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Faculty of Business Economics

Master of Management

Master's thesis

A Consumers Perception of a Service Constellation for a Tourism Destination

Gallus William Houghton

Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management, specialization Strategy and Innovation Management

SUPERVISOR :

Prof. dr. Allard VAN RIEL

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Abstract

This paper studied the concept of a service constellation in the field of tourism. Unlike value constellations, which offer value to consumers through a structure of multiple organisations working for a single firm, service constellations offer value to consumers through a combination of services working for a group of service providers. Tourism destinations provide such service constellations through their multiple service offerings, provided by a range of different actors or service providers. The aim of this study was to understand how services within a constellation affect each other and generate value for the group of service providers. To realise the study's objectives exploratory qualitative research was conducted. A service constellation of a tourist destination was created and analysed, through a focus group workshop and through customer journey analysis.

Keywords: Service Constellation, Customer Journey Analysis, Tourism Destination Management, Qualitative Research, Focus Group.

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1. Introduction

This paper intends to develop the concept of a service constellation in the field of tourism. A service constellation can be described as a collection of independent services that are interconnected and provide complimentary value to consumers as they buy and use services (Van Riel et al., 2013).

A tourist or tourism destination is "a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries in which a visitor can spend an overnight." (UNWTO, 2008). Tourism destinations are known to be challenging places to manage due to the 'complex systems of stakeholders' involved (Fyall & Garrod, 2019). The stakeholders that make up a tourist destination can be numerous and can include local government, tourism associations, tour operators and travel agencies, as well as accommodation and hospitality services (Presenza, & Cipollina, 2010). With the complexity and the sheer number of actors involved the need to maintain control is of the utmost importance to organise and manage a popular destination.

Many tools and techniques have been used to identify and manage the actors involved in a tourism destination. Customer journey analysis has been used by firms to extract key information about the tourism experience through the experience of consumers (Yachin, 2018). Service blueprinting, a technique used in service design to visually represent a firm's entire service delivery process (Shostack, 1984), has been an effective tool to innovate and improve services in tourism (Faché, 2000). While both techniques have proved to be valuable in determining the key touchpoints involved in a tourism experience, a customer journey analysis rarely identifies key actors outside an organisation, and the service blueprint is inherently firm-based and does not go beyond analysing its own organisation.

To create a holistic view of tourism services involved in a destination, this paper intends to investigate the concept of a service constellation by expanding the concept of a service blueprint. This paper proposes to expand the service blueprint beyond its traditional single-organisation structure to include multiple organisations. The constellation will be derived using customer journey analysis, by highlighting tourism services as touchpoints within a destination.

1.1 Research Motivation

The motivation for this study covers a wide range of business and economic interests. Organisation and control are key when managing a destination. Even with the recent Covid-19 pandemic, destinations are recovering and beginning to see the visitor numbers they realised pre-2020. Yet, the economic challenges they face are still apparent. The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) released a report at the end of 2022 stating that international travel was set to reach 65% of pre-pandemic levels, with some regions realising tourist arrivals above pre-pandemic levels (UNWTO, 2022a). In the same year, UNWTO reported that the trend in foreign direct investment was continually looking to decrease into the first part of 2022 (UNWTO, 2022b). While it is a promising sign that visitor numbers are expected to increase, the limitation in investment may curb a tourist destination's grasp of full economic value. As such, organising the tourism service system and capturing value through destination management is essential given the available resources.

The monetary and economic contribution to a destination through tourism is of high importance to the actors in the region. Tourist activities generate income and job opportunities for local businesses and residents. The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) expect jobs and GPD will increase, with 126 million new jobs and an average of 5.8% annual growth in travel and tourism GDP over the next 10 years (WTTC, 2022). With tourist numbers, income and job

opportunities set to increase over the coming years, it is of the utmost importance to organise in such a way as to maximise the economic benefits tourism can provide.

The concept of a service constellation offers a technique to map and interlink the multitude of tourist services within a destination. Tourism managers have an opportunity to gain insight as to best optimise and maintain the services offered to consumers. Doing so increases efficiency in the constellation and overall customer satisfaction with the tourist destination.

The academic aim of this study is to add to the value constellation literature by developing and investigating the concept of a service constellation within the field of tourism. Where value constellations focus on value derived from the multiple actors that form a single organisation (Norman & Ramirez, 1993), service constellations derive value from multiple actors with respect to the constellation of services in which they perform (Van Riel et al., 2013). By establishing the service constellation, we can expand on the notion that services support each other and potentially increase each other's value creation potential across organisational borders as well as within single organisational ecosystems. Services which act in such a way, can then develop a new way to capture value.

The concept of service constellations is yet to be studied significantly, especially in the field of tourism. The technique used to form a service constellation considers a new way of developing the service blueprint, something which is yet to cross organisational borders. By developing the techniques to create a service constellation this study will add insight into the innovation literature for services in tourism, especially in service design and service quality from the consumer perspective.

1.2 Problem Statement

Consumers perceive services in a constellation holistically (Van Riel et al., 2013). If one particular service in a constellation excels, ceteris paribus, the overall perception of a tourism experience may be positive. Conversely, if a service fails, this may in turn give consumers an overall negative impression of the entire tourism experience. Furthermore, when considering a constellation of services within a tourist destination, the perception of the entire service experience may have an indirect impact on a destination's image or tourism product. Therefore, it is important to understand how services within a constellation affect each other and the constellation itself.

There are other underlying factors that promote the value of understanding a service constellation. Van Riel et al. (2013) go on to explain that while one service in a constellation may perform a basic act, its value to the constellation as a whole may be greater than its value by itself. As such, some services may perform a complementary role in a constellation that enhances the value of other services. Discovering these complementary services is then of key importance to the overall value of the constellation, especially as these services may not be of direct importance to individual businesses. Alternatively, some services may provide no additional value to other services or may even detract value from other services. Therefore, finding services which may reduce the value of other services, will allow for a much more efficient constellation, unless that particular service is essential to the constellation. As a result, this paper proposes the following research questions:

Research question:

How do services within a service constellation for a tourism destination affect each other and the value-creating potential of the constellation as a whole?

Sub questions:

(1) How do consumers perceive the value of services in the constellation?

(2) How does a change in one service affect another service in the constellation?

(3) How does a change in services affect the constellation as a whole?

1.3 Contribution

The results of this study help to understand consumer perception of services within a constellation. Understanding how consumers perceive the constellation and how they derive value from it will give service actors strategic insight into how to protect, maintain and develop their business in such a constellation. Moreover, it provides service actors and destination managers insight into how to create synergy within a service constellation, as well as create, manage and maintain a strong service constellation over time.

1.4 Approach

This study will use a qualitative research approach to create and validify a service constellation for a tourist destination. To begin to build the theory behind the service constellation, in the context of a tourism destination, the study will first carry out a focus group workshop with the aim of creating a service constellation and understanding the service dimensions involved within it. Once the service constellation for a specific tourist destination has been formed, the group members will be asked to give their insight on how they value the services in the constellation, how they perceive the value of the other services and how they perceive the service constellation operates as a whole.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Service Constellation

To understand how the concept of a service constellation was formed we must first understand the concept of value creation within organisational constellations. This can be seen in a value constellation, which was first proposed by Norman and Ramirez (1993). Norman and Ramirez (1993) understood that value chains no longer accurately describe how value is created in some organisations. Where value chains generate value linearly, with firms adding value at functional points in a chain of downstream activities (Porter, 1985), value constellations derive value through a set of actors within an organisation interconnectedly. Norman & Ramirez (1993) argue that each actor, whether an internal department or an outsourced firm, is interconnected within the value constellation it performs. And rather than add value linearly, the constellation 'reinvents' value through synergistic relationships. There may be multiple services and partnerships within a constellation which increase the strength of a business through its product and service offering.

