tourism product (Zehrer, Pechlaner, & Reuter, 2013) on the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), smart tourism (Aldebert, Dang, & Longhi, 2011; Gretzel, Sigala, Xiang, & Koo, 2015), about innovation adoption (Brooker & Joppe, 2014) or about public policies implementation (Rodriguez, Williams, & Hall, 2014).

This study aims to address the research gap in conceptualization and measurement of the tourism journey (Yachin, 2018), as it approaches innovation from the *tourists' points of view*, analysing what shapes perceived innovation along the travellers' journey. Perceived innovation has a well-proven impact on the tourists' behaviour (Boo & Busser, 2018; Prayag, Hosany, Muskat, & Del Chiappa, 2017), for example on the level of expectation (an antecedent of satisfaction), the attitude toward the product/brand, the intention to purchase, the willingness to pay and the Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). In tourism literature, several factors have been established to have a direct or moderating role on perceived innovation: a) the level of (tourists') co-creation (Campos, Mendes, Valle, & Scott, 2018; Heinonen, Campbell, &

Ferguson, 2019; Ma, Gu, Wang, & Hampson, 2017; Marasco, De Martino, Magnotti, & Morvillo, 2018); b) the authenticity of the tourism experience (Zatori, Smith, & Puczko, 2018); and c) the tone of customer reviews (Ukpabi & Karjaluoto, 2018; Yachin, 2018). Moreover, perceived innovation was theorized to be swayed by the combined effect of surprise events during the tourist journey, like negative surprises e.g., last minute cancelation, unexpected long queues (Albrecht, Hattula, & Lehmann, 2017; Følstad & Kvale, 2018) or positive surprises e.g., peak events or 'magical moments' (Campos et al., 2018; Dixon, Victorino, Kwortnik, & Verma, 2017). Therefore, the major theoretical contribution of this paper is to provide an integrated view of the combined effect upon the perception of innovation of independent variables such as co-creation, (positive/negative) customer reviews about authenticity, and the occurrence of surprise moments within the tourist journey framework.

The research questions were formed by reviewing the available literature on the different concepts of innovation in tourism, customer (tourism) experience, throughout the phases of the tourism journey and its touchpoints. The research design of innovative experiences implies an aprioristic approach because potential consumers do not have (or have not had yet) the opportunity to purchase the tourism experiences. Therefore, this study focused on the planning phase of the tourism journey. Just as also Yachin (2018, p.203) argued, "in the prospective

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phase, the value is embedded in anticipation – the customer dreams about the forthcoming experience, builds expectations and imagines the experience (Malone, Mckechnie, & Tynan, 2018)".

The role of co-creation and authenticity as important drivers of the design and classification of the tourism experience (e.g., Campos et al., 2018; Heinonen et al., 2019; Zatori et al., 2018) is acknowledged. The overall experience of tourists can be significantly swayed by the manipulation of perceived co-creation cues and by the control of customer reviews commenting the authenticity of the experience (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Furthermore, new and unexpected features, according to the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) by Kano et al. (1984), have a decisive role in tourist decision-making, as they increase expectation, perceived value, purchase intention and (expected) satisfaction. This study argues that perceived innovation is also an antecedent of expectations and satisfaction. Extending the analysis further about the planning phase of the tourism journey, the study examines the impact of new information regarding negative and stressful events received during the planning phase. Moreover, a quasi-experiment is designed to investigate how to recover the damaging impact of these crises situations through the management of the 'surprise' gifts/peak events (Campos et al., 2018; Dixon et al., 2017), as strategic recovery tools.

2. Literature review

2.1. Innovation in the tourism experience journey and its touchpoints

Tourism product/service innovation can be any change directly observed by tourists. In the latest systematic review of tourism literature, Gomezelj (2016) clarifies that this change can be either something that was never seen before or simply new to the particular destination. These product/service innovations, solely based on their newness, can be sufficient reasons to compel tourists to purchase. There are various ways tourism innovation can be realised (Hjalager, 2015): 1) Changing the properties and varieties of the goods and services as they are experienced by the tourists; 2) Increasing the social and physical efficacy, for example, the power for the tourists to produce the benefits for themselves; 3) Increasing the productivity and efficacy in tourism enterprises and restructuring the input factors such as energy, labour, capital, and land; 4) Forming new destinations; 5) Enhancing mobility to and within destinations; 6) Altering the way of passing information within and across organizational boundaries; 7) Changing the institutional logic and the power relations. Moreover, the notion of innovation can be expanded to the whole customer experience as 'redesign of customers' interaction across all touchpoints' (Sawhney, 2011).

The concept of customer experience, and particularly tourism experience, is a well-studied field (e.g., De Freitas Coelho, de Sevilha Gosling, & de Almeida, 2018; Homburg, Jozić, & Kuehnl, 2017; Jackson, 2019; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2016; Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Rosenbaum, Otalora, & Ramírez, 2017). According to the traditional view, the realms of tourism experience may be categorized along two dimensions that range from passive to active participation and from absorption to immersion. The two dimensions create four quadrants where different types of experiences could be placed (Pine & Gilmore, 1998): a) *entertainment,* it involves passive participation and absorption of customers' attendance, as in the case of music concerts; b) *education*, it involves active participation and absorption of the customer, such as in sports practice or seminars; c) *escapist experience*, it involves active participation of customers immersed in it, as in the participation in religious ceremonies or destinations, working holidays and involvement in projects of NGOs, or even mass tourism in exotic destinations; and d) *aesthetic experience* occurs when customers are immersed passively in the experiences of, for example, sightseeing or trekking holidays. Packer and Ballantyne (2016) proposed a multifaceted definition of tourism (*visitor) experience*: (a) it is inherently personal and subjective, and it is distinct from the physical