While value constellations can be made up of a wide range of different organisations offering their own unique services to promote value, value constellations are organisationally bound to a single firm. The example given by Norman and Ramirez (1993) to explain this is the value constellation of IKEA. The value offered by IKEA goes beyond the products that they sell and includes the services provided at their stores (cafés, restaurants and child supervision services) as well as their relationship with suppliers, logistics and designers. A linear value chain does not explain the complex interaction between IKEA and its actors, as it does not highlight the exchange of value between the actors. The relationship between IKEA and its actors is more than transactional, as IKEA offers its expertise, knowledge and resources to improve the service of an actor. As a result, the value of an actor increases and so does the value of the

service constellation. While the actor may be external or even outsourced, it is still considered part of IKEA's value constellation. Yet, in turn, it may have its own organisational value constellation.

To better understand the way in which value is created in a constellation, we can consider value systems. A value system describes the collective value chains of firms in an upstream-downstream value chain. Each firm along the value chain (supplier, firm, buyer) has its own value chain. Collectively they encompass a value system (Porter, 1985). Supported by Jüttner and Wehrli (1994), they understand that value systems are 'transactions and relationships' between actors that increasingly develop over time. They describe a value system as, "a system of interdependent actors who raise the total value of the system by interactive value-generating processes and compete with other value systems in the 'competition system' of which they are parts" (Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994, p.63). It can be understood that the interactions and relationships between actors within a value system increase the value of the system and that actors compete to establish the best relationship to provide the most value. Therefore, the way in which value systems are made up is inherently designed to generate value for the constellation of actors and organisations involved. This suggests that interconnectivity between actors in a value system is not just a desirable strategy but an essential strategy for value creation. To create value, one must interact.

To further develop the notion of a service constellation we move on from value systems to understanding value creation between services, otherwise, refer to as service systems. Firstly, Vargo and Lusch (2004) proposed a new dominant logic based on services. Where the previous dominant logic was goods-based (GD Logic), the new logic is based on the action and relationship of actors within services. Where instead of an exchange of goods, an exchange of

intangible competencies is transferred, to the extent that the actors involved would co-create value. This service-centred dominant logic became known as service-dominant logic (SD Logic) (Vargo et al., 2006). It is important to acknowledge that interaction between actors within services creates value and is inherently co-created. This leads to a better understanding of service systems.

The concept of service systems is embedded in service science (Spohrer et al., 2007). Service systems engineering is an attempt by Tien and Berg (2003) to understand a complex system of services in the service sector where difficulties arise. They proposed by using service system engineering techniques, services could "enhance the design and production/delivery of services" (Tien & Berg, 2003, p.13). Therefore, a service system can be a useful tool to perceive the scope of actors and the interrelations between them in an environment. Moreover, service systems are arenas where value is created and co-created (Vargo et al., 2008). Moving on from value systems that are linearly formatted, service systems better explain an environment where collectively interdependent services interact and form relationships and exchanges to better increase their value. As such, a service constellation can be viewed in service science as a service system.

Before discussing the service constellation concept, we can first look at how value constellations have previously been used to serve service systems. Patrício et al. (2011) developed a Multilevel Service Design (MSD) that used a value constellation to design a service concept for an organisation. The value constellation was used to understand the customer experience which helped enable a suitable service offering. From there a service system was designed and then they developed how the service encounter would be enacted, by creating a service blueprint for each touchpoint in the service system. While a useful tool to

aid the design of a service-based firm, the technique does not go as far as creating and understanding a constellation of independent services. The MSD is limited to serving the organisation to which it is bound. Sempels and Hoffmann (2011) used the concept of a value constellation to map the actors involved in a sustainable service system of a car-sharing company. Semple and Hoffmann cleverly note that their Product Service System (PSS) approach is flawed as the infrastructure and network of actors go beyond a single organisational barrier and will require coordination with other actors outside the organisation's sphere of influence. The other actors outside of the company's control include services such as car parks and hire car companies. These insights could be recognised as the first steps in recognising the need for a more holistic service design, such as the proposed service constellation. Kieliszewski et al. (2012) used value constellations to model service systems within an urban city centre. They argued that urban areas could be seen as 'dynamic sociocultural systems' and with the use of value constellations, they could better analyse the service system which made up the community. The impact of the study greatly aids city planners as a tool to understand the key relationships and synergies between community actors. This way those able to manage the stakeholders in an urban area can effectively improve efficiency and value creation in the service system. This use of mapping key actors, relationships and value for a city centre is a promising technique to understand the interconnectivity of service actors within a tourist destination. Denicolai et al. (2010) understood this and used a value constellation to describe the interconnectivity of primary and support activities in a tourism network. They held that the value of tourism resources was more than the tangible assets of a destination. And recognised that a core competence of a tourist destination can be found through the organisation of key resources to create a competitive advantage. While their interpretation of a value constellation for a tourism network is well-founded, it does not encompass the multitude and diversity of potential services involved in a tourism destination. As such, a tourism network can be seen as

subjective to the destination involved and those who map service actors within a constellation, through customer journey analysis, should recognise this.

In a paper by Van Riel et al. (2013) the authors propose the concept of a service constellation. They describe a service constellation as a multitude of interconnected independent services that provide complimentary value to consumers as they buy and use services. Moreover, Van Riel et al. (2013) highlight that a service constellation focuses more on consumer value and how they perceive that value, rather than value for the organisation, which is an eco-system approach (Adner, 2006). Where ecosystems focus on the actors who provide services, service constellations focus on the services provided by the actors. For example, an ecosystem actor such as Hilton Hotels provides an accommodation service. Hilton Hotels is found in an ecosystem with other individual service providers such as Aviva Buses. The accommodation service is part of the service constellation with other service offerings such as transport services. It could be said then that ecosystems produce service constellations. Therefore, the value generated for consumers through the service constellation results in value for the ecosystem and moreover, the firms that make it up.

Van Riel et al. (2013) go on to propose a research agenda which includes further study on the constellation itself, the services within the constellation and how consumers perceive value from them, as well as the underlying service system. To map value creation in a service constellation, Van Riel et al. (2013) suggest adapting the service blueprint concept to include services in a cross-organisational manner. Then understand how and why the various services in the constellation enhance or diminish each other's value, from the perspective of the consumer. This paper will look to study the service constellation of a tourism destination, the services within the constellation and how consumers perceive value from them. Yet, studying

the underlying service system is out of scope for this paper. This paper will go as far as to use customer journey analysis to design the service blueprint of the service constellation but will not design nor study the underlying service of each service actor as a service blueprint calls for (Shostack, 1984). This paper intends to document the range of services provided and how they give value to the consumer and the constellation.