environment; (b) it is a personal interpretation of external events, and it can be shaped but not controlled by its physical context; (c) it is bounded in time and space regardless if it happens one time at a single place or multiple times and in various places; (d) it has a significant impact on the visitor, be it positive or negative. Furthermore, visitor experience can be approached in either of the following four ways (Packer & Ballantyne, 2016): (1) perceiving the *experience as flow of consciousness*-anthropological perspective (e.g., how events are received by consciousness); (2) perceiving the *experience as a subjective response to an event or stimulus*-psychological perspective (e.g., private events that occur in response to some stimulation); (3) perceiving the *experience as a memorable impression*-tourism and leisure management perspective, (e.g., the 'takeaway' impression formed by people's encounters with products, services, and businesses); and (4) perceiving the *experience as a designed or staged offering*-a tourism and leisure marketing perspective; this perspective focuses more on the objective and extrinsic aspects of experience (e.g., a type of offering to be added to merchandise (or commodities), products and service). Packer and Ballantyne (2016), also proposed a multifaceted model of visitor experience comprising the following ten categories: *physical experiences*, involving action and physical stimulation; *sensory experiences*, evoking perceptual, aesthetic and sensory responses to surroundings; *restorative experiences*, like escape, relaxation, revitalisation, peace and comfort; *introspective experiences*, including contemplation, reflection and introspection; *transformative experiences* focused on accomplishment, self-knowledge, inspiration and fulfilment; *hedonic experiences*, evoking excitement, fun and indulgence; *emotional experiences*, centred on joy, nostalgia, awe, empathy or love; *relational experiences* that strengthen social interactions, companionship and sense of belonging; *spiritual experiences* as communication with nature, connection with sacred and transcendence; and lastly, *cognitive experiences*, involving learning, exploration and understanding. Similarly, De Keyser et al. (2015, p.70) defined the customer experience construct as a "set of cognitive, emotional, behavioural, physical, sensory, spiritual, and social elements that arise in client interactions" with the other actors.

Lemon and Verhoef (2016) view customer experience as a *customer journey* with a set of touchpoints throughout the buying cycle. The buying cycle comprises of three phases: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase phase. The touchpoints emerge during the buying cycle and can be classified into four types: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and social/external/independent. Stein and Ramaseshan (2016) proposed an alternative classification of touchpoints based on eight categories: store atmosphere, technological, communicational, process-related, employee-customer interaction, customer-customer interaction, and customer-product interaction. More recently, Følstad and Kvale (2018), based on an exhaustive literature review on the methodologies of visualization and mapping of the tourism journey, introduced the concept of customer journey proposition. It describes how to design and manage an ideal customer journey through the identification and manipulation of the touchpoints. Mapping the touch points, also referred to as *customer journey mapping* (CJM), is a very popular tool among both scholars and practitioners, because it assists the holistic management of consumer experience, as argued by Rosenbaum et al. (2017). Homburg et al. (2017) have also advocated the strategic importance of the holistic consumer experience management (CEM). Another great contribution of customer experience journey mapping was to identify all the touch points during entire journey: the phases of awareness, consideration, planning, experience and advocacy (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; van der Veen & van Ossenbruggen, 2015; Yachin, 2018). Encounters between the tourism experience providers and tourists along the tourism journey's at each touchpoint are opportunities for co-creation and user-generated innovation (Clatworthy, 2011; Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Homburg et al., 2017; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Xie, Guan, & Huan, 2019; Yachin, 2018; Zomerdijk & Voss, 2007). Therefore, these encounters have the potential to alter the perceived innovativeness of the

tourism experience. In turn, overall perception of the tourism experience (including its innovativeness) has a positive impact on final satisfaction and intention to recommend (Prayag et al., 2017). Based on the above, the first research hypothesis was formulated as follows:

H1. The perceived innovativeness of an experience can be manipulated along the travellers' journey.

2.2. Co-creation vs. collaborative innovation

Co-creation within the context of the tourism experience is defined as "the sum of the psychological events a tourist goes through when contributing actively through physical and/or mental participation in activities and interacting with other subjects in the experience environment" (Campos et al., 2018, p. 391). Jackson (2019) found that tourists tend to take credit for their positive tourism experience, which points to the direction that tourists, by being in control as an active participant (co-creator) of their experience, contribute to them having a better perception of the experience.

Collaborative innovation is theorized as the pursuit of innovation across firms' boundaries through the sharing of ideas, knowledge, expertise and opportunities (Marasco et al., 2018). It can encompass a broad spectrum of external parties, e.g., customers, suppliers, competitors, universities and research institutes. It can cover a range of collaborative organisational forms including alliances, partnerships, networks and cooperative agreements, and apply various approaches, like interactive, distributed and open nature innovation. Although user-driven innovation is rather new in tourism, there are evidences that collaborative innovation could harvest valuable ideas and inspiration from customers in all sectors (Hjalager & Nordin, 2011).

Several scholars argue for the importance of distinguishing collaborative innovation during new experience design and development from co-creation produced by the tourist during the experience consumption, i.e. the contribution of tourists to the perceived overall benefits and final satisfaction (Heinonen et al., 2019; Ma et al., 2017; Yachin, 2018). While acknowledging that innovation and co-creation are distinct concepts, their relationship lacks clarification (Jernsand, Kraff, & Mossberg, 2015; Pikkemaat & Zehrer, 2016). Thus, the second hypothesis is formulated to shed light on this argued relationship (e.g., Frow, Nenonen, Payne, & Storbacka, 2015; Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos, 2015; Verleye, 2015):

H2. The perceived innovativeness of an experience is positively correlated to the self-ascribed level of co-creation of the tourists during experience consumption.

2.3. The role of authenticity

"While the authenticity of the object/site is a result of its embodiment in a tradition of which tourism is a ritual; the authenticity of the experience is a part of an engagement with aura" argues Rickly-Boyd (2012, p.271). The consumers' perception of authenticity plays an important role in their consumption behaviour. According to Baudrillard's (1983) view, consumers are unable to distinguish between what is authentic and what is not, while Grayson and Martinec (2004) suggest that consumers can and do use cues to make distinctions between authentic and inauthentic. Their results show that the presupposed authenticity of the museum, the visitor and the materials in the museum are the cues of authenticity rooted in consumer scepticism and expectation, and thus influence visitor satisfaction and perceived corporate hypocrite. The importance of authenticity in relation to museum visits have been strongly supported by several studies (e.g., Grayson & Martinec, 2004; Hede, Garma, Josiassen, & Thyne, 2014; Hede & Thyne, 2010). Interaction and customization of the on-site tourist experience were found to affect experience-involvement, memorability and above all, authenticity (Zatori et al., 2018).