2.2 Creating a Service Constellation through Customer Journey Mapping and Analysis

Customer journey techniques have been used in a variety of ways. Both to help construct and understand services. As part of service design, firms have used customer journeys to guide their design and creation of service offerings to their customers (Kimbell, 2011). Additionally, firms have also used customer journeys to gain a better understanding of the customer experience. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) understood that customer experience can be determined by analysing the customer journey through three different purchase stages: pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. And within these stages, they highlight four key touchpoints between the customer and the firm: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned and social/external/independent touchpoints. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) explain that measuring the level of customer experience throughout the purchase stages and touchpoints of the customer journey would in turn lead to better customer experience management. Yet, they note that many studies do not go as far as measuring the customer experience of individual touchpoints or purchase stages, only the overall customer experience. Therefore, to fully utilise customer journey analysis to provide a complete measure of the customer experience, it would be beneficial to measure the customer experience at each touchpoint through the purchase stages. In this research, the purchase stages will be viewed as the stages of a tourist trip: the pre-trip stage, the trip stage and the post-trip stage.

To conceptualise a service constellation of a tourist destination, one method would be to analyse customer journey maps. Følstad and Kvale (2018, p. 209) state, "Customer journey mapping is the activities performed to analyze an existing service process 'as is'." And so, documenting the services as they are available presently. As suggested earlier, the customer journey would encapsulate the touchpoints experienced in the pre-trip stage, the trip stage and the post-trip stage. These touchpoints would be represented as the services experienced by consumers. Pre-trip stage services could include booking services or transport services. Trip-stage services could include accommodation services or entertainment services. Post-trip stage services could include evaluation services such as travel forums or feedback surveys. This journey of services by the traveller can be mapped in different ways. Rosenbaum et al. (2017) advise that most customer journey maps are created theoretically, and few have been created using real examples. Such theoretical customer journeys include customer journey propositions, in that a "customer journey proposition refers to the generative design activities within a customer journey perspective which leads toward a possible service 'to be.'" (Følstad & Kvale, 2018, p. 210). Customer journeys created using real examples include the study by Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009), who planned to map customer journeys through geo-location mobile phone data of customers for a tourist destination. Although there is no definitive way to map a customer journey through touchpoints (Tueanrat et al., 2021), this paper will do so using real-life examples while documenting services 'as is'. This will be done through a focus group workshop.

The analysis of a customer journey map, or customer journey analysis, is a 'bottom-up approach' to understanding the service process from a consumer perspective (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). In this way, the customer determines the services which are utilised and those which are not, which is of great importance in understanding consumers' needs and wants.

Moreover, sourcing knowledge in such a way is of great value, given the co-creational relationship between the consumer and the tourism product (Yachin, 2018), which better helps to understand the tourism experience. This consumer-generated approach to gaining knowledge through customer journey mapping and analysis drives the understanding and formation of a service constellation for a tourism destination.

To form a service constellation for a tourism destination a customer journey map must be created and then analysed, with the touchpoints or service actors representing the type of service offered. As noted earlier many customer journeys are not based on real examples of customer experiences. Such customer journey mapping techniques use information derived from employees or managers of a firm who identify touchpoints customers might use. Rosenbaum et al. (2017) created a customer journey for a shopping mall based on recommendations from management. They went on to verify the appropriateness of the customer journey through questionnaires with shoppers. The results showed that of the touchpoints recommended by management less than half of respondents experienced them. As a method to map a true customer journey, this technique lacks the ability to generate a complete view. Other studies also highlight the discrepancies in firm-based customer journey mapping. Shiratori et al. (2021) compared two customer journeys. One was created from the view of a firm, as a planned customer journey, ‘to be’. The other was created from the direct feedback of clients, ‘as is’. The study found that the customer journey as imagined by the firm missed touchpoints that were represented in the actual customer journey. And so, planned customer journeys, created through the perception of firms, may not capture the true customer journey. Arguably, a more accurate account of a customer journey map should be derived from customer feedback.

Customer journey maps are useful representations of the customer/service process. Many customer journey maps, "are typically visualized as processes spanning a number of steps, stages, touchpoints, or activities; as a horizontal line or row or a vertical line or column" (Følstad & Kvale, 2018, p. 204), with each step, stage, touchpoint or activity supplemented with a score relating to a value of customer interaction. Stickdorn and Zehrer (2009) for example, represented their customer journey horizontally from left to right, noting the touchpoints at each service stage; pre-service, service period, and post-service. And at each touchpoint, there is a mean customer rating on a scale of minus 5 to plus 5. This visual representation is a simple and effective way to map a customer journey while displaying important information about each touchpoint.

Given that customer journey maps could encompass a vast number of touchpoints, it goes without saying that touchpoints offering similar services should be categorised together. As described in the previous chapter, the ecosystem approach (Adner, 2006), which describes service actors as providers of services (represented on a customer journey map as touchpoints), is different to the service constellation approach (Van Riel et al., 2013), which describes types of services provided by service actors. In reviewing the touchpoints of a customer journey map, touchpoints should be re-categorised with respect to the function or type of service they perform. For example, touchpoints such as restaurants, bistros or fast-food outlets could be categorised as 'Food Services', similarly, touchpoints such as hotels, hostels or rental apartments could be categorised as 'Accommodation Services'. This suggestion is in line with a study by Rosenbaum et al. (2017, p. 5) who suggest to, "resist designing all-inclusive customer journey maps that contain all possible touchpoints, as doing so can result in a highly complex customer journey map that customers may or may not follow." As such, the customer

journey map designed for this study will collate and categorise touchpoints into the service functions they perform.

Analysing a customer journey map is a useful tool to understand customer satisfaction for a bundle of services, such as found in a service constellation, as customer satisfaction can be measured at each touchpoint. Tueanrat et al. (2021, p. 340) state that "customer satisfaction has primarily been conceptualised as an alignment between service delivery and customer expectation." The difference between expected service delivery and actual delivery, as perceived by the customer, represents the level of satisfaction, whether positive or negative (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). When services match or exceed expectations, satisfaction is generated, while falling short of expectations generates dissatisfaction (Stickdorn & Zehrer, 2009). And so, the touchpoints of a customer journey for a tourist trip can be represented as differing levels of customer satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Therefore, combining these levels could contribute to understanding the overall experience of a tourist trip. Moreover, if touchpoints are to be categorised into the service functions they perform, it is important then to understand the level of satisfaction for each service type or category. Such as the level of satisfaction with travel services or accommodation services. In turn, the combination of satisfaction levels for all service types would contribute to understanding the value of a service constellation as a whole and the overall experience of a tourism destination. Therefore, the evaluations of service types that make up a service constellation could be interpreted as variables that affect the overall experience of a tourist trip. This provides new insight into how to evaluate the effect of different service types within a constellation. By categorising services into types, one can more easily visualise the value of the service it offers and more easily visualise the interactions between each service type. Potentially envisaging increased value or

decreased value of service types when they interact, which may result in a change in the overall experience of a tourism destination.

2.3 Destination Management

Service constellation research can be an effective tool to manage service actors in a tourist destination. Due to the complexity of tourist sites, Varghese and Paul (2014) understood the need for Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) to bring an air of control over tourist areas while still gaining tourist satisfaction.

Destination Management Organisations, otherwise referred to as Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), are known to manage and market tourist destinations. The beginnings of DMOs date back to the late 19th century and were known then as Convention and Visitor Bureaus (CVBs) (Gartrell, 1993). CVBs are typically non-profit organisations formed on behalf of their host city to promote their destination as a place to attract visitors for business or leisure stays. In later years CVBs have been compared as a type of Destination Marketing Organisation (Morrison, 1989) and more recently as a type of Destination Management Organisation (Morrison, 2022). Moreover CVBs, as Destination Marketing Organisations, have been described by five primary functions:

> "(1) an "economic driver" generating new income, employment, and taxes contributing to a more diversified local economy; (2) a "community marketer" communicating the most appropriate destination image, attractions, and facilities to selected visitor markets; (3) an "industry coordinator" providing a clear focus and encouraging less in-industry fragmentation so as to share in the growing benefits of tourism; (4) a "quasi-public representative" adding legitimacy for the industry and protection to individual

> and group visitors; and (5) a "builder of community pride" by enhancing quality of life and acting as the chief "flag carrier" for residents and visitors alike." (Morrison et al., 1998, p.5).