Both authenticity (e.g., Presenza, Petruzzelli, & Sheehan, 2019; Zatori et al., 2018) and perceived innovativeness (e.g., Gomezelj, 2016; Hjalager, 2015) play a crucial role in the overall evaluation of the tourism experience, but their relationship is unexplored. So, this study sets to understand if these determinants of tourism experience influence the overall evaluation of the experience independently or there is any significant correlation between them:

H3. The perceived innovativeness of an experience is positively correlated with perceived authenticity.

2.4. Relationship between customer experience, innovation, expectation and satisfaction

There is an ample body of literature that supports a strong correlation between customer experience and overall customer satisfaction (e.g., Khan, Garg, & Rahman, 2015; Prayag et al., 2017). Customer satisfaction is determined by three types of product requirements (Kano et al., 1984): (1) The must-be requirements (the basic characteristics of the product) – if these requirements are not met, the customer will be extremely dissatisfied. These requirements are self-evident and usually taken for granted nevertheless, they are the critical success factors. (2) One-dimensional requirements (the performance of the product) – customer satisfaction is proportional to the level of fulfilment of these requirements, the higher the level of fulfilment, the higher the customer's satisfaction, and vice versa. (3) Attractive requirements (or surprises) – these requirements represent the product characteristics that have the greatest influence on customer satisfaction. They are neither explicitly expressed nor expected by the customer. Fulfilling these requirements leads to more than proportional satisfaction, they delight the customer and lead to loyalty. If they are not met, however, there is no feeling of dissatisfaction.

Kano et al. (1984) argues that incremental (or disruptive) innovation should be linked to the unexpected attractive requirements in order to increase overall satisfaction. The common principles of new product development concepts, such as Quality Function Deployment of Matzler & Hinterhuber, 1998, are built on this notion of Kano et al. (1984). Current literature also provides substantial evidence that additional innovative (attractive) attributes, also referred as perceived innovativeness, enhance expectations, also referred as perceived performance (e.g., Gomezelj, 2016; Hjalager, 2010). Moreover, meeting more attractive requirements through innovation increases the intention to purchase, the willingness to pay and overall satisfaction (Boo & Busser, 2018; Couture, Arcand, Sénécal, & Ouellet, 2015). A recent study even goes that far to suggest that as travel expectations increase not only travel satisfaction but overall life satisfaction increases as well (Wei, Ma, Jiang, & We, 2019). Set to further advance the notion of Kano et al. (1984), the fourth and fifth hypothesis aim to analyse the relationship between innovativeness and expectations:

H4. The level of expectation of a planned tourism experience is positively correlated with perceived innovativeness.

H5. a,b- The level of expectation of a planned tourism experience is positively correlated with the a) intention to participate/purchase and b) willingness to pay.

2.5. The impact of 'moments of truth', inconveniences, negative surprises, stress, and the recovering role of 'surprise (wow) effect'

The impact of inconveniences as source of dissatisfaction with the tourism experience is well-documented (e.g., Lai, Hitchcock, Yang, & Lu, 2018). The findings of Khan et al. (2015) provide evidence that potential negative experiences during the 'moments of truth' episodes (defined as critical situations that demand a competent and efficient response from tourism operators) significantly reduce customer

satisfaction. Customers seldom want to queue, because they regard it as a waste of time (Blichfeldt, Pumputis, & Ebba, 2017; Liang, 2016; Taylor, 1994). While expectations can be fuelled by perceived innovativeness (Gomezelj, 2016) and increase overall satisfaction (Boo & Busser, 2018), an unanticipated wait can destroy positive expectations (Cameron, Baker, & Peterson, 2003) and directly lead to dissatisfaction. By applying a reverse logic, the sixth hypothesis is formed as:

H6. a,b,c,d- The exposure to the information about a negative event decreases: a) perceived innovativeness and consequently, b) expectations, c) purchase intention and d) willingness to pay.

Surprise is a basic human emotion (Plutchik, 2001). It is short-lived (Schutzwohl, 1998; Vanhamme & Snelders, 2001) and either pleasant or unpleasant depending on the followed emotion (Kim & Mattila, 2010; Lindgreen & Vanhamme, 2003). Experiencing surprise occurs when a person evaluates his/her surrounding environment and compares it to his/her schema (i.e., informal, unarticulated theories about objects, situations, and events) or expectation (Meyer, Reisenzein, & Schutzwohl, 1997; Schutzwohl, 1998).

'Surprise' (or novel) elements during the traveller's journey could result in a peak of satisfaction (Hsu, Fang, & Tseng, 2016). This 'wow effect' has a strong impact on overall satisfaction and could even help travellers to overcome their initial bad experiences. Dixon et al. (2017) argue that a surprise event, also called 'peak event', and its anticipation moderate the temporal peak placement (i.e., early peak or late peak) on overall customer perceptions. When the surprise peak is at the end of an experience, it yields the strongest effect. Initiating an additional surprise peak has a lasting effect that amplifies the peak-end effect of remembered experiences. Erkuş-Öztürk (2016) also suggests that surprise gifts are perceived as 'soft' innovation that delight the customer.

H7. a,b,c,d- In order to prevent the damage caused by negative events, tourism managers can plan/design 'surprise gifts' to recover: a) perceived innovativeness, and consequently, b) expectations, c) purchase intention and d) willingness to pay.

3. Methodology

3.1. Experimental design

Experiments are rarely used in tourism research (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010), however travel simulation is a resource-efficient way to induce and study travel related emotions and perceptions that surface only during an actual travel experience (Feinstein & Parks, 2002; Hsu et al., 2016). Thus, this study opted for a quasi-experiment (see Fig. 1) to gain a better understating of the perception of innovation during the tourism experience journey. A tourism experience journey map was built (see Appendix A) based on the recent advancements of the customer journey literature (e.g., Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; van der Veen & van Ossenbruggen, 2015; Yachin, 2018). By building on the findings of MacLeod, Dodd, and Duncan (2015), at each phase of the journey map, touchpoints with impact on innovation perception and overall satisfaction were pinpointed.

The experiment consisted of four different scenarios, one of which was randomly assigned to each respondent. All of the scenarios included questions that simulated low co-creation and then high co-creation (intra-subject variable) experiences. The role of authenticity and negative events was manipulated with a factorial plan: 2 perceived authenticity level (High vs. Low) x 2 negative event occurrence (Yes vs. No). The first pair of scenarios manipulated the peer opinion about the authenticity of the trip (appraisal vs. critique). In the second pair of scenarios, one included, while the other excluded a negative, unexpected event regarding long waiting times.

The study relied on a convenience/snowball sampling method. The link of the online questionnaire was shared on Facebook and distributed through the mailing list of several universities. 116 valid responses

were collected during the month of January 2019. The questionnaires in all scenarios started out with demographic questions. Then, the first stage of the tourism experience journey was assessed from travel motivation (need generation) or awareness phase until the travel-planning phase (see Appendix A). The collected information was to shed light on travel motivation and the preferred ways for planning a trip, like information source, planning tool, type of travel, destination, transportation mean, hotel quality category, theme of the hotel, favourite experience category following the classification of Packer and Ballantyne (2016).

The respondents were then invited to imagine their dream holiday and create a detailed narrative of it (see Fig. 1). In the initial measurement moment (t0), respondents were asked to evaluate their dreamed-up holiday concerning the dependent variables: self-ascribed innovativeness, level of co-creation, authenticity, level of expectations and willingness to pay.

Afterwards, participants were exposed to a set of advertising messages about different maritime programs. Finally, the respondents were asked to evaluate how this new advertising information has changed their perception about the same set of dependent measures (t1 and t2).

3.2. Stimuli and scenarios

In the scenarios, two maritime tourism experiences were selected to analyse the effect of the level of co-creation (low vs. high) building on the foundation of the work of Pine and Gilmore (1998). To evaluate the impact of the different levels of co-creation, respondents were asked to appraise an image of a guided visit to a fish market for the low co-creation (entertainment) experience and an image picturing fishing with local fishermen for high co-creation (escape) experience (see Fig. 2). (All images were retrieved from internet and are labelled as free for reusing with modification).

Source: Left image- https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Garrucha_Spain_Lonja.jpg; Right Image- https://pixabay.com/photos/boat-cruise-boat-vacation-sea-1535697/

To evaluate the impact of authenticity, a fictitious customer review was incorporated in the questionnaire commenting on the authenticity of the fishing trip. Some of the respondents were exposed to positive, while others to negative customer reviews regarding the level of authenticity of this experience (see Fig. 3). Then, all of them were asked to evaluate the dependent variables in light of the (assigned) customer review.

Finally, the impact of a negative event was assessed by including a fictitious announcement about long waiting times: "Bad news: due to long queues to enter the port, the departure time of the trip is delayed (approx. 2 h)." All scenarios ended with a surprise effect: "Because you booked this fishing trip you have WON A FREE MEAL & PARTICIPATION IN A COOKING SHOW FOR 2 in this over-the-sea bungalow restaurant with a professional chef, who will prepare a meal from the fishes you caught during the trip".

3.3. Sample characteristics

Table 1 provides an overview of the sample of the 116 respondents in terms of their gender and age in each scenario (survey condition).

The majority of respondents (76%) are students followed by managers (5,2%) and sales staff (4,3%). Regarding their level of education, 35,3% are undergraduate, 48,3% have a university degree, while the remaining 16,4% have a post-graduate degree. The respondents are predominantly single (83,6%). In terms of nationality, they are mainly Portuguese (77,6%) and Brazilian (10,3%). 43,1% of respondents travel with friends, 41,4% travel with the family, and 9,5% travel alone. Regarding the favourite destination, majority of respondents opted for city break destinations, such as Italy, London, Paris (all with 6,9%), New York (6,0%), Amsterdam and Barcelona (both with 4,3%).

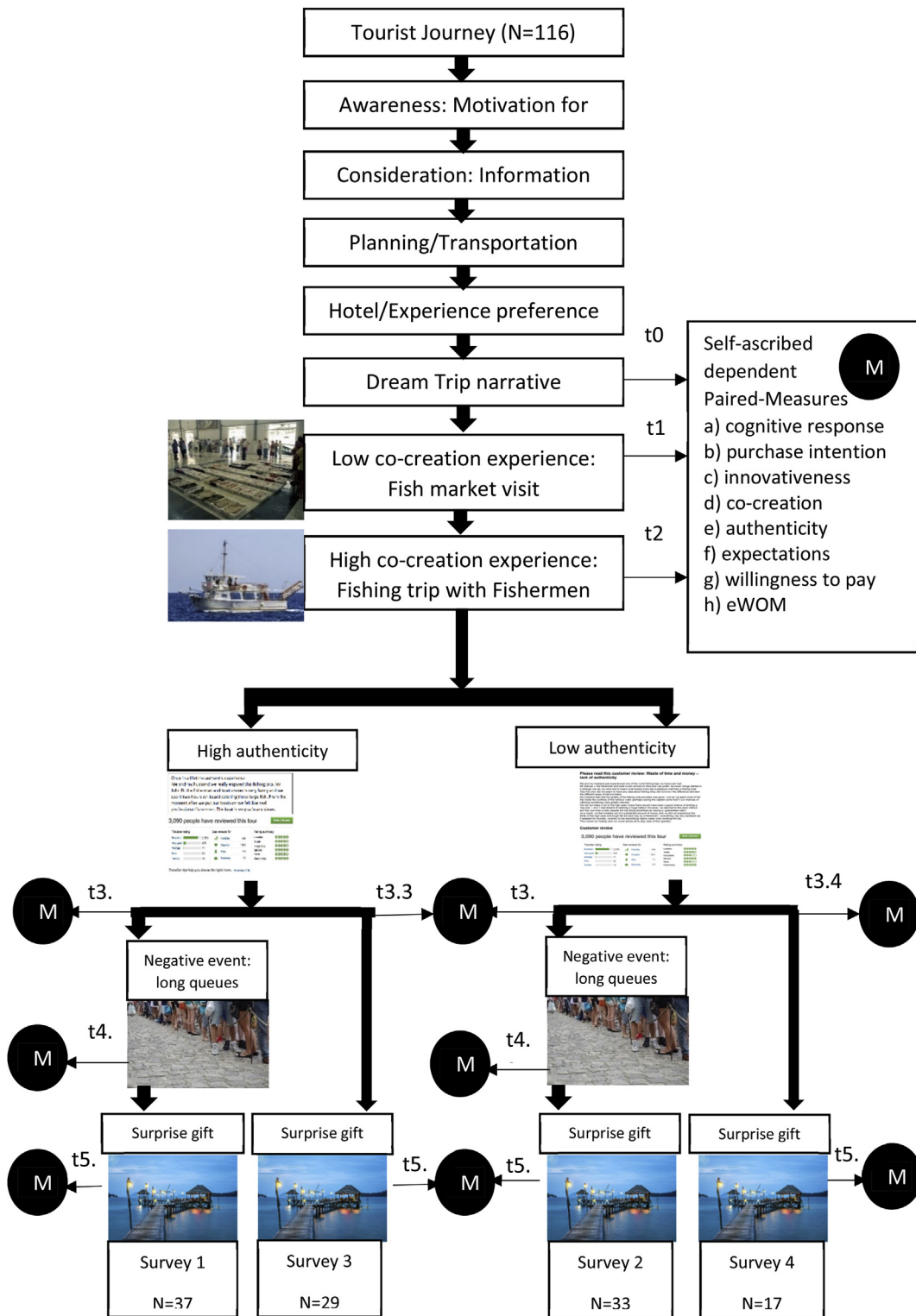Table 2 describes the respondents' preferences in terms of