As such, DMOs manage many different actors and stakeholders, which supports their description as Destination Management Organisations, not just Destination Marketing Organisations. Furthermore, the holistic nature of a tourism destination calls for management between actors and stakeholders, as poor coordination between actors can have an impact on a destination as "a change in one (actor) has ramifications for all of the others." (Presenza et al., 2005, p. 2). Hereby underlining the importance of understanding a tourist destination's service constellation, as CVBs function as an "industry coordinator" (Morrison et al., 1998, p.5) encouraging less in-industry fragmentation

As noted earlier, the stakeholders that make up a tourist destination can be numerous and can include local government, tourism associations, tour operators and travel agencies, as well as accommodation and hospitality services (Presenza, & Cipollina, 2010). To analyse and understand the relationship within a group of stakeholders, in a tourist destination, stakeholder theory has been regularly used as a technique to do so (Byrd, 2007; Khazaei et al., 2015; Nilsson, 2007; Theodoulidis et al., 2017). Stakeholder theory, as developed by Freeman (1984), maintains that stakeholders are characterised by being able to affect or able to be affected by an organisation's objectives. In terms of stakeholders for a tourism destination, they could be viewed as the actors who contribute to or are affected by a destination's collective objectives, as managed by a DMO. If we view the services within a constellation as stakeholders, we continue to understand the importance of analysis and collective management. Sautter and Leisen (1999) understood this and called for better management of stakeholders in tourism

planning. Still more, Presenza and Cipollina (2010) went a step further by analysing tourism stakeholders using network analysis. In doing so they underline the importance and desire of stakeholders in creating relationships with each other. However, their technique of network analysis was purely based on the perspective of firms. Whereby the service constellation approach in this study is drawn from the consumer perspective. As such, the results of this study may offer a different insight into how services should relate and coordinate with one another. Furthermore, as nodes within a service constellation represent the type of service provided by stakeholders, the network graph would be much simpler than a network graph of all the individual service providers of a tourist destination. For example, a network graph of individual service providers may compose of: hotels, hostels, restaurants, fast-food outlets, cafés, museums and theatres. Whereas a network graph of a service constellation would be simplified to: accommodation services, food services and entertainment services. As such, the analysis of a service constellation is determined by the value of the service provided, not the service provider. In turn, providing an alternative view of stakeholder relationships for a tourist destination.

Another important task for destination managers is the ability to manage service quality in a destination effectively. The service constellation approach gives DMOs a way to gather information on the quality of services and the relationship between services built from a consumer perspective. Understanding which services are most valued or least valued with respect to the overall satisfaction of a tourist trip is key in utilising the services available to a destination effectively. If for example, food services are a highly valued service, yet a destination lacks quality or capacity, DMOs may look to invest in improving quality or encourage other service providers such as cafes to provide additional food services. While service quality is a well-studied concept, there is no concrete definition for it. Service quality

has been thought of as the total combined perceptions of experiencing a service (Knutson, 2001). Other studies, however, use the term differently and in many cases, service quality involves customer expectations (Tosun et al., 2015). In relation to tourism, Kayat, and Abdul Hai (2014, p. 3) found that "perceived service quality is important not only for tourists' satisfaction but also for building a strong image about a destination." And so, the term Destination Service Quality (DSQ) has recently been used in studies to investigate the service quality of tourism destinations, such as studies by Abdulla et al. (2020) and Tosun et al. (2015). In these studies, DSQ was measured using seven variables: Accommodation, Local transport, Cleanliness, Hospitality, Activities, Language and Airport. Abdulla et al. (2020) measured the seven variables in relation to Tourist Satisfaction, while Tosun et al. (2015) measured the variables in relation to the Affective Image of a destination, which in turn impacted Revisiting Intention. Interestingly the study by Abdulla et al. (2020) found that all seven variables had a positive effect on Tourist Satisfaction. The greatest influence on Tourist Satisfaction was found to be Hospitality, which in the original study by Kozak (2001), relates also to Customer Care. Consequently, these findings offer insight as to how DSQ can influence the positive perception and overall satisfaction of a tourist destination. In turn, these studies in DSQ provide the primary steps in understanding how services affect the perception of a tourist destination. Yet, the service constellation approach takes further steps. Through customer engagement and the creation of customer journeys, the service constellation approach has the ability to conceive of potential new services, not yet studied, as variables to measure DSQ.

Destination managers, along with generating customer satisfaction, must also look to manage levels of customer dissatisfaction. Michalkó et al. (2015) describe the importance of DMOs to manage customer disappointment in tourist destinations. They claim disappointment is an under-studied concept in tourism literature, as most studies focus on positive aspects of travel

such as satisfaction. Moreover, they argue that “tourist disappointment derives from two main sources. The first source is external or extrinsic factors and is related to elements of the tourist's surrounding environment. The second source is internal or intrinsic factors nourished by the tourist's own consciousness, attitudes and life experiences.” (Michalkó et al., 2015, p. 87). Given the nature of these factors, DMOs may find it difficult to control disappointment. Still, Michalkó et al. (2015) go on to highlight aspects of a tourist trip that could potentially create disappointment, from the pre-trip stage through to the post-trip stage, that destination managers could influence or react to. Factors such as orientation assistance, quality of public transport and providing sufficient information have been highlighted as potential factors that could be better managed by destination managers, community members, local government agencies, and individual businesses (Michalkó et al., 2015, pp. 80-89). While tourists who experience disappointment with factors such as sanitary conditions and the condition of the tourism environment could be compensated, in some way, by DMOs (Michalkó et al., 2015, p. 89). Moreover, Michalkó et al. (2015, p. 89) claim that “the responsibility for eliminating factors that might generate disappointment should be a priority for DMOs and the service sector.” Therefore, DMOs need to manage service actors in a destination in a customer-centric way, while using the appropriate tools to understand the pain points and possible negative aspects of a tourist trip.

Consequently, this study will look to seek negative feedback from consumers during the qualitative stage of the methodology, when forming the customer journey and analysing the service constellation. In addition, respondents in the qualitative phase of this study will be asked to rate the impact of a poorly functioning service on other services within the constellation. As a result, this study aims to further understand possible disappointment factors within a tourist trip, and then go on to test these factors in relation to the overall satisfaction of

a tourist destination. And in doing so, this study will better understand the relationship between services within a constellation.

3. Research Design

This study uses an exploratory qualitative research design to achieve its research aims.

The study's research question asks: How do services within a service constellation for a tourism destination affect each other and the value-creating potential of the constellation as a whole? To realise the question the researcher asks the following sub-questions: (1) How do consumers perceive the value of individual services in the constellation? (2) How does a change in one service affect another service in the constellation? (3) How does a change in services affect the constellation as a whole?