Fig. 1. Flowchart of the experiment design.

information source, means of transportation and planning tool used. Most respondents (37,9%) reply on customer reviews as primary source of information, while others 22,4% read travel literature prior choosing a destination. Majority of the travellers (69%) use the Internet as a planning tool. Regarding the preferred means of transportation, 63,8% prefer low cost airlines, while about 20% of travellers opt for other ways of transportation than flying.

Table 3 provides information about the most preferred hotel type.

The majority of the respondents (22,4%) favour five-star hotels, followed by Airbnb apartments (19,8%). 49,1% of respondents choose destinations and hotels providing 'sun & beach' activities. Furthermore, respondents appeared to prefer mainly cognitive (25,0%) and restorative holiday experiences (24,1%). Table 4 points out that outbreaks of contagious diseases, terrorism and crime are the top three most significant travel risks (negative events) impacting the overall perception of the tourism experience, echoing the systematic review of

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Fig. 2. Images (stimuli) used for manipulating the level of co-creation: left-guided fish market visit; right-fishing with local fishermen.

Williams and Balaz (2015) on travel risk literature. Respondents also confirmed that free meals are the most welcome positive surprises. Sharing travel experiences with friends and family either in person or through electronic means (eWOM) are the most frequent follow-up behaviour after both negative and positive events during a trip.

4. Discussion of results

4.1. Manipulation check

The overall results confirmed the study's original notion on high vs. low co-creation activities. The stimuli of "fish market visit" introduced as low-co-creation experience (t1) were assigned a low rate of co-creation (M = 3,54), while in comparison the "fishing day with local Fishermen" created as a simulation of high co-creation experience (t2) were assigned a higher rate of co-creation (M = 5,51). Table 7 and Table 8 present the results of perceived authenticity after manipulating the customer reviews appraising either the high level of authenticity of the "fishing day" (in scenario 1 and 3) or criticizing its low levels of authenticity (in scenario 2 and 4). The results also confirmed the study's

Table 1
Gender and age distribution of respondents in each experimental scenario (survey).

			Survey				Total
			1	2	3	4	
Gender	Female	N	20	21	17	13	71
		% in Gender	28,2%	29,6%	23,9%	18,3%	100,0%
		% in Survey	54,1%	63,6%	58,6%	76,5%	61,2%
	Male	N	17	12	12	4	45
		% in Gender	37,8%	26,7%	26,7%	8,9%	100,0%
		% in Survey	45,9%	36,4%	41,4%	23,5%	38,8%
Total		N	37	33	29	17	116
		% in Gender	31,9%	28,4%	25,0%	14,7%	100,0%
		% in Survey	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%
Age		M	29,35	22,48	21,45	25,18	24,81
		SD	10,05	3,78	2,43	8,59	7,64

Fig. 3. Customer reviews (stimuli) used for manipulating the level of authenticity: left-positive review appraising authenticity; right-negative review complaining about the lack of authenticity.

Table 2
Frequencies of the favourite information source, means of transportation and planning tool.

Information Source	N	%	Transport mean	N	%	Planning tool	N	%
Online customer reviews	44	37,9	Low cost airlines	74	63,8	Internet search	80	69,0
Travel literature (books, online)	26	22,4	Premium/national airlines	19	16,4	Personal travel planner	22	19,0
Facebook posts	12	10,3	Private/rental car	12	10,3	I don't plan anything in advance	6	5,2
Films, books	12	10,3	Train	6	5,2	Tour operators	4	3,4
Travel agency brochures	8	6,9	Walking	2	1,7	Travel Agency	4	3,4
Suggestions of friends	6	5,2	Bus	1	0,9			
TV advertising	4	3,4	Cruise	1	0,9			
Others (Instagram, YouTube, internet)	4	3,4	Moto	1	0,9			
Total	116	100,0	Total	116	100,0	Total	116	100,0

original view on the influence of customer reviews on how authentic the experience is judged to be (see Fig. 4). Before ($M_{t2} = 6,61$) and after reading a positive customer review ($M_{t3} = 6,52$), the evaluation of perceived authenticity increased. While after being exposed to negative customer review, the perceived authenticity significantly decreases (from $M_{t2} = 6,32$ to $M_{t3} = 4,48$; $t = 5,17$; $p < 0,001$).

4.2. Influence of co-creation and authenticity

In order to confirm if the perceived innovativeness of an experience is positively related to the level co-creation (hypothesis H2), a paired samples *t*-test was conducted with measures obtained after the description of the dream trip (t0), and after the exposure to the images of the fish market visit (t1) and the fishing day with local Fishermen (t2). The results presented in Table 6 and Fig. 4 confirm that the perceived innovativeness ($M_{t1} = 4,19$) is significantly lower for the low co-creation activity then for high co-creation activity ($M_{t2} = 5,77$). The highest score of innovativeness was given to the imagined dream trip ($M_{t0} = 6,32$), which also confirms just how essential innovation is for the travellers. The significantly ($p < 0,01$) positive Spearman correlation coefficients between the variables measured at the stages of t1 and t2 (see Table 5) further validated the hypotheses H2 suggesting that innovativeness is positively related to authenticity ($R_{t1} = 0,606$; $R_{t2} = 0,763$; $p < 0,01$).

The results of the experiment when respondents are exposed to positive or negative customer reviews about the level of authenticity of the trip are detailed in Table 8 and Fig. 5. They directly confirm that the level of perceived authenticity has a significant impact on innovativeness, expectations and intention to participate. Only the willingness to pay was unaffected by the negative customer review. Moreover, after the positive review, the expectation significantly increased ($M_{t2} = 5,72$; $M_{t3} = 6,24$; $t = 2,38$; $GL = 53$; $p < 0,05$).

4.3. Hypotheses debrief

Table 9 presents the summary on the validation/rejection of hypotheses developed in section 2, thus confirming or rejecting the findings of previous studies (see last column).

The Spearman correlation coefficients of Table 5 ($R_{t1} = 0,606$; $R_{t2} = 0,763$; $p < 0,01$) confirmed that perceived innovativeness, measured after the exposure to the advertising image of maritime experiences, is positively related to perceived authenticity regardless of the actual level of co-creation, thus supporting the hypothesis H3. The same table also provides support for hypotheses H4, as expectation of a planned tourism experience is positively related to perceived innovativeness.

Hypotheses H5a was also confirmed. Table 5 displays that there is a positive correlation between expectation and purchase intention of a planned maritime trip (t1 and t2) Moreover, significant positive correlation was found between these measures and their antecedents as well, such as perceived innovativeness, co-creation level and perceived authenticity.

Tables 7 and 8 displays the results regarding hypotheses H6abc, which confirm that the exposure to any information about a potential negative event decreases: a) perceived innovativeness, b) expectation and c) purchase intention. Tour operators are suggested to mitigate the damage of a potential negative event by offering surprise gifts as proven successful during the experiment in all scenarios (measure t5).

As proposed in hypotheses H7a,b,c, there appears to be a recovery in terms of perceived innovativeness, expectations and purchase intention after a potential surprise gift, like a free meal. The results in Tables 7 and 8 also show that the willingness to pay does not change significantly during the tourism experience journey, except in scenario 1 when the participants were exposed to negative information about long waiting times after a positive customer review suggesting high level of authenticity. In this scenario, the participants' frustration led to

Table 3
Favourite hotel category, hotel theme and type of experience.

Hotel category	N	%	Theme of the hotel	N	%	Favourite type of experience	N	%
Hotel *****	26	22,4	Sun & Beach hotel	57	49,1	Cognitive experience (learning, discovery, exploration)	29	25,0
Airbnb apartment	23	19,8	Design boutique hotel (unique decoration)	18	15,5	Restorative experience (escape, relaxation, rest, liberation)	28	24,1
Hotel ****	22	19,0	Heritage/Historical building	13	11,2	Hedonic experience (excitement, enjoyment, fun)	15	12,9
Friends' house	16	13,8	Business hotel	7	6,0	Physical experience (action, movement, energy)	12	10,3
Hotel ***	11	9,5	Thematic hotel (wine/gastronomy hotel)	7	6,0	Emotional experience (surprise, awe, joy empathy, caring)	10	8,6
Youth hostel	10	8,6	Glamping (tree house)	6	5,2	Sensory experience (aesthetic, sensory response to surroundings)	8	6,9
Hotel **	5	4,3	Haunted house	2	1,7	Relational experience (social interactions, sense of belonging, friendliness)	5	4,3
Aparthotel	1	0,9	Lighthouse hotel	2	1,7	Transformative experience (accomplish, fulfilment, self-knowledge)	4	3,4
Camping	1	0,9	Golf course hotel	1	0,9	Spiritual experience (spiritual connection, connection with sacred or nature)	3	2,6
Did not answered	1	0,9	Others	3	2,6	Introspective experience (contemplation, imagination, internal dialogue)	1	0,9
						Physical Experience (action, movement, energy)	1	0,9
Total	116	100%	Total	116	100%	Total	116	100%

Table 4
Relative importance of negative and stressful events, efficacy of surprise gifts and after events digital behaviour.

Importance of negative and stressful events	M	SD	Efficacy of surprise gifts	M	SD	After negative/positive events behaviour	M	SD
Epidemic diseases at the destination	4,75	0,684	Free hotel meal	4,33	0,930	Provide positive Word-of-Mouth information to friends	4,35	0,847
Terrorism threat	4,61	0,821	Free hotel room upgrade	4,26	0,934	Share photos on social media (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	4,16	1,186
Insecurity due to criminality	4,50	0,860	Free massage in hotel spa	4,16	1,010	Provide negative Word-of-Mouth warnings to friends about the downside of any destination	4,06	1,041
Hotel changes due to overbooking	4,41	0,802	Surprise gifts in your hotel	3,92	1,014	Buy a souvenir at the destination	3,98	1,142
Environmental issues (air and water pollution)	4,24	0,992	Free ticket for the cinema/theatre	3,83	1,082	Make hotel reviews	3,09	1,269
Insecurity due to local demonstrations	4,16	0,910	Free hotel welcoming party	3,72	1,133			
Flight delays	4,10	0,981						
Bad weather conditions (rain, storms, etc)	3,88	1,097						
Noise	3,86	0,968						
Queues at security checks	3,59	1,056						
Queues in traffic jams	3,46	1,016						

Table 5
Spearman correlations coefficients between purchase intention (PI), expectations (EXP), perceived innovativeness (INOV), co-creation (CC), authenticity (A) and willingness to pay (WTP) after the exposure to the image of the fish market visit (t1) and fishing day (t2).

	t1						t2					
	PI	EXP	INOV	CC	A	WTP	PI	EXP	INOV	CC	A	WTP
PI- Please rate your intention to participate in this activity	1,000	,835**	,509**	,715**	,509**	,454**	1,000	,886**	,688**	,741**	,668**	,449**
EXP-How would you rate your expectations about this guided tour?		1,000	,502**	,744**	,582**	,490**		1,000	,764**	,799**	,748**	,445**
INOV-How would you rate this activity in terms of innovativeness?			1,000	,614**	,606**	,376**			1,000	,752**	,763**	,452**
CC-How much would you feel that you co-created this experience?				1,000	,569**	,528**				1,000	,738**	,517**
A-How would you rate this activity in terms of authenticity?					1,000	,283**					1,000	,392**
WTP- How much would you be willing to pay for this experience?						1,000						1,000

Significance level: **$p < 0,01$.