To the researcher's knowledge, the service constellation is yet to be applied and studied. As a result, this study calls for exploratory research to develop the theory behind the service constellation concept. To do so, this study implemented qualitative research to explore which services will encompass a service constellation for a tourist destination and what effect they had on each other and the constellation. The aim of the study is to first understand how a constellation is made up, how its actors interact with each other and how consumers perceive these actors and the constellation as a whole, through its operation. Therefore, through qualitative research, variables were identified and a theory of how it operates was formed. As explained by Whetten (1989) a theoretical contribution answers "what" and "how" questions in research, such that "what" questions aim to understand which factors constitute a phenomenon or concept and "how" questions aim to understand how these factors interact or are related. As such, this study's qualitative analysis contributes to answering these "what" and provides propositions to answer these "how" questions. In doing so this study looks to add to the service constellation literature and further develop the theoretical framework.

3.1 Method of Data Collection

Human participants were used for their insight of a tourist destination. The sample criteria for the study were people who had been to a major city for a leisure tourist trip to a tourism destination, for at least one overnight in the last 18 months. Namely, post Covid-19 restrictions. Furthermore, all individuals must have visited the same city. The sample was selected using convenience sampling and snowballing techniques. The sample was chosen from Erasmus students visiting a Belgian university for one winter semester. The sample students had visited Amsterdam during their Erasmus stay, shortly before the focus group was conducted, without visiting together. The sample was made up of two males and three females between the ages of 21 and 23. The subjects were informed of the purpose of the study and will remain anonymous. Pseudo-names were chosen by the participants themselves. As stated previously, the tool of the qualitative study was a focus group. However, the focus group was not entirely performed as an interview, but firstly as a workshop to identify the actors involved in the service constellation. The group used stationery materials such as cards and post-its to construct a visualisation of the constellation, which was then used as a base for discussion among the group. The focus group was conducted on the 7th of December 2023 and lasted approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. The focus group began with an introductory explanation of the study, including the service constellation concept, criteria of service actors or touchpoints, customer journey mapping and customer journey analysis. The theory of which is taken from this study's literature review. After these concepts were understood, the first step of the workshop was for each member to write down their individual customer journey relating to their trip to Amsterdam. Starting with preliminary services used before the trip (pre-trip stage) through to the services used during the trip (trip stage) and after the trip (post-trip stage). The next stage of the workshop was to categorise the service touchpoints into the type of service they provided, the group did this in consensus and the service types were recorded onto individual

cards. For example, a hotel was categorised as an Accommodation Service, the cathedral was categorised as a Cultural Site and a restaurant was categorised as a Food Service. Once all service touchpoints were categorised a service constellation was created, such that each service category or service type represented a position or point in the constellation. Each participant was asked to rate each service category on a scale of 0-10, 0 representing no value to a tourist trip and 10 representing essential to a tourist trip. A mean score was taken for each service category, which represented the perceived value of the individual service type in the service constellation. The next step was intended to gauge the effect of one service type on another in the constellation. For each service category, the following question was asked, "if this service type functioned extremely poorly, would it affect the following service type positively or negatively.". In consensus, the respondents compared each service type against all others in the constellation, with the above question in mind. For each service type, the respondents discussed and listed other service types which they believed would be positively or negatively affected. The respondents attached post-its listing the service types, which would be negatively or positively affected, onto the card which represented the service type. Herein, the relationship between service types was understood. The final step of the focus group was a key discussion intended to gain insight into any negative experiences with the services they were involved with. The following open questions were asked in sequence, "Were there any services which were frustrating or poor?", "If so, how did that impact other services?" and "How could it have been avoided?". The responses to these questions, as well as all the previous steps in the focus group, were voice recorded and all materials used to construct the service constellation were kept for later data analysis.

3.2 Qualitative Method of Data Analysis

The qualitative study analysed the service constellation formed by the focus group and how the services that make it up affect each other. The session was voice recorded and played back by the researcher as a reference to key points made by the group, which are highlighted in the following chapter Results. The materials used to form the service constellation such as the customer journey maps, post-its and cards were visualised as a table and analysed, see Fig 5. The final discussion of the focus group was analysed by recognising repeated themes and noting key feedback. Thereafter, propositions were formulated which will be noted in the discussion chapter.

The subjects of the focus group were informed of the purpose and intentions of the study before any discussion or data was collected. The subjects will remain anonymous and were given the researcher's contact information should they have any further questions about the study.

4. Results

The subjects that made up the focus group were three females and two males between the ages of 21 and 23, their details are found below in Fig. 1:

Focus group subjects				
Pseudo name	Gender	Age at time of trip	Month of trip	Number of overnights
Chiara	Female	23	September 2022	1
Kylie	Male	23	October 2022	2
Max	Male	22	November 2022	2
Sara	Female	21	July 2022	3
Tom	Male	22	November 2022	2

Fig. 1: Focus group subjects

The first step of the focus group saw each member write down their own customer journey for the pre-trip stage of their experience. An example of a customer journey for this stage is taken from Max's account: Google search > TripAdvisor > Booking.com > SNCB train website > Train service > Amsterdam Central Train Station. Each respondent gave their account and communally they organise each service touchpoint into service types or categories. An example of the service touchpoints and categories can be seen in Fig. 2:

In the second step, the respondents wrote down their own customer journey for the trip stage of their visit. An example of this is taken from Tom's account starting from the central train station: Tram > Hotel > Tram > Restaurant > Drinking Bar > Coffee Shop > Hotel > Supermarket > Google Maps > Foodhall > Museum > Library > McDonalds > Van Gough Museum > Pizzeria > Bar > Tram > Hotel > Supermarket > Tram > Flixbus > Home. Each respondent gave their own account of their customer journey, and the group organised each

service touchpoint into service categories. An example of the service touchpoints and categories can be seen in Fig. 3:

Pre-trip stage service touchpoints and service categories			
Booking Services	Travel-to-Destination Services	Arrival Services	Search Services
Booking.com SNCB website Flixbus Skyscanner Ticketmaster	Train Airplane Coach	Train station Airport Bus station	Google TripAdvisor Instagram TikTok

Fig. 2: Pre-trip stage service touchpoints and service categories

Trip stage service touchpoints and service categories						
Accommodation Services	Food Services	Entertainment Services	Cultural Sites	Drink Services	Internal Transportation Services	Shopping Services
Hotels Hostels Airbnb	Restaurants Fast Food Street Food Food halls Food truck	City Tours Dance Clubs Sports Events Boat tours	Museums Churches Cathedral Monuments	Cafés Bars Pubs Coffeeshops	Trams Buses Taxis Tuk-tuks	Clothes Foods Souvenirs

Fig. 3: Trip stage service touchpoints and service categories

The intention of the third step was made for the respondents to write down the post-trip services they used. However, none of the respondents claimed they used any. Still, it was discussed that

on other trips one of the respondents posted pictures on their social media accounts after returning home. But they did not go as far as to give such a detailed account of their trip after it had occurred.

> Kylie explained, "I usually post pics on my social media while I'm there. I've stopped doing it when I'm home but used to for other trips." Chiara added, "I use TripAdvisor a lot, but not to post anything. Usually just to read the reviews."

Eleven service categories formed from steps 1 and 2 of the focus group made up the initial service constellation for Amsterdam. Step 4 of the focus group asked the respondents to rate the importance of each service category for their trip, on a scale of 0-10. 0 represented no value while 10 represented essential. The mean results can be seen in Fig 4:

Mean results of individual service categories		
Services category	Mean Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Accommodation Services	8.8	2.2
Booking Services	8.6	1.1
Travel-to-Destination Services	8.6	0.89
Arrival Services	8.4	0.54
Food Services	8	2
Entertainment Services	8	2
Search Services	7.2	1.9
Cultural Sites	6.2	1.1
Drink Service	5.2	0.8
Internal Transportation Services	5	3.5
Shopping Services	4.4	2.9

Fig. 4: Mean results of individual service categories

Step 5 required respondents to go through each service category one by one and note which other service categories would be affected, positively or negatively, where the service category focused on performed poorly. The results are found in Fig. 5.

The effect on service types between categories												
	Service types affected											
The focus service category	Service category	Accomm. Services	Booking Services	Travel-to-Destination Services	Arrival Services	Food Services	Entertain. Services	Search Services	Cultural Sites	Drink Services	Internal Transport	Shopping Services
	Accomm. Services											
	Booking Services											
	Travel-to-Destination Services											
	Arrival Services											
	Food Services											
	Entertain. Services											
	Search Services											
	Cultural Sites											
	Drink Services											
	Internal Transport											
	Shopping Services											

Fig. 5: The effect on service types between categories

(Red: Negative affect. Green: Positive affect)

Step 6 of the focus group discussed the service constellation as a whole. The following open questions were asked in sequence, “Were there any services which were frustrating or poor?”, “If so, how did that impact other services?” and “How could it have been avoided?”. A common theme in this discussion was the importance of Informational Services during the trip stage of the visit. Informational Services such as Google, Google Maps and TripAdvisor helped respondents find suitable services such as Food Services and helped them navigate through the destination.

> Sara commented, “I didn’t eat well, I couldn’t find anything to eat, because I don’t eat meat. So, food was such a hard thing. But it didn’t really impact the travel. I mean, I could still eat something, even if I didn’t like it.”. To which Tom responded, “The food (services) could be improved. For me, I searched for a lot of stuff because I don’t eat meat. So, I searched for stuff I could go to, where you can eat vegetarian or vegan options.” Chiara interjected, “When you choose something to eat, it happens a lot that you just go on Google Maps, and you search for places that are close to you. Or even TripAdvisor, I use that.”. Kylie added, “I keep using Google while I’m there.”.

Another theme in the discussion was the importance of Booking Services. Quality booking services could improve accommodation choices, which would lead to improved entertainment, cultural and shopping experiences.

> Tom explained, “Especially with our accommodation, it did impact the cultural and entertainment a bit. Because we didn’t sleep that well. Of course, we enjoyed the trip. But if you really are awake, and not tired, you enjoy it more.”. The researcher then asked, “So the poor accommodation affected your entertainment?”. Tom replied, “Yes,

> as well as culture and shopping experience." The researcher then questioned, "How could that have been avoided?". Tom responded, "Choose a better accommodation. That goes back to booking services. That there are just more accommodations available and especially at the price point you want." Sara added, "I agree with the accommodation because it's really hard to find a good place for a good price.".

The importance of Booking Services was further discussed when in relation to Cultural Sites. Improved booking services could improve the services of cultural sites.

> Tom explained, "We wanted to go to the Van Gough Museum and the Anne Frank House. And you just couldn't go there because there weren't any tickets available. It impacted our experience a bit, but not that much. It could be improved very drastically with booking because you have to book the tickets online. It could be that not all tickets are put online at the same time. That you can also get some tickets in person, or you could buy them the same day. So, that they spread the availability of the tickets.". Kylie added, "Absolutely, the very frustrating part of the trip was that we couldn't book for the museums because they were already fully booked. So, it might be a solution to improve the booking services. Keeping some of them (tickets) available daily. Like, one can pass by and book a ticket. And also, for a person that booked and doesn't go, that ticket can be available for someone else that really is there. Because, the booking is to be taken so much in advance that anything can happen in between. So, someone that booked months before might not be there that day. Very frustrating the booking services for the museums."

5. Discussion

The aim of the study is to understand how services within a service constellation for a tourism destination affect each other and the value-creating potential of the constellation as a whole. To realise the question the researcher asks the following sub-questions: (1) How do consumers perceive the value of individual services in the constellation? (2) How does a change in one service affect another service in the constellation? (3) How does a change in services affect the constellation as a whole? This study now discusses the results of the focus group workshop, in view to answering the research questions.

To answer the research question, a service constellation was formed and studied. This was produced in steps 1, 2 and 3 of the focus group. The initial results are as follows (Fig. 6):

Pre-trip Services			
Booking Services	Travel-to-Destination Services	Arrival Services	Search Services

Trip Services						
Accommodation Services	Food Services	Entertainment Services	Cultural Sites	Drink Services	Internal Transportation Services	Shopping Services

Post-trip Services
N/A

Fig. 6: Initial Service Constellation

The initial service constellation, constructed through using customer journeys, does not encompass services throughout the whole trip, unlike studies such as Stickdorn and Zehrer

(2009). The initial service constellation here does not show services for the post-trip stage of the customer journey. Given the sample size of the qualitative study, it could be expected that such services within the post-trip stage are missed.

To finalise the service constellation, the researcher considered the discussions within the group about services used that were not included in the initial service constellation. Informational Services were used throughout the trip stage by all respondents. Informational services such as Google, Google Maps and TripAdvisor were used to assist the participants in selecting suitable services during the trip stage and to help them navigate throughout the destination. As a result, the researcher believes Information Services are an important service, if only complementary, to a visitor's trip and so should be included in the service constellation at the trip stage.

Another discussion worth noting was in regard to services used at the post-trip stage. While no respondents claimed to use any post-trip services during their trip, they were discussed. Post-trip evaluation services such as TripAdvisor and social media accounts were discussed. While none of the respondents evaluated nor posted their experience here, many did state it was useful as an informational search tool. As such, services such as TripAdvisor and social media sites work both as an informational search service and an evaluation service. Users of evaluation services share their experience of services within a tourist destination which then results in an informational tool for others. Therefore, evaluation services are interlinked with other services within the constellation and play an important role, albeit after the trip has ended. Consequently, the researcher deems it necessary to include Evaluation Services within the service constellation at the post-trip stage.

Given the additional service types, Informational Services (trip stage) and Evaluation Services (post-trip stage), a final service constellation can be concluded, as seen in Fig. 7:

Pre-trip Services			
Booking Services	Travel-to-Destination Services	Arrival Services	Search Services

Trip Services							
Accommodation Services	Food Services	Entertainment Services	Cultural Sites	Drink Services	Internal Transportation Services	Shopping Services	Informational Services

Post-trip Services
Evaluation Services

Fig. 7: Final service constellation

To answer sub-question (1), How do consumers perceive the value of individual services in the constellation? The respondents were asked how they valued the individual service types within the initial service constellation, on a scale of 0-10. 0 representing no value and 10 representing essential. While this does not measure the perceived value generated by the service type for the constellation as a whole, but rather a service type's importance in the constellation, the insight generated helps to identify the importance of a service type to the individual tourist and identify the status of the service type within the constellation.

The highest scoring service types were Accommodation Services (M=8.8, SD=2.2), followed by Booking Services (M=8.6, SD=1.1), Travel-to-Destination Services (M=8.6, SD=0.89) and Arrival Services (M=8.4, SD=0.54). Given that all subjects of the focus group stayed at the destination for at least one overnight, it could be argued that Accommodation Services would be expected to gain a high score. The large standard deviation value (2.2) can be explained by

Chiara, as she did not use any accommodation services. But instead stayed at a friend's house, scoring the value of this service type at 5/10. Therefore, it could be argued that those who do not use accommodation services, but instead opt for a day trip or stay with friends or family, would consider the value of Accommodation Services as less than those who need to use them. This shows that the situation of a tourist impacts their perceived value of a service type. Depending on a tourist's situation, for example, whether they need accommodation at a tourism destination or not, the related service type may be perceived as having a higher or lower value.