Table 6
Significant differences between the dream trip (t0), and low (t1) versus high co-creation (t2) experiences.

	Dream trip		Fish market visit			Fishing day with Fishermen		
	t0		t1			t2		
	M	SD	M	SD	t0,1 (GL = 115)	M	SD	t1,2 (GL = 115)
How do you rate your planned trip in terms of innovativeness?	6,32	1,959	4,19	2,399	7,42***	5,77	2,426	− 6,31***
How do you rate your planned trip in terms of authenticity?	7,26	1,828	5,24	2,717	6,80***	6,46	2,465	− 5,45***
How do you rate your planned trip in terms of co-creation (your own contribution to the final result)?	7,08	1,974	3,54	2,361	13,10***	5,51	2,483	− 7,81***
Please rate your expectations level about the planned trip	8,27	1,584	3,59	2,450	17,17***	5,75	2,431	− 8,90***
Please rate your intention to participate in this activity			3,63	2,444		5,92	2,668	− 8,76***
How much would you be willing to pay for this experience? (euros)			118,91	932,50		168,86	741,49	n.s

a decrease in the willingness to pay (M_{t3} = 76,81 euros; M_{t4} = 52,32 euros; t = 5,05; $p < 0,001$). So, hypotheses H5b, H6d and H7d are not supported.

Finally, hypothesis H1 is confirmed as per the results presented in Fig. 5. The perceived innovativeness is found to be influenced by positive and negative events during the planning phase of a tourism journey.

5. Conclusions

This paper aimed to assess an integrated view of the combined effect of some antecedents perceived innovation such as co-creation, (positive/negative) customer reviews about authenticity, and the occurrence stressful and surprise moments simulating a real journey in maritime tourism. This quasi-experiment, a methodology used rarely in tourism research (Tsiotsou & Ratten, 2010), found evidence for a direct positive relationship between perceived innovativeness, authenticity and the level of co-creation, and thus addressed the gap in understanding the

nature of the relationship between these constructs (e.g., Frow et al., 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Verleye, 2015). Furthermore, this study argues that innovativeness, authenticity and co-creation significantly influence expectations and purchase intention during the planning phase of a tourism journey.

Every new piece of information is shaping the travellers' expectations of their upcoming trip, and so it influences their overall evaluation of the experience. This research also provides further evidence of the claim of MacLeod et al. (2015) that customer journey mapping is a beneficial tourism management tool for designing innovative and customer-focused experiences. In light of the strong correlation between authenticity and the level of co-creation, tourism advertisements highlighting the co-creator role of travellers in unique and authentic experiences could yield great benefits.

5.1. Managerial implications

Travellers ascribe a great role for innovation in their dream trips, so

Table 7

Significant differences in perceived innovativeness, authenticity, expectation, intention to purchase and eWOM of the fishing day with Fishermen (t2) after the exposure to good reviews (t3), to negative event (t4.1) and to surprise gift (t5.1 and t5.3).

	Fishing Day with Fishermen		High Authenticity (Good review)			Negative event					Positive Surprise after negative event			Positive Surprise without negative event				
	t2 (N = 54)		t3 (N = 54)			t3 (N = 37)		t4.1 (N = 37)			t5.1 (N = 37)			t3 (N = 29)		t5.3 (N = 29)		
	M	SD	M	SD	t2,3	M	SD	M	SD	t3,4	M	SD	t4,5	M	SD	M	SD	t3,5
innovativeness	5,81	2,37	6,07	2,26	n.s	5,89	2,41	4,92	2,80	4,10***	7,32	2,26	−6,16***	4,76	2,67	7,34	2,21	−5,48***
authenticity	6,61	2,25	6,52	2,09	n.s.	6,11	2,48	4,19	2,31	5,74***	7,84	2,32	−10,0***	4,59	2,47	7,97	2,10	−6,76***
expectations	5,72	2,31	6,24	2,42	−2,38*	6,00	2,64	3,57	2,03	6,29***	8,03	2,35	−11,0***	4,48	2,60	8,21	2,18	−7,29***
intention to participate in this activity	5,91	2,52	6,11	2,53	n.s													
WTP	66,96	101,4	63,6	76,6	n.s.	76,81	88,1	52,32	75,1	5,05***	461,5	1588	n.s.	36,3	65,2	146,1	365,	n.s.
eWOM			5,87	2,46	n.s.	5,73	2,29	4,27	2,62	4,30***	7,54	2,61	−7,56***	5,00	3,07	7,48	2,77	−3,47**

Table 8

Significant differences in perceived innovativeness, authenticity, expectation, intention to purchase and eWOM of the fishing day with Fishermen (t2) after the exposure to bad reviews (t3), to negative events (t4.2) and surprise gifts (t5.2 and t5.4).