The high mean score for Booking Services can be explained by the discussion during step 6 of the focus group. The respondents highlighted the frustration of booking services at cultural sites as well as its importance in choosing appropriate accommodation. Its importance is high as its experience in use is seen to affect other aspects of a tourist trip. Therefore, when the accessibility of certain services is low, supporting services such as Booking Services are perceived as more valuable.

The high mean score of Travel-to-Destination Services and Arrival Services can be explained as essential to the trip, as all respondents used these services and would not be able to arrive at the destination without their use of them. In turn, tourists who use alternative transport to a destination, such as their own cars or caravans may value these service types less. Again, a tourist's need for a particular service depends on their situation.

The lowest scoring service types were Shopping Services (M=4.4, SD=2.9) and Internal Transportation Services (M= 5, SD=3.5). The low score for Shopping Services can be explained as a low essential service indicative of a trip to Amsterdam of the respondents, as this activity was not high on their agenda.

> Kylie explains, “If you wanted to buy something in Amsterdam, you could just order it online instead.”. Tom stated, “I didn’t go to Amsterdam specifically to go shopping.”. And Chiara added, “I went to the flower market, but not to buy anything. More for the cultural experience.”

The standard deviation (2.9) highlights the contrast in opinion for the value of Shopping services. Tom scored the service type as 1, while Max scored the service type as 8. Therefore, a service type’s value differs from person to person. In the case of Chiara, who went to the flower market for the cultural experience rather than for the shopping, the cultural. experience outweighs the value of shopping. This can be seen in her rating of Cultural Sites (7) and Shopping Services (2). Still, not every tourist will have the same values. Each tourist is likely to have individual preferences. Therefore, it is important to consider the relationship between tourist activities that offer multiple services in one. In the case of the flower market, those who value shopping and culture respectively, can both still enjoy the experience.

The low Internal Transport Services score can also be explained by the contrast in perceived value from respondent to respondent, as highlighted by the standard deviation (3.5). Low scorers of this service type such as Max, who scored it a 1, stated they preferred to walk. Whereas Tom who scored the service type a 9, used the tram multiple times during his trip. As a result, the value of Internal Transport Services may vary depending on personality, ability, or moreso the size and scale of the destination, of which Amsterdam is pedestrian friendly. And so the preference of an individual impacts their perceived value of a service type.

In review of sub-question (1), How do consumers perceive the value of individual services in the constellation? We see that services are valued differently and that perceived value is dependent on various factors such as preference, situation and accessibility. Preference, such as preferring to walk rather than take public transport or preferring cultural experiences over shopping. Situation, such as needing to book accommodation if a tourist is to spend an overnight at a tourism destination, or the need for transportation services if one does not have their own means of transport. Accessibility, such as being able to access a cultural site or the availability of quality accommodation. Thus, it is important to understand the different factors for which value is perceived by tourists for individual services.

To answer sub-question (2) How does a change in one service affect another service in the constellation? The respondents were asked about the interaction between service types in step 5 of the focus group, which is represented in Fig. 5. To understand the constellation more holistically, the respondents were asked to move on from perceiving the value of service types individually to conceptualising how the performance of one service type could affect another in the constellation. A question was posed for each service type individually, “if this service type functioned extremely poorly, would it affect the following service type positively or negatively.” As seen in Fig. 5, poor Accommodation Services, Travel-to-Destination Services and Search Services were considered to affect all other service types negatively. The rationale of the respondents was that a perceived poor performance would lead to a hindrance of other service types. Given the individual service scores for Accommodation Services (8.8) and Travel-to-Destination Services (8.6), this could be understood. Yet, the importance of Search Services for all other service types given its individual score is somewhat surprising. However, considering the group's discussion of Informational Services as a search tool during the trip stage, Search Services could be considered an important search tool during the pre-trip stage.

As a result, a poorly performing pre-trip Search Service could limit tourists' visibility of service offerings, hindering their use.

Poorly performing service types which affect other service types negatively can be understood to have a positive association. Likewise, if a service type performs expertly, positively associated service types will be affected positively. An increase in the performance of one will lead to an increase in the value of another and vice versa. However, it must be noted that this relationship is not always true, as shown in the table. One service type can be seen to affect another negatively, yet if the order is switched the relationship does not show the same association. For example, poorly performing Drink Services are seen to impact Entertainment Services negatively. Yet, poorly performing Entertainment Services are not shown to impact Drink Services. Another example of this is the relationship between Booking Services and Search Services. Where Booking Services are poor, it is seen to have a positive impact on Search Services. The rationale of the group was that poorly performing Booking Services would lead to greater use of Search Services. Yet, where Search Services are poor, they are seen to impact the Booking Services negatively. The rationale of the group is that poor Search Services lead to a lack of information to find suitable Booking Services.

Negatively associated service types can also be seen as those that affect another service type positively when it performs poorly. There are three negatively associated service types as shown in Fig. 5. Shopping Services, Cultural Sites and Entertainment Services. A decrease in the performance of either of these service types results in an increase in the value of the others. Similarly, an increase in the performance of one leads to a decrease in the value of the others. The rationale of the respondents is that where one of the service types performs poorly, the importance of the alternative service types increases. If Shopping Services are poor, tourists

will opt for alternative activities such as Entertainment Services or Cultural Services. Similarly, where Entertainment Services or Cultural Sites perform expertly, Shopping Services are valued and used less. This rationale was reasoned previously when discussing the individual value of Shopping Services.

In review of sub-question (2): How does a change in one service affect another service in the constellation? The relationship between service types and their perceived effect on others shows complex interactions between services in the constellation. There are positive and negative associations, as well as one-directional associations between service types. From the discussion in the focus group, it can be reasoned that the degree to which a particular service is valued depends on an individual's perceived value of another. This is a striking inference by the focus group that the relative impact of a service depends on a subjective individual valuation. As for the service constellation as a whole, we therefore see that not all services have an equal impact. Services within a constellation add value of differing strengths depending on individual preference.

The study does not go as far as to determine the overall end value perceived by the consumer from the constellation. While these relationships proposed by the focus group are no less valid, we cannot yet determine through qualitative research the limit to which they may affect the constellation holistically. Therefore, the following chapter discusses propositions of service impact for the service constellation, based on common themes found in the qualitative study.

5.1 Propositions

The following propositions suggest an answer to sub-question (3): How does a change in services affect the constellation as a whole?

Proposition (1): *Without Search Services, Informational Services and Evaluation Services the perceived value of a service constellation as a whole will be less than if it had these services.*

A common theme in the discussions of the service constellation was the use of search or informational services. Pre-trip stage Search Services, trip stage Informational Services and post-trip stage Evaluation Services are all similar in nature and offer a complimentary service. Search Services and Informational Services provide information to tourists during each stage of the trip. In some cases, these services are supported and in essence, created by post-trip Evaluation Services. Post-trip evaluations of tourism destinations by former travellers are shared on evaluation sites. In turn, the information is available for those in the pre-trip and trip stage of a tourist trip. There is an important link between these services such that they are reliant on each other's performance. Without Evaluation Services there is less information to support Search Services and Informational Services. Without Search Services and Informational Services, there is no need for Evaluation Services to provide information.