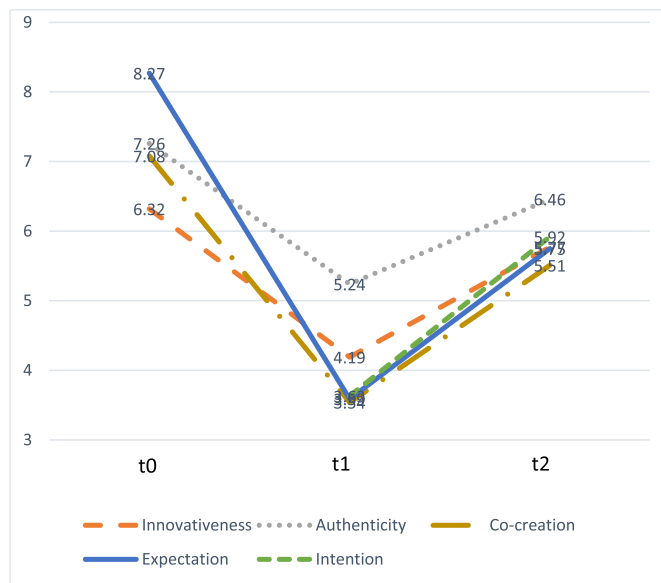|	Fishing Day with Fishermen		Low Authenticity (Bad review)			Negative event					Positive Surprise after negative event			Positive Surprise without negative event				
	t2 (N = 62)		t3 (N = 62)			t3.2 (N = 33)		t4.2 (N = 33)			t5.2 (N = 33)			t3.4 (N = 17)		t5.4 (N = 17)		
	M	SD	M	SD	t2,3	M	SD	M	SD	t2,3	M	SD	t4,5	M	SD	M	SD	t3,5
innovativeness	5,73	2,49	4,48	2,63	4,06***	4,24	2,61	3,42	2,02	2,73*	7,82	2,11	−9,86***	6,47	1,91	8,41	1,23	−4,67***
authenticity	6,32	2,65	4,48	2,71	5,17***	4,15	2,73	3,45	2,33	n.s	7,70	2,13	−8,75***	6,53	2,32	8,71	1,10	−3,95**
expectations	5,77	2,55	4,35	2,60	4,15***	4,15	2,36	2,88	1,75	3,57**	8,39	2,14	−12,9***	6,35	2,34	8,65	1,37	−4,82***
intention to participate	5,94	2,81	4,31	2,46	5,12***													
WTP	257,6	1005	310,6	1470	n.s.	551	1996	229,6	1052	n.s.	2016	10423	n.s	34,9	26,9	227,7	407	n.s.
eWOM			4,95	2,871	n.s.	4,91	2,73	4,70	3,10	n.s.	7,79	2,38	−6,34***	6,18	2,86	8,41	1,62	−3,95***

Fig. 4. Evolution of perceived innovativeness, authenticity, co-creation, expectation and intention to purchase at the stages of the dream trip (t0), the fish market visit (t1) and the fishing day (t2).
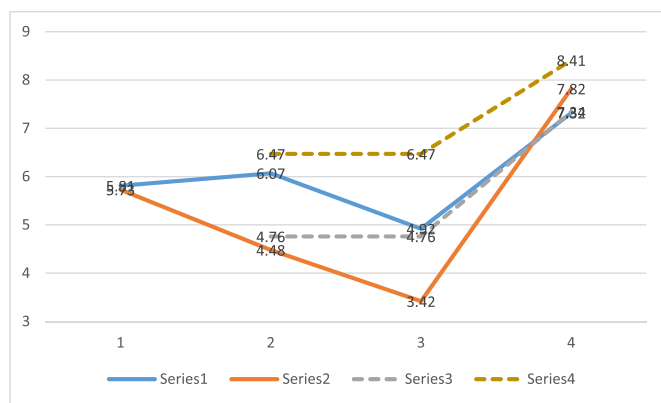

Fig. 5. Evolution of perceived innovativeness after the exposure to the customer reviews (measure 2), and after the exposure to negative events (measure 3) and information about the surprise gifts (measure 4).
Note: for exact values please refer to Tables 7 and 8.

tourism managers should also consider various forms of innovation when designing a tourism offer and when they advertise it. On other hand, tourism operators should develop innovative experiences that allow an active and customised participation (co-creation) of tourists. The cognitive experiences comprising discovering and exploration activities were rated as the most favourite type of experiences. Alternatively, tourists may also engage in restorative experiences. Besides the co-creation effect, tourism operators should assure that these experiences are perceived as authentic, thus avoiding "disneyfication" of places and activities.

Tourism managers are also encouraged to design unexpected gifts and offer contingent deals as positive surprises to recover the impact of any potential negative events and moreover, to enhance the overall tourism experience. For example, free meals or free room upgrades are welcome by tourists and can be used as tactical gifts in order to prevent the expected negative word-of-mouth behaviours resulting from a stressful event. Tourism managers should monitorize all touchpoints in order to assess the perceived innovation and satisfaction levels and identify the source of negative emotions which may affect the tourist mood.

5.2. Limitations and further research

The limitations of this study include the selection of the pictorial stimuli and its focus on maritime tourism examples. It could imply that the conclusions may not be applicable for other tourism experience categories. Moreover, the respondents were selected using a convenience/snowballing sampling method, and the majority of respondents were from Portugal and Brazil, which also limit the potential generalization of the findings. Further research should extend the study of the role of co-creation and authenticity to other tourism scenarios. The order of the events during the tourist journey may also influence the evolution of the response measurements. Therefore all situational variables must be controlled in order to avoid bias sources.

As a conclusion, the findings of this study contribute to scattered tourism innovation domain and provide practical insights for tourism professionals to better understand what constitutes innovation for travellers and how innovation contributes to their overall satisfaction with their tourism experience. Armed with these insights, tourism managers can make a more informed decision on how to distribute their resources strategically.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhtm.2019.10.003.

Table 9
Summary of hypotheses debrief.

	Description	Supported by results	Studies supporting the current findings
H1	The perceived innovativeness of an experience can be shaped along the travellers' journey.	Yes	Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Yachin, 2018;
H2	The perceived innovativeness of an experience is positively related to the self-ascribed level of co-creation of the tourists during experience consumption.	Yes	Frow et al., 2015; Jaakkola et al., 2015; Verleye, 2015;
H3	The perceived innovativeness of an experience is correlated with perceived authenticity.	Yes	Presenza et al., 2019; Zatori, Smith & Puczko, 2018;
H4	The level of expectation of a planned tourism experience is positively correlated with perceived innovativeness.	Yes	Gomezelj, 2016; Hjalager, 2010; Zehrer et al., 2013;
H5a,b	The level of expectation of a planned tourism experience is positively correlated with the a) intention to participate/purchase and b) willingness to pay.	Yes(H5a) No (H5b)	Gomezelj, 2016; Hjalager, 2010;
H6a,b,c,d	The exposure to the information about the occurrence of a negative event decreases: a) perceived innovativeness; and consequently b) expectations; c) purchase intention; d) WTP	Yes(H6a,b,c) No (H6d)	Blichfeldt et al., 2017; Liang, 2016; Taylor, 1994; Cameron et al., 2003;
H7a,b,c,d	In order to prevent the damages of potential negative events, tourist operators can plan/design "surprise" gifts to recover: a) perceived innovativeness; and consequently b) expectations; c) purchase intention and d) willingness to pay; d) WTP	Yes(H7a,b,c) No (H7d)	Dixon et al., 2017; Hsu et al., 2016;

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