The importance of these service types is evident at each stage of the trip. In most cases, they support the use of other service types by providing better visibility of services to tourists, while also acting as a first-hand source of information. Moreover, the value of service types in a constellation can only improve where such services are used as a tool for information. Therefore, it is likely that without Search Services, Informational Services and Evaluation Services the perceived value of a service constellation as a whole will be less than if it had these services. Practically, if access to these service types were limited, or if the quality in use was poor, the perceived value of the constellation would suffer similarly.

Proposition (2): *The overall perceived value of a service constellation is heavily dependent on the quality of the first service types used when services are consumed sequentially.*

Another common theme in the focus group discussion was the improvement of one service type leading to the improvement of others. As noted earlier, it was postulated that improved Booking Services would directly improve the experience at Cultural Sites. Additionally, Booking Services could help to improve the choice of Accommodation Services, which in turn would lead to improved experiences at Cultural Sites, with Entertainment Services and Shopping Services. This directional association suggests that high-value Booking Services are a prerequisite for better Accommodation Services, experiences at Cultural sites, Entertainment Services and Shopping Services. The initial performance of Booking Services, therefore, affects the perceived value of these other service types. Consequently, it could be argued that a service type which precedes another is extremely influential to the perceived value of the service type that follows. In this example the use of Booking Services precedes the use of Accommodation Services which precedes the experience of Cultural Sites. High-performing Booking Services would subsequently lead to better choices of Accommodation Services then an improved experience at Cultural Sites. Likewise, a low-performing Booking Service could lead to poorer choices of Accommodation Services leading to a poor experience at Cultural Sites. Therefore, it could be argued that service types in sequence are preceded by a service type of greater importance. Moreover, the overall perceived value of a service constellation is heavily dependent on the quality of the first service types used when services are consumed sequentially.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study developed the concept of a service constellation for a tourist destination. The service constellation, as proposed by Van Riel et al (2013), was formed through qualitative research, employing a focus group workshop, and using customer journey analysis. The aim of the study was to understand how services within a constellation affect each other and the value-creating potential of the constellation holistically. To do so, (1) the value of individual services, (2) the perceived effect of one service on another and (3) propositions on how the constellation changes as a whole, were realised from a consumer perspective, developed through group discussions in the focus group.

In the study, 13 service types were found to make up the service constellation of the tourist destination Amsterdam: Booking Services, Travel-to-Destination Services, Arrival Services, Search Services, Accommodation Services, Food Services, Entertainment Services, Cultural Sites, Drink Services, Internal Transport Services, Shopping Services, Informational Services and Evaluation Services. From a consumer perspective, the importance of each service type was understood on an individual level. The study found that services are valued differently from individual to individual and that perceived value is dependent on factors such as preference, situation and accessibility of the service. The study also found complex interactions between the 13 service types. The relationships between service types and their perceived effect on others found positive, negative and one-directional associations. The degree to which a particular service type is valued depends on an individual's perceived value of another.

While the study could not go as far as to determine the overall perceived value of the service constellation, propositions were made to suggest how changes in service types affect the constellation as a whole. The study highlights the importance of search and informational

services and proposes that the perceived overall value of a service constellation would be less without the service types Search Services, Informational Services and Evaluation Services than it would be if the constellation had them.

Lastly, the study found that the perceived value of service types is influenced by the sequential order in which they are consumed. Service types that precede others have a great impact on the perceived value of the next. The quality of a preceding service type will in turn affect the quality of the next in sequence. The study proposes that the overall perceived value of a service constellation is heavily dependent on the quality of the first service types used when services are consumed sequentially.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This study has expanded the concept of value constellations (Norman & Ramirez, 1993) and service constellations (Van Riel et al., 2013), by moving from a constellation of organisations that add value to a single firm, to a constellation of services that add value to a group of service providers. Furthermore, this study suggests service constellations are value systems (Porter, 1985), by supporting the notion that like value systems, interactions between actors raise the total value of the system (Jüttner & Wehrli, 1994).

The study has added to the growing literature on customer journey analysis in tourism. Unlike many other studies, as claimed by Lemon and Verhoef (2016), this study has evaluated the customer experience at individual touchpoints throughout the purchase stages. As a result, a holistic overview of key touchpoints of a tourist trip can be seen to determine variables such as overall experience or satisfaction. And so, researchers can discern more clearly the individual elements that contribute to consumer satisfaction. Furthermore, customer journey

analysis derived through direct consumer feedback, as shown in this study, is a worthy technique to discover services through an ‘as is’ approach rather than a ‘to be’ approach as studied by Shiratori et al. (2021).

With respect to service constellation theory, the study highlights the importance of an individual’s subjective value of services in a constellation. Individual circumstances allow for a different perceived value of service types and the impact of a service depends on an individual’s perceived value. Therefore, this leads to the understanding that not all services generate an equal impact on the perceived value of the constellation. Moreover, it is important moving forward that researchers account for this.

6.2 Managerial Recommendations

The study provides much insight for DMOs when organising a tourism destination. The study has highlighted 13 service types which make up the service constellation for Amsterdam. As such, DMOs can look to view services within their destination similarly, so to organise and manage them efficiently and effectively, with the aim of creating extra value for visitors.

This study has shown that the process of creating a service constellation and gaining feedback from consumers generates a lot of valuable insight into how consumers perceive the services within a destination function, how consumers value the services and how in combination the services affect the perceived value of consumers. Using the same techniques DMOs of different tourism destinations may find it useful to enact the same process to gain valuable insight into their own destination. The technique shows great potential in gaining real consumer insight which is actionable.

DMOs should understand the importance of complimentary services such as search, informational and evaluation services. While DMOs may have little control over these services, it is important for the value of the constellation. DMOs should look to support such services as their importance relates to many service types in the constellation.

Managers should understand the importance of the consumption of services in sequence. While managers of service providers will generally look to enhance their own business, they may rarely look at the performance or enhancement of others. As such, they may not realise the impact that a poorly performing service has on them. By understanding that a service provider may be secondary or tertiary in a sequence, managers should understand that preceding services impact the use of their service. Therefore, by enhancing preceding services, managers may find that their service is more greatly valued or used more regularly. While this may not be feasible for all service providers it could be the role of DMOs to manage supporting services. DMOs can look to consumer journey analysis to understand the likely consumption sequence of services.

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

A limitation of the study could be seen in the sample of the study. The age range of the focus group subjects (21-23) and the occupation of the subjects (students) may be considered a limitation of the study. The study lends itself to the perception of tourists within this age group. While it is evident that the study sample does not encompass the likely demographic of any tourism destination, it may be useful for DMOs when targeting this type of clientele. And so, the study is limited in its generalisability when considering other demographics. Therefore, future research may look to continue to build on the findings of the study for this particular demographic or look to develop the study around a different one.

A second limitation is the generalisability of this study on other tourism destinations. While this study gives great insight into the workings of one particular tourism destination, it cannot be determined whether the same functionality is true for other destinations. While DMOs can look at this study as an example of generating a service constellation for their own destination, researchers should look to create a constellation of services that can be generalised for all destinations.

Lastly, this study is limited to exploratory and partially descriptive research and lacks the design to definitively study cause and effect relationships between service types. While potentially a difficult task, future research could look to determine a causal relationship of service types in sequence. Even moreso, the effect of pre-trip stage services on trip stage services or the effect of trip stage services on post-trip stage services. This calls for quantitative research. Future research could look to test the relationships between service types and more importantly their overall effect on the perceived value of a service constellation as a whole.

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